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CLASS OF 1885

A  
NEW WORK ON OLD LINES

A Rational Plea on behalf

OF

**Shakspeare's Sonnets**

A

PERMANENT REPLY TO HIS MISINTERPRETERS

A LABOUR OF LOVE

*Dedicated to His Lovers*

A NECESSARY SUPPLEMENT TO ALL EDITIONS  
OF HIS WORKS

\*

TO  
THE AUTHOR.

“ Come farfalla, che la luce attira,  
Alla vorace fiamma abbrucia e spira,  
Così, dell' arte al sacro fuoco, anch' io  
M'incendio tutto, per fatal desio!

“ Per te Massey la sorte è ben diversa!  
L'istinto che ti sprona non t'avversa.  
Andranne la salma, sepolta e pesta,  
Ma con l'opere tue, il *Genio* resta!

“TOMMASO SALVINI.”

A BRIEF PRELIMINARY ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SONNETS.

ONLY Twice does Shakspeare speak to us in prose outside of his Plays.

The first time is when he dedicates the poem of *Venus and Adonis*, as the First heir of his Invention, to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and says, "If your Honour seem but pleased I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour." In the year following this promise was fulfilled. To the same friend the Poet offered the fruit of his "graver labour" in the poem of *Lucrece*. In the second dedication he again looks forward and speaks of literary work to be done in the future. "What I have done is yours," he says. "What I have to do is yours,—being part in all I have devoted yours." "What I have to do is yours" implies future work; all future work will be a continuation of all past work, and both are included in the inclusive "all I have devoted yours," i. e. all which I have devoted to you.

Now, whether the work thus spoken of had been done in the past, or is being done in the present, or is to be done in the future according to an agreement or understanding, Shakspeare himself here tells us that such past, present, and future work was wholly and solely devoted to his young friend, the Earl of Southampton. So stands the record in Shakspeare's own writing when he makes another promise more emphatic than the one he had just fulfilled, and again pledges himself by another reference to work in hand, more express in meaning than was his primary dedication. From this personal record we learn that he *has work in hand which is pre-dedicated at the time of writing to the same friend*. This second and more serious promise given publicly had no fulfilment, unless the work devoted to Southampton was the *Sonnets of Shakspeare*, known four years later to be circulating amongst the poet's "Private Friends." But, as Mrs. Cowden Clarke observed in a letter addressed to me (July 25, 1866),

"*Shakspeare was not the man to write lightly and meaninglessly such words as 'The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end,' and 'what I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours!'* Shakspeare was not the man to write thus to his friend Southampton covertly, and to write to his friend of the *Sonnets* as he there does, unless they were one and the same person."

The earliest notice we have of Shakspeare's *Sonnets* yet identified by name is from the pen of Francis Meres, Master of Arts of both Universities, in his work entitled '*Palladis Tamia; Wit's Treasury*, being the second part of *Wit's Commonwealth*,' which was published in the year 1598. Meres at that date

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recognizes Shakspeare as the foremost writer, the most all-round poet, of the Elizabethan age, and proclaims him to be one of the very best in Comedy, in Tragedy, and in Lyrical Poetry. The writer shows that he was up to date in his familiarity with Shakspeare's writings, for he quotes an expression used by Falstaff in the first part of *Henry IV.*, II. iv.<sup>1</sup>—a play which had only been entered on the Stationers' Register Feb. 25th, 1597-98. Meres was also greatly impressed with the English glory of Shakspeare's language. "As Epilus Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus' tongue if they would speak Latin, so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakspeare's fine, filed phrase, if they would speak English." And of the Poems and Sonnets Meres remarks that "*As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare; witness his 'Venus and Adonis,' his 'Lucrece,' his sugred Sonnets among his Private Friends.*" This mention of the Sonnets supplies us with an important link of connection. We learn from Meres that in the year 1598 the Sonnets of Shakspeare were known and somewhat renowned in MS. for him to proclaim their sweetness as Love-Poetry, and they were also numerous enough to be classed and concisely reviewed by him among the Poet's other Works. Meres was a Warwickshire man. He is characterized by Heywood in his *Apology for Actors* as "an approved good Scholar whose work was learnedly done." Thus, according to Francis Meres, in 1598, Shakspeare had made his "Private Friends," for whom he had written the Sonnets; and if the Sonnets be the same, the private friendship publicly recognized by the Critic must of course have included that which is celebrated by the Poet in his first 126 Sonnets.

The Title to Thorpe's Collection, printed in 1609, reads with an echo to the words of Meres—*Shakspeare's Sonnets, never before Imprinted*, though so often spoken of, and so long known to exist in MS.

An understanding on the subject is implied in the familiarity of phrase. The inscriber appears to say, "You have heard a great deal about the 'Sugred Sonnets,' mentioned by the critic, as circulating amongst the poet's private friends; I have the honour to set them forth for the public."

The Sonnets were published in 1609, with this inscription:—

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .  
 THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .  
 M<sup>r</sup> . W . H . ALL . HAPPINESSE .  
 AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .  
 PROMISED .  
 BY .  
 OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .  
 WISHETH .  
 THE . WELL-WISHING .  
 ADVENTVRER . IN .  
 SETTING .  
 FORTH . T . T .

<sup>1</sup> Falstaff says, "here's Lime in this Sack too; there is nothing but Roguery to be found in Villainous Man." Meres applies this to the "Corrupt times, when there is nothing but roguery in villainous man." This familiarity with Falstaff makes it fairly certain that the *Merry Wives of Windsor* had not appeared when Meres wrote in 1598, or he would have included it in his list of Shakspeare's Plays.

The book is inscribed by Thomas Thorpe, a well-known publisher of the time who was himself a dabbler in literature. He edited a posthumous work of Marlowe's, and was the publisher of plays by Marston, Jonson, Chapman, and others. Shakspeare makes no sign of assent to the publication; whereas he prefaced his *Venus and Adonis* with dedication and motto; the *Lucrece* with dedication and argument.

After the Sonnets were printed by Thorpe in 1609, we hear no more of them for thirty-one years. In 1640 a new edition appeared with an arrangement totally different from the original one. This was published as 'Poems written by Wil. Shakspeare, Gent. Printed at London by Tho. Cotes, and are to be sold by John Benson.' In this arrangement we find some of the pieces printed in the *Passionate Pilgrim* mixed up with the Sonnets, and the whole of them have titles which are chiefly given to little groups. Sonnets 18, 19, 43, 56, 75, 76, 96, 126 are missing from the second edition. This publication of the Sonnets as poems on distinct subjects shows, to some extent, how they were looked upon by the readers of the time. The arranger, in supplying his titles, would be following a feeling and answering a want. Any personal application of them was very far from his thoughts. Sonnets 88, 89, 90, and 91 are entitled *A Request to his Scornful Love*. 109 and 110 are called *A Lover's excuse for his long Absence*. Sonnet 122, *Upon the Receipt of a Table Book from his Mistress*; and 125, *An Entreaty for her Acceptance*. The greater part of the titles however are general, and only attempt to characterize the sentiment.

The most remarkable feature of this publication is Benson's address, to which sufficient attention has never been directed.

#### " TO THE READER.

*" I here presume, under favour, to present to your view some excellent and sweetly composed poems of Master William Shakspeare, which in themselves appear of the same purity the author himself, then living, avouched! They had not the fortune, by reason of their infancy in his death, to have the due accommodation of proportionable glory with the rest of his ever-living works. Yet the lines will afford you a more authentic approbation than my assurance any way can to invite your allowance; in your perusal you shall find them serene, clear, and elegantly plain, — such gentle strains as shall recreate and not perplex your brain. No intricate or cloudy stuff to puzzle intellect, but perfect eloquence, such as will raise your admiration to his praise. This assurance will not differ from your acknowledgments, and certain I am my opinion will be seconded by the sufficiency of these ensuing lines. I have been somewhat solicitous to bring this forth to the perfect view of all men, and in so doing glad to be serviceable for the continuance of glory to the deserved author in these his poems."*

At first sight one might fancy that Benson referred to the purity of Shakspeare's life as avouching for the purity of the Sonnets. But after long questioning the conclusion is forced upon me that Shakspeare *had himself defended them* against some such "exsufficate and blown surmises" or conjectures of his day as we find extant in ours. Benson emphatically states that *the author himself when living avouched their purity!*

To avouch is to affirm or testify, and therefore the plain English of this must be that Shakspeare, in his life-time, gave his own personal testimony to the

purity of his Sonnets. This vindication would not have been made unless some contrary charge had been brought against them. Benson having heard of this looked into the Sonnets for himself, and found they justified the claim that Shakspeare had made on their behalf. Therefore he says, "*I have been somewhat solicitous to bring this forth to the view of all men,*" with intent to do justice to the Sonnets and their Author.

In the editions that followed the first two, sometimes the one order prevailed, sometimes the other. Lintot's, published in 1709, adhered to the arrangement of Thorpe's Collection. Curll's, in 1710, follows that of Cotes. Gildon gave it as his opinion, that the Sonnets were all of them written in praise of Shakspeare's mistress. Dr. Sewell edited them in 1728, and he tells us, by way of illustrating Gildon's idea, that "a young Muse *must* have a Mistress to play off the beginnings of fancy; nothing being so apt to elevate the soul to a pitch of poetry, as the passion of love." This opinion, that the Sonnets were addressed to a mistress, appears to have obtained, until disputed by Malone and Steevens. In 1780, the last-named critic published his *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays* (1778), and the notes to the Sonnets include his own conjectures and conclusions, together with those of Dr. Farmer, Tyrwhitt, and Steevens. These four generally concur in the belief that 128 of the Sonnets are addressed to a man; the remaining 28 to a lady. Malone considered the Sonnets to be those spoken of by Meres. Dr. Farmer thought that William Harte, Shakspeare's nephew, might be the person addressed under the initials "W. H." However, the Stratford Register soon put a stop to William Harte's candidature, for it showed that he was not baptized until August 28, 1600. Tyrwhitt was struck with the peculiar lettering of a line in the 20th Sonnet,—

A man in *Hew* all *Hews* in his controlling,

and fancied that the Poet had written it on the colourable pretext of hinting at the "only begetter's" name, which the critic conjectured might be William Hughes.

The Sonnets were Steevens' pet abhorrence. At first he did not reprint them. He says, "We have not reprinted the Sonnets, &c. of Shakspeare because the strongest Act of Parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service, notwithstanding these miscellaneous poems have derived every possible advantage from the literature and judgment of their only intelligent editor, Mr. Malone, whose implements of criticism, like the ivory rake and golden spade in Prudentius, are, on this occasion, disgraced by the objects of their culture. Had Shakspeare produced no other works than these, his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older and much more elegant sonneteer." Afterwards he broke out continually in abuse of them. The eruption of his ill-humour occurs in foot-notes, that disfigure the pages of Malone's edition of Shakspeare's poems. He held that they were composed in the "highest strain of affectation, pedantry, circumlocution, and nonsense." "Such laboured perplexities of language," he says, "and such studied deformities of style prevail throughout these Sonnets, that the reader (after our best endeavours at explanation!) will frequently find reason to exclaim with Imogen—

I see before me, man,—nor here, nor here,  
Nor what ensues, but have a fog in them  
That I cannot look through."



"This purblind and obscure stuff," he calls their poetry. And in a note to Sonnet 54 he asks with a sneer, "but what has truth or nature to do with sonnets?" Steevens however was not altogether without warrant for his condemnation if he read the Sonnets as utterances entirely personal to the Poet.

Boswell, second son of Dr. Johnson's biographer, in editing a later edition of the work in which Steevens' notes are printed, had the good sense to defend the Sonnets against that censor's bitterness of contempt, and the good taste to perceive that they are all aglow with the "orient hues" of Shakspeare's youthful imagination. He ventures to assert that Steevens has not "made a convert of a single reader who had any pretensions to poetical taste in the course of forty years," which had then gone by since the splenetic critic first described the Sonnets as worthless. Boswell also remarks anent the personal interpretation that the fondling expressions which perpetually occur would have been better suited to a "cockered silken wanton" than to "one of the most gallant noblemen that adorned the chivalrous age in which he lived."

In 1797 Chalmers had endeavoured to show that the Sonnets were addressed to Queen Elizabeth, although Her Majesty must have been close upon sixty years of age when the Sonnets were first commenced. He argues that Shakspeare, knowing the voracity of Elizabeth for praise, thought he would fool her to the top of her bent; aware of her patience when listening to panegyric, he determined, with the resolution of his own Dogberry, to bestow his whole tediousness upon her.

Dr. Drake, in his *Shakspeare and his Times* (1817), was the first to conjecture that Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, was the youthful friend of Shakspeare who was addressed so affectionately in the Sonnets, as well as inscribed to so lovingly in the dedications of his poems. He thought the unity of feeling in both identified the same person, and maintained that a little attention to the language of the times in which Thorpe's inscription was written, would lead us to infer that Mr. W. H. had sufficient influence to "obtain the manuscript from the Poet, and that he lodged it in Thorpe's hands for the purpose of publication, a favour which the bookseller returned by wishing him *all happiness and that eternity* which had been promised by the bard in such glowing colours to another, namely, to one of the immediate subjects of his Sonnets." Drake contended, logically enough, that as a number of the Sonnets were most certainly addressed to a female, it must be evident that "W. H." could not be the "only begetter" of them in the sense which is primarily suggested. He therefore agreed with Chalmers and Boswell that Mr. W. H. was the *obtainer* of the Sonnets for Thorpe, and he remarks that the dedication was read in that light by some of the earlier editors. Having fixed on Southampton as the subject of the first 126 Sonnets, Drake is at a loss to prove it. He never goes deep enough, and only snatches a waif or two of evidence floating on the surface. When he comes to the latter Sonnets he expresses the most entire conviction that they were never directed to a *real* object. "Credulity itself, we think, cannot suppose otherwise, and, at the same time, believe that the Poet was privy to their publication."

About the year 1818 Mr. Bright was the first to make out that the "Mr. W. H." of Thorpe's inscription was William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke. It is said he laboured for many years in collecting evidence, brooded over his cherished idea secretly, talked of it publicly, and was then anticipated

in announcing it by Mr. Boaden in 1832. Mr. Boaden argued shallowly that the Earl of Southampton could not be the man addressed by Shakspeare, and assumed desperately that William Herbert was! He held him to be the "only begetter," or Inspirer. Thus Mr. Bright escaped the infamy of persistently trying to tarnish the character of Shakspeare for the sake of a pet theory; that is, if *his* discovery included the personal interpretation elaborated later by Charles Armitage Brown, which will be dealt with in my next chapter.

Wordsworth, in his Essay supplementary to the famous preface, printed with the Lyrical Ballads, has administered a rebuke to Steevens, and reprehended his flippant impertinence. He says, "There is extant a small volume of miscellaneous poems, in which Shakspeare expresses his own feelings in his own person. It is not difficult to conceive that the editor, George Steevens, should have been insensible to the beauties of one portion of that volume, the Sonnets; though in no part of the writings of this Poet is found in an equal compass a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed. But from a regard to the critic's own credit he would not have ventured to talk of an Act of Parliament not being strong enough to compel the perusal of these little pieces, if he had not known that the people of England were ignorant of the treasures contained in them; and if he had not, moreover, shared the too common propensity of human nature to exult over a supposed fall into the mire of a genius whom he had been compelled to regard with admiration, as an inmate of the celestial regions, 'there sitting where he durst not soar.'"

This was written by Wordsworth in 1815; he had read the Sonnets for their poetry, independently of their object, but held that "*with this key Shakspeare unlocked his heart,*" which has become the one Article in the *Credo* of some readers of the Sonnets. About the same time Coleridge lectured on Shakspeare at the Royal Institution, and publicly rebuked the obtuse sense and shallow expressions of Steevens.

Coleridge thought that the person addressed by Shakspeare was a woman. He fancied the 20th Sonnet might have been introduced as a blind. He felt that in so many of the Sonnets the spirit was essentially feminine, whatever the outward figure might be, sufficiently so to warrant our thinking that where the address is to a man it was only a disguise; for, whilst the expression would indicate one sex, the feeling altogether belied it, and secretly wooed or worshipped the other. Poet-like, he perceived that there were such fragrant gusts of passion in them, such "subtle-shining secrecies" of meaning in their darkness, as only a woman could have called forth; and so many of the Sonnets have the suggestive sweetness of the lover's passionate words, the ecstatic sparkle of a lover's eyes, the tender, ineffable touch of a lover's hands, that in them it must be a man speaking to a woman.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Knight maintained that certain of the Sonnets, such as Nos. 56, 57, and 58, and also the perfect love-poem contained in Sonnets 97, 98, and 99, were addressed to a female, because the comparisons are so clearly, so exquisitely the symbol of womanly beauty, so exclusively the poetic representatives of feminine graces in the world of flowers, and because, in the Sonnets where Shakspeare directly addresses his male friend, it is manly beauty which he extols. He says nothing to lead us to think that he would seek to compliment his friend on the

<sup>1</sup> See *Table Talk*, p. 231.

delicate whiteness of his hand, the surpassing sweetness of his breath. Mr. Knight has found the perplexities of the personal theory so insurmountable, that he has not followed in the steps of those who have jauntily overleaped the difficulties that meet us everywhere, and which ought, until fairly conquered, to have surrounded and protected the Poet's personal character as with a *chevaux-de-frise*. He wisely hesitated rather than rashly joined in making a wanton charge of immorality and egregious folly against Shakspeare. He considered that many of the Sonnets must be dramatic in sentiment, and as a printer found plenty of proofs that they were not printed in the written order, nor overlooked by the author. He likewise considered it impossible that William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, could have been the "only begetter" of the Sonnets.<sup>1</sup>

Hallam inclined to the personal theory of the Sonnets, and evidently thought we might assume that William Herbert was the youth of high rank, as well as personal beauty, accomplishment and licentious life, whom Shakspeare so often addressed as his dear friend. He remarks that, "There is a weakness and folly in all excessive and misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of Sonnets." "No one," he says, "ever entered more fully than Shakspeare into the character of this species of poetry, which admits of no expletive imagery—no merely ornamental line." But, so strange, so powerful is the Poet's humiliation in addressing this youth as "a being before whose feet he crouched, whose frown he feared, whose injuries—and those of the most insulting kind, the seduction of the mistress to whom we have alluded—he felt and bewailed without resenting;" that on the whole, "it is impossible not to wish the Sonnets of Shakspeare had never been written."

Mr. Dyce, in 1864, rested in the conclusions which he had reached thirty years before. He then said, "For my own part, repeated perusals of the Sonnets have well-nigh convinced me that most of them were composed in an assumed character, on different subjects, and at different times, for the amusement—if not at the suggestion—of the author's intimate associates (hence described by Meres as 'his sugred Sonnets among his private friends'); and though I would not deny that one or two of them reflect his genuine feelings, I contend that allusions scattered through the whole series are not to be hastily referred to the personal circumstances of Shakspeare." He left the problem where he found it, and made no attempt to make it double.

Mr. Bolton Corney, who presented me with a copy of the pamphlet he printed for private circulation, has recorded his conviction that the Earl of Southampton was the "Begetter" of the Sonnets; that they were written in fulfilment of a promise made to the Earl in 1594; that the Sonnets mentioned by Meres in 1598 formed the work which was promised in 1594 and reached the press in 1609, but that they are, with slight exceptions, mere poetical exercises. He protests against the theory that they relate to transactions between the Poet and his patron:—1. Because as an abstract question the promise to write a poem cannot imply *any such object*. 2. Because in the instance of *Lucrece* no such object could have been designed. 3. Because, in the absence of evidence, it is incredible that the man of whom *divers of worship had reported his uprightness of dealing*

<sup>1</sup> *Studies of Shakspeare*, by Charles Knight. London, 1849.

should have lavished so much wit in order to proclaim the grievous errors of his patron—and of himself. He denounces the vaunted discovery of Mr. Brown as a most unjustifiable theory, a mischievous fallacy. He accepts M. Chasles' reading of Thorpe's inscription, and thinks a Frenchman has solved the Shakspeare problem which has resisted all the efforts of our "homely wits." Believing that the Earl of Southampton was really the "only begetter" of the Sonnets, and that the inscription addresses the "only begetter" as the objective creator of them, Mr. Corney feels compelled to accept M. Chasles' interpretation; he thinks that William Herbert dedicates the Sonnets to the Earl of Southampton, and that Thorpe merely adds his wishes for the success of the publication. He assumes that the initials "W. H." denote William Lord Herbert. Thus, he holds that the sense of the inscription is:—To the only begetter (the Earl of Southampton) of these ensuing Sonnets, Mr. W. H. (William Herbert) wishes all happiness, and that eternity promised (to him) by our ever-living Poet. This was the private inscription, in imitation of the lapidary style, written on the private copy which had been executed for the purpose of presenting to the Earl; and Thorpe, in making the Sonnets public, let this dedication stand, merely adding that the "well-wishing adventurer in setting forth" was "T. T."

There have been various minor and incidental notices of the Sonnets, which show that the tendency in our time is to look on them as Autobiographic. Mr. Henry Taylor, in his *Notes from Books*, speaks of those Sonnets in which Shakspeare "reproaches Fortune and himself, in a strain which shows how painfully conscious he was that he had lived unworthily of his doubly immortal spirit." Mr. Masson<sup>1</sup> states resolutely, that the Sonnets are, and can possibly be, nothing else than a record of the Poet's own feelings and experience during a certain period of his London life; that they are distinctly, intensely, painfully autobiographic. He thinks they express our Poet in his most intimate and private relations to man and nature as having been "William the Melancholy," rather than "William the Calm," or "William the Cheerful." Mr. Masson once wrote a work on the Sonnets which has not been published.

The Sonnets seem to have placed Ulrici in that difficult position which the Americans describe as "facing North by South." To him the fact that Shakspeare passed his life in so modest a way and left so little report, is evidence of the calmness with which the majestic stream of his mental development flowed on, and of the clear pure atmosphere which breathed about his soul. Yet, we may see in the Sonnets many traces of the painful struggles it cost him to maintain his moral empire. His mind was a fountain of free fresh energy, yet the Sonnets show how he fell into the depths of painful despondency, and felt utterly wretched. They tell us that he had a calm consciousness of his own greatness, and also that he held fame and applause to be empty, mean, and worthless. This is Ulrici's cross-eyed view. He reads the Sonnets as personal confessions, and he concludes that Shakspeare must have been so sincere a Christian, that being also a mortal man, and open to temptation, he, having fallen and risen up a conqueror over himself, to prove that he was not ashamed of anything, set the matter forth as a warning to the world, and offered himself up as a sacrifice for the good of others, most especially for the behoof of the young Earl of Pembroke, for, according to Ulrici, he alone can be the person addressed.

<sup>1</sup> *Essays, chiefly on English Poets.*

Gervinus, in his Commentaries on Shakspeare, is of opinion that the Sonnets were not originally intended for publication, and that 126 of them are addressed to a friend; the last 28 bespeaking a relation with some light-minded woman. It is quite clear to him that they are addressed to one and the same youth, as even the last 28, from their purport, relate to the one connection between Shakspeare and his young friend. Gervinus considers that these should properly be arranged with Sonnets 40—42. He maintains that the real name of the "only begetter" was not designated by the publisher, the initials W. H. were only meant to mislead; that this "Begetter" is the same man whom the 38th Sonnet calls in a similar sense the "Tenth Muse," and whom the 78th Sonnet enjoins to be "most proud" of the Poet's works, because their influence is his, and born of him. He does not believe that the Earl of Pembroke could be the person addressed, the age of the Earl and the period at which the Sonnets were written making it an impossibility. He thinks the Earl of Southampton is the person, he being early a patron of the drama, and a nobleman so much looked up to by the poets and writers of the time, that they vied with each other in dedicating their works to him. Gervinus also thinks that a portion of Sonnet 53 directly alludes to the poems which the Poet had inscribed to the Earl, and that he points out how much his friend's English beauty transcends that old Greek beauty of person, which the Poet had attempted to describe, and set forth newly attired in his *Venus and Adonis*. This foreign critic wonders why in England the identity of the object of these Sonnets with the Earl of Southampton should have been so much opposed. To him it is simply incomprehensible, for, if ever a supposition bordered on certainty, he holds it to be this.

When writing my article on Shakspeare and his Sonnets, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1864, I was not aware of, or should have mentioned, the fact that Mrs. Jameson had already suggested a portion of my hypothesis independently attained. Mrs. Jameson says of the Sonnets, "It appears that some of them are addressed to his amiable friend Lord Southampton; and others I think are addressed in Southampton's name to that beautiful Elizabeth Vernon to whom the Earl was so long and so ardently attached."

According to Herr Bernstorff<sup>1</sup> the Sonnets do not speak to beings of flesh and blood, no Earls of Southampton or Pembroke, no Queen Elizabeth or Elizabeth Vernon, no corporeal being, in short, nobody whatever, but Shakspeare's own soul, or his genius or his art. This author considers that the Sonnets are a vast allegory, in which Shakspeare has masked his own face; he has here kept a diary of his inner self, not in a plain autobiographic way, but by addressing and playing a kind of bo-peep with his döppel-ganger.

It is Shakspeare who in the 1st Sonnet is the "only herald to the blooming spring" of modern literature, and the world's fresh ornament. The "beast that bears" the speaker in Sonnet 51 is the Poet's animal nature. The "sweet roses that do not fade" in Sonnet 54 are his dramas. The praises so often repeated are but the Poet's enthusiasm for his inner self. All this is proved by the dedication, which inscribes the Sonnets to their "only begetter," W. H.—*William Himself*. The critic has freed the Shakspearian Psyche from her Sonnet film, and finds that she has shaken off every particle of the concrete to soar on beautiful wings, with all her inborn loveliness unfolded, into the empyrean of

<sup>1</sup> *A Key to Shakspeare's Sonnets*. English translation. London, 1862.

pure abstraction! There sits the Poet sublimely "pinnacled, dim in the intense inane," at the highest altitude of self-consciousness, singing his song of self-worship; contemplating the heights, and depths, and proportions of the great vast of himself, and as he looks over centuries on centuries of years he sees and prophesies that the time will yet come when the world will gaze on his genius with as much awe as he feels for it now. "Is this vanity and self-conceit?" the critic asks, and he answers, "Not a whit, simple truthful self-perception!" Into this region has he followed Shakspeare, where "human mortals" could not possibly breathe. He keeps up pretty well, self-inflated, for some time, but at length, before the flight is quite finished, our critic gives one gasp, showing that he is mortal after all, and down he drops dead-beaten in the middle of the latter Sonnets.

Mr. Heraud says<sup>1</sup>—"After a careful reperusal, I have come to the conclusion that there is not a single Sonnet which is addressed to any individual at all." He maintains that the "*Two Loves*" of Sonnet 144 are "the Celibate Church on the one hand, and the Reformed Church on the other!" And in the latter Sonnets, our Poet is reading his Bible—"Has the very Book open before him, he is in fact reading the Canticles; and there he finds the Bride, who is '*black but comely*'—at once the bride of his CELESTIAL FRIEND and his own." This is too good to omit, although I can only make a note of it; good enough surely, if boundless folly can reach so far, to tickle Shakspeare in eternity and make him feel a carnal gush of the old human jollity!

But, it may be asked, why recognize such rootless and literally groundless imaginings as these? Wherefore notice such vain shadows at all in the presence of realities firm and fast as the centre? What says Delius in Randolph's *Muses' Looking-Glass* when he has been censured for his fear of Shadows? "*Who knows but they come leering after us to steal away the substance!*"

Every red herring trailed across the true scent will be sure to mislead some deluded followers. But the Sonnets are no more allegorical than they are autobiographical; neither were they intended to set forth that system of philosophy which Mr. Richard Simpson sought for in them. The editor of the "Gem edition" at one time accepted the personal theory, and according to his own admission could make but little way with it.<sup>2</sup> Although each Sonnet "is an autobiographic confession," he remarks, "we are completely foiled in getting at Shakspeare himself," and these "revelations of the Poet's innermost nature" appear to "teach us less of the man" than the tone of mind which we trace or seem to trace in his dramas. The "strange imagery of passion which passes over the magic mirror has no tangible existence before or behind it." And yet these Sonnets are autobiographic. It is Shakspeare showing himself to us, they say (with M. Chasles), not only in person, for they insist that he has sounded the depths of his heart in "a drama more tragic than the madness of Lear or the agonies of Othello." According to this view our great Poet has written an autobiography that is impersonal, a subjective revelation which reveals nothing definite, and he has also mixed up the sexes in a confusion that is unparalleled in poetry. But this was the greatest master of expression, the one man whose art of uttering just what he meant to say and suggest was incomparable, supremely potent, and of infinite felicity!

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare, his Inner Life*, by John A. Heraud. London, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakspeare*. London, 1865.

According to Mr. Henry Brown, "nothing at all satisfactory had appeared in elucidation of the Sonnets" previous to the publication of his queerly-called book.<sup>1</sup> From this we learn that the Sonnets are an "intentional burlesque," an "allegorical parody," from beginning to end. The "entire Sonnets are a satire upon the reigning custom of Mistress-Sonneting," although no one but him has "observed that the drift of the Poet is parody." In his loftiest moods and most solemn music the singer has no other object than to "ape the bombast of the Sonneteers" and at the same time out-bombast them. It was Shakspeare's crowning or rather fool's-capping conceit to marry his young friend to his own immortal muse, seeing that he would not get married himself! This friend is held to be Master Will Herbert, who is the actual Adonis of the poem which Shakspeare dedicated to Southampton when Herbert was in his thirteenth year! Mr. Brown's adoption of Stella as the "dark lady" of the Latter Sonnets without one word of explanation has in it all the Elizabethan audacity of unacknowledged borrowing, whilst his Holywell Street title of "Lady Rich's illicit amours revealed" made me shrink, ashamed of having introduced her name into the Sonnet controversy.

In 1872 the first 126 Sonnets were translated into German by Herr Fritz Krauss and called *Shakspeare's Southampton-Sonette*,<sup>2</sup> my theory of their nature and significance being frankly adopted and sustained in the author's commentary. Since then Herr Krauss (now deceased) has written an original work in support of my contention that Lady Rich was the subject of the Latter Sonnets suggested to the Poet by William Herbert, but this book, a posthumous publication, I have not seen.

In his *History of the English People*<sup>3</sup> Mr. J. R. Green has some remarks on the Sonnets. Speaking of Shakspeare he says, "His supposed self-revelation in the Sonnets is so obscure that only a few outlines can be traced even by the boldest conjecture. In spite of the ingenuity of commentators, it is difficult and even impossible to derive any knowledge of Shakspeare's inner history from the Sonnets. If we take the language as a record of his personal feelings, his new profession as an actor stirred in him only the bitterness of self-contempt. He chides with Fortune 'that did not better for my life provide than Public means which public manners breed.' 'Thence comes it,' he adds, 'that my name receives a brand, and almost thence my nature is subdued to that it works in.' But the application of the words is more than a doubtful one. The works of Mr. Armitage Brown and Mr. Gerald Massey contain the latest theories as to the Sonnets."

Some persons seem possessed with an esthetic passion for unrealizing and de-vitalizing the Sonnets. There have been recent editors who deliberately set themselves to evaporate the actual facts into the mistiest forms of fancy by affixing their own misleading subject-titles to send them off into the "intense Inane" delightedly as children blowing bubbles.

Professor Dowden is of opinion that Shakspeare wrote whole series of Sonnets upon such abstract themes as Time, Beauty, Goodness, and Verse; that he takes these ideas as topics; that "Love as love is the one eternal thing," and,

<sup>1</sup> *The Sonnets of Shakspeare solved*, by Henry Brown. 1870.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakspeare's Southampton-Sonette*. Deutsch. von Frik Krauss. Leipzig. Berlag von Wilhelm Engelmann. 1872.

<sup>3</sup> *History of the English People*, pp. 412, 426. London, 1874.

as shown by the last of the first series (125), "that is the end of the whole matter." In vain does Shakspeare protest that it is not so; that he did not write about ideas; that he detested the feigning of idealists like Drayton as much as he did false hair and face-painting. His protest is even passionate—

"So is it *not* with me as with that Muse  
Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse."

He did *not* dally with the shadows of ideas, but wrote of persons, especially of one and about one—"To one, of one, still such and ever so." And *for* one, one only, as he tells his friend Southampton. However, Professor Dowden thinks otherwise, and so, as he remarks, "that is the end of the matter!"<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare was dramatic-minded above all other men, and the least immured in himself. He wrote of persons, events, circumstances, and the affairs of others, not about his own; and the subjective mind of the Brownites cannot see that the same man wrote the same way at times in his Sonnets.

One of the latest deliverances on the subject is by Mr. Furnivall in his introduction to the Leopold Shakspeare, who says that "*the Sonnets are in one sense Shakspeare's Psalms. Spiritual struggles underlie both poets' work. For myself I'd rather accept any number of 'slips in sensual mire' on Shakspeare's part to have the 'bursts of (loving) heart' given us in the Sonnets.*" "He tells me," says Mr. Furnivall, "*what his false swarthy mistress was,*" and also "*of the weakness of his own nature.*" Mr. Furnivall, holding on to the coat-tails of Armitage Brown, also holds that the disreputable experience attributed by him to Shakspeare was the Poet's "best preparation" for the "Unhappy Third Period" in which our great dramatist wrote his greatest plays. Mr. Furnivall treats Shakspeare as if he were a recent hysterical convert of the Salvation Army—the greater sinner the purer saint—or as if he had prepared himself for his devotions on Sunday by a prolonged and profound debauch on Saturday night. Mr. Furnivall does not argue or listen to evidence; he only issues his fiat. "*The Book on the Sonnets has yet to be written; and I hope Professor Dowden'll do it. The best book yet written is Armitage Brown's.*"<sup>2</sup> There is but one reading possible for him, that is the autobiographic. "*Were it not for the fact,*" he tells us, "*that many critics worthy of the name of Shakspeare Students and not Shakspeare fools have held the Sonnets to be merely dramatic, I could not have conceived that poems so intensely and evidently autobiographic and self-revealing; poems so one with the spirit and inner meaning of Shakspeare's growth and life, could ever have been conceived to be other than what they are, the records of his own loves and fears.*" So the man in *Punch* did not know whether the Claimant was the rightful heir or not, but he could not bear to see a fellow done out of his own! Mr. Furnivall continues, "*I know that Mr. Browning is against this view, and holds that if Shakspeare DID 'unlock his heart in Sonnets,' the less Shakspeare he.*" As I am personally responsible for the first effort made to substantiate a dramatic theory of the Sonnets, I may be allowed to say here that no writer known to me has ever maintained the opinion that they are *merely* dramatic. My contention is at present, as it was before, that the Sonnets are *both* Personal *and* Dramatic; Personal when spoken by Shakspeare, and Dramatic when spoken by his friends. The problem is to identify and distinguish the different speakers and to present

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare's Sonnets*. London, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Leopold Shakspeare, Introduction, pp. 63—67, 122.



the proof by means of the internal evidence and historic data. Mr. Furnivall quotes from some rhapsody sopped in sentiment—“*Honour again to the singers of brief poems, to the Lyrists and Sonneteers! O Shakspeare! let thy name rest gently among them, perfuming the place. We swear that these Sonnets and Songs do verily breathe ‘not of themselves but thee;’ and we recognize and bless them as short sighs from thy large and poetic heart, burdened with diviner inspiration.*” This, says Mr. Furnivall, in italics, “*this is the teaching that such of our modern poets as are not mere tinkling cymbals, but have souls, need, and that the students of Shakspeare’s Sonnets must recollect.*” He belongs to that subjective brood of mind which can read not only David’s Psalms but also Mrs. Barrett Browning’s Sonnets or Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* into Shakspeare’s Sonnets, and then try to interpret the one by the other, oblivious of the fact that the objective dramatic mind of Shakspeare was antipodal to that of Tennyson and Mrs. Browning. The folly of inferring that Shakspeare’s Sonnets are autobiographic because those of Mrs. Barrett Browning are so, or on account of *In Memoriam* being entirely personal to the writer, could not be surpassed. Mr. Furnivall and those for whom he speaks assert that “*no one can understand Shakspeare who does not hold that the Sonnets are autobiographical.*” But they present no evidence for their belief, which is really as baseless as the Baconian theory; and they suppress or ignore the facts that are fatal to their faith. My contention is that no one can understand Shakspeare who does look on them as autobiographical, and it is my business now to demonstrate that the Sonnets are partly personal and partly dramatic. A view which ought to recommend itself to our national love of a compromise, independently of all that has to be urged on behalf of its likelihood and verity.

The latest contribution to the Sonnet literature in England is by Mr. Thomas Tyler.<sup>1</sup> He supports the theory that the Sonnets are autobiographical, and that William Herbert was the young friend who is addressed in them by Shakspeare. Mr. Tyler considers the Sonnets were written during the years 1598—1601. The chief interest of his communication lies in the introduction of a new claimant, one Mary Fytton, as that Dark Lady of the latter Sonnets, who they say was mistress in common to Shakspeare and the Earl of Pembroke. Mistress Fytton was one of the Ladies of Honour, who was fully in the Queen’s favour in the year 1600, as is shown by her dancing with Elizabeth at a masque and playing the leading part. Mr. Tyler vouches for her being “on specially intimate terms with the Queen.” He establishes Herbert’s connection with Mrs. Fytton by means of a document in the Record Office, which may be dated approximately October 1602. This paper states:—“*One Mrs. Martin, who dwelt at Chopinje Knife near Ludgate, told me that she had seen priests marry gentlewomen at the Court in the time when that Mrs. Fytton was in great favour, and one of her Majesty’s Maids of Honour, and during the time that the Earl of Pembroke favoured her she would put off her head tire, and tuck up her clothes, and take a large white cloak and march as though she had been a man to meet the said Earl out of the Court.*”

Mr. Tyler connects this with another letter. He says, “On January 19, 1601, William Herbert became, through the death of his father, Earl of Pembroke. There is in the Record Office a letter from Tobie Matthew to

<sup>1</sup> *New Shakspeare Society.* Monthly Abstract of Proceedings. May 9 and June 13, 1884.

Dudley Carleton, written two months later (March 25), containing a statement which probably has an important relation to our present subject. 'The Earl of Pembroke is committed to the Fleet: his *Cause* is delivered of a boy who is dead.' The words 'his *Cause*' must mean the woman who had been the cause of Lord Pembroke's getting into trouble." The link between the nameless "Cause" and Mrs. Fytton has to be inferred or forged. Mr. Tyler presents no proof, although he alleges that when Pembroke "had been committed to the Fleet, Mistress Fytton *was* his Cause." If it was Mary Fytton, and she was the character portrayed in the Latter Sonnets, one can hardly see why the child should have been fathered on Herbert. Why should it not have been Shakspeare's or anybody's?

The sole ground, however, for supposing that Mistress Fytton was Shakspeare's paramour is that she was Herbert's Light o' love, or one of them, and Herbert was one of Shakspeare's "Private Friends." Still, Mr. Tyler does not think that Mistress Fytton, who was a Maid of Honour in especial favour with the Queen in 1600, could have *lodged* with Shakspeare, because in line 12 of Sonnet 144 the speaker says,

*"I guess one Angel in Another's Hell."*

This being the Hell where Mary Fytton lodged; the place no doubt where Shakspeare (or another speaker) spent his "Hell of time" (Sonnet 120), and for which he tells us that he was "paying too much rent" (Sonnet 125). Further comment is here reserved, with the exception of one observation. There is at present an insuperable difficulty in the way of accepting Mistress Fytton as the lady of the Latter Sonnets, inasmuch as *Fytton was her maiden name*.

Mr. Tyler adduces no evidence to show that she was a married woman at the time the Earl of Pembroke favoured her. The imprisonment of Pembroke for such a cause would imply the seduction of an unmarried woman who was a Maid of Honour. The Dark Lady of the Sonnets is a married woman notorious for her faithlessness. "In act thy bed-vow broke" proves the marriage state; and it must be shown that Mistress Fytton was a married woman at the time that Sonnet 152 was written, before any other claims can be admitted on her behalf, notwithstanding the punning appropriateness of her maiden name. This difficulty should have been fully faced at once. But it seems that the Herbertists can shut their eyes to everything that is against their view, and take in or be taken in by anything that appears to be in their favour. They will strain at the least little gnat, and swallow camels by the dozen. They remind me of those Africans who cannot face a dead fly in their drink, but who will hunt each other's heads for live delicacies. Mr. Tyler somewhat impotently suggests that Mrs. Fytton *may* have been married and "re-assumed her maiden name of Fytton." What! and been allowed by Elizabeth to masquerade at Court as an impostor as well as a prostitute! *i. e.* as the mistress of Herbert and Shakspeare?

The Latter Sonnets were extant in 1599 as proved by the *Passionate Pilgrim*, therefore the Dark Lady was then a married woman of the vilest reputation—so bad that she was in the "refuse of her deeds"—so common as to be the "wide world's common-place" and "the bay where all men ride" as early as 1599! Consequently this cannot be Mary Fytton, who still bore her maiden name as an honourable Lady at Court, even if she were seduced by Herbert in

1600, and found out in 1601. Thus far Mr. Tyler's hypothesis rests mainly on three supports afforded by the words "If," "Probable," and "May-be," which have to do duty in place of verifiable facts and conclusive criteria, and at present he has but led his followers into an IMPASSE.

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### THE LUES BROWNIANA.

ADMITTING as we all do that Shakspeare wrote his Sonnets, there are but two ways of reading them. Either the Poet is the Speaker throughout, or else some of them are spoken by other persons, for whom they were written; e.g. the "Private Friends" among whom the Sonnets circulated during many years—as we learn from Meres in 1598, and from other evidence now adduced. This latter interpretation is mine, in opposition to the personal theory of Charles Armitage Brown.

One editor of the Sonnets, the late Robert Bell, writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, was constrained to admit that—"Whatever may be the ultimate reception of Mr. Massey's interpretation of the Sonnets, nobody can deny that it is the most elaborate and circumstantial that has been yet attempted. Mr. Armitage Brown's essay, close, subtle, and ingenious as it is, recedes into utter insignificance before the bolder outlines, the richer colouring, and the more daring flights of Mr. Massey. What was dim and shapeless before, here grows distinct and tangible; broken gleams of light here become massed, and pour upon us in a flood; mere speculation, timid and uncertain hitherto, here becomes loud and confident, and assumes the air of ascertained history. A conflict of hypotheses had been raised by previous annotators respecting the facts and persons supposed to be referred to in the Sonnets, and the names of Southampton, Herbert, and Elizabeth Vernon flitted hazily through the discussion. It has been reserved for Mr. Massey to build up a complete narrative out of materials which furnished others with nothing more than bald hints, and bits and scraps of suggestions."

In his Notes to *A Treasury of English Sonnets* Mr. David M. Main remarks on the subject of Shakspeare's Sonnets and their interpreters, "*The reader must pursue (this) for himself in the elaborate works devoted to the subject, especially those of Mr. Charles Armitage Brown and Mr. Gerald Massey, the protagonists of the two great opposite theories of the Sonnets as, according to the former, autobiographic, personal; and, according to the latter, dramatic (vicarious) or impersonal. Whichever of these works may ultimately determine his faith—I cannot doubt that it will be Mr. Massey's masterly and luminous exposition.*"<sup>1</sup> Mr. Main, however, did

<sup>1</sup> *A Treasury of English Sonnets*, by David M. Main. 1880. Notes, pp. 279—280.

not point out that my contention is for *both* Dramatic and Personal Sonnets. When my work was first published, that happened which a writer has most reason to deprecate, whose object it is to set the facts in battle-array and fight it out. No sustained attempt was ever made to grapple with my arguments or to rebut my evidence; and cross-examination has been declined for more than twenty years. There was some distant biting of thumbs at my theory, and doubtless considerable back-biting, but no acceptance of the challenge which was then made, and is now repeated.

In trying to present a rational rendering of Shakspeare's Sonnets I had from the outset to argue with or rather against an established mania from which some readers have suffered and others still suffer acutely. They dare not discuss the evidence, they cannot present any valid arguments for their fanatical faith, they will not face the facts; but they speak virulently, and at times rave rabidly against any one who questions the personal nature of the Sonnets; or else they assume the position of "I am Sir Oracle" and deliver an adverse verdict without any show of right or reason. When Alexander was counselled to give battle at Arbel'a and attack the enemy by night, he declined, saying he would not steal the victory. But this is what the supporters of the Brownite theory are always trying to do with readers who are entirely in the dark concerning the facts that are fatal to their assumptions. They want to filch the victory without fighting the battle. Still worse if possible are those who pose as judicious doubters of any and every solution that may be proposed. Such people never make a discovery themselves and never recognize one when it is made. They "venture to doubt" whether the mystery ever will be penetrated, the friend identified, the Rival Poet named, the Dark Lady recognized, the problem solved. Enough for them to raise a subjective mist and call it Shakspeare's mystery, which they deem inscrutable. Such judicial-minded doubters are as obstinate as mules, and equally sterile. Their reputation for wisdom is not derived from their natural insight, but from the wise way they have of looking at people through their spectacles. They can ensconce themselves in their own conceit and smile as if it were indeed a something to be proud of. Difficulties that are insuperable to them are pronounced insoluble by others, and they are the staunchest of conservatives in defence of their own narrow limits. For their part they are content to repose in their own incompetence.

But we have now to do with the Autobiographic theory of Charles Armitage Brown. Bright and Boaden put forth their suggestions, but Brown made the theory his own. Those who have followed him, like Mr. Furnivall,<sup>1</sup> are but irresponsible echoes. Nothing has been done during fifty years to make good the hasty generalization. Not a single fact has been adduced to prove the theory true. Brown put forth the fiction; his followers are only believers in it. *Fingunt simul creduntque*. And this still remains a fiction to which they have only added their faith. The Autobiographic theory has passed into the stage of belief and become the sacred fetish of a little cult, although no sustained attempt has ever been made in defence of the faith. It is founded upon the assumption that the Sonnets are entirely personal to Shakspeare himself, and that he is the sole speaker in them from first to last; also that the "Mr. W. H." of Thorpe's Inscription was William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, who

<sup>1</sup> Leopold Shakspeare: Introduction.

was born in 1580, and who first came to live in London in the year 1598—the year in which Meres proclaimed the Sonnets to be then extant among Shakspeare's "Private Friends."

According to Brown's reading the Sonnets are not Sonnets merely, but consist of groups that form six poems in the Sonnet-stanza. He tells his readers that if the printers in 1609 had received efficient directions the order and manner of these six poems would have run thus:—

*First Poem.* Stanzas 1 to 26. To his friend, persuading him to marry.

*Second Poem.* Stanzas 27 to 55. To his friend, who had robbed him of his mistress, forgiving him.

*Third Poem.* Stanzas 56 to 77. To his friend, complaining of his coldness, and warning him of life's decay.

*Fourth Poem.* Stanzas 78 to 101. To his friend, complaining that he prefers another poet's praises, and reproving him for faults that may injure his character.

*Fifth Poem.* Stanzas 102 to 126. To his friend, excusing himself for having been some time silent, and disclaiming the charge of inconstancy.

*Sixth Poem.* Stanzas 127 to 152. To his mistress, on her infidelity.<sup>1</sup>

Brown considered that Sonnets 135, 136, and 143, containing puns on the name of "Will," were quite out of keeping with the rest on account of their playful character. He seems not to have known that Sonnet 57 was another of these; possibly he never saw the original Quarto. The last two Sonnets he left out. The 145th stanza was rejected on account of its metre, and the 146th Sonnet was to be deleted because of its religious nature; this being too solemn as the others were too trivial. Without adducing anything like evidence from within the Sonnets, and in defiance of all the testimony that can be collected from without, Mr. Brown was proudly satisfied in assuming that Shakspeare was not only a self-debaser, but was also a self-defamer of a species that had no previous type and has produced no after-copy. The theory is that Shakspeare discovered a particular species of the forbidden fruit and tried to keep the Tree all to himself. But his young friend Will Herbert found it out and ate of it in the same stealthy manner as he himself had done. Sooner or later the "two thieves kissing" the same mistress found each other out, and they had a "hell of time." Mr. Brown says "we can scarcely imagine Shakspeare in a fit of rage; such, however, was the fact. He was stung to the quick, and his resentment, though we are ignorant of the manner in which it was shown, appears to have been ungovernable!" (p. 63).

After the Fall which followed his eating of the forbidden fruit Shakspeare sat down to carve his cherry-stones into pretty likenesses of the facts, or in other words, to make a record of his sins and sufferings in Sonnets as an offering of his everlasting love thus dedicated to the man who had perfidiously partaken of his paramour! No one knows better than myself that ridicule is not the test of truth, but my case is not going to rest on ridicule if I do laugh a little at what I look upon as madly ridiculous. It is true that Mr. Brown most charitably forgives Shakspeare for doing what he has gratuitously charged him with doing, i. e. "keeping a mistress." He says piously enough, "*May no person be inclined on this account to condemn him with a bitterness equal to their own virtue. For*

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare's Autobiographical Poems.* Charles Armitage Brown. London, 1838.

*myself, I confess I have not the heart to blame him at all—purely because he so keenly reproaches himself for his own sin and folly*" (p. 98). One is thankful to find that Mr. Furnivall also forgives him freely and offers him absolution with extreme unction. He appears to hold that these wantonly imputed sins of blood and slips in sensual mire have conferred on our poet a character quite Biblical. Thus he compares Shakspeare with David and looks upon the Sonnets as his Psalms. There never were any authentic grounds for making such a charge or for placing Shakspeare in such disreputable company, or beslaving him with the unction of cant; nothing whatever to go upon except those poetic appearances and shadows of some kind or other of facts which have played the fool with the Brownites, who have falsified them in their malodorous rendering of the Sonnets.

Mr. Furnivall supposes that we fight against the Autobiographic theory of the Sonnets to save Shakspeare from the charge of adultery. Not at all. Give us the facts and we will face them frankly. I do not fear facts nor war against them. My battle is set in array against fictions, fallacies, forgeries, and groundless assumptions, not against facts. But we deny that you have ever made out any case of Adultery. We deny your possession of the facts. We deny that you, who are too subjective-minded to get out of your own conceited selves, have taken the measure of our great Dramatist, whose power of going out of himself and assuming other forms of personality was Protean and humanly unparalleled whether he wrote Plays or Sonnets. We deny that you have ever plumbed or penetrated deep enough, or ever given sufficient proofs of profound insight in reading the Sonnets. We deny the accuracy of your gauge and the truth of your interpretation. We reject your version of the circumstantial data concealed in the Sonnets as calumnious, incredible, and impossible; and we charge you with taking advantage of the obscurity, like others that come by night, to vilify the man Shakspeare and vitiate his work. We see and say that you have never known the man to whose acquaintanceship you pretend. When we ask for proof you smoke a sooty figure on the ceiling and call *that* a likeness of Shakspeare. You have made the Flower-Garden of the Southampton Sonnets common as a place that is haunted with the ghost of dead drink and the foul breath of bad tobacco. They will need to be disinfected for a while, so that clean people can freely breathe their natural sweetness.

What we repudiate from the first is the puerility of supposing that if our Poet had been an adulterer he would have written Sonnets on the subject to perpetuate his personal and for-ever-to-be-reflected shame, when (as he tells us) the subjects were suggested by this friend, and the Sonnets were written to be the living record of his friendship, his loving memorial in life, his "gentle monument" in death; were intended to contain the Poet's "better part," "the very part was consecrate to thee" (Sonnet 74, written after the supposed "adultery"). I look upon this imputation as an utterly unwarranted attempt to make us think ignobly of the man, and a most unique specimen of dilettante devilry. It is not as if Mr. Brown had been inspired by the passion for essential truth, and made blind with earnestness on Shakspeare's behalf! Neither he nor his imitators had or have any such excuse. Their foolish conceit is that in some surreptitious way they can get at the "inner workings" of the Poet's nature, having caught him this time without the mask, and found him out. But Shakspeare is not to be "found out" by the one-eyed people. He was all eyes him

self, and each eye had as many facets for conduct, guidance, and self-protection as those of the fly. As a matter of course any casual reader might assume at first sight that Shakspeare's Sonnets would be personal to Shakspeare. As the true saying is, "any fool can do that." Therefore it is not surprising that this revelation of Shakspeare's guilt came upon Mr. Brown at a flash. Most of us at first sight have fancied the Sonnets were wholly personal to the writer of them. That is, we took it for granted they were personal to Shakspeare. But those who take things for granted, or who adopt a false view and act upon it, may do as Othello did, and as others have done, who murdered by mistake. Such was the position of an old Shakspearian who says in a letter to me—

*"Six years ago I wrote and read a paper on the Sonnets declaring at that time for the Personal Theory. I still remember how greatly the difficulties presented by that theory dissatisfied and depressed me, and how I was forced to the conclusion that those difficulties never could be surmounted. I have now read and re-read your exhaustive work again and again, and I can only say that you have made a blind man see. Whereas I groped in the dark before, I now walk under a strong light, and can read with apprehension and delight those beautiful poems that I used to read with a feeling of impatience and vexation. I feel greatly indebted and grateful to you for having relieved me from the burden of an immense difficulty."*

Another old Shakspearian wrote to me as follows—

*"Having just finished your very interesting book on Shakspeare's Sonnets, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of thanking you for your eloquent vindication of Shakspeare's personal character, and for the new and clear light by which you enable the world to read and comprehend those exquisite pieces of poetry."*

*"As one of the many admirers of these Sonnets, I have always been perplexed by their import, regarding them as autobiographical; but now that I can view them as having been written to and for others, their beauty and intensity appear to me to be wonderfully enhanced by the glowing spirit of love and devotedness which gives them a double life. Let me congratulate you on the completeness and fulness of your noble task, for which all lovers of Shakspeare must be grateful to you."*

But it cost me three years of intense thought and patient labour to free myself entirely from this delusion. At length I found that the path attempted by Mr. Brown was of no more avail for making way through the maze than that of the drunken man whose wooden leg stuck so fast in the earth that he stumped round and round it all night without getting any forwarder, but believing all the while that he was on his way home. That picture or parable, if grotesque, is by no means an unfair or extravagant representative of the personal theory! I found that the difficulties all lay in the details which Brown had avoided and never attempted to cope with, nor even pretended to understand. Just where the Sonnets are the fullest of arresting matter, and the surface is most craggy with obstructive facts, which Brown could not get over or explain away, he had to shirk the difficulty by suggesting that the Sonnets were *no doubt intended to be left vague* (p. 63). Although there is nothing indefinite in his indictment of Shakspeare and his young friend!

Those readers who will insist on the Sonnets being solely Autobiographical are seeking to cross the sea by dry land. They keep on making the attempt like those migratory Norwegian rats of which we read, who never do succeed, but who at least have the excuse that there was a land-passage once where the water drowns them to-day. The chief contents of the Sonnets never have been

and never can be made personal to Shakspeare. The long fight against an adverse fate, the spite of fortune, and the tyranny of time; the banishment and wanderings abroad, the public disgrace and vulgar scandal, the unfaithfulness in friendship, the frailties of sportive blood, the sins and sufferings, the cries of repentance, the confessions of his blenches, the defiance in thinking good what others think bad, the pitifully false excuses and abject servility, all belong to a speaker who is NOT Shakspeare. These things can no more be made personal to our Poet by any racking of ingenuity or reach of an emasculate imagination than the sea can be taken on board the ship. With the Autobiographical theory all is discord and dissonance; whereas the semi-dramatic rendering serves to bring harmony out of a chaos of sights and sounds; and as Bacon tells us, it is the harmony which of itself giveth light and credence. For this semi-dramatic interpretation in its final form I now ask an attentive hearing.

It was in consequence of mistaking the confessions of the Sonnets as Autobiographical that Hallam wished they had never been written. Schlegel read them in the same way, as wailings over a wasted youth; the Poet's Book of Lamentations. Writers like Carlyle and Emerson, who could recognize the great self-sufficing strength and almost imperturbable tranquillity of this placid, joyous nature; who accredit him with the calm of an unfathomable depth as mirror to the world around, can also sigh over the sad secrets of a darkly troubled spirit divulged in the Sonnets. "It has to be admitted after all," said Emerson, that "this man of men, who gave to the science of mind a new and larger subject than had ever existed, and planted the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into chaos—that he should not be wise for himself—it must even go into the world's history that the best Poet led an obscure and profane life." And solely because the Sonnets have been misrepresented by loquacious libellers, and wise men have been foolish enough to echo their babblings, instead of questioning their credentials. When truly understood the Sonnets will reflect the same man as do the Plays. The same writer was one in both. But when the mirror has been fractured by the stone-thrower it can but give back an image of the man shockingly distorted and hideously disfigured. Surely it is high time that all this scandal-mongering concerning Shakspeare's Sonnets and his "Swarthy Siren" was brought to book, and the hypothesis of that "*Worshipful fraternity of the Sireniacal Gentlemen*" confuted once for all. Shakspeare's fair fame is at root the property of the nation, not to be fly-blown or infected by the suspicions of pretended experts who keep on sending forth their smuts that stick where they fall on the youthful mind like "blacks" upon the skin of the face.

To the genu'ne lovers of the man it ought to be a matter of prime importance that this Sonnet-question should be fairly met and finally settled. We must be ignorant hypocrites to continue talking as we do on the subject of our great Poet's character, and believe what we do of his virtues, his moral qualities, his manly bearing, if these Sonnets are personal confessions, having the character ascribed to them by the *autobiographobist*. And if they be not, then all lovers of Shakspeare will be glad to get rid of the uncomfortable suspicions, see the "skeleton" taken to pieces, and have the ghost of the Poet's guilt laid at once and for ever; so that wise heads need no longer be shaken at "*those Sonnets*," and fools may not wag the finger with comforting reflections upon the littleness of great men.



Where is the use of trying to gauge the Art and Mind or take the measure of the man Shakspeare, or to get his writings correctly classified, whether by the two-feet-and-eleven-fingered or any other kind of rules, if we are all the while be-darkening the truth with the shadow of a lie, by adopting the wrong reading of his Sonnets as to the times when they were written and the personal characters of the speakers self-portrayed? All that has been said by Mr. Furnivall about Shakspeare's "Unhappy third period" is as false as the foundations are unsound; and the falsehood of his misleading inference is solely based upon the fundamental fallacy of the Autobiographic theory of the Sonnets. No biography of our Poet can be safely built with this shifting sand of the Sonnets at the foundations.

One notices that in later writings upon Shakspeare's life and character there has been a growing diffidence on the subject, if not an actual desire to leave the Sonnets alone. Men who have attained their mental maturity begin to shake their wiser heads (as did the late Mr. Spedding) at this juvenile invention of Armitage Brown's and its unfortunate aberrant effect on the mind of his follower, Mr. Furnivall. If we have been deceived by a manufactured mystery, and imposed upon by a got-up ghost of Shakspeare's guilt, which only needs facing to be found out, the sooner we know the real truth the better. The primary question is not whether Shakspeare ever did keep a mistress who was "swarthy, fickle, and serpent-like," as Mr. Furnivall avouches; nor is it whether he entered into irregular relationships with a male friend and a female fiend, nor whether this trinity in unity fell out when the peer and poet quarrelled and the firm of Shakspeare and Co. dissolved partnership—it has not come to that because no evidence has ever been presented—not one jot—for a case to be called in court or a hearing to be granted. The first question is whether the Sonnets say and substantiate these things that have been surmised and asserted by Brown and the feeble chatterers who echo him. This I deny. This I shall disprove.

Professor Dowden appears to think that I look upon the Brownite and Autobiographobist view as the result of "intellectual obliquity." That is a mistake. The obliquity is manifest enough, but it is non-intellectual.

As we see, no one ever left a cleaner record than Shakspeare's. The total testimony of his time tells of a character that was beyond reproach. Those who knew him best did not perceive the flaws and frailties, the stains of his sins of blood and slips in sensual mire. Ben Jonson says with underlined emphasis, "He was indeed honest." "He sowed honestly," says John Davies. "Besides," says Chettle, "divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty." Publishers and players vie with each other in testifying to his uprightness and manly worth. No doubt the Elizabethans had as keen a scent for scandal as the Victorians may have, and liked their game to be as high; such things as our Poet has been supposed to charge himself with could not have escaped, unnoticed and unknown. In this world it is easy enough at any period of history, and in any station of life, for some of the personal virtues to be overlooked by whole "troops of unrecording friends." These may nestle and make sweet some small breathing-space of life, and pass away without being remembered in gilt letters. But the Vices! That is quite a different matter. And such vices too in such a man as Shakspeare, who was watched by so many jealous looks on the part of those who used the pen and could sharply prick in the record with it. His vices could not have nestled out of sight quite so

cleverly if he himself had taken pains to endorse them publicly. When once the Sonnets were in print, if they had told anything, as in a glass darkly, against the fair fame of Shakspeare—if there had been such a story as modern ingenuity has discovered, we may be sure there were eyes keen enough amongst the Poet's contemporaries to have spied it out and made the most of it. His friendship with Southampton was known. His Sonnets were read with interest. Meres had called attention to them. He himself had publicly proclaimed that Southampton was *part in all that he had devoted to him!* Yet there is not a whisper against him. And why but because it was understood that they *were* Sonnets, not personal confessions, but Sonnets on subjects chosen or given? It was not strange in 1609 that a great dramatic poet should write dramatically in his Sonnets. And there was nothing suspicious in the Poet's life or personal bearing to cause the lynx-eyed to pry, no summons issued for a feast of the vultures; neither when the book of Sonnets was printed, nor when the writer himself was dead and his grave had become the fair mark for a foul bird. No one rakes there for rottenness; no one ventures to deposit dirt there. Moreover, as Benson alleges, the enigmatical nature of the Sonnets did not pass unquestioned! They had excited suspicion enough for Shakspeare to vindicate their purity—if he did not explain the secret drama of the Private Friendship. And in vouching for the purity of his Sonnets, as Benson declares he did, Shakspeare would be giving the lie personally to the Autobiographic rendering of the dark Story in the Southampton Sonnets, and to the personal application of the Latter Sonnets. Doubtless *that* is what is meant by his testifying to their purity. He could never contend that the Dark Lady was a woman of pure character, but he would defend himself against the false inference that she was his mistress, and insist that such Sonnets were written dramatically on subjects supplied or suggested by the "Private Friends." He was not the only "Will" in the world. Anyway, with his own name written by himself in connection with the Circe of the Latter Sonnets, there is not an ill-breath breathed against the moral reputation of our Poet, either from rival dramatist or chronicler of scandal, in all the letters of the time. Now character is evidence in any properly constituted court of justice. Not as against facts, but as an element in the right interpretation of them. Here, however, there are no facts to array against the character, only inferences, whereas the character stands irremovably fixed, with all the facts for buttresses around it.

No one like Shakspeare in all literature has ever mirrored so magically the tenderness and purity of womanly love. No man like him has ever nestled in the innermost holy of holies of the most purely perfect of female natures as the very spirit of daintiest purity; pure as the dewdrop in the fragrant heart of a flower. Think of Imogen, Miranda, Cordelia, and Desdemona, as nurslings of Shakspeare's purity in love.<sup>1</sup>

He left the statue of a life as clean and white as Carrara marble. For more than two centuries no hand was raised to throw mud at it, no dirty dog ever ven-

<sup>1</sup> Those who saw Helena Faucit as Imogen will remember a rare vision of one of Shakspeare's pure women upon the stage.

The soul of love and doubled life was smiling in her face;  
'Twas music when she moved, and in the stillness of her grace  
Affection, like a Spirit, stood embodied to embrace.

tured to defile it. For purity's sake all women ought to stop their ears against this calumny of the would-be polluters of his purity, and all men who have listened to these scandal-mongers should turn sick of them, cast out the poison, and slough off the *Lues Browniana*. As representative of all humanity the nature of Shakspeare was one-half woman. And to that fresh force of morality, of spirituality, of conscience, of divine instinct now being introduced as a new literary and political factor contributed by cultured womankind, we must make appeal in this matter on Shakspeare's behalf. The proper jury to be empanelled for the Dark Story of the Sonnets will contain one-half of either sex, with the doubled likelihood of justice being done.

So far from being a lecher, Shakspeare shows no toleration for adultery, but is hard and stern as steel in reflecting the evil features of the vice they charge him with, as in the character of Antony! He is the very evangelist of marriage and of purity in wedded life; as such *he began the writing of his Sonnets*. He who had to be reproached and reproved for his "sin of silence" by the friend who was so fond of being written of would be the last man in the world to become a self-defaming blabber on the subject of an illicit love. He, the one writer of his age who showed the supremest, most judicious reticence concerning himself, was not the man to make known in Sonnets that were to live and give life to the facts enshrined in them "so long as men can breathe or eyes can see," that he had been co-partner in keeping a courtesan.

It may be remarked in passing that the scandal-mongers who accept the Autobiographic theory, and its supposed revelations of illicit love, also maintain the present order of the Sonnets. "Repeated perusals," says Professor Dowden, "have convinced me that the Sonnets stand in the right order."<sup>1</sup> Very well then—if the story of Shakspeare being false to himself, to his wife, and his own good reputation, and of his friend being treacherous to him, had been true, the circumstances must have occurred previous to the writing of the 70th Sonnet, in which Shakspeare says to this same false friend who had been seduced by the Poet's own siren, or who had filched her from Shakspeare—

## (A KEY-SONNET.)

"That thou *art blamed* shall not be thy defect,  
 For *Slander's mark* was ever yet the fair;  
 The ornament of beauty is *suspect*,  
 A Crow that flies in Heaven's sweetest air!  
 So thou be good, Slander doth but approve  
 Thy worth the greater, being wooed of Time;  
 For canker Vice the sweetest buds doth love,  
 And thou *present'st at a pure unstained prime*:  
 Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,  
 Either not assailed, or victor being charged;  
 Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,  
 To tie up Envy evermore enlarged:  
 If some *suspect of ill* masked not thy show  
 Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts should'st owe."

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare's Sonnets*. London, 1880. Introd. p. 10.

You cannot have it both ways, nor win by playing fast and loose. This is a key-sonnet, and one of the most precious of the whole series. The anchorage of personality in it is assured. It is in reality Shakspeare's own personal reply to the false charges brought against him by Brown, which were derived from preceding Sonnets. It gives the lie point-blank to the assertion that the friend had robbed the Poet of his mistress in the earlier time. *Even if he had been charged with doing so, this Sonnet would obviously reduce it to a case of false suspicion and consequent slander.* For if this had been the fact he could not have been the "victor being charged"—at least not in the sense implied.

And as Shakspeare is able to congratulate his friend in this way, that fully disproves Mr. Brown's reading of the story. Something had occurred; the Earl had been blamed for his conduct; slander had been at work. Shakspeare takes part with his friend, and says, the blame of others is not necessarily a defect in him. The mark of slander has always been "the fair," just as the cankers love the sweetest buds. Suspicion attaches to beauty, and sets it off;—it is the black crow flying against the sweet blue heaven. It is in the natural order of things, that one in the position of the Earl, and having his gifts and graces, should be slandered. But, "*so thou be good,*" he says, "Slander only proves thy worth the greater, *being wooed of Time.*" Slander, in talking of him *without warrant*, will but serve to call attention to his patient suffering and heroic bearing under this trial and tyranny of Time. So Shakspeare *did* think the Earl was slandered, and he accounts for it on grounds the most natural.

He then offers his testimony as to character—

"And thou present'st a pure unstained prime!  
Thou hast past by the ambush of young days,  
Either not assailed, or victor being charged."

A singular thing to say, if Mr. Brown's version of the earlier Sonnets were true. Very singular, and so Mr. Brown has omitted it! Further, the Sonnet is a striking illustration of the mutual relationship of poet and peer—a most remarkable thing that Shakspeare should congratulate the Earl for his Joseph-like conduct, and call him a "victor." Very few young noblemen of the time, we think, would have considered that a victory, or cared to have had it celebrated. Yet this fact, which Shakspeare says is to the Earl's praise, will not be sufficient to tie up Envy,—nor, he might have added, shut up Folly.

We have still further personal testimony in Sonnet 105. When that was written Shakspeare had been false to his wife, his friend had been false to him and stolen his mistress; and, as the story goes, the Poet had commemorated the inconstancy of both in Sonnets that were to live for ever. To all such charges this is Shakspeare's unconscious but conclusive reply—

*"Let not my love be call'd idolatry,  
Nor my beloved as an idol show,  
Since all alike my songs and praises be,  
To one, of one, still such and ever so:  
Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;  
Therefore my verse, to constancy confined,  
One thing expressing, leaves out difference:*

Fair, kind, and true, is *all my argument*,  
 Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words ;  
 And *in this change is my invention spent*,  
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords :  
 Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,  
 Which three, till now, never kept seat in one."

*Sonnet 105.*

When those two Sonnets were written the "sins" and "crimes" had been committed which are afterwards admitted and lamented; the lapses and 'frailties' had been found out; the treachery discovered; the "hell of time" suffered; the speaker's name had been "branded" publicly and his brow stamped with "vulgar scandal." Also, the Sonnets supposed to record the "facts" referred to had been composed and sent to the friend, and treasured up by him with all their prophecies and promises of everlasting fame (or infamy). But as these things were not personal to Shakspeare, it follows that the Sonnets which are personal to himself recognize nothing of all this unfaithfulness in love that is so pitifully confessed in others where he is NOT the speaker and his is NOT the character portrayed, because such Sonnets are not personal to himself.

But to conclude the argument—we will step in yet a little closer.

After the supposed Dark Story has been told in the Sonnets, which they assure us have no meaning if they do not proclaim the young friend's inconstancy in love and unfaithfulness in friendship, as the deceiver who has inflicted a public disgrace on the speaker of Sonnet 34; who has been a base betrayer of all trust in Sonnet 35; a thief and a robber in Sonnet 40; the breaker of "two-fold truth" in Sonnet 41; the same person, the thief, traitor, deceiver, betrayer, injurer, and living effigy of falsehood and inconstancy, is idiotically supposed to be told by Shakspeare in a neighbouring Sonnet (53) that there is "None, none, like you, for *constant heart!*" Thus his false perfidious friend is extolled as the express image of unswerving faithfulness! In Sonnet 54 he is assured that *truthfulness* is the crown jewel of his character, the "sweet ornament" of his beauty, and that the object of the Poet's verse is to *distil his truth!* The personal Sonnets deny that the inconstancy, the unfaithfulness, the betrayal of trust, and all the rest of a lover's sins and crimes were committed *in relation to the writer of the Sonnets*, and necessarily point to an explanation in some other way.

Here it will be necessary to consider the feeble and entirely ineffectual exegesis by which the unsavoury surmise was sought to be substantiated. Mr. Brown's mode of dispersing the mystery is by furnishing his own facts, and getting rid of those recorded by Shakspeare in the Sonnets. He makes no application of the comparative method, without which nothing final can ever be established. Without testing his assumption by means of Shakspeare's use and wont and way of working in the dramas, he dogmatically asserts that the first 125 Sonnets are all addressed to a *male* friend.

Here, for example, are a few of the expressions assumed without comparison or question to have been addressed *to a man* by the most natural of all poets :

I tell the day to please him, thou art bright,  
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the  
heaven ;

So flatter I the swart-complexioned night.  
*Sonnet 28.*

*Lascivious Grace*, in whom all ill well shows,  
Kill me with spites ; yet, we must not be foes.  
*Sonnet 40.*

Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
Upon the hours and times of *your desire* ?  
I have no precious time at all to spend,  
*Nor services to do*, till you require :  
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,  
Whilst I, *my Sovereign*, watch the clock for  
you,

Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,  
When you have bid *your Servant* once adieu.  
*Sonnet 57.*

Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee  
So far from home, *into my deeds to pry* ;  
To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
*The scope and tenor of thy jealousy* ?

For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake else-  
where,  
From me far off, *with others all too near*.  
*Sonnet 61.*

Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon  
Doubting the *filching age* will steal his treasure.  
*Sonnet 75.*

Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,  
In sleep a king, but, waking, no such matter.  
*Sonnet 87.*

And prove thee *virtuous* though thou art for-  
*sworn*,  
*Sonnet 88.*

But what's so blessed fair that fears no blot ?  
Thou *may'st be false*, and yet I *know it not*.  
*Sonnet 92.*

How like *Eve's apple* doth thy beauty grow,  
If thy *sweet virtue* answer not thy show.  
*Sonnet 93.*

For nothing this wide universe I call,  
Save thou, *my Rose* ! in it thou art my all.  
*Sonnet 109.*

*Mine appetite* I never more will grind  
On newer proof to try an older friend.  
*Sonnet 110.*

Such Cherubins as your sweet self.—*Sonnet 114.*

For why should others' false adulterate eyes  
Give salutation to my sportive blood ?  
*Sonnet 121.*

Here the Autobiographic Theory demands, and it is consequently assumed, that Shakspeare, the peerless Psychologist, the poet whose observance of natural law was infallible, whose writings contain the ultimate of all that is natural in poetry, should have sinned grossly in this way against nature, in a matter so primary as the illustration of sex !

All such imagery is feminine, and has been held so by all poets that ever wrote in our language ; and I consider his instinct in such a matter to be so natural that he could not thus violate the sex of his images. That there are certain warranted exceptions is true ; that there are moods in which the expression demanded rises above sex is also true. Shakspeare makes a woman a "god" in love, in her power to re-create the lover. In such wise he has a man-muse, a man-fish, a man-mistress, a mankind witch, a mankind woman, as well as a woman of the God-kind. In fact, he dare do anything on occasion, only there must be the occasion. But his ordinary practice is to do as other poets have done.

Those who cannot or will not see the impossibility of these expressions being addressed to a man by the manliest of men, but will continue to babble blasphemy against Shakspeare in their blindness, deserve to be hissed off the stage. Rather than think that Shakspeare had so mistaken the nature of sex as to amorously reverse its imagery in his Sonnets, one would sooner suspect that there had been some congenital confusion in the nature of their own. Messrs. Brown and Furnivall have the confidence to assure us that Shakspeare, whose instinct in poetry was as unerringly true to nature as is the power of breathing in sleep, offered those and many other kindred delicacies to a man, and thus violated the sex in its own images. But would he, could he, did he sin in this way against

the natural law of sex in poetry? The closer we study Shakspeare's work the more we find that his dramatic instinct must be true to sex, not only in the spirit and essence, but also in the outward appareling of imagery. There are certain natural illustrations which he never applied to man, but keeps sacred to woman; certain phrases used, which prove or imply that the opposite sex is addressed. It needs no special discernment: the commonest native instinct is guide enough to show that he would not talk of his *appetite* for a man, or speak of personifying *desire* in getting back to him, or allude to the *filching* age stealing his male friend—this being opposed to the law of kind and very liable to the Petronian interpretation.

By the aid of the comparative method we are able to do that which the Brownites have never done, and gloss the Sonnets by means of the Plays, so that Shakspeare may tell us bit by bit what he did mean when he wrote. The Personal Reading assumes that the three lovely flower-sonnets, 97, 98, 99, were addressed to a man; but not only is the whole of their imagery sacred to the sex, as I call it; not only is it so used by Shakspeare all through his work; not only did Spenser address his lady-love in exactly the same strain, in his Sonnets 35 and 64, likening her features to flowers, saying—

“Such fragrant flowers do give most odorous smell,  
But her sweet odour did them all excel;”

and—

“All this world's glory seemeth vain to me,  
And all their shows but shadows, saving she!”

Not only so, but the images had been previously applied *seriatim* by Constable in his *Diana* (1584). Let me draw out a few parallels.

“The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,  
One blushing shame, another white despair.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“My lady's presence makes the roses red,  
Because to see her lips they blush for shame.”—CONSTABLE.

“The lily I condemnèd for thy hand.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“The lilies' leaves for envy pale became,  
And her white hands in them this envy bred.”—CONSTABLE.

The violet in Shakspeare's Sonnet is said to have its purple pride of complexion because—

“In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed.”

In Constable's the lover says—

“The violet of purple colour came,  
Dyed with the blood she made my heart to shed.”

“More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,  
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“In brief, all flowers from her their virtue take,  
From her sweet breath their sweet smells do proceed.”—CONSTABLE.

Here the likeness is all lady, according to the custom of the Poets. One man, and that man Shakspeare, is supposed to call another man “*Next*

*my Heaven the best.*" This has no warrant from his usage in the Plays. But Katharine, speaking of the King, says she had "*loved him next heaven,*" and Antipholus in the *Comedy of Errors* calls Luciana

*"My sole earth's heaven and my heaven's claim."*

Shakspeare, it is assumed, tells his male friend that everything is summed up between the two in a "Mutual render, only Me for Thee." But this is the very language in which Posthumus addresses his wife :—

*"Sweetest, fairest,  
As I my poor self did exchange for you."*

Prospero says of the two lovers Ferdinand and Miranda :—

*"At the first sight they have changed eyes."*

And Claudio says to Hero :—

*"Lady, as you are mine, I am yours ;  
I give away myself for you,  
And dote upon the exchange."*

In Sonnet 109 the speaker calls the person addressed "My Rose!" Readers will remember that it was a courtly fashion of Shakspeare's day for the young nobles to wear a rose in the ear for ornament as an image of gallantry. But the Poet could hardly compliment his male friend by representing him as symbolically dangling at his ear. His own words in the mouth of the "Bastard" would almost preclude such a possibility.

*"In mine ear I durst not stick a rose,  
Lest men should say, 'Look where three-farthings goes.'"—King John, I. i.*

We shall see how appropriate it was when addressed to a lady by the lover who had plucked the rose, and pricked his fingers too, but had not yet worn her as he wished—for his life's chief ornament. Having made the most thorough examination of Shakspeare's wont and habit, I mean to prove it in this and other instances from his dramas. I doubt if there be an instance in Shakspeare of man addressing man as "my rose," and should as soon expect to find "my tulip." The Queen of Richard the Second speaks of her fair rose withering, and Ophelia of Hamlet as the "rose of the State." But even here it is *one sex describing the other*. For the rest, the "rose" is the woman-symbol. "Women are as roses," says the Duke in *Twelfth Night*. Fair ladies masked, according to Boyet, are "roses in the bud"; and Helena, in *All's Well*, speaks of "our rose." "You shall see a rose indeed," is said of Marina. "O, rose of May," Laertes calls Ophelia; Cleopatra is likened to the "blown rose"; a married woman is the "rose distilled," the unmarried "one that withers on the virgin thorn."

In Sonnet 114 the person apostrophized is likened to a "Cherubin"—"such Cherubins as your sweet self." And Prospero exclaims to Miranda: "O, a Cherubin thou wast that did preserve me." "For all her cherubin look," says Timon of Phryne. In *Othello* we have, "Patience, thou young and rose-lipped Cherubin;" in the *Merchant of Venice*, "young-eyed Cherubins"; but no man is called a Cherubin by Shakspeare.



The speaker in Sonnet 110 designates the person addressed as "*a God in love to whom I am confined.*" At first sight it may seem that a God implies the male nature. But it is not necessarily so. Helena says, "We, Hermia, like two artificial gods, *created* both one flower." Miranda says, "Had I been any god of power." But the sexual parallel to the god in love of Sonnet 110 is only to be found in Iago's description of Desdemona's power over Othello. The speaker of the Sonnet exclaims:—

"Mine appetite I never more will grind  
On newer proof, to try an older friend,  
A god in love, to whom I am confined."

And Iago says of Othello and his infatuation for Desdemona:—

"His soul is so en fettered to her love,  
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,  
Even as her appetite shall play the god  
With his weak function."

Again, as an illustration of the testimony of sex to the truer reading of the Sonnets, take the image in Sonnet 93:—

"How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,  
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!"

How could this be so if man were addressing man? How should the beauty of a man grow like the apple which tempted Eve? But the person addressed being a woman, the image becomes singularly felicitous. Then we for the first time see that Eve's apple means the apple with which she tempted Adam!

It is a matter of natural and therefore of Shakspearian necessity that such a Sonnet as No. 48 can only be spoken to a woman by a man. Shakspeare was the manliest of men; not the most effeminate of poets. In his Plays, men do not call each other their "best of dearest," most "worthy comfort," or "only care." Shakspeare could not have called the friend his "only care," he had a wife and family to care for, and a lively sense of that responsibility, as well as a most acute perception of the ludicrous. In the Plays, the only expressions equal to these in depth of tenderness are such as those spoken by Posthumus to Imogen—"Thou the dearest of creatures." "Best of comfort" Cæsar calls his sister; "Thou dearest Perdita" is Florizel's phrase; and the Duke of France, speaking of Cordelia to King Lear, says: "She that even but now was your *best* object, balm of your age, most best, most dearest;" and Cordelia was the offspring of our Poet's most fatherly tenderness. Stella is Sydney's "only dear." In *All's Well* the mother of Bertram calls her absent son her "greatest grief." Thus these expressions are sacred to the use of mother, father, lover, brother, and husband. Here, as elsewhere, nothing satisfactory could be determined without the most rigorous application of the comparative process which Armitage Brown forgot to apply to the Plays and Sonnets, as do his over-faithful followers. The suggestion that all this confusion of the sexes in the Sonnets arises from Shakspeare's own inadvertence and oversight, or from the overweening womanly half of him, comes from imbecility itself. The question that arises here is this—are we to place our trust in Messrs. Brown and Furnivall, or other

autobiographobists, any further, or henceforth rely upon Shakspeare and his truth to nature?

Mr. Brown presents his readers with a paraphrastic rendering of the Sonnets, and puts forward the claim that the "task of interpreting their sense has been effected carefully and honestly" (p. 93). Let us see how this was done. In each instance he gives us all that he could make personal to Shakspeare as speaker in the Sonnet summarized.

## SONNET 107.

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul,  
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,  
Can yet the *lease of my true love* control,  
*Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.*  
The mortal Moon hath her *eclipse endured*,  
And the sad Augurs *mock their own presage*,  
*Uncertainties* now crown themselves *assured*,  
And *Peace proclaims olives of endless age*.  
Now with the drops of this most balmy time,  
My love looks fresh, and *death to me subscribes*,  
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes:  
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
When *Tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent*!

"No consideration can control my true friendship. In spite of death itself, I shall live in this verse, and it shall be your enduring monument."

## SONNET 109.

O never say that I was false of heart,  
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify;  
As easy might I from myself depart,  
As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie;  
That is my home of love; if I have ranged,  
Like him that travels I return again,  
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,  
So that myself bring water for my stain.  
Never believe though in my nature reigned  
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,  
That it could so preposterously be stained,  
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good:  
For nothing this wide Universe I call,  
Save thou, my Rose; in it thou art my all.

"O never say that absence made me fickle. I return unchanged. Never believe anything against me so preposterous."

## SONNET 117.

Accuse me thus, that I have scanted all,  
Wherein I should your great deserts repay,  
Forgot upon your dearest love to call,  
Where-to all bonds do tie me day by day;  
That I have frequent been with unknown minds,  
And given to time your own dear-purchased right,  
That I have hoisted sail to all the winds  
Which should transport me furthest from your sight;  
Book both my wilfulness and errors down,  
And on just proof surmise accumulate,  
Bring me within the level of your frown,  
But shoot not at me in your wakened hate:  
Since my appeal says I did strive to prove  
The constancy and virtue of your love.

"Accuse me of having been remiss in my duty by not calling on you, say I have frequented others' company instead of yours, record my wilfulness and errors, and add surmise to proof; but hate me not for putting your constancy and the virtue of your friendship to trial."

## SONNET 123.

No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change!  
 Thy pyramids built up with newer might  
 To me are nothing novel, nothing strange,  
 They are but dressings of a former sight:  
 Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire  
 What thou dost foist upon us that is old,  
 And rather make them born to our desire,  
 Than think that we before have heard them told:  
 Thy registers and thee I both defy,  
 Not wondering at the present nor the past,  
 For thy records and what we see doth lie,  
 Made more or less by thy continual haste;  
 This I do vow and this shall ever be,  
 I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.

“Time, with his pyramids,  
 which are but deceptions on us,  
 because our lives are short, shall  
 not boast of my change.”

## SONNET 124.

If my dear love were but the Child of State,  
 It might for Fortune's bastard be unfathered,  
 As subject to time's love, or to time's hate,  
 Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gathered:  
 No, it was builded far from accident;  
 It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
 Under the blow of thrall'd Discontent,  
 Where-to th' inviting time our Fashion calls:  
 It fears not Policy that Heretic,  
 Which works on leases of short-numbered hours,  
 But all alone stands hugely politic,  
 That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with showers.  
 To this I witness call the fools of time,  
 Which die for goodness, who have lived for crime.

“If my dear friendship were  
 but the child of state, it might  
 be called fortune's bastard, sub-  
 ject to circumstances, and built  
 on accident; but it is neither  
 affected by smiling pomp, nor  
 by misfortune. It fears not  
 policy; it stands alone, un-  
 biassed, and is itself, in the  
 grand sense, politic.”

## SONNET 125.

Were't ought to me I bore the Canopy,  
 With my extern the outward honouring,  
 Or laid great bases for eternity,  
 Which proves more short than waste or ruining?  
 Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour  
 Lose all, and more, by paying too much rent?  
 For compound sweet foregoing simple savour,  
 Piteful thrivers in their gazing spent.  
 No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,  
 And take thou my oblation, poor but free,  
 Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,  
 But mutual render, only me for thee.  
 Hence, thou suborned Informer, a true soul,  
 When most impeached, stands least in thy control!

“How should I have profited  
 by obsequiousness, laying a  
 wrong foundation for fame?  
 Have I not seen courtiers lose  
 all, and more, by paying too  
 much? No! let my unmix'd  
 and artless homage be to your  
 heart, and let your heart be  
 mine in exchange. Hence, thou  
 suborned calumniator of my  
 sincerity! A true soul, when  
 most impeached, stands least in  
 thy power.”

To me this looks very like prepensely following out a process of unrealisation, and of teaching us how not to recognize what it was that had been written by Shakspeare. The reader will see that the lines in these Sonnets are pregnant with strangely particular significance, and full of meaning waiting to be brought to birth. But with Mr. Brown as obstetricist the life and spirit pass out of them, and only a poor little dead abortion is born. Events are obscured, the dates grow dim, the contemporary history dislimns and fades away; Shakspeare's meaning drops defunct, Mr. Brown wraps it in a winding-sheet of witless words,

and buries the whole of the facts that are of the greatest "pith and moment" in any attempt to understand the Sonnets. Before passing on I will make one more comparative parallel. The following four Sonnets are all supposed to be Autobiographical, and therefore spoken by Shakspeare to the same friend, although, as the reader will feel, they are diametrically opposite in character.

## SONNETS SPOKEN BY SHAKSPEARE

*Personal.*

If thou survive my *well-contented day*,  
When that churl Death my bones with dust  
shall cover,  
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey  
These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,  
Compare them with the bettering of the time ;  
And tho' they be outstripped by every pen,  
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,  
Exceeded by the height of happier men :  
O, then vouchsafe me but this loving thought !  
" *Had my friend's Muse grown with this grow-  
ing age,*  
*A dearer birth than this his love had brought,*  
*To march in ranks of better equipage :*  
*But since he died, and Poets better prove,*  
*Theirs for their style I'll read ; his for his  
love.*" (32)

Let not my love be called idolatry,  
Nor my beloved as an idol show,  
Since all alike my songs and praises be  
*To one, of one, still such, and ever so.*  
Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
*Still constant* in a wondrous excellence,  
Therefore *my verse to constancy confined,*  
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.  
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,  
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words,  
And *in this change is my invention spent,*  
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope  
affords.  
Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,  
Which three, till now, never kept seat in  
one. (105)

Now, let any one look back at the two Sonnets, Nos. 29 and 32, and compare them. They were written by the greatest dramatist who ever portrayed human character or distinguished its opposite traits. They come quite near together in the first series, but the characters of the two speakers are totally antipodal. Sonnet 32 is spoken by Shakspeare himself as the lover of his friend and the writer of the Sonnets. He is happy in his work, in his lot, in his love ; standing looking mentally from the end of it, he describes his life as a "*well-contented day.*" The other speaker is unhappy in all things, and discontented with everything. He is in disgrace with fortune, and his disgrace is public. He is an outcast in exile, a lonely, discontented, miserable man. These are not two moods merely of the same mind ; they are two entirely distinct characters, which

SONNETS NOT SPOKEN BY  
SHAKSPEARE.*Dramatic.*

When *in disgrace with Fortune, and men's eyes,*  
*I all alone beweep my outcast state,*  
*And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,*  
*And look upon myself and curse my fate,*  
*Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,*  
*Featured like him, like him with friends pos-  
sessed,*  
*Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,*  
*With what I most enjoy contented least ;*  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on Thee,—and then my state,  
Like to the Lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at Heaven's  
gate ;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth  
brings,  
That then I scorn to change my state with  
kings. (29)

*Two loves I have of comfort and despair,*  
Which like two spirits do suggest me still,  
The better angel is a man right fair :  
The worse spirit a woman coloured ill.  
To win me soon to hell my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil ;  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.  
And whether that my angel be turned fiend,  
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,  
But being both from me both to each friend,  
I guess one angel in another's hell :  
Yet this shall I ne'er know but live in doubt,  
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.  
(144)

can be identified with two different persons; one Sonnet being personal, the other dramatic. In Sonnet 29 the speaker is "in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes." In Sonnet 37 he is "made lame by Fortune's dearest spite." In Sonnet 90 the "world is bent" upon "crossing his deeds," and he is still suffering the "spite of Fortune" at its worst. In Sonnet 124 he says—

"If my dear love were *but* the Child of State,  
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfathered."

This long war of Fortune cannot be made personal to Shakspeare, who was a favourite of Fortune, knew it, and acknowledges it in these Sonnets when he speaks for himself. Such cursing of Fate and Fortune as we find in certain Sonnets is sternly rebuked by Friar Lawrence in the case of Romeo under circumstances desperate enough to excuse an outbreak.

"Why rail'st thou on thy birth, the heaven, the earth?  
Since birth and heaven and earth all three do meet  
In thee at once, which thou at once would'st lose.  
Fie, fie! thou sham'st thy shape, thy love, thy wit,  
Which like an Usurer abound'st in all,  
And usest none in that true use indeed  
Which should bedeck thy shape, thy love, thy wit.  
Thy noble shape is but a form of wax,  
Digressing from the valour of a man."

We hear the voice of Shakspeare in the Friar rather than in Romeo.

Professor Dowden, who contends that the Sonnets stand in their true order, likewise *claims that these two belong to the first group, as there is no break until we get beyond the 32nd Sonnet*, so that both these Sonnets go together and were sent together as internal revelations from this man who tells his friend that he lives a "*well-contented day*," at the very time that he is supposed to deny it altogether, and to give us all these cumulative details in direct disproof! Professor Dowden has supplemented Brown's Autobiographical interpretation by one unique discovery that is entirely his own. He contends for the Personal Theory, and when speaking more especially of the Latter Sonnets he says, "I believe that Shakspeare's Sonnets express his feelings in his own person. To whom they were addressed is unknown. We shall never discover the name of that woman who for a season could sound, as no one else, the instrument in Shakspeare's heart from the lowest note to the top of the compass. To the eyes of no diver among the wrecks of time will that curious talisman gleam" (p. 33).

A person of the name of "Will" is the SPEAKER in four different Sonnets (Nos. 57, 135, 136, and 143), and if the Sonnets are read as *personal utterances* of Shakspeare, it inevitably follows that he is the speaker whose name is "Will." From *that* conclusion there is no escape. Thus "Will" is the speaker of Sonnets 57, 135, 136, and 143; the speaker mark! NOT THE FRIEND ADDRESSED, nor the person spoken of, as the subject of the Latter Sonnets is a woman in relation to "Will"! So that these four Sonnets *must be spoken by Shakspeare* for him to "*express his own feelings in his own person.*" If any other "Will" than Shakspeare is admitted as speaker, that would necessitate my dramatic theory which the Professor opposes. "Will" then is the speaker addressing or speaking of the woman! Yet Professor Dowden asserts (p. 51) that it is Shakspeare's friend (not himself) who is called "Will" in Sonnet 135. If it

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were Shakspeare's friend who is the "Will" of these four Sonnets, *he must be the speaker of them, and so they would not and could not then be personal to Shakspeare himself!* You cannot have one "Will" both ways—"Will" as speaker and "Will" as the friend addressed—when there is but one! From the beginning to the end of the Sonnets there is but ONE "Will"; in each case he is the speaker, and nowhere is he the person who is spoken to! Professor Dowden has actually transmogrified this "Will" the speaker into Shakspeare's friend "Will" in support of "Will" Herbert's being that friend. He says, "To avoid the confusion of *he* and *him*, I call Shakspeare's friend *as he is called* in 135, Will" (p. 51).

The reader will find nothing of the kind either in Sonnet 135 or in the other three which go with it and are spoken by the person who tells us that his own name (not his friend's) is "Will." No student of the Sonnets will take it otherwise unless blinded through believing a lie. "Will"—whoever he may be—*is the speaker by name in four of the Sonnets, and never is he the friend addressed by Shakspeare in any of his Sonnets!*

Therefore the assumption that the friend who is addressed by Shakspeare was "Will" by name has no basis or warrant whatever except in the blunder now exposed, a blunder so gross that it may seem incredible as it is inexplicable; and, for a commentator and critic to commit it, is suicidal. This irreparable mistake is all that Messrs. Dowden and Furnivall ever had to go upon in foisting the name of "Will" upon their readers as that of Shakspeare's friend in the earlier Sonnets. I repeat, this "Will" who speaks and puns on his own name in the Latter Sonnets is Professor Dowden's sole evidence that the earlier 126 Sonnets are addressed to "Will"! Nevertheless the falsification has been built upon as a foundational fact. Mr. Furnivall, for example, says, "that the W (of Thorpe's Inscription) was 'Will,' we know from Sonnets 135, 136, 143." He further affirms that "in Sonnets 38 and 78 Shakspeare's verse is said to be solely begotten by Will." This, as the reader will see by referring to those two Sonnets, is simply to convert the false inference into a conclusion that is sought to be established by downright dishonesty of manipulation. Whilst Professor Dowden, as already shown, is so well satisfied with his suicidal assumption that he can say, "*to avoid confusion of HE and HIM I call Shakspeare's friend* (all through the Sonnets) *as he is called* in 135, 'Will.'"

This is trying to pass off a counterfeit coinage, none the less false because it is literary. And by such false coinage, by such a false reading and a falser inference, "Will" Herbert is to be changed into the young friend of Shakspeare, for whom he wrote his early Sonnets, and thus foisted into the seat of Southampton! This attempt to change "Will" the speaker into "Will" as the person addressed is a palpable perversion of the plainest fact.

Of course if "Will" Herbert can only be hoisted into Southampton's place, it makes the story of lechery and treachery look a little less improbable on account of Herbert's well-known licentious character! For if Shakspeare can be made to reflect or share the character of Herbert, it will look a little more likely that Herbert may have shared in Shakspeare's mistress—as they swear he did. Whereas, if it be proved that Southampton was the "sweet boy," the Adonis of Shakspeare's Sonnets, the same friend in private who afterwards became his patron publicly, then the lie of the libellers falls dead and damned: (1) because Southampton was purely and profoundly in love with Elizabeth

Vernon ; (2) because the subjects and arguments were supplied by the friend and lover ; and (3) because the Sonnets were to be written in the lover's own book, and remain in the sight of the Private Friends (Sonnets 38).

If William Herbert is not the young friend addressed by Shakspeare in the first 126 Sonnets, it follows that all the hypotheses based on the false assumption must fall with it ! Thorpe's Inscription may be left aside for the present. It would be worse than useless to begin with that which never has supplied and never can supply the key that Thorpe himself did not possess. The Sonnets must furnish their clue to his enigmatical dedication, which has been a most disastrous guide, as of the blind leading the blind.

Michael Drayton did not bequeath to us many memorable lines, but he says in one of the few he left,

“Blind is that sight that's with another's eye.”

Now I do not ask the students of Shakspeare's Sonnets to see with my eyes, but to keep their own well open and fixed steadily on all the facts as they are presented to them piecemeal, and examine them one by one as if they were under the microscope, to make all sure before they accompany me any further. Let us take the necessary time to see our way clearly step by step with our own eyes ; leap to no hasty conclusions, and accept nothing upon trust, nothing upon a mere basis of belief. It was a very long and close study of such matterful and causeful lines as cannot be made personal to Shakspeare, nor be invisibly evaporated as abstract ideas, a very diligent course of

“*Minding true things by what their mockeries be,*”

that first opened my own eyes to let fall the scales imposed upon them by non-use through trusting to the eyes of others.

We live in a time when the old manufactories of Opinion are well-nigh ground out. People who think do not ask for opinions ready-made. Give them the original facts, and they can form their own opinions from a first-hand acquaintanceship. That is the only way to attain the truth. And in the present case there is no possible way of attaining the truth concerning Shakspeare and his Sonnets without being in possession of those definite data which alone constitute the criteria of the truth. I fully acknowledge holding a brief on Shakspeare's behalf. Nevertheless I shall present the evidence entire all through my long and elaborate argument ; “*Ay, and the particular confirmation, point by point, to the full arming of the verity.*” My appeal is addressed to readers who learn by insight rather than trust to hearsay.

## PRIMARY FACTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FALLACIES.

THEORIZERS who seek to establish and perpetuate the belief that "William Herbert" was the "Only Begetter" or objective inspirer of Shakspeare's Sonnets, as lumped together by Thorpe in his Inscription, are forced to ignore the most vital internal evidence and blink the most conclusive external data. Evidence within the Sonnets and from without; evidence poetic and historic; evidence the most positive and irrefutable, can be offered to show that the mass of them (at least the first 86 as they stand) were composed at a period too early for William Herbert to have been the young friend who was so beloved by Shakspeare, and the patron to whom the Poet sent his earliest Sonnets, written by his "Pupil Pen," to "witness duty," to identify his present and to promise him his future work. It is not what I may say, or Messrs. Brown, Dowden, and Furnivall may surmise or profess to believe, but what are the facts of the case to be found in the Sonnets, corroborated by the testimony outside of them? Is there any rock of reality on which we can build the bridge to cross a chasm hitherto impassable?

At the outset the Sonnets plainly tell us that they had no "Only Begetter" in the sense of one *sole inspirer*, seeing that *both sexes are addressed in them*; and both sexes must include at least two persons! Next they inform us, with Shakspeare for speaker, that many of them were written by the Poet with his "*Pupil Pen*" before he had appeared in print with his *Venus and Adonis* in the year 1593. The 26th Sonnet is perfectly explicit on that point.

"Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage  
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,  
To thee I send this written embassy,  
To witness duty, not to show my wit:  
Duty so great which wit so poor as mine  
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it;  
But that I hope some good conceit of thine  
In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it:  
*Till whatsoever star that guides my moving  
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,  
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,  
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:  
Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;  
Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me."*

One's vision must be very confused or obstructed by the subjective blinkers of a false belief not to see that this was written and sent in MS. to the friend addressed before the writer had published anything, that is, before the year 1593, when William Herbert was just thirteen years of age. Also, nothing can be more certain than that this was written and sent to the friend, *who was his patron at that time*, that is before 1593, with its kindred and accompanying group of Sonnets, which are referred to previously (Sonnet 23) as his "Books"; Books intended to plead silently for the patron's love until such time as he can boast of his friendship publicly.

It is equally evident that Shakspeare did not know exactly where his success was to be won, or how his "moving" on his course would be guided, when this



Sonnet was written, although there may possibly be an allusion to the *Venus* (then in hand) as the *planet* under which the first work was to be brought to birth! Meanwhile, he asks his patron to accept these Sonnets in manuscript to "witness duty" privately, not to "show his wit" in public. Before venturing to address him in a printed dedication, he will wait until his star shall smile on him graciously, and his love shall be able to clothe itself in fit apparel, that is, when he is ready to put forth a poem such as he may not shrink from offering to his patron in public; the present Sonnets being exclusively private; then will he hope to show himself worthy of the friend's "sweet respect," but till then he will not dare to dress out his love for the critical eye of the world, will not lift up his head to boast publicly in print of that love in his heart which he now expresses in writing. Here are three indisputable facts recorded by Shakspeare himself. He writes these earlier Sonnets with his "Pupil Pen"; he sends them as private exercises before he appears in print, and he is looking forward hopefully to the time when he may be ready with a work which shall be more worthy of his love than are these Sonnets—preliminary ambassadors that announce his purpose—which work he intends to dedicate publicly to the man whom he addresses privately as his patron and friend, and appear in person; that is, by name; where the merits of his poetry may be tested, that is, in print.

Whosoever we may hold to have been the Lord of Shakspeare's love here addressed, he would know, however much may be hidden from us, whether or not the Poet was telling the truth; and there can be no other conclusion for those who give heed seriously to Shakspeare's own words, than that the 26th Sonnet, together with those to which it is Ambassador or *L'Envoy*, were presented to the same patron privately before the *Venus and Adonis* was inscribed to him publicly, when the Poet ventured to test the worth of his work, and to ascertain how the world would censure him for "choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden."

Again, in Sonnet 23 the writer tells us how in presence of his friend he feels like some imperfect actor on the stage who forgets his part when he is before the public, and cannot put into words the wealth of affection with which his heart is overcharged. It is all there, as we say, but he cannot utter it, and he makes the best excuse he can for his extreme diffidence in this delightful personal Sonnet. "*O let my books be then the eloquence and dumb presagers of my speaking breast. O learn to read what silent love hath writ!*" "Silent love" is that with which he was writing these two Sonnets and their fellows of the particular group that go with them; the silent love which preceded and heralded the love that was dedicated later and aloud in a printed book.

These "Books" are the Sonnets sent in "Written Embassy." They were the "dumb *presagers*" of that which he intended to say, and afterwards did say, publicly to his friend when he printed—in 1593-4. This friend to whom the Sonnets were addressed, and to whom the promises of public dedication are here made, is afterwards identified by Shakspeare's dedications in print as the Earl of Southampton—not William Herbert, to whom he did not dedicate anything that he ever printed! The only two Books published by Shakspeare himself were both inscribed to the Earl of Southampton, the first to "witness duty" as promised in Sonnet 26, the second being offered to him with a dedication, not merely of his Book, but of his "love without end"; a love so totally his that the Book was but a "superfluous moiety." Consequently, if

the Books thus consecrated to Southampton *had been published* at the time of writing they must have been included, and thus they identify the person to whom Shakspeare's "Books" were offered as dumb representatives of himself. If, on the other hand, these Sonnets were written first by his "Pupil Pen," and they are the "Books" he speaks of, then the public dedications prove that Southampton was the person addressed through these Sonnets in which the silent love and presaging breast express the promises afterwards fulfilled, and he must be the object of the "Books" spoken of in private, whether these were Books of Sonnets in MS. or the Poems in print. *Either way* Shakspeare's "Books" identify Southampton as the object of Shakspeare's love, and therefore as the original "Begetter," Inspirer or Evoker of the Sonnets. Moreover, we have Shakspeare's word for it, that when he was describing the mythical Adonis as the subject of his poem, the object he had in view was the young friend and patron whom he addresses in the Sonnets. In Sonnet 53 he tells us that he has made or is then making the picture of Adonis as the likeness of his friend—

"Describe Adonis and the Counterfeit  
Is poorly imitated after you;  
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,  
And you in Grecian tires are painted new."

He proves it by introducing Adonis in company with Helen as a substitute for Paris, and thus goes out of his way once more to violate the Classical Unities. He further proves the identity of Adonis with Southampton in his dedication of the poem. Moreover, we find the argument of the earliest Sonnets is publicly reproduced in the poem promised to and written for the Earl of Southampton. It will not be necessary for me to run the parallel all through; the reader can make the application of the matter quoted,—which will also be found in the Sonnets.

"Nature that made thee, with herself at strife,  
Saieth that the world hath ending with thy life."

"The tender Spring upon thy tempting lip  
Shows thee unripe; yet mayst thou well be  
tasted;  
Make use of time, let no advantage slip;  
Beauty within itself should not be wasted.  
Fair flowers that are not gathered in their  
prime  
Rot and consume themselves in little time."

"Is thine own heart to thine own face affected?  
Can thy right hand seize love upon the left?  
Then woo thyself, be of thyself rejected,  
Steal thine own freedom, and complain on  
theft.  
Narcissus so himself himself forsook,  
And died to kiss his shadow in the brook."

"Torches are made to light, jewels to wear,  
Dainties to taste, fresh beauty for the use,  
Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to  
bear;  
Things growing to themselves are growth's  
abuse:  
Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth  
beauty,  
Thou wast begot,—to get it is thy duty.

"Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou  
feed,  
Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?  
By law of Nature thou art bound to breed,  
That thine may live, when thou thyself art  
dead;  
And so in spite of death thou dost survive,  
In that thy likeness still is left alive."  
*Venus and Adonis, 2, 22, 27, 28, 29.*

Now it is in strict accordance with forthcoming evidence to infer that the same thoughts or expressions would appear first in the private Sonnets before being repeated in print, and would not be repeated *privately* after they were *published*! Thus we argue that when we find the line in Sonnet 78, "*Thine eyes*

that taught the Dumb on high to sing," repeated or echoed in the *Venus and Adonis* as "Thine eyes that taught all other eyes to see," Stanza 159, and when the line, "Hearing you praised I say 'tis so," Sonnet 85, is echoed in Stanza 142, "She says 'tis so; they answer all 'tis so," it tends to show that *Adonis* was first described in the Sonnets, which indeed is no more than what Shakspeare asserts. So much of the Poet's argument as could possibly be repeated from the Sonnets under the changed circumstances has been re-applied in the poem, where it does not particularly apply! Such a sustained *plea on behalf of posterity* was by no means necessary for a Goddess, and the object was far too remote to serve her turn immediately. The truth of the matter is that Shakspeare is still wooing his friend on the subject of marriage by the enticing mouthpiece of Venus. The argument for procreation and future progeny is his, far more than hers! Hence the repetition from the Sonnets in which he makes his personal appeal on behalf of wedlock. Neither the Poet nor the world in general could be greatly interested in the posterity of the mythical Venus and Adonis, and Shakspeare is speaking from behind the mask in a way that has not hitherto been suspected.

Thus the Adonis of the poem drawn from the life was previously portrayed in the Sonnets as the rose-cheeked Boy who possessed the beauty of both sexes, which could be celebrated as combining the graces of Adonis and the charms of Helen, on account of his youth and his comeliness. Here then we find in the Sonnets an earlier form of the *Venus and Adonis*, indeed, the various odd Sonnets on this subject suggest that the writer once thought of treating it in the Sonnet Stanza.

Some of my critics have instanced the 20th Sonnet as an obstacle in the way of a dramatic reading, and as furnishing indubitable proof that Shakspeare's personal feeling for his young friend was erotic enough to go any lengths in the confusion of imagery proper to the different sexes. But it is the greatest obstacles that become the surest stepping-stones when conquered and turned to account by a true reading. Much turns on a KEY-SONNET like this, because, until it is rightly read, one misinterpretation can only be wedded to another. Chapman has described "a youth so sweet of face that many thought him of the female race." Marlowe says of Leander,

"Some swore he was a maid in man's attire,  
For in his looks were all that men desire."

And this is how Shakspeare portrays his young friend, of whom he says,

"A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted  
Hast thou, the Master-Mistress of my passion."

If we accept this at its current Victorian value, "my *passion*" would mean the personal feeling I have for you, which would put us directly on the wrong track. That rendering is quite common and has been built upon, but it is demonstrably false. The modern sense of "my passion" only leads us to an Elizabethan pitfall that awaits the unwary. To explain very briefly. In the year 1582 Thomas Watson published his ΕΚΑΤΟΜΗΡΑΘΙΑ, or the *Passionate Centurie of Love*.<sup>1</sup> The work consisted of 100 Sonnets, which are called "Passions" all through it! From this we learn that Sonnets or Poems and

<sup>1</sup> *Arber's English Reprints*. London, 1870.

Passions were synonymous. We find they are so in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the two ditties are termed the "Passions" of Pyramus and Thisbe. It may be noticed *en passant* that Shakspeare was designated "Watson's heir" by W. C. (1595) in an allusion to his Adonis. Thus the "passion" of Shakspeare is not an affair of the heart, not the personal affection for his young friend, whether amatory, idolatrous, Platonic, or Aretinish, and those who have thought it was so have been going farther and farther astray all the time. His passion here is the *theme* on which he writes, the love-poem in Sonnet-form that he is engaged upon at the time, and of which, as we now see, the young friend is the *subject* far more than the *object*. So far from there being any confusion of gender in the imagery, the Sonnet was written expressly to bring out the difference of sex in the concluding lines. Perhaps the use of the words "subject" and "object" could not be better illustrated than by the distinction they enable us to make in thus disinterring Shakspeare's meaning! Southampton is here the *subject* of the poetic *passion*, not the object of any passion in our modern sense. He is the Master-Mistress of the *poet's* passion, not of the man's; and so the effeminacy of the woman-like love in wooing a male friend vanishes from the Sonnets like a vapour that concealed the true interpretation of the Elizabethan meaning. The correct reading is very important, because the wrong one has been so fertile in false inference, and because the right one sets us half-way on the road to the dramatic treatment that is applied in later Sonnets.

Here then the Adonis of real life was the "Master-Mistress" of the Poet's passion or theme in Sonnet-form, almost as ideally as the Greek Adonis was the subject or "Passion" in the published Love-poem; which consideration will serve to give another and a semi-dramatic aspect to the Sonnets so written.

There are still other ways of adding to the force of this demonstration that Southampton was Shakspeare's original for Adonis, and the personal Suggester of the Sonnets which were written before the publication of the poem.

Mr. Knight, in proof that the earlier series of these Sonnets must have been written before William Herbert was old enough to be a "begetter," has instanced a line, first pointed out by Steevens, which was printed in a play attributed, with some poetic warrant, to Shakspeare, entitled *The Reign of King Edward III.* The same line occurs in Sonnet 94:—

"Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

This drama was published in 1596, after it had been sundry times played. It is presumable that the line was first used in the Sonnet privately, before it appeared in the play, because the poetic notions of the Sonnet, as well as the personal and private friendship, would demand the more fastidious taste. If so, this was one of the Sonnets in which William Herbert could not have been addressed, seeing that he did not live in London until two years later.

According to the statement in Sonnet 104, the Poet had known his young friend three years when that was written, and as two Sonnets which come later appeared in print in 1599, it follows that the writer must have known his young friend at least as early as the year 1596, or, *two years before the date when Herbert first came to live in London!*

But there is no need to emphasize a single one or several illustrations where we shall find so many. In this instance the thought is Shakspeare's own twice

over. He had no need to borrow it from the "base subject" of a public play to enrich a private Sonnet. The line appears in Sonnet 94—

"The Summer's flower is to the Summer sweet,  
Though to itself it only live and die ;  
But if that flower with base infection meet,  
The basest weed outbraves his dignity :  
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds ;  
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

And he had already written in Sonnet 69—

"Then (churls) their thoughts, although their eyes were kind,  
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds ;  
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,  
The solve is this, that thou dost common grow."

So numerous are the instances of likeness in thought and image betwixt these Sonnets and certain of the early Plays as to make it almost a matter of indifference whether the lines were used first in the Play or the Sonnet, although one can have no doubt that as a point of literary etiquette the Sonnet would have first choice. A close examination of both shows that these resemblances and repetitions occur most palpably and numerous in dramas and Sonnets which I take to have been composed from 1590 to 1597 ; they most strongly suggest, if they do not prove, both Sonnets and Plays to have been written about the same period, having the same dress of his mind, the composition perhaps running parallel at times.

As we have seen, some of the Sonnets were written before the two Poems ; and there is no reason to question the conclusion that the Sonnets were considered the choicest, and would first contain the thought or image or expression before it was made public in the Plays. Chief of the Plays are the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. First, we perceive an indefinable likeness in tone and mental tint, which is yet recognizable, as are the flowers of the same season. In Shakspeare's work, so great is the unity of feeling as it is seen pervading a whole play, that whatsoever was going on below would give visible signs on the surface, whether he was working at a drama or a Sonnet. His work is so much of a natural product that it takes on the colour of the season and the environment, just as certain animals and birds are coloured in accordance with their surroundings, the tone of which is reflected in the hues of feather and tints of fur.

In the earlier Sonnets, and in the above-named Plays, certain ideas and figures continually appear and reappear. We might call them by name, as the conceit concerning painting, concerning substance and shadow, the war of roses in the red and white of a lady's cheek, the pattern or map-idea, the idea of the antique world in opposition to the tender transiency of youth, the images of spring used as emblems of mortality, the idea of engraving on a tablet of steel, the canker in the bud, the distilling of roses to preserve their sweets, the cloud-kissing hill, and the hill-kissing sun with golden face—and many others which were the poet's early stock of imagery, the frequent use of which shows that it was yet the spring-time of his creative powers. But to pass from this indefiniteness to the actual likeness, here are a few passages from the Sonnets compared with the Plays and Poems.

*Sonnets.*

Even so my sun one early morn did shine  
 With all-triumphant splendour on my brow ;  
 But, out, alack ! he was but one hour mine,  
 The region-cloud hath masked him from me  
 now. (33)

Which by and by black night doth take away.  
 (73)

For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any.  
 (10)

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck ;  
 And yet, methinks, I have astronomy,  
 But not to tell of good or evil luck,  
 Of plagues, of dearths, or season's quality :  
 Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,

But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive.  
 (14)

To witness duty, not to show my wit.—(26)

Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate,  
 Which to repair should be thy chief desire.  
 (10)

I never saw that you did painting need,  
 And therefore to your fair no painting set.  
 (63)

So is it not with me as with that Muse'  
 Stirred with a painted beauty to his verse.  
 (21)

Let them say more that like of hearsay well,  
 I will not praise that purpose not to sell.—(21)

Painting my age with beauty of thy days.  
 (62)

But from thine eyes this knowledge I derive.  
 (14)

Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and  
 date. (14)

(See also Sonnet 20.)

Look in thy mother's glass.—(3)  
 Dear my love, you know  
 You had a Father ; let your son say so.—(13)

For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.  
 (48)

Thy unused beauty must be tomb'd with thee.  
 (4)

*Plays.*

O how this Spring of love resembleth  
 The uncertain glory of an April day,  
 Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,  
 And by and by a cloud takes all away.  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. i.

They do not love that do not show their love.  
*Two Gen. Ver.*, I. ii.

I read your fortune in your eye.  
*Two Gen. Ver.*, II. iv.

My duty will I boast of, nothing else.  
*Two Gen. Ver.*, II. iv.

O thou, that dost inhabit in my breast,  
 Leave not the mansion so long tenantless,  
 Lest, growing ruinous, the building fall,  
 And leave no memory of what it was.  
 Repair me with thy presence, Silvia.  
*Two Gen. Ver.*, V. iv.

My beauty  
 Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, II. i.

Fie, painted Rhetoric ! O she needs it not ;  
 To things of sale a seller's praise belongs,—  
 She passes praise.—*L. L. L.*, IV. iii.

Beauty doth varnish age as if new-born.  
*L. L. L.*, IV. iii.

From women's eyes this doctrine I derive.  
*L. L. L.*, IV. iii.

More lovely than a man !  
 Nature that made thee, with herself at strife,  
 Saith that the world hath ending with thy life.  
*Venus and Adonis*, 2.  
 The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and  
 trim ;  
 But true, sweet beauty lived and died with  
 him.—*V. and A.*, 180.

Art thou a woman's son and canst not feel  
 What 'tis to love ?—*V. and A.*, 34.  
 Oh, had thy mother borne so hard a mind  
 She had not brought forth thee.  
*V. and A.*, 34.

Rich preys make true men thieves.  
*V. and A.*, 121.

What is thy body but a swallowing grave ?  
*V. and A.*, 127.

*Sonnets.*

Uuthrifty loveliness! why dost thou spend  
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?  
Profitless usurer.—(4)

Hearing you praised, I say 'tis so.—(85)

Thine eyes that taught the dumb on high to  
sing. (78)

Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon  
Doubting the filching age will steal his trea-  
sure;

Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,  
And by and by clean starvèd for a look.—(75)

For Slander's mark was ever yet the fair.—(70)

Thou art thy Mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime.—(3)

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride  
With ugly rack on his celestial face,  
Even so my sun.—(33)

Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare.  
(52)

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,  
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;  
The better angel is a man right fair;  
The worsè spirit a woman coloured ill;  
To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil;  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.—(144)

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought.—(30)  
And moan th' expense of many a vanished  
sight. (30)

When I perhaps compounded am with clay.  
(71)

Sweet Roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours  
made. (54)

Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward;  
Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard.  
(133)

That is my home of love; if I have ranged,  
Like him that travels, I return again.—(109)

I do forgive thy robbery, gentle Thief,  
Although thou steal thee all my poverty.  
(40)

That sweet Thief which sourly robs from me.  
(35)

*Plays.*

Gold that's put to use more gold begets.  
*V. and A.*, 128.

She says 'tis so; they answer all 'tis so!  
*V. and A.*, 142.

Thine eyes that taught all other eyes to see.  
*V. and A.*, 159.

Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown  
From thievish ears, because it is his own.  
But poorly rich, so wanteth in his store  
That, cloyed with much, he pineth still for  
more.—*Lucrece*, 5 and 14.

For greatest scandal waits on greatest state.  
*Lucrece*, 144.

Poor broken glass, I often did behold  
In thy sweet semblance my old age new-born.  
*Lucrece*, 252.

Who doth permit the base contagious clouds  
To smother up his beauty from the world.  
Pt. I. *Henry IV.*, I. ii.

So my state,  
Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast,  
And won by rareness such solemnity.  
Pt. I. *Henry IV.*, III. ii.

You follow the young prince up and down  
like his ill-angel.—Pt. II. *Henry IV.*, I. ii.  
There is a good angel about him, but the devil  
outbids him too.—Pt. II. *Henry IV.*, II. iv.

You do draw my spirits from me  
With new lamenting ancient oversights.  
Pt. II. *Henry IV.*, II. ii.

Only compound me with forgotten dust.  
Pt. II. *Henry IV.*, IV. iv.

Earthlier happy is the Rose distilled,  
Than that which, withering on the virgin  
thorn,  
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.  
*Midsommer Night's Dream*, I. i.

Transparent Helen, Nature shows her art  
That through thy bosom makes me see my  
heart.—*M. N. D.*, II. ii.

My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourned,  
And now to Helen it is home returned.  
*M. N. D.*, III. ii.

O me; you Juggler! you Canker-blossom!  
You Thief of Love! What, have you come by  
night  
And stolen my Love's heart from him?  
*M. N. D.*, III. ii.

*Sonnets.*

When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st  
the even. (28)

Then can no horse with my desire keep pace.  
(51)

Then look I death my days should expiate.  
(22)

To change your day of youth to sullied night.  
(15)

Truth and Beauty shall together thrive,  
If from thyself to store thou wouldst convert.  
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,  
Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and  
date. (14)

And tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.  
(1)

My soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face  
new. (27)

There lives more life in one of your fair eyes  
Than both your poets can in praise devise.  
(88)

For sweetest things turn sourest by their  
deeds ;  
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.  
(94)

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse  
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain in-  
harse,  
Making their tomb the womb wherein they  
grew ? (86)

But, ah ! thought kills me that I am not  
Thought. (44)

Oh, what a mansion have those vices got  
Which for their habitation chose out thee.  
(95)

Whilst that this shadow doth such substance  
give. (37)

Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make  
bright,  
How would thy shadow's form form happy  
show

To the clear day with thy much clearer light,  
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so !  
How would—I say—mine eyes be blessed made  
By looking on thee in the living day. (43)

*Plays.*

Fair Helena, who more engilds the night  
Than all you fiery oes and eyes of light.  
*M. N. D.*, III. ii.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
Having some business, do entreat her eyes  
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.  
*Romco and Juliet*, I. v.

My legs can keep no pace with my desires.  
*M. N. D.*, IV. ii.

Make haste, the hour of death is expiate.  
*King Richard III.*, III. iii.

Hath dimmed your infant morn to aged night.  
*K. R. III.*, IV. iv.

Oh, she is rich in beauty, only poor  
That when she dies with beauty dies her store.  
Then she hath sworn that she will still live  
chaste ?

She hath, and in that sparing makes huge  
waste.

For Beauty starved with her severity,  
Cuts Beauty off from all posterity.

*Romeo and Juliet*, I. i.

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night,  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.

*Rom. and Ju.*, I. ii.

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye  
Than twenty of their swords.

*Rom. and Ju.*, II. ii.

Nor aught so good but, strained from that  
fair use,

Revolts from true birth stumbling on abuse ;  
Virtue itself turns vice being misapplied.

*Rom. and Ju.*, II. iii.

The Earth, that's Nature's mother, is her  
tomb,

What is her burying grave, that is her womb.  
*Rom. and Ju.*, II. iii.

Love's Heralds should be Thoughts.

*Rom. and Ju.*, II. v.

Oh, that deceit should dwell in such a palace !  
*Rom. and Ju.*, III. ii.

I dreamt my lady came and found me dead ;  
(Strange dream ! that gives a dead man leave  
to think,)

Ah me ! how sweet is love itself possessed  
When but love's shadows are so rich in joy.

*Rom. and Ju.*, V. i.



*Sonnets.*

From limits far remote where thou dost stay.  
 (44)  
 But ah! thought kills me that I am not  
 thought,  
 To leap large lengths of miles when thou art  
 gone,  
 But that so much of earth and water wrought.  
 (44)

How like Eve's Apple doth thy beauty grow,  
 If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show.  
 (93)

Let those who are in favour with their stars,  
 Of public honour and proud titles boast,  
 Whilst I, whom Fortune of such triumph bars,  
 Unlooked-for joy in that I honour most :

Then happy I, that love and am beloved,  
 Where I may not remove, nor be removed.  
 (25)

Where wasteful time debateth with decay.  
 (15)

Thou by thy dial's shady stealth may'st know,  
 Time's thievish progress to eternity.—(77)

So I, for fear of trust, forget to say,  
 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,  
 And in mine own love's strength seem to  
 decay,  
 O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's  
 might ;  
 O let my books be then the eloquence.—(23)

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
 (116)

Thy gifts, thy tables, are within my brain  
 Full charactered with lasting memory ;  
 Which shall above that idle rank remain  
 Beyond all date, even to eternity :  
 Or at the least so long as brain and heart  
 Have faculty by nature to subsist.—(122)

With mine own weakness being best acquainted  
 Upon thy part I can set down a story  
 Of faults concealed wherein I am attained.  
 (88)

For what care I who calls me ill or well,  
 So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow ;  
 My adder's sense  
 To Critic and to Flatterer stoppèd are.—(112)  
 I must attend Time's leisure. (44)

Thou dost love her because thou know'st I  
 love her. (42)

*Plays.*

The farthest limit of my embassy.  
*King John*, I. i.  
 Large lengths of seas and shores  
 Between my father and my mother lay.  
*K. J.*, I. i.

A goodly apple rotten at the heart ;  
 Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath !  
*Merchant of Venice*, I. iii.

Thoughts tending to content, flatter them-  
 selves  
 That they are not the first of fortune's slaves,  
 And in this thought they find a kind of ease.  
*Richard II.*, V. v.

Nature and sickness  
 Debate it at their leisure.  
*All's Well that Ends Well*, I. ii.

The Pilot's glass  
 Hath told the thievish minutes how they pass.  
*A. W.*, II. i.

My lord will go away to-night ;  
 A very serious business calls on him,  
 The great prerogative and rite of love,  
 Which, as your due time claims, he doth  
 acknowledge,  
 But puts it off by a compelled restraint.  
*A. W.*, II. iv.

That it may stand till the perpetual doom.  
*Merry Wives*, V. v.

From the table of my memory  
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
 And thy commandment all alone shall live  
 Within the book and volume of my brain.  
 Remember thee !  
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a  
 seat  
 In this distracted globe.—*Hamlet*, I. v.

I could accuse me of such things, that it  
 were better my mother had not borne me.  
*Ham.*, III. i.

The censure of which one, must, in your  
 allowance, o'er-weigh a whole theatre of others.  
*Ham.*, III. ii.

I shall attend your leisure.  
*Measure for Measure*, IV. i.

Let me love him for that, and do you love  
 him because I do.—*As You Like It*, I. iii.

*Sonnets.*

As easy might I from myself depart  
As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie.  
(109)

Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour  
Lose all and more by paying too much rent ?  
For compound sweet foregoing simple savour ;  
Pitiful thrivers in their gazing spent !  
No ! let me be obsequious in thy heart,  
And take thou my oblation, poor but free.  
(125)

Or whether doth my mind, being crowned with  
you,  
Drink up the Monarch's plague, this flattery ;  
Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true ?  
'Tis flattery in my seeing. (114)

Or, on my frailties why are frailer spies ?  
(121)

So now I have confessed that he is thine,  
And I myself am mortgaged to thy will.  
(134)

Thy dial will show thee how thy precious  
minutes waste. (77)

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the  
shame.

O what a mansion have those vices got  
Which for their habitation chose out thee !  
Where Beauty's veil doth cover every blot,  
And all things turn to fair that eyes can see.  
(95)

Love's not love  
That alters when it alteration finds.— (116)

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured.  
(107)

And peace proclaims olives of endless age.  
(107)

*Plays.*

Join her hand with his  
Whose heart within her bosom is.  
*A. Y. L.*, V. iv.

Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave  
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,  
Wears out his time. Others there are  
Who trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves.  
*Othello*, I. i.

I fear to find  
Mine eye too great a flatterer for my mind.  
*Twelfth Night*, I. v.

Alas ! our frailty is the cause, not we.  
*T. N.*, II. ii.

And he is yours, and his must needs be yours ;  
Your servant's servant is your servant, madam !  
*T. N.*, III. i.

The clock upbraids me with the waste of time.  
*T. N.*, III. i.

But O, how vile an Idol proves this God !  
Thou hast, Sebastian, done good feature shame.  
In nature there's no blemish but the mind,  
None can be called deformed but the unkind ;  
Virtue is beauty ; but the beauteous evil  
Are empty trunks o'erflourished by the Devil.  
*T. N.* III. iv.

Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stand  
Aloof from the entire point.—*King Lear*, I. i.

Alack, our terrene moon is now eclipsed.  
*Antony and Cleopatra*, III. ii.

Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nooked  
world shall bear the olive freely.  
*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV. vi.

This comparison shows the uselessness of placing the Sonnets *en gros* between *Romeo and Juliet* and Part III. of *King Henry VI.*, as is done in the Leopold Shakspeare, and the folly of limiting them, as Mr. Tyler would, to the years 1598—1601.

These extracts present a panorama of the Poet's progress. All along the Sonnets are the seed-bed of thoughts and expressions afterwards sown in the Dramas during at least a dozen years. The order observed is, roughly, that of the Dramas, not of the Sonnets.

According to the poetic data now adduced, this comparative criterion tells us that a large number of the Sonnets were produced either before or else they belong to the time of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and other of the early Plays. No one who is intimately acquainted with Shakspeare will deny or doubt that this diagnosis demonstrates the period of certain Sonnets and Plays to have been the same, even though they may not

share in my certitude of the particular Sonnets being still earlier than the Poems and Plays.

Fertile and lavish as he was, Shakspeare is prone to repeat himself. Moreover, he wrote with unparalleled rapidity, and work done in Play or Sonnets at a heat would and does leave its mark of the time on both. It is so in his Plays, and the same law must apply to the Poems and Sonnets.

These, however, are not merely flowers of the same season ; they are frequently the same flowers transferred from the Sonnets to the Plays. For we may be certain sure that such matter as we find in *Venus and Adonis* would not be presented first to Southampton in a printed poem, and afterwards repeated and re-presented to him privately in the Sonnets ! The first-fruits of the Poet's thought and personal affection would naturally and necessarily be offered in the private work which he *had to do* ; whereas, according to the chronology of Mr. Tyler and other Herbertists, Shakspeare must have gone on repeating himself in the Sonnets from his public Plays all along the line of his progress.

Thus the Sonnets themselves supply ample proof in various kinds of evidence, and in a regular sequence, that a large number of them were written too early for William Herbert to have been their "begetter," or the friend who is the object of Shakspeare's affection. Many of them were written by the Poet's "Pupil Pen" before he had ventured to appear in public : therefore, before he printed in 1593. On other grounds it will be shown, from internal evidence, that another group was written before the death of Marlowe, in the same year. Consequently, these must belong to the "Sonnets among his private friends," which were known to Meres in 1598 ; and, as William Herbert did not come to live in London till the year 1598,<sup>1</sup> and was then only eighteen years of age, he cannot be the person addressed in these Sonnets during a number of years previously !

There could be no kind of reason why Shakspeare should write a series of Sonnets for the purpose of urging a boy of thirteen, or it may be of ten or eleven years of age, to get married immediately ! No reason why this impubescent youth should have been addressed by the man Shakspeare with pathetic reproaches for not entering the state of matrimony ! He is letting his ancestral "house fall to decay," which "Husbandry in honour might uphold"—he is

"Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate,  
Which to repair should be thy chief desire."

This boy-begetter would be charged with "*making a famine where abundance lies*"—he would be told to look in the glass and

"tell the face thou viewest,  
*Now is the time* that face should form another ;  
Thou dost beguile the world, unless some mother.  
For where is she so fair whose unweared womb  
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry ?"

"Now stand you on the top of happy hours ;  
And many maiden-gardens yet unset  
With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers."

And this is assumed without evidence or question to be written by Shakspeare to a lad who could not have been over thirteen years old, and may have been only

<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 43.

ten, at the time the first Sonnets were composed; *as we have the facts under Shakspeare's own hand and warranty.* This is a demonstration not likely to be successfully assailed by my opponents if they should ever dare to grapple with my argument.

At the outset of our inquiry, then, it is established that William Herbert cannot be the man whom Shakspeare urged to marry, to whom he dedicated eternal love; and to all who can fairly weigh the facts, it must be just as evident that Henry Wriothesley was the patron and friend whom our Poet loved, and by whom he was so much beloved.

Amongst the few precious personal relics of Shakspeare are those two short prose epistles in which he inscribes his two poems to the Earl of Southampton. They are remarkable revelations of his feeling towards the Earl. The first is shaded with a delicate reserve, and addressed to the *patron*; the second, printed one year afterwards, glows out full-hearted in a dedication of personal love for the *friend*. The difference is so great, and the growth of the friendship so rapid, as to suggest that the *Venus and Adonis* may have been sent to the Earl, or at least written, some time before it was printed.

The dedication runs thus:—

Right Honourable,—I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burthen: only, if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But, if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your Honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish, and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your Honour's in all duty,  
WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

Now, as our Poet had distinctly promised in Sonnet 26, that when he was ready to appear in print and put worthy apparel on his "tattered loving," he would then dare to boast how much he loved his patron and friend, and show his head, where he might be proved, we cannot but conclude that the dedication to the *Venus and Adonis* is in part fulfilment of the intentions expressed in that Sonnet. In fact we see the Sonnet was as much a private dedication of the Poet's first poem, as this epistle was afterwards the public one, and know that in it he as much promised the first poem, as in the prose inscription he promises the future *Lucrece*, when he vows to take advantage of all idle hours till he has honoured the Earl with some graver labour. Therefore, the person who was privately addressed in "written embassy" as the Lord of Shakspeare's love, must be one with him whom the Poet afterwards publicly ventured to address as such, in fulfilment of intentions already recorded. The feeling of the earliest Sonnets is exactly that of this first public inscription; it is reticent and noticeably modest, whilst in each there is an expression that gives the same personal image. "*Your honour's in all duty*" echoes the voice of the Sonnets which were sent to "*Witness Duty*." In the first Dedication the Poet hopes that his young patron may answer to the "*World's hopeful expectation*," and in the first of all the Sonnets this Lord of Shakspeare's love is saluted as "*the world's fresh ornament*

and only Herald to the gaudy Spring." In both we have Hope a-tiptoe at gaze on this new wonder of youth and beauty, this freshest blossom of noble blood.

In the next year, 1594, Shakspeare dedicated his poem of *Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton as follows:—

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end, whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. *The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines,* makes it assured of acceptance. *What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours.*<sup>1</sup> *Were my worth greater my duty would show greater;* meantime, as it is, *it is bound to your lordship,* to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with happiness.

Your Lordship's in all duty,  
WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

Again the dedication echoes the 26th Sonnet. "The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines," and "were my worth greater, my duty would show greater," are the prose of the previous words, "to witness duty, not to show my wit." Then we have the "lord of our Poet's love," to whom his service was vowed, his duty bound in "*vassalage*," identified in the person of Lord Southampton, to whom Shakspeare is *in duty bound*, as in the Sonnet which says, "thy merit hath my *duty strongly knit*;" and to this lord the Poet has sent his "Books" in private, and now publicly dedicated all that he has done, and all that he has to do. Thus we have it recorded in 1594, by Shakspeare himself, that the relationship of Poet and patron was so close, the friendship had so far ripened, that Shakspeare could dedicate "love without end," and he uses these never-to-be-forgotten words:—"What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours." That is, the Earl of Southampton is proclaimed to be the lord of our Poet's love, the man to whom he is bound, and the patron for whom he has hitherto written, and for whom, as is understood betwixt them, he has yet to write. "What I have to do is yours"—so there is work in hand—"being part as you are in all that my duty and love have devoted to your service." What work in hand *devoted* to Southampton can this be, save the Sonnets which he was then composing? Here is a promise made which was never fulfilled in any other shape. As we have seen, he made a promise in the 26th Sonnet which he fulfilled in 1593 with the *Venus and Adonis*. In his inscription to that poem, he makes a further promise, this he carries out in dedicating the *Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton. In the second public inscription, he speaks still more emphatically of work that he has to do for the Earl, not like a poet addressing a patron, but as a familiar friend alluding to something only known amongst friends. It is a public promise respecting work that has a private history; its precise speciality has never yet been fathomed, although something marked in the meaning has been felt; it could only have had fulfilment in the Sonnets, and that in a particular way.

The Sonnets themselves respond to the dedications. They show that Shakspeare was in duty bound to write and was expected to write of and for his

<sup>1</sup> In the Malone and Grenville copies this reads "being part in all I have, devoted yours," which punctuation has been preserved. But it is so obviously an error of the press as not even to demand a passing remark. It is obstructive to the sense, and severs what Shakspeare meant to clench by his last repetition of "*yours*."

friend, who in Sonnet 83 has reproached him for not writing when he has been remiss. The Poet says,

“ This silence for my sin you did impute.”

Again, in Sonnet 100, he apologizes for being so long silent. He reproaches his Muse with her forgetfulness, and bids her

“ Sing to the ear that doth thy Lays esteem.”

This then was what the Poet *had to do*, and he lets us know plainly enough that he is doing it in writing his Sonnets to and for Southampton. Hence he calls these poems the “ Barren tender of a Poet's debt.” The debt contracted with the public as witness, in the Dedication to *Lucrece*, is not only acknowledged privately in the Sonnets, we see him in the act of writing it off in that mode of fulfilling his promise and paying his debt.

As the *Venus and Adonis* was printed in 1593, we might safely assume that the first Sonnets, inclusive of the 26th, were not written later than the year 1591 or 1592. But it may have been still earlier. Tom Nash in his *Anatomic of Absurdity* affords us good ground for thinking that Shakspeare had been heard of as a writer of Sonnets and Songs as early as the year 1590. He refers to a playwright, and sneers at his “ *Country grammar knowledge.*” He damns the audacity of this fellow who is setting up as a poet and is already being patronized, to the knowledge and disgust of Nash, as a writer of Sonnets! This would-be Poet he treats as one of a very low kind in the following tirade :

“ *What will they not feign for gain? Hence come our babbling ballets and our new-found Songs and Sonnets which every red-nose fiddler hath at his fingers' end, and every ignorant all-knight breathes forth over the pot as soon as his brain waxeth hot. . . . Were it that the infamy of their ignorance did redound only upon themselves, I could be content to apply my speech otherwise than to their Apuleyan ears; but sith they obtain the name of our English poets, and thereby make men think more basely of the wits of the country, I cannot but turn them out of their counterfeit livery, and brand them on the forehead, that all men may know their falsehood. Well may that saying of Campanus be applied to our English poets:— ‘ They make poetry an occupation; lying is their living, and fables are their moveables.’ . . . . . It makes the learned sort to be silent, when, as they see, unlearned sots [are] so insolent. These bussards think knowledge a burthen, tapping it before they have half tunned it, venting it before they have filled it, in whom that saying of the orator is verified, Ante ad dicendum quam ad cognoscendum veniunt. They come to speak before they come to know. They contemn Arts as unprofitable, contenting themselves with a little country grammar knowledge, God wote. Such kind of poets were they that Plato excluded from his Commonwealth; and amiss it were not if these, which meddle with the art they know not, were bequeathed to Bridewell, there to learn a new occupation; so those rude rithmours, with their jarring verse, alienate all men's minules from delighting in number's excellence, which they have so defaced, that we may well exclaime with the poet, Quantum mutatus ab illo.”*

Nash wants to class this new poet with the old Minstrels, who were but wandering rogues and vagabonds in the eye of the law. We have the Shakspearian echo to this complaint in *Love's Labour's Lost*, “ Tush! none but

minstrels like of Sonneting," at the very time when the King and his courtiers have all turned Sonneteers.

It is quite in keeping with our knowledge of Shakspeare that he should have been recognized thus early by Nash as the writer of Songs and Sonnets. His exquisite lyrical faculty is shown by the song to Sylvia in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream* it is already in full flower. The collection of his Songs and Sonnets in the *Passionate Pilgrim* was based upon his reputation as a lyrist. Some of these were very early work.

In his Epistle to Greene's *Menaphon* Nash sneers at the ambitious but futile efforts of "those that never were gowned in the University," and nothing could have made him feel worse than to hear that this ignoramus with no college credentials had found favour as a poet with the young Earl of Southampton, the artful man of art being preferred to the men of Arts, the unlearned to the Learned; a fellow in "counterfeit livery," who would feign anything for gain, being employed to write Sonnets and honoured with the patronage which belonged by right to the educated and authorized academical funkey. This would be all the more galling and unendurable as Nash and Southampton were both Cambridge men, and both of St. John's College.<sup>1</sup> Nash passed B.A. in 1585, and was expelled some time in 1587 for the part he took in the play entitled *Terminus et non Terminus*. The Earl of Southampton was admitted Dec. 11, 1585, and passed B.A. June 6, 1589. This early recognition of the Upstart Player, whose education was limited to a Country Grammar School, as a writer of Sonnets, is not to be faced by the Brownites and Herbertists. It is not to be thought of that Shakspeare should have been known as a Sonneteer when Herbert was but ten years old, consequently this recognition by Nash is unanimously ignored by them, as it is by Mr. Furnivall in his lengthy Introduction to the Leopold Shakspeare.

This Player-poet aimed at by Nash is as certainly Shakspeare as is the "Shakscene" denounced later by Greene; and this is one of the earliest and most important of all the contemporary notices of the rising man. Nash's denunciation applies to a playwright who is recognized as being the author of Sonnets, and it follows that if the man of "Country Grammar knowledge" is Shakspeare, then Shakspeare had been heard of in the year 1590 as a writer of Sonnets. Therefore the earliest Sonnets composed for Southampton may have been begun in 1590. There is nothing opposed to this in the dates. Henry Wriothesley was born in the year 1573. He came to London in June 1589, and entered himself as member of Gray's Inn when he was sixteen years of age. Nor is there any difficulty in the way of an early meeting between him and Shakspeare. The young Earl's fondness for Plays is well known. Shakspeare's great affection and love for him were proclaimed to all the world in his prose dedications. And Southampton's step-father, Sir Thomas Heneage, was then Treasurer of the Chamber and Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household, as well as Captain of the Guard to the Queen. Thus Southampton's immediate access to players and playwrights would be made easy on account of his step-father's official relationship to them, and his own influence in their favour would be eagerly sought. In 1589 Southampton was travelling abroad, but was back

<sup>1</sup> According to Gabriel Harvey, in his *Trimming of Thomas Nash*, the latter was of seven years' standing in 1587.

again in the year following. He was then seventeen years old, and in this year Nash makes his gird at the playwright who was the author of "new-found Songs and Sonnets," therefore the newly-discovered Sonneteer who is identified by his "Country Grammar knowledge" as Shakspeare.

The youth whom the Poet first saw in all his semi-feminine freshness of the proverbial "sweet seventeen," and afterwards celebrated as a "sweet boy," a "lovely boy," a "beauteous and lovely youth," a pattern for rather than a copy of his Adonis, corresponds perfectly with Southampton in his seventeenth year. If we take the year 1590 for the first group of Sonnets, we shall find the young Earl of Southampton's age precisely reckoned up in Sonnet 16,

"Now stand you on the top of happy hours,"

which shows us that the youth has sprung lightly up the ladder of his life, and now stands on the last golden round of boyhood. The Earl of Southampton was born October 6th, 1573, consequently in 1590 he was seventeen years of age.

The very first Sonnet addresses one who is the "world's fresh ornament,"—that is, the budding favourite at Court, the fresh grace of its circle, the latest representative there of youthful spring; "the Expectancy and Rose of the fair State!" Southampton was, in truth, the "Child of State," under the special protection of the Queen. He was recommended to Her Majesty's notice and care by the loss of his father at so early an age, and by the quiet service of his step-father, who was an old servant of Elizabeth's, as well as favoured with the best word of his guardian, Burleigh, who at one time hoped to bring about a marriage betwixt Southampton and his own grand-daughter. We shall see, further, that such was his place in Her Majesty's regards, that an endeavour was made by Sir Fulke Greville and others, to get the Earl of Southampton installed as royal favourite in the stead of Essex. "There was a time," says Sir Henry Wotton,<sup>1</sup> sometime secretary to the Earl of Essex, "when Sir Fulke Greville (Lord Brook), a man intrinsically with him (Essex), or at the least, admitted to his melancholy hours, either belike espying some weariness in the Queen, or perhaps (with little change of the word, though more in the danger), some wariness towards him, and working upon the present matter (as he was dexterous and close), had almost superinduced into favour the Earl of Southampton, which yet being timely discovered, my Lord of Essex chose to evaporate his thoughts in a Sonnet (being his common way), to be sung before the Queen (as it was) by one Hales, in whose voice she took some pleasure; whereof the couplet, methinks, had as much of the Hermit as of the Poet." Wotton has not gone quite to the root of the affair; the real ground on which the motion of Sir Fulke Greville was made, was a strong feeling of personal favour on the part of Her Majesty towards the young Earl of Southampton; this to some extent is implied in the fact recorded, but there was more in it than Wotton had seen from the one side. It is difficult to define what this royal favour meant, or what was the nature of Her Majesty's affection, but it most assuredly existed, and was shown, and Essex manifested his jealousy of it, as in the cases of Southampton, Mountjoy, and others. Perhaps it was an old maid's passion for her puppies!

It does not in the least help to fathom the secret of this Favouritship, through

<sup>1</sup> *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, p. 163.



which Hatton, Leicester, and Essex passed; for which Southamp'on was proposed, and to which honour Herbert might have aspired if he would, but was out-distanced by "young Carey," to point to the age of the Queen and the youth of the young nobles. Many aged persons have had extremely youthful tastes. It was a characteristic of the Tudor tooth. Besides, the Queen prided herself on not looking or growing old as other women did. And according to unsuspected contemporary testimony, she must have borne her years very youthfully. Jacob Rathgeb, who wrote the story of Duke Frederick of Wirtemburgh, in *England as seen by Foreigners*, saw her Majesty in her fifty-ninth year, and, thinking she was sixty-seven at the time, he records that, although she had borne the heavy burthen of ruling a kingdom for thirty-four years, she need not indeed—to judge both from her person and appearance—yield much to a young girl of sixteen!

In judging of Elizabeth's character, we must remember that some of her richest, most vital feelings had no proper sphere of action, though their motion was not necessarily improper. She did not live the married life, and Nature sometimes plays tricks when the vestal fires are fed by the animal passions, that are thus covered up, but all aglow; these will give an added warmth to the imagination, a sparkle to the eye, and a youth to the affections in the later years of life, such as may easily be misinterpreted.

My chief interest at present in the subject mooted, is in relation to the Earl of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon, the Queen's cousin; and her Majesty's persistent opposition to their marriage.

It is not my object to bedaub the portrait of Gloriana with a coating of lamp-black, but I have lost a good deal of the mental glamour created by Froude and Kingsley, and am at liberty to maintain that it is not necessary to possess a monkish imagination not to be able to chime in with Fuller's emphatic cry of "*Virginissima*," where he calls Elizabeth *when living*, the first Maid on Earth, and *when dead*, the second in heaven.

Let me not raise any scandal against Elizabeth, when, supported by the suggestive hint of Wotton, I conjecture that the persistent opposition of the Queen to Southampton's marriage had in it a personal feeling which, under certain circumstances, could find no other expression than in thwarting the wedded happiness of others.

It is in this sense of the new favourite at Court, that I read—

"The World's fresh ornament  
And only herald of the gaudy spring,"

and find in it another feature whereby we can identify the Earl of Southampton as the person addressed.

A difficult passage in the 20th Sonnet may glance at this favouritship. Southampton is described as a "man in *hue* all *Hews* in his controlling," and the word *Hew* is printed as a proper noun and in italics. The Earl of Essex being first favourite at the time when Southampton was set up as a rival for the Royal honour, Shakspeare lauds his young friend as the "World's fresh ornament," and as a man in hue whose hue is in some way superior to all other hues, and as the "only herald of the gaudy Spring." Elizabeth chose her favourites for their youthful favour. Southampton's complexion had the hue of "rose-cheeked Adonis," and Shakspeare besought him to preserve it all he could. In Sonnet 104 his rosiness is called "your sweet hue." It has been

conjectured that a name was being punned upon in this emphasized line. I think so too. But it is not Hughes or Hews as Tyrwhitt fancied. Nor is it Hughes the friend of Chapman. It is EWES that was aimed at by the *double entendre*, which leads us beyond the mere name to a person of importance; for *Ewe* was a title of Essex! The Earldom was that of "Essex and Ewe."

"A man in hue, all Ewes in his controlling," was as far as Shakspeare could go in telling his friend that his comeliness and favour were far superior to those of the favourite, and that these gave him the upper hand. The word *hue* had also the meaning of a *match* for; and here the hue of Southampton is more than a match for all other hues. Such punning upon names was a common practice of the time, and it had been done before on this very name with a variation by Peele in his *Polyhymnia*. In describing the Earl of Essex, and in speaking of his appearance,

"That from his armour borrowed such a light  
As boughs of yew (= Ewe) receive from shady stream,"

Peele was punning in precisely the same way that Shakspeare does on the same name of the same person, only with him it is Yew = Ewe, whereas in the Sonnet it is Hew = Ewe. The reader cannot fail to recognize in this an early note of the "Secret Drama" of the Sonnets and the identification of Shakspeare's "Private Friends."

Herbert came too late for any rivalry with "Essex and Ewe"; his rivalry was with "young Carey," a far later favourite.

Professor Dowden, in declaring and affirming against Southampton being Shakspeare's young friend of the early Sonnets, has the temerity to assert that Henry Wriothesley "was NOT beautiful"; for which gratuitous assertion he had no warrant whatever. He merely repeats without testing what Boaden had already said without proof. The Professor further declares that Southampton bore "no resemblance to his mother." But if this were a fact he had no knowledge of it. Where is the portrait of the mother to determine it? Or where is the fact recorded?

"Youngster," said the impecunious manager Elliston to the author of *Black-eyed Susan*, "have you the confidence to lend me a guinea?" "I have all the confidence in the world," said Jerrold, "but I haven't got the guinea." So is it with the Brownites. They have any amount of assertion, but not the needful facts. Professor Dowden also says, "Wriothesley at an early age became the lover of Elizabeth Vernon, needing therefore no entreaty to marry." But no age is given; no dates are compared; no time defined for either the Sonnets or the courtship—an omission not to be bridged over with a "therefore"!

Why, the Sonnets, as already shown, must have been begun as early as 1590-1. They precede and promise the Dedication of whatsoever Shakspeare is going to publish. They identify the living original of Adonis with Southampton, and therefore as the young friend addressed in the first Sonnets. Only twenty of them are devoted to the marriage theme. And the earliest that we hear *publicly* of Southampton's being in love with Elizabeth Vernon is in the year 1595—*i. e.* two years after the public dedication of *Venus and Adonis*. The Professor does not take the trouble to spin a "rope of sand," he only throws a handful of dust in the eyes of his readers.

It does seem as if the sufferers from the *Lues Browniana* would say anything.

We may well ask with the Irish orator, who inquired of his audience if they could trust a single word that was said by a gentleman who wore a waistcoat of *that colour*?

But to return to the first Sonnets. Next—and here we feel an endearing touch of Shakspeare's nature—the youth addressed is so evidently *fatherless*, that it seems strange it should have been overlooked, until pointed out by the present writer. The plea all through the first Sonnets is to one who is the sole prop of his house, and the only bearer of the family name, the “tender heir” to his father's “memory”; hence the IMPORTANCE OF MARRYING, on which the Poet lays such stress. The first Sonnet opens with an allusion to the *early* death of the Earl's father:—

“From fairest creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby Beauty's rose might never die,  
But as the *riper* should by time decease,  
*His tender heir might bear his memory!*”

In Sonnet 10 he is charged with not inclining his ear to the advice given to him that he should marry. Thus:—

“Seeking that *beauteous roof to ruinate*,  
Which to *repair should be thy chief desire.*”

We find the same use made of the verb *to ruinate* in *Henry VI.*, Part III. Act V. :—

“I will not *ruinate* my father's house.”

And in the *absence of Pericles* one of the lords says—

“This kingdom is without a head,  
Like goodly buildings left without a roof.”

Of course the roof would not need repairing if it were not going to decay. Accordingly we find that Southampton's father—head of the house—died in 1581, when the boy was not quite eight years old, and within four years of that time his elder brother died, leaving him sole heir and representative. Again in Sonnet 13 the Poet urges—

“Who *lets so fair a house fall to decay*,  
Which *husbandry in honour might uphold!*”

Southampton being an only son left fatherless, he was the sole prop and stay of the ancestral roof! Whereas William Herbert did not lose his father until the year 1601, three years after the proclamation of Shakspeare's Sonnets by Meres, and two years after the appearance of some of them in the *Passionate Pilgrim*. Moreover, William Herbert had a brother, and *never was the sole prop of his father's house!* The Poet's argument has no meaning in Herbert's case, early or late.

Although aware that the lines may not be confined to the literal reading, I cannot help thinking that the underlying fact was in the Poet's mind when in the same Sonnet he wrote—

“Dear my Love, you know  
You *had* a father; let your son say so.”

So the Countess in *All's Well* says, “This young gentleman *had* a father;”

oh that '*had*,' how sad a passage 'tis!" And the lines in Sonnet 3 double the likelihood.

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

There is no mention of his having a father; there is an allusion to his having *had* one, and the mother is referred to as though she were the only living parent. Shakspeare is forced to make use of the "mother's glass," when the father, had there been one in existence, is demanded by the hereditary nature of the argument. Also, it makes greatly in favour of my reading that some of the arguments yet to be quoted, which were taken from Sidney's prose, have been altered precisely to suit the case as now put by me. The speaker in the *Arcadia* says, "Nature made you child of a mother" (Philoclea's mother "Lettice Knollys" was then living), but Shakspeare says, "you *had* a father" (the Earl of Southampton's father being dead). The description is also differentiated by the "*tender* heir," who, "as the *riper* should by time decease," might "bear his memory," and by the house-roof going to decay, "which to repair" by "husbandry in honour," should be the chief desire of the person addressed. Thus, we have the Earl of Southampton identified as the lord of Shakspeare's love, and the object of these early Sonnets, by his exact age at the time when Shakspeare speaks of appearing soon in print, by his position as the "fresh ornament" of the Court world and Court society, by his rivalry with Hews, by his being the living model for "Adonis," and by the fatherless condition which gave a weightier emphasis to the Poet's argument for marriage, a more paternal tone of anxious interest to his personal affection. To revert for a moment to the words of Meres, it is obvious that the "private friends" of Shakspeare alluded to must have had as much to do with the critic's mention as the Poet had; it would be made on their account as much as on Shakspeare's. Who else could prove the opinion recorded? And certainly there was no living patron of literature at the time more likely to elicit the public reference of Meres than Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, whose early love of learning, says Camden, was as great as his later warlike renown.

On going a little further afield we may glean yet more evidence that the Earl of Southampton is the object of these Sonnets. "Thy poet," Shakspeare calls himself in Sonnet 79, and one of the Earl's two poets in Sonnet 83. Whose poet could he have been but Southampton's either before or after the dedication of his two poems? Of whom, save Southampton, should he say—

"Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem"—(Sonnet 100)

when it was that Earl who *had* so esteemed the Poet's lays? To whom, except this noble fellow and personal friend, could he speak of his Sonnets as the *poor* returns,

"The barren *tender* of a poet's debt!"—(Sonnet 83)

which is the most palpable acknowledgment of the fact that he fulfilled in his Sonnets such a promise as he made in the dedication of *Lucrece*. In Sonnet 108 he says his love is great, "even as when first I *hallowed* thy fair name." Whose *name* did he ever hallow or honour save that of Southampton? Again in Sonnet 102:—

"Our 'love was new and then but in the spring,  
When I was wont to greet it with my lays."

What love but that betwixt this Earl and Shakspeare did the Poet ever greet with his lays? And Sonnet 105 tells us that up to the time at which it was written, the affection must have been undivided; and the patron of both Sonnets and poems must have been one and the same person. For—

“All alike my songs and praises be,  
To one, of one, still such and ever so.”

But the conclusive fact is to be found in Sonnet 78, where Shakspeare himself salutes, addresses, and identifies the friend to whom and for whom he wrote his Sonnets privately with his “Pupil Pen”; identifies him as the man who lent him the light of his countenance and caused him to sing in public for the first time.

“Thine eyes that taught the *dumb on high* to sing,  
And heavy Ignorance *aloft to flee*.”

“Thou art all my Art and *dost advance*  
As *high as Learning my rude ignorance*.”

This is the Poet's recognition of the Patron at the time of publishing, just as we have him pointed out in Sonnet 26 before the Poet appeared in print.

It was Southampton whose encouragement was the cause of our Dramatist coming before the public as a Lyric Poet. It was Southampton who inspired him to break silence and make his claim in the court of literature. It was Southampton who thus advanced the “rude ignorance” of Shakspeare to the status of Letters, and placed him on a footing of equality with the Learned, as is proved by the prose dedications to the poems, and by the motto to *Venus and Adonis*. The man who “taught the dumb on high to sing” was he who made the singer first break silence in public with his poem of *Venus and Adonis*. He who encouraged the Poet to mount aloft was the patron of the earliest poem published; and he who advanced the “rude ignorance” of Shakspeare to the status of Letters and Learning was the Earl of Southampton—he to whom the Poet tendered his Sonnets in acknowledgment of his debt. Those who do not or cannot see this are unworthy of further consideration, and those who deny it because they foolishly persist in foisting a false theory on their readers must be left henceforth to carry on their clamour outside the court.

A few of the primary facts now substantiated are—(1) That Henry Wriothesley was the fatherless young friend to whom Shakspeare addressed his first Sonnets. (2) That it was to him the promise of a public dedication of his poems was privately made in Sonnet 26. (3) That he was the living original from whom the Poet drew his portrait of Adonis as the Master-Mistress of his passion. (4) That he was the Poet's Favourite whose comely complexion Shakspeare celebrates as being more attractive in hue than that of the royal favourite Essex-and-Ewe. (5) That he was the man who encouraged Shakspeare to publish his poems, and the friend to whom the Sonnets were offered privately as the “barren tender of a Poet's debt”; and (6) that a mass of the Sonnets belong to the time of the early Plays, and therefore were written too soon for William Herbert to have been the friend addressed in them. If Evidence is to count for anything, we may now consider Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to be sufficiently identified as the young friend and patron who was both the Object and the Subject of the early Sonnets.

Southampton has nearly passed out of sight in the cloud of dust created by

the fall of Essex, and Time has almost effaced him from the national memory—or had done so previous to the reminder offered in the earlier edition of the present work. But for our great Poet's sake we cannot help taking an interest in his story, or in his friendship, of which the Sonnets are the fruit; and the more we draw near to read his character aright, the greater reason we shall find to love him for what he once was to Shakspeare. There was a time in our Poet's life when the patronage of Southampton, as it was described by Barnes, shone like a splendid shield in the eyes of envious rivals, and such a dazzling defence must have tended to lessen the yelpings of the pack that was at him in full cry about the years 1590-3. His influence would call off the dogs. In all likelihood Southampton was one, the chief one, of those "divers of worship," who, according to Chett'e, had reported most favourably of the Poet's private character, and vouched for his poetic ability and "facetious grace" in writing. And, although not intended as an autobiographic record, the Sonnets sufficiently show that this friendship was the source of many comforting and loving thoughts, which cherished and illumed his inner life. The 25th Sonnet tells us how Shakspeare congratulated himself on having secured such a friend, whose heart was larger than his fortunes, whose hand was liberal as his thought was generous, and whose kindly regard placed the Poet far above the "favourites of great princes." What truth there may be in the tradition that the Earl gave Shakspeare a thousand pounds at one time we do not know; but the story descends through Oldys and Rowe by two different and apparently independent channels. Whether the Earl gave so large a sum at one time or not, there can be no question that he did him sundry good turns, and gave help of various kinds; if required, money would be included; when the Poet most needed help, to hearten him in his life-struggle, while he was working at the basis of his character and the foundations of his fortune and his fame. It would be a kind of breakwater influence, when the Poet was fighting with wind and wave for every bit of foothold on firm ground.

Shakspeare would likewise be indebted to his friend at Court for many a glimpse of Court life and Court manners and customs, many an insight into personal character, through this chance of seeing the personal characteristics that would otherwise have been veiled from him. His friend would lift the curtain for him, and let him peep behind the scenes which were draped to the commonalty.

It was a wonderful time for such a dramatist. Men and women played more personal parts, exerted more personal influence, and revealed more of their personal nature. The inner man got more direct outward manifestation. Shakspeare saw the spirits of men and women, as it were, in habitations of glass, sensitive to every light and shadow, and showing how the changes passed over them, by the glow or gloom that followed. Now-a-days, we are shut up in houses of stone, iron-fenced by manners and customs and the growths of time, that have accumulated between man and man, until a good deal of the Elizabethan nearness of life is gone. We have lost much of that element, which has been described as the real source of genius, the spirit of boyhood carried into manhood, which the Elizabethans had, and showed it in their friendships and their fighting, their passions and their play. We are more shut up, and only peep at one another, we reveal the smallest possible part of ourselves. The Elizabethans had more naked nature for Shakspeare to draw; he was as fortun-

at'e in the frank habits of his time as the Greek sculptors were in the freedom of their dress. He would not have made nearly so much out of us, had he lived in our day, because so much would not have been revealed or tolerated in public. He would not be able to see the most characteristic things, the best and the worst saying out their utmost, known by name, and visible at their work. The personality which Shakspeare saw and seized, would now be lessened in the increasing crowd of life, and conflict of circumstances, and change of things. He would now see no sight like that of Drake at bowls on Plymouth Hoe; or Raleigh smoking his pipe with his peasants, and making their eyes glitter with the mirage of a land of gold; a Lord Grey rushing at Southampton in the street, with his sword drawn; noble grey heads going to the block after a life of service for their country; Essex and her Majesty exhibiting in public the pets and passions of the nursery; or the Queen-coquette showing her leg to an ambassador and boxing the ears of a favourite; or dropping her glove on the stage, as the story goes, for Shakspeare to pick it up and present it to her in some regal character; or a player who, like Tarleton, dared to abuse the favourite Leicester, present with the Queen, and who "played the God Luz, with a fitch of bacon at his back; and the Queen bade them take away the knave for making her to laugh so excessively, as he fought against her little dog Perrico de Faldas, with his sword and longstaff, and bade the Queen take off her mastiff."<sup>1</sup> That was a time in which character was brought closer home to the dramatist. And the Earl of Southampton's friendship was a means of introducing our Poet to characters that must otherwise have remained out of reach. In this way he was enabled to make a close study of Southampton's friends, including persons like Essex and Mountjoy, and one of the most remarkable women of that time, one of the most unique samples of human nature, the Lady Rich, in whose person I think the Poet saw several of his creations in outline, and whose influence warmed his imagination and gave colour to the complexion of his Rosalind, Beatrice, Cleopatra, and Lady Macbeth. Many a hint of foreign scenes would he catch from those who had travelled, and could describe; men who in our time would perhaps put their experience into books; and many a heroic trait from the silent fighting men, who had done what they could not put into words. Looking over the shoulder of his private friends, Shakspeare could read from the living book, see some of the best and worst things that the life of his time had to show, and take his mental pictures with his instantaneous quickness of impression, for he had the chameleon-like spirit that could catch its colour from the air he breathed, and in the company of these friends he must often have breathed an air that "sweetly crept" into the study of his imagination, brightening and enriching his mind, and making its images of life come to him "apparelled in more precious habit," more "moving delicate," especially in the shape of the exquisite fragrant-natured English ladies who became his Imogenes and Hermiones.

Southampton's friendship could not fail to give a larger outlook and range to the Poet's mind when he was writing his early plays. It was as good to him as if he had been personally a man of State Affairs, for he was one who could make more of experience at second hand than most other people can at first hand.

<sup>1</sup> Scrap of paper in the State Paper Office, 1588. Calendar of State Papers, Elizabeth, 1581-1590, p. 541.

It has been assumed that these Sonnets of Shakspeare do but represent a form of sonneteering adulation common to the time. As though they were merely the poetic coin wherewith the Poet sought to repay the patron for his munificent gifts. Nothing could be farther from the fact. They contain no flattery. So far as they are personal to Shakspeare they come warm from his own sincere heart, and are vital with his own affectionate feeling for the brave and bounteous peer to whom he publicly dedicated "love without end," and for whom he meant to make a wreath of immortal flower which had its mortal rootage in the Poet's own life. Such a celebration of personal friendship as occurs in these Sonnets was not common as some writers have asserted. In fact it has no parallel in the Elizabethan time. Such a friendship was as uncommon as this celebration of it is rare.

Looking backward over the three centuries, and seeing the halo of glory on the brow of the dead Past, it seems that the personal friendship of man and man was a more possible and noble thing with the Elizabethan men. Perhaps it is partly owing to the natural touch of Time in the composition of his historic pictures; to the softened outline and mellowing tint. But those Elizabethans have a way of coming home to us with more of the nearness of brotherhood; they are like a band of brothers with a touch of noble boyhood about their ways, and on their faces a light as of the golden age. But such an example of personal friendship as this of Shakspeare the player and Southampton the Peer stands absolutely alone; there is nothing like it.

We are apt to think of Shakspeare as the great master-spirit, who was fit to be the friend of the noblest by birth and the kingliest by nature. Those who knew him, we fancy, would be more likely to think of the injunction that reminds us not to be forgetful of entertaining strangers, for they may be the angels of God in disguise, rather than to be troubled with thoughts and suggestions of his being only a poor player. But the age in which he lived was a time when the distinctions of rank and the boundary lines of classes were so precisely observed that even the particular style and quality of dress were imposed according to the wearer's position in life. Therefore the feeling of personal friendship must have been very strong in these two men, to have so far obliterated the social landmarks, and made their remarkable intimacy possible.

The 25th Sonnet tells us plainly enough, that the young Earl first sought out the Poet, and conferred on him an unexpected honour; a joy *unlooked-for*. This view is most in keeping with the two personal characters. Then the frank-hearted, free-handed young noble soon found that his advances were amply repaid. And he had the insight to see that here was a noble of nature, with something in him which towered over all social distinctions. On his side, the Poet would warmly appreciate the open generous disposition of the Earl, who, whatever else he lacked, had the genius to make himself beloved. Shakspeare was that natural gentleman, who could preserve exactly the distance at which the attraction is magnetically perfect, and most powerfully felt; thus the acquaintanceship soon grew into a friendship of the nearest and dearest possible between Shakspeare, the man of large and sweet affections, and the comely good-natured youth, who had the intuition to discover the Poet, and was drawn lovingly towards the man. Of the depth of the personal affection, and the inward nature of the friendship, there is the most ample proof. The dedicatory epistle to his poem of *Lucrece* breathes the most cheery assurance, and publicly



alludes to a private history that has never before been understood, but which will now serve to show how close were the personalities, how secret the relationship of Southampton and Shakspeare.

The Sonnets abound with evidence that the personal intimacy of Shakspeare and Southampton was very inward, the friendship most uncommon. So near are they, that in Sonnet 39 the Poet says the two are but one; and, that when he praises his friend, it is as though he were praising himself. Therefore, he proposes to take advantage of a separation, which is to divide them, and make their "dear love" lose the name and look of singleness, by throwing into perspective that half which alone deserves to be praised. Absence and distance are necessary to show even in appearance that the two are not one! In Sonnet 23, previously referred to, his love is so great that he cannot speak it when they meet in person: the strength of his feeling is such as to tie his tongue, and make him like an unpractised actor on the stage, overcome by his emotion, so he tries to express it in his Sonnets, pleading that they may be more eloquent with their silent love than the tongue, that might have said more. The plea also of Sonnet 22 is most expressive of tender intimacy. "Oh, my friend," he says, "be of yourself as wary as I will be of myself; not for myself, but on your account. I will bear your heart as cautiously, and keep it from all ill, as protectingly as a nurse carries her babe." His spirit hovers about his young friend. He warns him that youth is short, and beauty a fleeting gloss. He defends him when he has been falsely accused and slandered by the gossips about the Court; is sad when the Earl is reckless and does break out in wild courses, or dwells in infectious society; tries to set him writing (in Sonnet 77), by way of diversion, for his moral behoof and mental benefit. He will write of him and his love in his absence abroad, and when he returns to England, how lovingly (in Sonnet 100) he holds him to look into the sun-browned face, with a peering jealousy of affection, to see what change has been wrought by the wear of war and waste of time,—

"Rise, restive Muse, my Love's sweet face survey;  
If Time have any wrinkle graven there,—

"be ready with the colour of eternal tint to retouch his beauty and make it live for ever in immortal youth." Then we shall see that the Poet's love grows warmer, as the world looks colder on the Earl; it rises with the tide of calamity that threatened to overwhelm him; it exults and "looks fresh with the drops of that most balmy time," when the Poet welcomed his friend at the opened door of his prison, in 1603 (Sonnet 107), and made the free light of day once more richer with his cordial smile.

"If the Earl of Southampton," says Boaden, "had been the person addressed by Shakspeare, we should expect the Poet to have told the Earl that but for his calamity and disgrace, mankind would never have known the resources of his mighty mind." So might we if the Poet had been a common flatterer, who had stood afar off and talked flamboyant nonsense that was never meant to be tested for the truth, never brought to bear upon the real facts because of the personal distance at which it was spoken. But this was not Shakspeare's position. The Earl had not a mighty mind, and Shakspeare was not driven by stress of circumstances to laud the mental gifts which his friend did not possess. In only a single instance has he mentioned the intellect of the Earl. Sonnet 82 says,

"Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue!"

In this fact we may find one more illustration of the inwardness of their personal intimacy. They were too intimate, and knew each other too well for any "bosh" to be tolerated on either side. When Shakspeare spoke to his friend Southampton it was from the quiet depths of genuine feeling, not from the noisy shallows of flattery; and such was the nature of their intercourse, the freedom of their friendship, that he was permitted to do so, and could afford it. What Shakspeare found in Southampton was not great gifts of mind to admire, but a fine generosity and hearty frankness of nature to love. He was one of those who grasp a friend with both hands to hold him fast, and wear him in their heart of hearts. Shakspeare loved him too truly to speak of him falsely. He was the only great poet in an age of adulation who never stood cap in hand, or dealt in "*lozengerie*." Whilst Spenser's Sonnets are sent to his patron in the servile attitude of flunkies, Shakspeare's personal ones go with the bearing of ambassadors. Shakspeare did not address his friend as a public man at a distance—had no need of the speaking trumpet—but was thus secret and familiar with him as a bosom friend.

Upon any theory of interpretation the personal intimacy must have been of the closest, most familiar kind. Those who have so basely imagined that Shakspeare and his young friend both shared one mistress must assume that the intimacy was one of great nearness. Also those who accept the ignorant reading of the 20th Sonnet must admit that the Poet was on very familiar terms with the Earl to address him in the language which they have attributed to him by their modern rather than Elizabethan reading. My interpretation supposes a nearness equally great, a personal intimacy equally secret, but as pure as theirs is gross, as noble as theirs is ignoble, as natural as theirs is unnatural. An intimacy which does not strain all probability in assuming it to have been close enough for Shakspeare to write dramatic sonnets on his friend's love and courtship, as it does to suppose the Poet wrote Sonnets to proclaim their mutual disgrace, and perpetuate his own sin and shame. In truth it is the sense of such nearness as I advocate, that, working blindly, has given some show of likelihood to the vulgar interpretation; the tender feeling passing the love of woman which, carried into the interpretation of the impersonal Sonnets by prurient minds, has made the intimacy look one of which any extravagance might be believed.

The *personal Sonnets* all tend to show and illustrate this nearness of the two friends, only they prove it to have been on Shakspeare's part of the purest, loftiest, most manly kind. There is not one of those wherein Shakspeare is the speaker for certain, that can possibly be pressed into showing that the friendship had the vile aspect into which it has been distorted by false focussing.

Southampton being identified as the person addressed, and the object of Shakspeare's personal affection, the intimacy must have been one that was perfectly compatible with the Earl's love for a woman. For it is certain that he *was in love, and passionately wooing Elizabeth Vernon, during some years of the time over which the Sonnets extend*. And it would be witlessly weak to suppose that Shakspeare wrote Sonnets upon a disgraceful intimacy to amuse a man who was purely in love; out of all nature to imagine that he pursued Southampton in a wooing amorous way more fondly and tenderly than ever after the Earl had become passionately enamoured of Elizabeth Vernon. He would neither thrust himself forward as the lady's rival for the Earl's love, nor

appear in her presence-chamber covered with moral mire to remind them both of the fact that he and the Earl had rolled together in the dirt; and the intimacy must have been such as to recommend Shakspeare to Elizabeth Vernon as a friend of the Earl, not brand him as an enemy to herself. Again, Boaden is of opinion that the Sonnets do not at all apply to Lord Southampton, either as to age, character, or the bustle and activity of a life distinguished by distant and hazardous service, to something of which they must have alluded had he been their object. He argues that there was not sufficient difference in their ages for Shakspeare to have called the Earl "sweet boy." The difference was nine years and six months. Our Poet was born April, 1564, and his friend October, 1573. Now if the two men had been of like mental constitution, that difference in years would have made considerable disparity in character when the one was thirty and the other but twenty years of age. But one man is not as old as another at the same age, nor are men constituted alike. Shakspeare's mental life, and ten years' experience in such a life, were very different things from the life and experience of his young friend.

He would be quite warranted by this difference of age in calling the Earl "sweet boy," who was a boy when matched with his own mental manhood, but his expression did not depend on age alone. When a priest says "my child," he does not first stop to consider whether the person so addressed is some twenty years younger than himself. He is presumed to be speaking from a feeling that is not exactly governed or guided chronologically. So with Shakspeare. He is taking the liberty and latitude of affection. He uses the language of a love that delights to dally with the small words and dainty diminutives of speech, which Dante calls the "wee short words one cannot say without smiling," and tries as it were to express the largeness of its feeling in the least possible shape, on purpose to get all the nearer to nature; it being the way of all fond love to express itself in miniature. It is one of Shakspeare's ways of expressing the familiarity of his affection more than any difference in age. He speaks by virtue of that protecting tenderness of spirit which he feels for the youth—the prerogative of very near friendship—an authority which no age could necessarily confer. And it is also his way of expressing the difference of rank and position, as the world would have it, that existed betwixt them; the distance at which he is supposed to stand is turned to account in the shape of an elder brotherhood. It is of set purpose that Shakspeare paints himself older than he was, as most obviously he has done; it is intended as a foil and framework for his picture. He deepens the contrast and gives to his own years a sort of golden gloom, and mellow background, with the view of setting forth in more vernal hues the fresh ruddy youth of his friend, the subject of his "passion." He puts on an autumnal tint and exaggerates his riper years on purpose to place in relief that image of youth which he has determined to perpetuate in all its spring-tide beauty, and thus the "yellow leaf" throws out the rathness of the green. This does not show that there were not sufficient years betwixt them, but that the intimacy of friendship was such as to permit the Poet to obey a natural law which has served to finish his picture with a more artistic touch, and to further illustrate the familiarity of his affection.

And here we may fairly infer that the world is indebted to this personal relationship for those beautiful delineations of loving friendship betwixt man and man which Shakspeare has given us, excelling all other dramatists here as

elsewhere. He himself has portrayed the most human-hearted types of male friendship! He who wrote this memorable advice, "keep thy friend under thy own life's key; be checked for silence, but never taxed for speech!" There is a sacred sweetness in his manly friendship; fine and fragrant in its kind, as is the delicate aroma breathed by his most natural and exquisite women. No one, like him, has so tenderly shown the souls of two men in the pleasant wedlock of a delightful friendship. The rarest touch being reserved for the picture in which one friend is considerably older than the other. Then the effect is gravely-glad some indeed; the touch is one of the nearest to nature. This we connect with his own affectionate feeling for the young Early, and see how that which was subjective in the Sonnets has become objective in the plays. Thus, behind Bassanio and Antonio we may identify Southampton and Shakspeare.

Also, as pointed out to me many years ago by Mrs. Cowden Clarke, in another Antonio and the Viola-faced youth, Sebastian, of *Twelfth Night*, we have a still more striking reflex of the Sonnet friendship. This dear old fellow-labourer says in her letter, "*I have often felt with you that Antonio and Bassanio were dramatized pictures of Shakspeare and his beloved friend of the Sonnets. I also think that Antonio, the sea-captain, and Sebastian are repainted pictures of the same subject, even yet more closely copied from life. The humility, the fascinated attachment, the idolatrous admiration, together with the consciousness of power to protect and guide, as shown in his restless following and offer of his sailor's purse, even while treating the youth as a being of a superior order, are all reflexes of the Sonnet friendship. And then the passionate regret in the after-scene—'But oh! how vile an idol proves this God!'*"

This view, however, is coloured or discoloured by the *personal theory* of the Sonnets; and it should be remembered that Antonio's exclamation was *the result of a complete mistake on his part*, and was not based on any real change in Sebastian! He did not speak from a clearer insight into the character of his young friend, but from the blindness of his own error, and therefore this does NOT countenance the personal interpretation of certain Sonnets, which I maintain are not spoken by Shakspeare in his own character. The false impression in the play does not make for reality as between the two male friends in the Sonnets. Also, it is Sebastian who says, "My stars shine darkly over me; the malignance of my fate might perhaps distemper yours."

Antonio says he gave Sebastian his love "without restraint, all his in Dedication." But note the difference between the Sonnet and the Play. Antonio declares that he did *devotion to the image of Sebastian*; whereas Shakspeare says in the Sonnets,

"Let NOT my love be called Idolatry,  
Nor my beloved AS AN IDOL show."

We have to distinguish difference as well as discover similitude in character, and must not allow any trait of likeness to vouch for a whit more than it is worth; must not permit the least smudge of confusion, nor lose the least particular by any looseness of generalization. We know that Shakspeare was "all his in Dedication," but we may never know how much the Poet adventured for his young friend who was bound up in the Essex bond, how far he lent himself, in spite of his better judgment, but we may be sure that his love, like

that of Antonio, was strong enough to surmount all selfish considerations. He was one like Antonio, "that for his love dares yet do more than you have heard him brag to you he will."

Students of Shakspeare's times, his life, and works will have received an impression that our Poet must have been in some way, to some extent, mixed up with the affairs of Essex. I am told that the late Mr. Croker, of the *Quarterly Review*, always entertained this opinion, although he could never lay his hand on any very tangible evidence of the fact. There is constructive evidence enough to show, that if Shakspeare was not hand-in-glove with the Essex faction, he fought on their side pen-in-hand. In the chorus at the end of *Henry the Fifth* he introduced a prophecy of the Earl's expected successes in Ireland. This was after Bacon had parted company with Essex.

Then, one of the counts in Essex's indictment was the play of *King Richard the Second*, which, according to Bacon's account of Meyrick's arraignment, was ordered to be played to satisfy his eyes with a sight of that tragedy which he thought soon after his lord should bring from the stage to the State. That this play was Shakspeare's cannot be doubted, except by the most wilful crassness or determined blindness; nor that the "*new additions of the Parliament scene, and the deposing of King Richard, as it hath been lately acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe,*" were made to the drama, previously written by Shakspeare, at the call of his patrons, the confused recollections of Forman notwithstanding. I shall have to add another bit of evidence, that Shakspeare did throw a little light on things political with the *dark lanthorn*, and introduce allusions which, to say the least, were calculated to make play for Essex; and thus far we must hold that our Poet was on the same side, and rowed, as we say, in the same boat with these "private friends"; this fact will furnish my concluding illustration of the personal intimacy of Peer and Poet, and of their friendship's binding and abiding force.

Nevertheless, the present contention is not that the Earl of Southampton was the friend of Shakspeare and that William Herbert was not! Both of these noblemen were patrons of literature; both were his personal friends; Southampton being the *first by many years*. It is the fundamental fallacy of the Brownites, who are misled by Thorpe's "Only Begetter," to assume that this proved or implied that one friend only was concerned in the production of the Sonnets; and it is their irretrievable error to try and read the one friendship backwards all through the Sonnets, when there are two entirely distinct series; so distinct that the earlier Sonnets, which were consecrated to Southampton by the personal love of Shakspeare, are profaned by being mixed up with the Latter Sonnets as commonly interpreted; the matter being made still worse when these are read as the personal utterances of Shakspeare. Then a defamation of his character is added to the de-consecration of the Sonnets which he had devoted to his first and foremost friend. It is their especial work to confuse by mixing up all together the Sonnets of Herbert with those of Southampton; the "Sweet Argument" with the unsweet, in the same state of general promiscuity as that which they then deduce and ascribe to Shakspeare, his Boy, and the Dark Lady. Hence they could neither distinguish nor define; they have only obfuscated the Sonnets and confused the minds of their readers.

Those who begin with Herbert and the date of 1598, under the blind guidance of Thorpe, are bound to read the Sonnets backwards. They are precluded from

looking at anything in a straightforward manner, and must go wrong from the starting-point.

The advocates of the hypothesis that William Herbert was the sole inspirer of Shakspeare's Sonnets are helplessly driven to deny—(1) that the young friend was fatherless ; (2) that he was the only support of his house ; (3) that the Sonnets were begun in 1590 ; (4) that they were written before the early Plays as quoted ; (5) that they were written before *Venus and Adonis* was printed ; (6) that they were written with the poet's "Pupil Pen" ; (7) that "Books" of the Sonnets were sent to Southampton privately before the Poems were dedicated to him publicly ; (8) that Southampton was the living original from whom the Poet drew his Adonis ; (9) that Marlowe was the rival Poet of the Sonnets ; (10) that these Sonnets were extant in 1598 according to the testimony of Meres. In short, they are forced to ignore everything inside or outside of the Sonnets that can be established on behalf of Southampton ; and compelled to suppress, pervert, or overlook every fact that is fatal to their one primary false assumption. It has been very truly said that when the human will is strongly disposed to ignore the practical consequences of a fact, it "has a subtle and almost unlimited power of blinding the intellect even to the most elementary laws of evidence ;" but this truth has never been more curiously exemplified than by the Brownites.

The latest attempt to dodge the fatal dates is that made by Professor Dowden and Mr. Furnivall, who tell their readers that it really matters very little who the "Mr. W. H." of Thorpe's Inscription or the "Will" of the Sonnet was ! But in doing this they are sitting like the man on the end of the plank projecting from a high window, and sawing betwixt themselves and the wall. If W. H. be not "William Herbert," they are launched backward into space with nothing whatever to break their fall. A story told of the hunted beaver, by Herodotus, if not matter-of-fact, may be commended to their notice as a most apposite fable.

SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS

PERSONAL AND DRAMATIC

WRITTEN TO AND FOR THE

EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON.

*Our most observant Man, most unobserved ;  
Maker of Portraits for Humanity !  
He held the Mirror up to Nature's face,  
Forgetting with colossal carelessness  
To look into it and reflect his own :  
Even in the Sonnets he put on the Mask  
And was, at times, a Player as in the Plays.*



## PERSONAL SONNETS.

*The earliest Sonnets personal to Shakspeare commending marriage to his young friend the Earl of Southampton.*

From fairest creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby Beauty's rose might never die,  
But as the ripper should by time decease,  
His tender Heir might bear his memory :  
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,  
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial  
fuel,

Making a famine where abundance lies,  
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel :  
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,  
And only herald to the gaudy spring,  
Within thine own bud buriedst thy content  
And, tender churl! mak'st waste in niggarding:  
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,  
To eat the world's due, by the grave and  
thee. (1)

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,  
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,  
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,  
Will be a tattered weed, of small worth held :  
Then being asked where all thy beauty lies,  
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,  
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,  
Were an all-eating shame, and thriftless praise:  
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's  
use,

If thou could'st answer, "*this fair child of  
mine  
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse,*"  
Proving his beauty by succession thine !  
This were to be new-made when thou art  
old,  
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it  
cold. (2)

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou  
viewest,  
Now is the time that face should form another,  
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest.  
Thou dost beguile the world—unless some  
mother :  
For where is she so fair, whose unear'd womb  
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry ?  
Or who is he so fond, will be the tomb  
Of his self-love to stop posterity ?

Thou art thy Mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime :  
So thou, through windows of thine age, shalt  
see,  
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time :  
But if thou live—remembered not to be—  
Die single, and thine image dies with thee. (3)

Unthrifty loveliness! why dost thou spend  
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy ?  
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,  
And, being frank, she lends to those are free :  
Then, beauteous niggard! why dost thou abuse  
The bounteous largess given thee to give ?  
Profitless usurer! why dost thou use  
So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live ?  
For, having traffic with thyself alone,  
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive :  
Then how, when Nature calls thee to be gone,  
What acceptable audit canst thou leave ?  
Thy unused beauty must be tomb'd with  
thee,  
Which, used, lives thy executor to be. (4)

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame  
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,  
Will play the tyrants to the very same,  
And that unfair, which fairly doth excel :  
For never-resting Time leads summer on  
To hideous winter, and confounds him there ;  
Sap checked with frost, and lusty leaves quite  
gone,  
Beauty o'er-snowed, and bareness everywhere :  
Then, were not Summer's distillation left,  
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,  
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,  
Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was !  
But flowers distilled, though they with winter  
meet,  
Leese but their show ; their substance still  
lives sweet. (5)

Then let not Winter's rugged hand deface  
In thee thy summer, ere thou be distilled :

Make sweet some phial ; treasure thou some  
place

With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-killed :  
That use is not forbidden luxury,  
Which happies those that pay the willing  
loan :

That's for thyself to breed another thee,  
Or ten times happier ! be it ten for one :  
Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,  
If ten of thine ten times refigured thee :  
Then what could Death do if thou shouldst  
depart,

Leaving thee living in posterity ?  
Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair  
To be Death's conquest, and make worms  
thine heir. (6)

Lo, in the Orient when the gracious light  
Lifts up his burning head, each under-eye  
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,  
Serving with looks his sacred majesty :  
And having climbed the steep-up heavenly  
hill,

Resembling strong Youth in his middle age,  
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty, still  
Attending on his golden pilgrimage :  
But when from highest pitch, with weary  
car,

Like feeble Age, he reeleth from the day,  
The eyes—fore duteous—now converted are  
From his low tract, and look another way :  
So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,  
Unlooked on diest, unless thou get a son.  
(7)

Music to hear ! why hear'st thou music sadly ?  
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in  
joy :

Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not  
gladly,

Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy ?  
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,  
By unions married, do offend thine ear,  
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds  
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst  
bear :

Mark how one string, sweet husband to  
another,

Strikes each in each by mutual ordering ;  
Resembling Sire, and Child, and happy Mother,  
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing :

Whose speechless song being many, seeming  
one,  
Sings this to thee—" *Thou single wilt prove  
none.*" (8)

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye,  
That thou consum'st thyself in single life ?  
Ah ! if thou issueless shalt hap to die,  
The world will wail thee like a makeless wife ;

The world will be thy widow ! and still weep  
That thou no form of thee hast left behind,  
When every private widow well may keep,  
By children's eyes, her husband's shape in  
mind :

Look, what an unthrift in the world doth  
spend

Shifts but its place, for still the world enjoys  
it ;

But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,  
And kept unused, the user so destroys it :  
No love towards others in that bosom sits  
That on himself such murderous shame  
commits. (9)

For shame ! deny that thou bear'st love to any,  
Who for thyself art so unprovident :  
Grant, if thou wilt, thou art beloved of many,  
But that thou none lov'st is most evident ;  
For thou art so possessed with murderous hate  
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to con-  
spire ;

Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate  
Which to repair should be thy chief desire :  
O, change thy thought, that I may change my  
mind !

Shall Hate be freer lodged than gentle Love ?  
Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind,  
Or to thyself, at least, kind-hearted prove ;  
Make thee another self, for love of me,  
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.  
(10)

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou growest  
In one of thine, from that which thou depart-  
est ;

And that fresh blood which youngly thou  
bestowest

Thou may'st call thine, when thou from youth  
convertest :

Herein lives wisdom, beauty and increase ;  
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay :  
If all were minded so, the times should cease,  
And threescore years would make the world  
away :

Let those whom Nature hath not made for  
store,

Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish :  
Look, whom she best endowed, she gave thee  
more ;

Which bounteous gift thou should'st in bounty  
cherish ;

She carved thee for her seal, and meant  
thereby

Thou should'st print more, nor let that copy  
die. (11)

When I do count the clock that tells the time,  
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night ;  
When I behold the violet past prime,  
And sable curls are silvered o'er with white ;

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,  
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,  
And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,  
Borne on the bier with white and bristly  
beard;—

Then of thy beauty do I question make,  
That thou amongst the wastes of time must go,  
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake  
And die as fast as they see others grow;

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make  
defence,

Save breed, to brave him when he takes  
thee hence. (12)

O, that you were yourself! but Love, you are  
No longer yours, than you yourself here live:

Against this coming end you should prepare,  
And your sweet semblance to some other give:  
So should that beauty which you hold in lease,  
Find no determination; then you were  
Yourself again after yourself's decease,  
When your sweet issue your sweet form should  
bear:

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,  
Which husbandry in honour might uphold  
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day,  
And barren rage of Death's eternal cold?

O none but unthrifths! Dear, my Love, you  
know

You had a Father; let your Son say so.

(13)

In my previous treatment of the Sonnets I did not dare to date the earliest of them quite early enough; nor did I fully apprehend all that depended on getting the chronology absolutely right. I then said, "In this first group the Poet advises and persuades his young friend the Earl of Southampton to get married. A very practical object in writing the Sonnets! This of itself shows that he did not set out to write after the fashion of Drayton and Daniel, and dally with 'Idea' as they did. Here is a young noble of nature's own making; a youth of quick and kindling blood, apt to take fire at a touch, whether of pleasure or of pain; likely enough to be enticed into the garden of Armida and the palace of sin. He is left without the guidance of a father, and the Poet feels for him an affection all the more protecting and paternal. We may perceive that underneath the pretty conceits sparkling on the surface of these Earlier Sonnets there lies a grave purpose, a profound depth of wisdom. This urgency on the score of marriage is no mere sonnetting trick, or playing with the shadows of things. The writer knows well enough that there is nothing like true marriage, a worthy wife, the love of children, and a happy home, to bring the exuberant life into the keeping of the highest, holiest law. Nothing like the wifely influence, and the clinging of children's wee fingers, for twining winningly about the lusty energies of youth, and realizing the antique image of Love riding on a lion; the laughing mite triumphantly leading captive the fettered might, having taken him 'prisoner, in a red rose chain!' Seeing his young friend surrounded with temptations, his personal beauty of mien and manner being so prominent a mark for the darts of the wicked one, he would fain have him safely shielded by the sacred shelter of marriage. Accordingly he assails him with suggestion and argument in many forms of natural appeal; and whilst harping much on the main object for which marriage was designed, the harmony of the life truly wedded rises like a strain of exquisite music, as it were, wooing the youth from within the doors of the marriage sanctuary." This has now to be modified. And here let me say, it is a great advantage as well as a privilege to be able to write one's work over again after many years. It is like having had the benefit of experience in being married a second time.

The earliest Sonnets on marriage could not have been written until after Shakspeare had read the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney. So great is the likeness between Sidney's writing and Shakspeare's Sonnets, that Sir Walter Scott fancied these must have been read by Sidney. The likeness remains, but the

facts were just reversed by him. Shakspeare, not Sidney, was the borrower. He has adopted plea after plea and argument after argument in favour of marriage, and taken the greater part of his subject matter for the first 12 or 13 Sonnets from Sidney's *Arcadia*. In Book iii. pp. 431, 432, of that work, will be found these arguments on behalf of marriage and children—

"No, no, my dear niece (said Cecropia), Nature, when you were first born, vowed you a woman, and as *she made you child of a mother, so to do your best to be mother of a child. She gave you beauty to move love; she gave you wit to know love; she gave you an excellent body to reward love; which kind of liberal rewarding is crowned with an unspeakable felicity. For this, as it bindeth the receiver, so it makes happy the bestower. This doth not impoverish, but enrich the giver.* O the comfort of comforts, to see your children grow up, *in whom you are, as it were, eternised!* If you could conceive what a heart-tickling joy it is to see your own little ones, with awful love come running to your lap, and like *little models of yourself still carry you about them, you would think unkindness in your own thoughts,* that ever they did rebel against the measure to it. Perchance I set this blessedness before your eyes, as captains do victory before their soldiers, to which they must come thro' many pains, griefs, and dangers? No, I am content you shrink from this my counsel, if the way to come unto it be not most of all pleasant."

"I know not (answered the sweet Philoclea) what contentment you speak of, but I am sure the best you can make of it (which is marriage) is a burdensome yoke."

"Ah, dear niece (said Cecropia), how much you are deceived. A yoke, indeed, we all bear, laid upon us in creation, which by marriage is not increased, but thus far eased that you have a yoke-fellow to help draw through the cloddy cumbers of this world. O widow-nights, bear witness with me of the difference! How often alas, do I embrace the orphan side of my bed, which was wont to be imprinted by the body of my dear husband! Believe me, niece, man's experience is woman's best eye-sight. *Have you ever seen a pure rose-water kept in a crystal glass? How fine it looks! how sweet it smells while the beautiful glass imprisons it!* Break the prison, and let the water take his own course, doth it not embrace the dust, and lose all his former sweetness and fairness? Truly so are we, if we have not the stay rather than the restraint of crystalline marriage. My heart melts to think of the sweet comfort I, in that happy time, received, when I had never cause to care but the care was doubled; when I never rejoiced, but that I saw my joy shine in another's eyes. And is a solitary life as good as this? *Then, can one string make as good music as a consort? Then, can one colour set forth a beauty?*"

This passage contains most of the Texts for the first 13 Sonnets. Take the last one first; "Can one string make as good music as a consort?" (concert) and see how it is expanded in Sonnet 8, where the concert or harmony of parts is portrayed. Look next at the imagery of distillation applied in Sonnets 5 and 6; here in the lines italicized are the suggestions of the "liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass," Sonnet 5, and the following out of the illustration in the next Sonnet, "Make sweet some vial;" the suggestion of Sonnet 6—

Which happiest those that pay the willing loan.

Also of the children—same Sonnet—which are to "eternise," so that death

shall leave him "living in posterity;" the argument of the "single string" in Sonnet 8, reversely applied; the image of the widow with her children, who keep her husband's form in mind, Sonnet 9; the plea, "O change thy thought," because it is unkindly, Sonnet 10; the argument of Sonnet 11,—

Which bounteous gift thou should'st in bounty cherish.

When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.—*Sonnet 13.*

The suggestion of Sonnet 13—

Dear, my Love, you know  
You had a Father: let your son say so!

All these are in that brief passage of Sidney's prose, and all are used for the same purpose, the main difference being that in the *Arcadia* it is a woman speaking to a woman. Various other illustrations might be cited, to show that Shakspeare has literally adopted sentiment, idea, and image, one after the other, from the *Arcadia*. Let me draw out a brief parallel of likenesses in accordance with the order of the Sonnets.

*Sonnets.*

From fairest creatures we desire increase  
That thereby Beauty's Rose might never die. (1)

When forty Winters shall besiege thy brow. (2)

If thou couldst answer, this fair child of mine  
Shall sum my count. (2)

Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime. (3)

A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass. (5)  
Make sweet some vial. (6)

Which happens those that pay the willing  
loan. (6)

No love towards others in that bosom sits,  
That on himself such murderous shame com-  
mits. (10)

Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate,  
Which to repair should be thy chief desire. (10)

Then you were yourself again after your self's  
decease,  
When your sweet issue your sweet form should  
bear. (13)

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay  
Which husbandry in honour might uphold. (13)

Dear, my love, you know  
You had a father; let your son say so. (13)

*Arcadia.*

Beauty is a gift which those on whomsoever  
the heavens have bestowed it are without  
question bound to use it for the noble purpose  
for which it was created.

Will you suffer your beauty to be hidden in  
wrinkles? These forty Winters have I married  
been.

She made you child of a mother, so to do  
your best to be mother of a child.

Have you ever seen a pure rose-water kept  
in a crystal glass?

It makes happy the bestower.  
That indeed is the right happiness which is  
not only in itself happy, but can also derive  
the happiness to another.

If thus thou murder thy posterity,  
Thy very being thou hast not deserved.

Thy House by thee must live or else be gone.

Oh, the Comfort of Comforts, to see your  
children grow up, in whom you are, as it were,  
eternized . . . little models of yourself.

She made you child of a mother, so to do  
your best to be a mother of a child.

*Sonnets.*

And you must live drawn by your own sweet  
skill. (16)

For all that beauty that doth cover thee  
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart. (22)

For all that beauty that doth cover thee  
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,  
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me,  
How can I then be elder than thou art ?  
O therefore love be of thyself so wary. (22)

*Arcadia.*

With his sweet skill my skillless youth he  
drew.

My wealth is you,  
My beauty's hue your beams, my health your  
deeds ;  
My mind for weeds your virtue's livery wears.  
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his,  
By just exchange one for the other given :  
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss ;  
There never was a better bargain driven :  
His heart in me keeps me, and him in me ;  
My heart in him his thoughts and senses  
guides ;  
He loves my heart, for once it was his own ;  
I'll cherish his because in me it bids.

The following passages are selected from 'Geron and Histor' (*Arcadia* 71)  
as a further specimen of Sidney's argument in verse—

"In faith, good Histor, long is your delay  
From holy marriage, sweet and surest meane,  
Our foolish lust in honest rules to stay :  
Believe me, man, there is no greater bliss  
Than is the quiet joy of loving wife,  
Which whoso wants, half of himself doth miss.  
Friend without change, play-fellow without strife  
Is this sweet doubling of a single life.

Nature above all things requireth this,  
That we our kind do labour to maintain,  
Which drawn-out line doth hold all human bliss :  
The Father justly may of thee complain,  
If thou do not repay his deeds for thee,  
In granting unto him a grandsire's name.  
Thy Commonwealth may rightly grievèd be,  
Which must by this immortal be preserved,  
If thus thou murder thy posterity !

O Histor, seek within thyself to flourish ;  
Thy House by thee must live, or else be gone,  
And then who shall the name of Histor nourish ?  
Riches of children pass a Prince's throne.

The matter of Shakspeare's first 13 Sonnets then is mainly adapted from Sidney's *Arcadia*, which was published in 1590. But the most fully-developed faculty of comparison can detect nothing in the first 13 Sonnets that could have been derived from Sidney's Sonnets in his 'Astrophel and Stella,' which was NOT published until 1591. This very striking fact tends to warrant the inference that these 13 Sonnets, at least, were written immediately after Shakspeare had read the *Arcadia* in 1590, and before he had seen the *Astrophel and Stella* of 1591. Because with Sonnet 14 the likeness to or borrowing from the later work begins. For example, Sidney writes—

"Though dusty Wits dare scorn Astrology,  
And Fools can think those lamps of purest light—  
Whose numbers, ways, greatness, eternity,  
Promising wonders, wonders do invite—

To have for no cause birthright in the sky  
 But for to spangle the black weeds of night ;  
 Or for some brawl, which in that chamber high,  
 They should still dance to please a gazer's sight ;  
 For me I do Nature un-idle know,  
 And know great Causes great effects procure ;  
 And know those bodies high reign on the low ;  
 And if those rules did fail proof makes me sure,  
 Who oft foresee my after-following race  
*By only those two stars in Stella's face.*" (26, Grosart's Ed.)

Now the writing of a Sonnet properly consists in the perfect evolution of one thought. In that sense this is a perfect Sonnet, as so many of Sidney's are. The subject is Astrology, an earlier form of Astronomy. The writer is a believer in astrology ; he prognosticates the future by means of its science. Not by the stars in heaven though, but by the heaven of those two stars in Stella's face. Now see how Shakspeare takes the one thought and turns it to his own account, on the line of his one thought running through many Sonnets, viz. that of getting his friend to marry—

" Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck,  
 And yet methinks I have Astronomy ;<sup>1</sup>  
 But not to tell of good or evil luck,  
 Of plagues, of deaths, or Seasons' quality :  
 Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,  
 Pointing to each its thunder, rain or wind ;  
 Or say with Princes if it shall go well,  
 By oft predict that I in Heaven find :  
*But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,*  
 And—*constant Stars !*—in them I read such Art  
 As truth and beauty shall together thrive,  
 If from thyself to store thou would'st convert ;  
 Or else of thee this I prognosticate  
 Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and date."

After this there is considerable derivation at times, but no such wholesale adoption of argument as there was from the *Arcadia*.

This is from one of Sidney's songs—

" Doubt you to whom my Muse these notes intendeth,  
 Which now my breast surcharged to music lendeth !  
     To you, to you  
     All song of praise is due,  
 Only in you my song begins and endeth.

Who hath the eyes that marry state with pleasure,  
 Who keeps the key of Nature's chiefest treasure !  
     To you, to you  
     All song of praise is due,  
 Only for you the Heaven forgot all measure."

My reader probably knows how often that strain is echoed in Shakspeare's Sonnets.

<sup>1</sup> "Astronomy." This exchange is curious. *Astrology* was the correct term, but this belonged to the later science.

In his wretched outcast state Sidney describes his forlorn condition as that of a bankrupt. He says—

“ With what sharp checks I in myself am shent  
 When into Reason's Audit I do go,  
 And by just counts myself a bankrupt know  
 Of all those goods which Heaven to me hath lent ;  
 Unable quite to pay even Nature's rent,  
 Which unto it by birthright I do owe ;  
 And which is worse no good excuse can show,  
 But that my wealth I have most idly spent !  
 My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys ;  
 My wit doth strive those passions to defend,  
 Which for reward spoil it with vain annoys :  
 I see my course to lose myself doth bend ;  
 I see—and yet no greater sorrow take  
 Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake.”

In the next Sonnet Sidney writes—

“ When most I glory, then I feel most shame,”

and in Sonnet 64—

“ Let Fortune lay on me her worst disgrace,  
 Let folk o'ercharged with brain against me cry.”

This position of the bankrupt is similar, and the same thoughts are amplified, the expression being intensified, in Shakspeare's 29th and 30th Sonnets, in which the speaker bemoans his bankrupt condition, his outcast state, the waste of his previous time. In the one case the speaker is self-summoned to the *audit* and reckoning of Reason. In the other the speaker says—

“ When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
 I summon up remembrance of things past.”

Sidney writes of Stella (1st Song) as she “ *who long-dead beauty with increase reneweth.*” The speaker of Sonnet 31 says—

“ Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts  
 Which I, by lacking, have supposed dead ;  
 And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,  
 And all those friends that I thought buried.”—*Sonnet 31.*

In his absence from Stella Sidney writes, Sonnets 88, 89—

“ Out, traitor Absence, darest thou counsel me  
 From my dear Captainess to run away.”

“ Tush, Absence ; while thy mists eclipse that light,  
 My orphan sense flies to the inward sight.”

(Cf. Shakspeare, Sonnet 61.)

#### NIGHT AND DAY.

“ Now that of absence the most irksome night  
 With darkest shade doth overcome my day ;  
 Since Stella's eyes, wont to give me my day,  
 Leaving my hemisphere, leave me in night ;



Each day seems long, and longs for long-staid night ;  
 The night, as tedious, woos th' approach of day :  
*Tired with the dusty toils of busy day,*  
 Languished with horror of the silent night ;  
 Suffering the evils both of day and night,  
 While no night is more dark than is my day,  
 Nor no day hath less quiet than my night :  
 With such bad mixture of my night and day,  
 That living thus in blackest Winter night,  
 I feel the flames of hottest Summer day."

With these lines we may compare the following of Shakspeare's, which are uttered by a speaker in his absence from the person addressed—

" *Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,*  
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,  
 But then begins a journey in my head  
 To work my mind, when body's work's expired :  
 For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)  
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,  
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,  
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see :  
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight  
 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
 Which like a jewel (hung in ghastly night)  
 Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new :  
 Lo thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,  
 For thee, and for myself, no quiet find."—*Sonnet 27.*

" How can I then return in happy plight  
 That am debarred the benefit of rest ?  
 When day's oppression is not eased by night,  
 But day by night and night by day oppressed."—*Sonnet 28.*

" But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,  
 And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger."—*Sonnet 28.*

Each Poet also writes a Sonnet on seeing the beloved one imaged by night in sleep.

## SHAKSPEARE'S.

When most I wink then do mine eyes best  
 see,  
 For all the day they view things unrespected,  
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,  
 And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed :  
 Then thou whose shadow shadows doth make  
 bright,  
 How would thy shadow's form form happy  
 show  
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,  
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so ?  
 How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made,  
 By looking on thee in the living day ?  
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade  
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth  
 stay ?  
 All days are nights to see till I see thee,  
 And nights bright days when dreams do shew  
 thee me. *Sonnet 43.*

## SIDNEY'S.

This night, while sleep begins with heavy  
 wings  
 To hatch mine eyes, and that unbitted thought  
 Doth fall to stray, and my chief powers are  
 brought  
 To leave the sceptre of all subject things ;  
 The first that straight my fancy's error brings  
 Unto my mind is Stella's image, wrought  
 By Love's own self, but with so curious drougth  
 That she, methinks, not only shines but sings :  
 I start, look, hark ; but what in closed-up  
 sense  
 Was held, in opened sense it flies away,  
 Leaving me nought but wailing eloquence :  
 I, seeing better sights in sight's decay,  
 Called it anew, and wooed Sleep again ;  
 But him, her host, that unkind guest had  
 slain. *Sonnet 98.*

The following lines are spoken by Sidney in absence and on horseback—

“ I on my horse, and Love on me, doth try  
 Our horsemanships, while by strange work I prove  
 A horseman to my horse, a horse to Love,  
 And now man's wrongs in me, poor beast! descry :  
 The rein wherewith my rider doth me tie  
 Are humbled thoughts, which bit of reverence move,  
 Curbed in with fear, but with gilt bosse above  
 Of hope, which makes it seem fair to the eye ;  
 The wand is will ; thou, Fancy, saddle art,  
 Girt fast by Memory ; and while I spur  
 My horse, he spurs with sharp desire my heart ;  
 He sits me fast, however I do stir ;  
 And now hath made me to his hand so right,  
 That in the manage myself take delight.”—Sidney's *Sonnets*, 49.

Again, Sidney speaks on horseback—

“ High-way ! since you my chief Parnassus be,  
 And that my Muse, to some ears not unsweet,  
 Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet  
 More oft than to a chamber-melody ;  
 Now blessed you bear onward blessed me  
 To her, where I, my heart safe left, shall meet.”

Compare with these the 50th and 51st of Shakspeare's Sonnets. This will suffice to demonstrate the fact that Shakspeare *did* also copy from or imitate Sidney in his *Astrophel and Stella*. But this was in Sonnets that follow the first 13.

Here then is further evidence to show that Shakspeare's Sonnets were begun as early as 1590, and therefore they were in time for the writer to be the New Sonneteer aimed at by Nash as a Player and a man of “ little Country Grammar knowledge.”

Now there was a scheme afoot as early as the year 1590 for capturing the young Earl of Southampton in marriage. After the death of his father he became the ward of Lord Burleigh, who designed him to marry the Lady Vere, his own grand-daughter. It is noticeable that some years later the old diplomatist seems to have been bent on marrying William Herbert to another of his grand-daughters, Bridget de Vere. In both instances, however, the intention was thwarted. In regard to Southampton and his contemplated marriage, we learn from a letter written by Sir Thomas Stanhope to Lord Burleigh on July 15th, 1590, that he had never sought the young Earl in marriage with his own daughter as he knew of Burleigh's intended marriage between that nobleman and the Lady Vere. On the 19th of September, 1590, Southampton's grandfather, Viscount Montague, tells Lord Burleigh that he has been talking with the Earl of Southampton respecting his engagement with Burleigh's grand-daughter. At this time the Countess of Southampton is not aware of any alteration in the mind of her son.<sup>1</sup> The son's mind, however, did change, and the engagement was broken off. The Lady Vere only played the part of Rosaline before young Romeo met his fate in Juliet. As

<sup>1</sup> Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1581—1590, p. 688.

Southampton was the "Child of State," and one of those to whom the Queen was a sort of god-mother because he was fatherless, and as he was Burleigh's Ward of State, and Burleigh was a favourite servant of Elizabeth's, it appears probable that she resented this backing out on the part of Southampton, and thus the long series of his troubles and misfortunes began; this being the primary cause of his finding himself in "disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes." It was not a matter of imprisonment or banishment, but Elizabeth had other means of making the frown of her wonted displeasure most profoundly felt.

Here then we find that Shakspeare's young friend, his "Sweet Boy," was actually engaged to be married before he was 17 years old. It being early to bed and early to wed in the Elizabethan age. And thus we can recognize the time in Southampton's life when Shakspeare's argument for marriage is a reflex from the external history. Southampton being indubitably identified as the "Sweet Boy" in his comely beauty; the "Tender Heir," the Fatherless Youth, the "World's fresh Ornament" addressed and described in the earliest Sonnets, we are now able to apprehend the motive, the theme, the true subject, or *passion* of these first poems. At so early an age there does not seem to have been sufficient warrant for all the urgency of Shakspeare in the matter of marriage generally, nor for its immediate application to the youngster of 17 years. But we must learn to think less of the direct object and dwell more on the *subjects* of the Sonnets. The circumstances and position of Southampton supplied this *subject*, whoever suggested its being treated in verse. The suggestion may have been made by that mother who is complimented in the lines—

"Thou art thy Mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime,"

the mother from whom he derived his "beauty's legacy" (Sonnets 3 and 4). Or, Shakspeare may have backed the intended marriage with Burleigh's granddaughter, thinking it would be a good thing if the noose were applied as soon as possible to the neck of the headstrong youth, especially under such fortunate auspices for one who was so literally the "Child of State." Being desirous of breaking off this engagement the youth might naturally declaim against marriage altogether, like the Lords in *Love's Labour's Lost*, vow that he was not going to marry, and pose as an inveterate opponent of matrimony. It is the very young who *are* the most pronounced mysogonists. That is the standpoint which would supply Shakspeare with a sufficient motive for his argument. Thus, suggestion for the theme of the first Sonnets is made apparent by the fact that the young Earl was so averse to marriage that he would not and did not consent to the family arrangement; and by the further fact that he was fatherless, and the sole heir of his house and name.

The Poet says we derive increase from nature's fairest creatures to preserve the Race of Beauty, or to propagate the flower of the Race, and you, the World's "fresh ornament" and "Only Herald to the gaudy Spring," declare you will not marry! But your beauty will fade, the flower wither as a weed, and there will be nothing to show for it. Your glass will tell you now is the time to till some maiden garden with your husbandry and bless some mother. If you die single your image dies with you. But do not let this flower of youth and

beauty wither. Distil it rather and make sweet some vial in which the precious essence shall be preserved. The more repetitions of your likeness the better—

“ Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,  
If ten of thine ten times re-figured thee.”

In the first Sonnet he is called a “tender churl,” who threatens to “make waste” by his “niggarding;” he is a “beauteous niggard” and a “profitless usurer” in Sonnet 4. He is pleaded with in Sonnet 6, “Be not self-willed;” he is charged with self-love; with being beloved by many and with loving none (Sonnet 10). The writer urged in this Sonnet, “Oh change thy *thought*,” i.e. respecting marriage, and reminds him that if all were like-minded the race would come to an end with the present generation. The last plea in Sonnet 13 is on behalf of the Ancestral House—

“ Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,  
Which Husbandry in honour might uphold !”  
“ Dear my love, you know  
You HAD a Father; Let your Son say so !”

This subject was continued in the *Venus and Adonis*; and as his Poet proclaims that Southampton was the original of this “Counterfeit” then his *shying* at the proposed marriage becomes the shyness of Adonis to the invitations of Venus. “Love he laughed to scorn,” is said of young Adonis and illustrated by the boy Southampton. “Nature that made thee with herself at strife” (stanza 2) is the summary of Sonnet 20 in a single line. It has already been shown how the Poem was a repetition and continuation of the early Sonnet theme, with a warmer wooing on account of Venus,—*Southampton being in his twentieth year when the Poem was presented to him!* And we now see the reason for this repetition of the same argument in the Poem, both Sonnets and Poem being portions of his work that was pre-dedicated to Southampton.

Shakspeare did not look on the Sonnets as he did on the Poem, which he call's the “first heir of *my* Invention.” The Sonnets were written on subjects suggested or supplied by the private friend or friends. Thus the poem as “first heir” of his *own* invention shows that he made no claim to originality in the Sonnets where the Ideas had been adopted from Sidney. And most probably his adoption of the matter was the result of a request that he should try his hand in turning Sidney's prose into Sonnets. It certainly was no result of unconscious imitation or mere assimilative sympathy. He knew what he was about, and may have looked upon the prose as matter for his private verse. The *Arcadia* and *Sonnets* of Sidney were as well-known to Southampton as to Shakspeare, and I now argue that this was the result of deliberate adoption. He was not borrowing from Sidney by any right of royalty or “Sovereignty of nature.” Sidney's writings would furnish one of those “precedents of high excellence” which were followed by beginners and allowed in those days. The “Pupil Pen” was copying from a well-known master, consequently it could hardly be considered plagiarism. Others are found to have honoured Shakspeare by the same form of flattery; and returned to him the same kind of compliment that he paid to Sidney.

Shakspeare, I take it, only wrote in the Sonnet form because Sidney had done so. Most assuredly he did not take to the Sonnet as one might catch up a hand-mirror to reflect one's self, nor to make it his form of confessional when, as Schlegel puts it, he "had feelings intense and secret to express." He became the master who perfected Sidney's model on behalf of his subject matter, moulded for the delight of his dear friend. Otherwise it may well be doubted whether Shakspeare himself had any great love for the Sonnet. He humorously satirizes the sonneteers in *Love's Labour's Lost*—

"This is the liver vein, which makes flesh a deity :  
A green goose, a goddess : pure, pure idolatry."

"Tush ! none but minstrels like of sonneting."

These first Sonnets are sent to Southampton to "Witness duty," not to show the Poet's wit (Sonnet 26). Such duty implies that they were written by request or upon subjects suggested, as intimated by the public statement "*what I have to do is yours.*" This duty was so great that Shakspeare fears his wit may prove inadequate in showing his sense of it. But he sends the Sonnets, his "Books" of them, as in duty bound, to serve until he has written something better which he hopes to dedicate publicly. They are essentially private and not to be thought of as intended for the eye of the public. In Sonnet 21 the writer says—

"I will not praise that *purpose not to sell.*"

They are Southampton's Sonnets. They are to *stand against his sight*, and remain in his keeping ; and the writer looks forward to his paper becoming "yellow with age." This should put us on our guard against bringing in the public where the Sonnets were composed solely for the "Private Friends," and the matter was meant for privacy.

Here the ground is felt to be firm underfoot at starting. Nor does this beginning detract from the interest or the beauty of these particular Sonnets. As we study them with their rootage thus revealed, it is like looking at the fibres of a hyacinth-bulb held up in a water-glass against the light ; we can see the life in embryo ; see what a quickening womb was this man's nature to every germ, and particle or monad of life ; see the wonder wrought, the transformation effected—creation caught in the act, and learn that creation with a Shakspeare is not *ex nihilo*.

Such is the enrichment of his re-touch, such the freshness of new life he breathes into the work that the idea comes out perfectly pristine, and looks as if it had been reclaimed rather than borrowed. Our study will serve to show us that others contributed to the making of Shakspeare, and that his immense range was not any mere result of a personal originality, and absolute invention, nor of a begetting on himself ! In truth the greatest of all poets and supremest literary man was the one to whom human nature contributed most, including matter from the printed as well as the unwritten book. That made his range so universal. The direct indebtedness in this case was undoubtedly exceptional on account of his private purpose, but it is to some extent typical of his mind and method, and the charge of purloining made by Greene was not entirely without warrant. So unconscionable is this borrowing and adapting, however,

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when judged by the modern standard (set up if not always acted up to!) that an argument might be founded on it to the effect that Shakspeare was ONLY imitating Sidney in these Sonnets instead of drawing from his own life and making autobiographic confessions on the shady side of his own character. The position, however, as I apprehend it was this. Shakspeare as friend of the young Southampton plays the part or assumes the character of Languet the elder friend of Philip Sidney. Languet had been especially anxious for Sidney to be married, as we learn from one of the "Zurich Letters," March 1578, in which Sidney says—"I wonder . . . that when I have not as yet done anything worthy of me, you would have me bound in the chains of matrimony."

Sidney also writes of this his friend and teacher—

"The song I sang old Languet had me taught—  
Languet, the shepherd best swift Ister knew  
For clerkly rede, and hating what is naught;  
For faithful heart, clean hands, and mouth as true;  
With his sweet skill my skilless youth he drew  
To have a feeling taste of him that sits  
Beyond the heaven, far more beyond our wits.  
He likèd me but pitied lustful youth,  
His good strong staff my slippery years up-bore;  
He still hoped well because I lovèd truth." (A. S. 70, Grosart.)

It is possible that these first Sonnets were thus intended to be a reminder of Sidney the Hero, Scholar, Poet, and Peerless Peer of his time, the very mirror of knighthood, the perfect flower of England's chivalry. Shakspeare was quite capable of modestly sheltering himself under the *ægis* of Sidney when setting up to offer advice on this subject of marriage. With his known quotations he would virtually be saying it is not I alone who advocate the wedded life as happiest, noblest, purest, best. You hear what Philip Sidney says—Sidney who was

"The Courtier's, Soldier's, Scholar's eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and Rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form."

"Sidney as he fought,  
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,  
Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot,"

must have left the imprint of his natural nobility, heroic lineaments, and intellectual graces permanently stampt upon the soul of Shakspeare; and I am inclined to think it was a poetic conceit of his to bring the influence of Sidney to bear more cunningly by means of memory and suggestion upon the character of his friend the young Earl of Southampton.

## PERSONAL SONNETS.

*The argument for marriage continued, with the introduction of a new theme ;  
that of the writer's power to immortalize his friend.*

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck ;  
And yet methinks I have astronomy,  
But not to tell of good or evil luck,  
Of plagues, of dearths, or season's quality ;  
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,  
'Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind ;  
Or say with Princes if it shall go well,  
By oft predict that I in Heaven find :  
But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,  
And,—constant stars,—in them I read such  
art,  
As truth and beauty shall together thrive,  
If from thyself to store thou would'st convert ;  
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,  
Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and  
date. (14)

When I consider everything that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment ;  
That this huge stage presenteth nought but  
shows  
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment ;  
When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
Cheerèd and check'd even by the self-same  
sky ;  
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
And wear their brave state out of memory ;  
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay  
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,  
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,  
To change your day of youth to su'lied night ;  
And all in war with Time for love of you,  
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.  
(15)

But wherefore do not you a mightier way  
Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time ?  
And fortify yourself in your decay  
With means more blessed than my barren  
rhyme ?

Now stand you on the top of happy hours !  
And many maiden gardens, yet unset,  
With virtuous wish would bear your living  
flowers ;  
Much liker than your painted counterfeit :  
So should the lines of life that life repair,  
Which this time's Pencil, or my pupil Pen,<sup>1</sup>  
Neither in inward worth, nor outward fair,  
Can make you live yourself in eyes of men :  
To give away yourself keeps yourself still,  
And you must live, drawn by your own sweet  
skill. (16)

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
If it were filled with your most high deserts ?  
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a  
tomb  
Which hides your life, and shows not half your  
parts !  
If I could write the beauty of your eyes,  
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,  
The age to come would say "*this Poet lies,  
Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly  
faces :*"  
So should my papers, yellowed with their  
age,  
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than  
tongue :  
And your true rights be termed a Poet's rage,  
And stretchèd metre of an antique song :  
But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice ; in it, and in my  
rhyme. (17)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day ?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate :  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of  
May,  
And Summer's lease hath all too short a  
date :

<sup>1</sup> This line could not be read whilst printed as heretofore—

" Which this, Time's pencil, or my pupil pen."

It was impossible to see what *this* meant. What Shakspeare says is, that the best painter, the master pencil of the time, or his own pen of a learner, will alike fail to draw the Earl's lines of life as he himself can do it, by his "own sweet skill." This pencil of the time may have been Mirevelt's ; he painted the Earl's portrait in early manhood.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed ;  
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
 By chance, or Nature's changing course un-  
 trimmed ;  
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest ;  
 Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his  
 shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou growest :  
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.  
 (18)

Devouring Time, blunt thou the Lion's paws,  
 And make the Earth devour her own sweet  
 brood ;  
 Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce Tig-r's  
 jaws,  
 And burn the long-lived Phoenix in her blood ;  
 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleets,  
 And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,  
 To the wide world, and all her fading sweets ;  
 But I forbid thee one most heinous crime :  
 O, carve not with thy hours my Love's fair brow,  
 Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen ;  
 Him in thy course untainted do allow,  
 For Beauty's pattern to succeeding men !

Yet, do thy worst, old Time ; despite thy  
 wrong,  
 My Love shall in my verse live ever young.  
 (19)

A Woman's face, with Nature's own hand  
 painted,  
 Hast thou the master-mistress of my Passion ;  
 A Woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
 With shifting change, as is false women's  
 fashion ;  
 An eye more bright than theirs, less false in  
 rolling,  
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth ;  
 A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,  
 Which steal Men's eyes and Women's souls  
 amazeth :

And for a Woman wert thou first created,  
 Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-dot'ng,  
 And by addition me of thee defeated,  
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing :  
 But since she marked thee out for women's  
 pleasure,  
 Mine be thy love and thy love's use their  
 treasure.  
 (20)

So is it not with me as with that Muse  
 Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,  
 Who heaven itself for ornament doth use  
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse ;  
 Making a complement of proud compare  
 With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich  
 gems,

With April's first-born flowers, and all things  
 rare

That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems.  
 O, let me, true in love, but truly write,  
 And then believe me, my Love is as fair  
 As any mother's child, though not so bright  
 As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air :  
 Let them say more that like of hearsay well ;  
 I will not praise that purpose not to sell.  
 (21)

My glass shall not persuade me I am old,  
 So long as youth and thou are of one date :  
 But when in thee Time's furrows I behold,  
 Then look I death my days should expiate :  
 For all that beauty that doth cover thee,  
 Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,  
 Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me ;  
 How can I then be elder than thou art ?  
 O, therefore, Love, be of thyself so wary,  
 As I, not for myself, but for thee will ;  
 Bearing thy heart which I will keep so chary  
 As tender nurse her babe from faring ill :  
 Presume not on thy heart when mine is  
 slain,  
 Thou gav'st me thine not to give back again.  
 (22)

As an unperfect Actor on the stage  
 Who with his fear is put beside his part,  
 Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,  
 Whose strength's abundance weakens his own  
 heart ;

So I, for fear of trust, forget to say  
 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,  
 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,  
 O'ercharged with burthen of mine own love's  
 might :  
 O, let my Books be then the eloquence  
 And dumb presagers of my speaking breast ;  
 Who plead for love and look for recompense,  
 More than that tongue that more hath more  
 expressed :  
 O learn to read what silent love hath writ ;  
 To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.  
 (23)

Mine eye hath played the painter, and hath  
 stell'd  
 Thy beauty's form in table of my heart ;  
 My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,  
 And perspective it is best painter's art :  
 For through the painter must you see his skill,  
 To find where your true image pictured lies,  
 Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,  
 That hath his windows glazed with thine  
 eyes :  
 Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have  
 done !  
 Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine  
 for me



Are windows to my breast, where-thro' the sun  
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee ;  
Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their  
art—  
They draw but what they see, know not the  
heart. (24)

Let those who are in favour with their stars  
Of public honour and proud titles boast,  
Whilst I, whom Fortune of such triumph bars,  
Unlooked-for joy in that I honour most :  
Great Princes' favourites their fair leaves  
spread,  
But as the margold at the sun's eye ;  
And in themselves their pride lies buried,  
For at a frown they in their glory die :  
The painful warrior famoused for worth  
After a thousand victories once foiled,  
Is from the book of honour ras'd forth,  
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled :

Then happy I, that love and am beloved  
Where I may not remove, nor be removed. (25)

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage  
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,  
To thee I send this written embassage,  
To witness duty, not to show my wit :  
Duty so great which wit so poor as mine  
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show  
it ;  
But that I hope some good conceit of thine  
In thy soul's thought, a naked will bestow it :  
Till whatsoever star that guides my moving  
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,  
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,  
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect :  
Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee :  
Till then, not show my head where thou  
mayst prove me. (26)

This second group of Personal Sonnets continues the argument for marriage with a new theme added to the subject matter. The Poet had pleaded with Southampton on behalf of his House now going to decay and on account of posterity, but as the friend will not marry to perpetuate himself and his comeliness in his children it becomes the object of his Poet to rescue him from oblivion.

This supplies the second motive for further Sonnets. Then begins the Poet's "War with Time," for love of his friend. As old Time takes from him, it is the writer's work to "engraft" anew the youth, the beauty, the lovable features of his friend. Thus it behoves Shakspeare to do that which Southampton declines to do for himself when the Poet advises him to "Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time," by a "mightier way" and "means more blessed" than his own barren rhymes. There are many maidens who with "virtuous wish" would mirror back a picture of himself "much liker" life than any painted portrait or likeness poetized, whether drawn by the Master Pencil of the time or the Poet's "Pupil Pen." If he would truly live in the "eyes of men" it must be by means of the portrait that can only be drawn by his "own sweet skill" and not by that of painter or poet. Besides, who would believe the Poet's tale in times to come if he were to fill his verse with his friend's deserts, and do justice to his character and his personal attractions. They would say, "this Poet lies." But if a child of his were extant as a witness then he would live twice over, once in his offspring, and again in the Poet's rhyme. His most ingenious argument goes subtly on its winding way to the heart of the matter with a serpentine sort of grace. He commences his portrait directly in Sonnet 18 with a sudden leap in the pulse of his power. He makes an immense stride in lines like these, as if he had put on the seven-league boots—

"But thy eternal summer *shall not fade,*  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest ;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his shade,  
When in *eternal lines* to time thou growest :  
*So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,*  
*So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*"—Sonnet 18.

In the following Sonnet his challenge to Time is defiant as it was previously to Death—

"Yet, do thy worst, old Time ; despite thy wrong,  
My Love shall in my verse live ever young."

The portrait is more expressly painted in Sonnet 20, when he describes the beauty of both sexes. But he protests against all extravagance even in sonneteering. It is not with him as it is with those who are "stirred by a painted beauty," and who make all sorts of false comparisons. His argument, like his practice, is for truth to nature. Sonnet 21 contains an answer to those who hold that the flowery tenderness and exquisite spring-tints of Sonnets 98 and 99 were devoted to a man as the object of them. The Poet here says he does *not* compare his friend "*with April's first-born flowers and all things rare, that Heaven's air in this huge rondure hems.*" He protests that he does not use the "gross painting" the "strained touches Rhetoric can lend." It is the very opposite of his nature and art to write in the extravagant style and "high-astounding terms," so often used: he most emphatically rebukes those who have assumed that he perpetrated all kinds of sonneteering nonsense, and exceeded all others in his fantastic exaggeration and amorous reversal of the sexes. In these Sonnets he tells us that he writes of and from reality.

The tone of this Sonnet has a manly ring. It contains no phrase effeminately fond; no outward signs of inward servitude to falsehood of any kind. His love being true he will write truthfully. Elsewhere he says—

"Thou, *truly* fair, wert *truly* sympathized  
In *true*, plain words by thy *true-telling* friend."

The Muse here aimed at is evidently that of Sidney. It was he who did use "Heaven itself for ornament" in designating his love by the name of "Stella," and ransacking external nature to lavish on her the most extravagant comparisons he could make. Shakspeare says his love is as fair

"As any mother's child, though *not so bright*  
*As those gold candles fixed in Heaven's air ;*"

that is, he will not compare him or clothe him with the stars, as Sidney did his Stella! It is a fact still more interesting, that the seal-ring of Shakspeare, now preserved at Stratford, the ring he used to seal his letters with, shows the true-lover's knot entwining about his initials W. S. Therefore "*True in Love*" was his own chosen personal motto, the sense of which, as this Sonnet shows, was not limited to the *outside* of his letters, for he has identified himself by name and in the character of True-in-love; "oh, let me, true in love but truly write," in keeping with the motto on his seal. In Sonnet 22 the intimacy is so near that the two are as one. On this account the Poet pleads—

"Oh, therefore Love, be of thyself so wary  
As I, *not for myself but for thee will ;*  
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary  
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill !"

And the man who personally utters this protecting sentiment with almost motherly tenderness of feeling, is the one they say who was all the time keeping

a mistress of the loosest character, and who would therefore be the direct cause of leading the youth to be seduced by the Poet's own temptress.

In these Sonnets it is the Poet's intention to paint a portrait of his young friend, and make his likeness live in "eternal lines," so that others may see him through Shakspeare's proud and loving eyes, and he may live hereafter more admired than now. In Sonnets 18, 19, 20, 21 we see the painter at work on the portrait. He draws his lines and lays on his colours. The lines are to be permanent, the colours not to be exaggerated. He is to be made immortal as an image of biune beauty; a man in complexion with the tender heart of a woman. In Sonnet 24 the picture is finished and on view. Here then the Poet is working at this likeness of his friend as a *subject*, the third theme of three different ones treated in the first 24 Sonnets. Thus the Earl of Southampton is the subject rather than the object of the Poet's passion or poem; and this is the special aspect it is desirable to dwell upon and consider for awhile, in order that we may attain the absolutely necessary *detachment* from the old false standpoint.

We also learn from this group of Sonnets that they are written in batches which Shakspeare calls his "Books,"—

"Oh, let my Books be then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast."

When he is with his friend he cannot express his love in words, and his "Books" of Sonnets must say it for him. "Oh, learn to read what silent love hath writ!" They are sent to the man who is lord of our Poet's love as his "Written Embassy," and in witness of his duty. They are but poor representatives of what he feels towards his friend, and of what he hopes to do and dedicate to him publicly some day when his planet points on him "graciously with fair aspect." Then he will "dare to boast" aloud of his love and "show his head" before the literary world, where the worth of his work can be tested.

These first 26 Sonnets contain three themes or subjects, and probably consisted of two or three "Books" illustrated, so to say, by the portrait drawn with the Poet's "Pupil Pen" when Southampton was in his eighteenth year, standing on the "top of happy hours" in all the freshness of his downy youth and dawning manly beauty. Every word in them demands the closest scrutiny because they are personal to Shakspeare, and because it is on the ground of the Personal Sonnets that we have to make our first foothold secure. For example, we shall find that the things which Shakspeare says he *does not do* in the Personal Sonnets because he is speaking to his male friend *are done* by a lover when addressing his lady in other Sonnets. Thus the speaker in 21 will not pay compliments by making proud comparisons with heaven and earth and sea and all external nature, because that is lover's language—Sidney's when addressing Stella; whereas this becomes the very language of the speaker six Sonnets later on. In Sonnets 27 and 28 the speaker says—

"I tell the Day, to please him, thou art bright,  
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven :  
So flutter I the swart-complexioned night ;  
When sparkling stars twire not, thou gild'st the even."—*Sonnet 28.*

And in the preceding Sonnet the speaker says—

“ My soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow (likeness) to my sightless view,  
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.”

This is an entire reversal of what he had said six Sonnets earlier. What do such a change and contradiction mean? Here he takes to the same language and superlative comparisons that Sidney had employed when writing to and of his “Stella,” but which our Poet repudiated whilst he was addressing a man. Now there is a change of sex. The person described and dreamed about is a woman, as his own practice proves, according to the comparative test.

My soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beauteous and her old face  
new.—*Sonnet 27.*

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night,  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethioi's ear!  
Romeo of Juliet.

When sparkling stars twire not, thou giid'st  
the even.—*Sonnet 28.*

Fair Helena, that more engilds the night  
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.  
Lysander to Helena.

We shall hear a little later of a speaker who is in disgrace with Fortune; a public man whose disgrace with Fortune is likewise public; a man that charges Fortune with being the goddess who is guilty of his “harmful deeds,” his deviations from the path of rectitude, his bad name and braided brow, because Fortune who made him a public man is the cause of his manners, which are confessedly a public scandal. Now Shakspeare's sense of the public man, the public disgrace and public scandal, can be partly gauged and judged by his sense of public honours; and in the 25th Sonnet he distinctly tells us that his Fortune debarred him from the triumph of “public honours” as much as from the bearing of a proud title. Consequently he did not consider that the stage could confer such “public honours,” nor that a player was a public man. Therefore, he would not lock upon himself as a public man who was in disgrace with Fortune because she had made him a player. His Fortune smiled upon him favourably from the first; the very Fortune also that he went to London in search of, and if we are to believe him in Sonnets 25 and 32, had begun to find. He had lately and unexpectedly found his Fortune in his good friend, to whom he is shallowly supposed to address these later complaints and wailings over his being in such woeful disgrace with Fortune.

King Richard II. in his prison reflections observes that it is not the nature of Thought to be contented. But “thoughts tending to content flatter themselves that they are not the first of Fortune's slaves, nor shall not be the last.” This exactly describes the mental pose and method of contentment which Shakspeare adopts for himself, and tries to get adopted by his friend in Sonnet 25. This mode of contenting Thought is the philosophy of the man who speaks in Sonnet 32 of his whole life as a “well-contented day.” Again and again the right reading of these Personal Sonnets will make the autobiographic reading of others all wrong, where the Sonnets are not personal to Shakspeare. The Sonnets were left with their meaning half-revealed and half-concealed. The darkness and difficulty chiefly depend on the dramatic ones being read as

personal to Shakspeare. When we get these rightly adjusted to the speakers and circumstances by aid of the dramatic rendering then their meaning will be fully revealed, and the genius of the writer will come to the full orb for the first time in his Sonnets.

## A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Which affords a clue to the dramatic treatment of subjects suggested by Southampton, who is to supply his "own sweet argument," and "give invention light."*

"How can my Muse want subject to invent,  
 Whilst thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse  
 Thine own sweet argument, too excellent  
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse?  
 O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me  
 Worthy perusal stand against thy sight;  
 For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,  
 When thou thyself dost give invention light?  
 Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth  
 Than those old Nine which rhymers invoke,  
 And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth  
 Eternal numbers to outlive long date:  
 If my slight Muse do please these curious days,  
 The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise." (38)

According to the interpretation now presented, the above Sonnet (which is a little out of place) sounds the note of preparation for a change of method in writing; it is the prologue spoken by Shakspeare in person to the Secret Drama of the Sonnets.

If the reader will turn to the book of Sonnets—a copy of which should be kept at hand, the reproduced Quarto being preferable for specialists—it will be seen that we can read the first 26 straight on as personal to Shakspeare himself, because *the speaker of them is also the writer*. But with the 27th Sonnet comes confusion, and we soon feel ourselves to be all at sea, where it is of no use trying to make believe, either to ourselves or others, that we are not adrift. The most intensely passionate Sonnets, those that are filled with facts, most localized, most circumstantiated, are the least identifiable with Shakspeare's life and character, and the most impersonal to him as their speaker. This statement can be tested by a study of Sonnets 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37, 40, 50, 51, 52, 75, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 109, 110, 111, 123, 124, 125, which I consider to be dramatic. And it is the Dramatic Sonnets that cause all the mystery. These refuse to be made autobiographical, just because they were not personal to Shakspeare. They cannot be understood until we can stand where he did, by putting ourselves in his place.

No doubt it will be denounced as a flaw in my treatment if I do not religiously keep to the arrangement (or want of it) to be found in Thorpe's edition! and if it could be shown that Shakspeare had himself printed the Sonnets, or had

anything to do with their publication, that would constitute an argument against the least alteration. But it cannot, and the plea is sheer hypocrisy. There is evidence absolutely incontrovertible, proof positive, that neither the poet nor the initiated private friends saw the Sonnets through the press. There are from forty to fifty errors which could not have passed if they had been submitted to Shakspeare. In Sonnet 46 the word "*thy*" occurs four times, and three times out of the four it is printed "their;" it being the custom to abbreviate those words in writing, and the reader for the press did not know which word was intended; "ruined" is spelled "rn'wd" (73); "disposed" "dispode," Sonnet 88. "Shall" is "stall" (90). Sonnet 116 is numbered 119. Line 14 in Sonnet 112 reads—"That all the world besides me thinks y' are dead"—a most ingenious printer's correction of the original, "That all the world besides methinks are dead." *That is printer's proof* of what I state. And such is the nature of our poet's promises made to Southampton, so careful was he in correcting his other poems, that we must conclude he would have superintended the publication, and not subjected his promises of immortality to all the ills of printer's mortality, had he given his sanction to it as it comes to us. Had he authorized the printing, Thorpe would have said so; therefore he did not. *That is publisher's proof.* We get no guarantee, then, from the author as to the arrangement, and it is useless to talk about the duty of sacredly accepting them exactly as they have been handed down to us. At least we have the right to test the arrangement of an unauthorized work by an appeal to internal evidence; for it is *only by that the author himself can speak to us.* If I could show that one single sonnet had got out of place, there would be good cause to suspect they had not reached us in perfect order, and that a part of the problem was hidden in their dislocation. Whereas, I can give plenty of proof that the printed is not always the written order.<sup>1</sup> No one can justly doubt that I have identified the subject matter of Sonnet 107 as a congratulation to Southampton on his release from prison, at the time of Elizabeth's death, in the year 1603. At that date Shakspeare must have known the Earl some eleven or twelve years. The *Venus and Adonis* had been dedicated to him ten years before. Yet this Sonnet is printed *next but two* to the one (Sonnet 104) which speaks of his having seen the youth for the first time *three years before* the date of writing it! Again: Sonnet 126 is a fragment, and printed last of the Southampton series. In this the Earl is called a "boy," and this comes *after the sonnet of 1603*, at which time Southampton was thirty years of age, married, father of a family, and a renowned war-captain. Of necessity the Sonnet belongs to that earlier time when Shakspeare did salute him as "sweet boy," and has got displaced. Indeed, it is not a Sonnet at all, but consists of six rhyming couplets. The idea of *growing by waning* has been re-wrought in Sonnet 11. Sonnet 57 is one of those that contain puns on the name of "Will," which are addressed to a woman of loose character. This fact had been overlooked from the time of the first edition till pointed out by me. By the original printing, as well as from internal evidence, it is identified as belonging to the latter series of Sonnets which are spoken by "Will" (not to "Will"!), and yet it is printed with 76 Sonnets between it and its congeners! So with Sonnets 43 and 61: the second is a

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet 81 is demonstrably out of place.

palpable continuation of the first. The group to which these belong is spoken by some one on a journey. *We may fairly assume that they would be written with some sort of sequence to be intelligible to the reader for whom they were intended, yet those Sonnets which are spoken by the person when at the remotest distance from the stay-at-home are numbered 44 and 45, whereas the first of this series spoken at STARTING on the journey is number 50.* We have but to turn to Sonnet 61 to see that it is one of those that are spoken on the journey, or far from home, and has no connection with the two Sonnets which precede and follow it. In fact, the greatest confusion of all begins with Sonnets 27 and 28, following the 26 Sonnets which are plainly personal. These two pertain to the journey and the absence abroad that are spoken of in Sonnets later on. The toil, of which the speaker is so weary, is travel, hence the other journey that goes on in sleep. Like Sidney, he is "Tired with the dusty toils of busy day" (A. S. 89),<sup>1</sup> and each day he is "further off" from the person addressed, who remains at home. These two Sonnets have strayed out of their place, and must be restored before they can be understood. These are facts—facts in Shakspeare's own handwriting, which tell us the Sonnets were printed with no key to the written arrangement, and that no restriction can be imposed on any such account. There is ample evidence to prove that *some* of the Sonnets are out of place; there is ample warrant for me to collate them by the internal evidence. Although I am bound, for my own sake, to alter as little as ever I can.

In at least three instances the Sonnets have got out of place, two by two. It is so with numbers 57 and 58, which belong by nature and by the pun on the name of "Will" to the Latter Series. So is it with numbers 27 and 28, which seems to show that in each instance they were written on the two sides of the same leaf, and thus one loose leaf, in going astray, would carry two Sonnets with it. On the whole the groups have held together; but a few loose riderless horses may make dire confusion in the ranks.

As already seen, there is a change of sex in the imagery, which in a writer so true to nature as Shakspeare is known to be implies, or at least suggests, a change of sex in the person addressed! That, as before said, is now done which was previously denied whilst the writer was speaking to a man. This change in the imagery, in the spirit of the Sonnets, in the circumstantial evidence, and in the personal character, which is obvious to all who are not characteristic-blind, also suggests that there may be a change of speaker in Sonnet 27 and others that follow.

Till now the feeling was one of repose in the affection which the Poet celebrated. Here the feeling has all a lover's restlessness. In the previous Sonnets we have not been left in doubt as to the sex of the person addressed; there were many allusions to its being that of a man. We now meet with Sonnet after Sonnet, and series after series, in which there is no mention of sex. The feeling expressed is more passionate, the phrase has become more movingly tender; far closer, more inward relationship is indicated, and yet the object to whom these Sonnets are written never appears in person. There is neither

<sup>1</sup> The Herbertists never scruple to upset the arrangement when it suits their purpose. Mr. Tyler places Sonnets 90 to 96 *liter* than the groups to which Nos. 138 and 144 belong! Such a dislocation being necessary to give even a look of possibility to Shakspeare's having known "Will" Herbert for 3 years when Sonnet 104 was written!

"man" nor "boy," "him" nor "his." How is this? Surely it is not the wont of stronger feeling and a greater warmth of affection to fuse down all individuality and lose sight of sex. That is not the way of Nature's or of Shakspeare's working. Here is presumptive evidence that the speaker is not addressing a man. The internal evidence and poetic proof derivable from Shakspeare's other work, are in favour of its being a woman. There is a spirit too delicate for the ear of a man. The imagery is essentially feminine. There is a fondness in the feeling, and a preciousness in the phrase that tell of "Love's coy touch." There are secret stirrings of nature which influence us as they might if we were in the presence of a beautiful woman disguised: little tell-tales of consciousness and whisperings in the air. Some of the Sonnets addressed by Shakspeare to the Earl are as glowing with affection, and tender in expression as could well be written from man to man, but there is a subtle difference betwixt these and others that, as will be shown, are addressed to a woman. The conditions under which the Poet created did not permit of his branding them with all the outward signs of sex; but the difference exists in the secret spirit of them. We continually catch a breath of fragrance, as though we were treading upon invisible violets, and are conscious of a perfusive feminine grace; whilst a long and loving acquaintanceship brings out the touches and tenderesses of difference, distinct as those notes of the unseen nightingale that make her song so peerless amongst those of other birds. There is a music here such as could only have found its perfect chord in a woman's heart. Once we shut our eyes to the supposition that all these Sonnets were meant for a man, we shall soon feel that in numbers of them the heart of a lover is going forth with thrillings ineffable towards a woman, and, in the unmistakable cry, we shall hear the voice of that love which has no like—the absorbing, absolute, all-containing Love that woman alone engenders in the heart of a man. Not that Shakspeare is here wooing a woman in person. He would not have done that and left out the sex if he were addressing his own mistress. My proposed solution of the problem here is, that many of the Southampton Sonnets were written dramatically or vicariously; and cannot be read as personal utterances of the Poet. My endeavour will be to show that the first of these dramatic ones were written upon Southampton's courtship after he had fallen in love with Elizabeth Vernon; and that it is not Shakspeare who speaks at times, but Southampton to his lady.

This will account for the impassioned tenderness, and, at the same time, for the absence of all mention of the sex of the person addressed, which would be a natural result arising from the Poet's delicacy of feeling. In such a case "Bondage is hoarse" or somewhat muffled, "and may not speak aloud." It will likewise explain one of the most remarkable characteristics of many Sonnets, that glancing allusiveness to which the Poet was limited whilst writing for another! Moreover, it may shed light on the noteworthy fact that in the personal Sonnets the terms of "my love" or "lover" occur 24 times in 18 Sonnets. In the more impassioned ones they occur only 5 or 6 times in 50 Sonnets, and that when the person addressed has become the speaker's "*best of dearest*," his "*only care*," his "*home of love*," his "*cherubin*," his "*God in love*," his "*Rose*," his "*All*"; that is when Shakspeare is the writer for another and is not speaking for himself!



There should be nothing very incredible or surprising in making the proposition that the greatest dramatic writer in the world may also have written dramatic Sonnets in the service of his friend Southampton! In a letter just received, Howard Furness, the American Editor, says, "*Shakspeare was as much a dramatist in his Sonnets as in his Plays, and wherein you acknowledge and enforce this you have the whip-hand over all the Theorisers.*" But there are English readers who seem unable to think even tentatively that the most essentially dramatic-minded and objective of all our Poets could have written Sonnets to represent any other character than his own; readers who cannot rise to the conception that he may have worn the player's mask at times when writing Sonnets for his friends. Such a suggestion makes the Autobiographists become Autobiographobists. People who fancy they hold a diamond in their grasp, naturally object to your wrenching their hand open for the purpose of demonstrating that it is but charcoal! And that is precisely what has to be done with those who imagined they had grasped the facts of Shakspeare's biography in the revelations of the Sonnets. I tell them the jewel is elsewhere; show them the live sparkles of it (by aid of my dramatic interpretations), and they insist on keeping the hand closed all the more strenuously on their bit of charcoal, and will not look on the real gem for fear their treasure should prove to be only graphite after all and not the precious diamond.

People who can build the "fabric of his folly, whose foundation is piled upon his faith," will become the fanatical opponents of those who found upon facts; whilst those who can rest on a basis of false belief are beyond the reach of evidence. The capacity to follow and comprehend the greatest of all dramatic Poets; the ear to distinguish his voice from others where faces are concealed behind the dramatic mask; the perception and sense of dramatic fitness; the insight for recognizing Shakspeare's truth to nature within and without us,—these have now to be put to the test. It is the supreme characteristic of Shakspeare's mind that it was so essentially dramatic he never was his own very self excepting when he wore the mask, and assumed the character of somebody else. His was the direct opposite of the autobiographic nature. Self-exhibition was most foreign to him. Outside the Sonnets he has shown no single sign of tendency to write personal poems of an elegiac, a melancholy, or confessional character. The Sonnet was not adopted by him as a sort of droning spinning-wheel by the sound of which he lulled his own personal sorrows; it was not taken up for himself at all. When he does speak for himself in the early personal Sonnets he says the least possible about himself. His friend and not himself was his subject. Hence he begins by borrowing the matter of his argument for marriage from Sidney. He could hardly be original when limited to the personal standpoint! and so he imitates some one else. But when we come to the Sonnets in which he represents the feelings, the thoughts, the circumstances and characteristics of his friend Southampton or others, the moment he gets on the mask, he is as freely and fully himself as is the Shakspeare of the Plays.

Shakspeare can only be adequately known in his Sonnets by those that are dramatic. In these alone does his energy reach the full height, and his poetry attain the perfect flower. He seems to have been unable to do justice to his genius when speaking in his own person; this is shown conclusively in his two

Poems. It is as if his modesty required a mask and a complete detachment from the consciousness of self for the free, full play of his intellectual powers. The Sonnets are richer, stronger, more vital and inspired precisely in proportion as they are dramatic. The impersonal Sonnets have twice the force of the personal ones, and ten times the perplexity on account of their matter not being personal. If Shakspeare had been speaking of and for himself in such lines as the following, the nearer we might think we were getting to the profoundest realities of his life and character, the more remotely would the man recede from us in this unlikeness to all we know of him from his other writings, or can learn of him from contemporary history. The more definite these realities are to the writer the more indefinite they become for the reader so long as we assume that Shakspeare is speaking of or for himself, and thus fail to penetrate the dramatic mood in which he speaks from behind the mask.

When *in disgrace with Fortune* and men's eyes,  
I all alone bewep my *outcast state*,  
And trouble *deaf heaven* with my *bootless* cries,  
And look upon myself and *curse my fate*,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured *like him, like him with friends*

*possessed*,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least.

(29)

I have *frequent been* with *unknown minds*  
And given to Time your own *dear-purchased*  
*right* ;

I have *hoisted sail* to all the winds  
*Which should transport me farthest from your*  
*sight.* (117)

If my dear love were *but the Child of State*,  
It might for *Fortune's bastard* be *unfathered*.

(124)

I may not evermore acknowledge thee,  
Lest my *beveiled guilt* should do thee *shame* ;  
Nor thou with public kindness honour me  
Unless thou *take that honour* from thy name.

(36)

Were it ought to me I bore the *Canopy* ? (the  
Cloth of State)

Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour  
Lose all and more ? (125)

In many of the Sonnets the speaker is certainly under a cloud, the shadow of which is more or less to be felt over all the hundred that follow No. 26. But this cloud did not arise from his own evil fortunes, nor was it created by his own bad character, nor by his disreputable public manners. He is simply under the cloud of the dramatic mask that he wears in his Sonnets as well as in the Plays.

As we shall demonstrate, two different speakers with entirely distinct characters are to be heard in various series of the Sonnets. It is impossible for both to be Shakspeare. This fact will enable me to get in the thin end of the wedge that will rive the personal theory in twain. We shall then have to ascertain which of the Sonnets are personal to Shakspeare himself, and which of them are spoken by Southampton or other of the "Private Friends."

If it can be demonstrated that there is more than the one speaker who is the writer of the Sonnets, then the need for a dramatic interpretation will be established. This can only be done scientifically by the comparative method. Our base, or *point d'appui*, is that rock of reality found in the Personal Sonnets where the speaker is the writer. To this we must cling like the limpet to the rock. That speaker is Shakspeare when he repudiates applying effeminate imagery to his male friend (Sonnets 21); thence we argue that the speaker is not intended for Shakspeare in other Sonnets where this very thing is done, and, as would seem, somewhat extravagantly overdone. Shakspeare is

the speaker (Sonnet 105) who pleads that he may not be looked upon as an idolator if he does religiously say the same things over and over again like daily prayers. But in a later Sonnet the speaker does the precise thing here repudiated, and calls the person addressed "A God in love to whom I am confined." This, according to Shakspeare, shows a change of sex as when Juliet calls the "gracious self" of her Romeo the God of her Idolatry; or when Queen Katharine had "loved him (the king) next heaven," and "been, out of fondness, superstitious to him" (*King Henry VIII.*, III. ii.). "I prythee be my god! I'll kiss thy foot; I'll swear myself thy subject." This is the language that Caliban drunk addresses to a drunken man, when it is from male to male; and we have been asked to believe in sober earnest that Shakspeare addressed the same to his friend. In Sonnet 21 Shakspeare says he will not compare his friend with the sun or moon. But the speaker in Sonnet 33 does use this lovers' language, and calls the person addressed "My Sun!"

It is Shakspeare for certain who sums up his total lifetime as a "*well-contented day*" in Sonnet 32, which immediately follows the sudden startling ejaculations of unhappiness and hopelessness. He is happy in his life, his lot, his love; whereas the other speaker is unhappy in most things and discontented with everything; he is in disgrace with fortune and his disgrace is public. He is an outcast in exile; a lonely, discontented, and dejected man.

We shall find there is an enforced absence caused by some "separating spite" that has parted two different persons, and that Shakspeare as the writer stayed at home whilst writing about, of, and for his friend who had been banished and driven abroad. Now there must be two speakers where one is wandering abroad who speaks amongst foreigners on distant shores, whilst the other stays at home and writes Sonnets about him here who doth "hence remain."

The man who is the speaker of Sonnet 29 is an outcast, desolate and in disgrace publicly in the eyes of men—and so is driven apart as a lonely banished man. That, as will be shown, is not Shakspeare. This outcast banished man is the speaker of Sonnet 44, who is on distant shores at "limits far remote." That is not Shakspeare, who is then writing at home. "We may be sure," says Dr. Nicolson, "that Shakspeare never was at sea for any length of time."<sup>1</sup> In which dictum I cordially concur. But the *speaker* in at least two different groups of Sonnets has often been at sea, "frequent been with unknown minds," or abroad amongst foreigners. Again and again has he "hoisted sail to all the winds" that would blow him the farthest away from England. In Sonnet 44 he is on distant shores, at "limits far remote," with vast spaces of earth and water between him and home. This cannot be Shakspeare according to the external circumstances any more than it is Shakspeare in personal character. The speaker of Sonnet 124 can speak of himself as one of the nobility, the fashion, "*our fashion*," as he says, and as a soldier. That is not Shakspeare. In Sonnet 125 he is a person who has borne the Canopy of state, as a Lord in Waiting. That is not Shakspeare. He is one who can speak of his love or affection as having been the child of state, subject to its policy, but as suffering from it no longer. That is not Shakspeare. But it is the same speaker who gives expression to the cries over a wasted youth, to the complaints against a

<sup>1</sup> Trans. New Shakspeare Society, 1881, pp. 42-3.

pursuing evil fortune, to the confessions of weaknesses, of lapses, of blenches, and sensual sins, and who bewails the guilt that has been attributed blindly to Shakspeare. The simple explanation is that such Sonnets are not personal to the writer, but are spoken in a character which can be otherwise identified. These therefore are dramatic Sonnets. We have another mode of proof or evidential illustration by comparison with the Plays. For instance, when Demetrius in the *Midsommer Night's Dream* has recovered his true sight once more, and thrown off the glamour of illusion under which he had strayed from Helena in pursuit of Hermia, he says—

“ But like (as) in sickness did I loathe this food :  
 But as in health, come to my natural taste,  
 Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,  
 And will for evermore be true to it.”

This is the speaking likeness of a repentant lover who has been beguiled and misled. With the perverted taste of sickness he had false longings for Hermia. But with the recovery of his natural taste he returns to health and Helena. The sex and situations in the play will help to show that it must be lovers' language in Sonnet 118. Here the speaker has been astray after other women ; or at least he pleads that “false adulterate eyes” have given salutation to his “sportive blood” ; he has visited the “isles of error,” listened to the “sea-maid's music,” and been deluded by the siren's tears to dally on the wrong shore, and he now returns to the one true love “rebuked” to his “content.” He urges *à la* Demetrius—

“ Like as to make our appetites more keen  
 With eager compounds we our palate urge,  
 As to prevent our maladies unseen,  
 We sicken to shun sickness when we purge ;  
 Even so being full of your ne'er-cloying sweetness,  
 To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding ;  
 And sick of welfare found a kind of meetness  
 To be diseased ere that there was true needing :  
 Thus policy in love t' anticipate  
 The ills that were not, grew to faults assured,  
 And brought to medicine a healthful state  
 Which rank of goodness would by ill be cured :  
 But thence I learn and find the lesson true  
 Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.” (118)

Here, as so often, the autobiographists assume that Shakspeare would take the same situation but reverse the sex in the Sonnet, and apply the same language, images, and expressions to a male that he had previously applied to a female in the plays, just as if there were no such thing as sex to be recognized in poetry, and males could be given in marriage to males when Shakspeare is the writer ! I say no. My contention is that the practice in the Plays offers some guidance for our interpretation of the Sonnets ; I maintain that Shakspeare was masking in his Sonnets as well as in his Plays, and it is only by lifting the mask where he speaks in other characters that we can read the true expression of his own face, or find his very self in the Sonnets. Here are a few illustrations presented in accordance with the comparative method—

## CHARGE MADE BY ONE SPEAKER.

For no man well of such a salve can speak  
That heals the wound and cures not the dis-  
grace ;  
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief ;  
Though thou repent yet I have still the loss.  
Ah ! but those tears are pearl which thy love  
sheds,  
And they are rich and ransom all ill deeds.  
(34)

O in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose !  
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,  
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,  
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise :  
Naming thy name blesses an ill report. (95)

## SHAKSPEARE AS WRITER AT HOME.

Oh, Absence ! what a torment would'st thou  
prove  
Were it not thy sour image gave sweet leave  
To entertain the time with thoughts of love ;  
And that thou teachest how to make one  
twain  
By praising him here who doth hence remain.  
(39)

## PERSONAL SONNETS.

My glass shows me myself indeed  
Beaten and chapped with tanned antiquity.  
(62)

Ah wherefore with infection should he live  
And with his presence grace impiety ? (67)  
The Summer's flower is to the Summer sweet,  
Though to itself it only live and die ;  
But if that flower with base infection meet,  
The basest weed out-braves his dignity.  
For sweetest things turn sourest by their  
deeds. (94)

They look into the beauty of thy mind,  
And that in guess they measure by thy  
deeds ;  
Then (churls) their thoughts although their  
eyes were kind  
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of  
weeds,  
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show  
The solve is this—that thou dost common  
grow. (69)

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,  
For Slander's mark was ever yet the fair.  
(70)

## REPLY BY ANOTHER.

O that our night of woe might have remem-  
bered  
My deepest sense how hard true sorrow hits,  
And soon to you as you to me then tendered  
The humble salve that wounded bosom fits.  
But that your trespass now becomes a fee ;  
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom  
me. (120)

For why should others' false adulterate eyes  
Give salutation to my sportive blood ?  
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies ?  
(121)

## THE SPEAKER WHO IS ABROAD.

Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee  
So far from home into my deeds to pry,  
To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy ? (61)  
If the dull substance of my flesh were Thought,  
Injurious distance should not stop my way,  
For then, despite of space I should be brought  
From limits far remote (to) where thou dost  
stay. (44)

## ANOTHER SPEAKER IN REPLY.

Why should others' false adulterate eyes  
Give salutation to my sportive blood ? (121)

Pity me then and wish I were renewed,  
Whilst like a willing patient I will drink  
Potions of Eysell 'gainst my strong infection.  
(111)  
What potions have I drunk of siren tears  
Distilled from Lymbecks foul as hell within.  
(119)

Alas ! 'tis true, I have gone here and there  
And made myself a motley to the view.

But  
O for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
The guilty Goddess of my harmful deeds.  
(111)

Your love and pity doth the impression fill  
Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow.  
(111)

H

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments ; love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove. (116)

Accuse me thus ;  
That I have frequent been with unknown  
minds,  
That I have hoisted sail to all the winds  
That would transport me farthest from your  
sight. (117)  
And yet this time removed was Summer's  
time. (97)  
A God in love to whom I am confined. (110)

Let not my love be called idolatry,  
Nor my Beloved as an Idol show ! (119)

Here there are at least two different persons involved who are as identifiably engaged in a dramatic dialogue as any two characters talking at or to each other in the Plays. These two are not to be set down as Shakspeare making faces at his own face in the mirror of the Sonnets. They are not to be explained as Shakspeare himself and the Double of himself, nor as Shakspeare himself and Shakspeare beside himself.

The same charges are made by one Speaker that are acknowledged and replied to word for word by the other. These charges are formulated by the Speaker who stays at home, and they are admitted and answered by the Speaker who is or has been the frequent wanderer abroad, the dweller in infectious society, the Remover who has hoisted sail to every wind that would blow him farthest from his home of love, to wander hither and thither as chance or fortune might determine.

A very important repetition of two lines occurs in Sonnet 96. When the lovers were parting (Sonnet 36) because an absence was enforced upon them by some "separating spite," the Speaker says the friend must not honour him with any "public kindness," or she (?) will be dishonouring herself.

*" But do not so ; I love thee in such sort,  
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report ! "*

These lines were doubled in their pathos by repetition in Sonnet 96. For this time they are spoken by the person to whom they were previously addressed. That person refers to the gossip that is abroad, and the reports which are current, and says—

*" How many lambs might the stern Wolf betray,  
If like a lamb he could his looks translate !  
How many gazers might'st thou lead away,  
If thou would'st use the strength of all thy state !  
But do not so ; I love thee in such sort,  
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report ! "*

The repetition would be meaningless in Shakspeare's mouth, but is a pathetic reminder of the lover's declaration of protective love that was made in the earlier Sonnet.

It has now been shown conclusively that (1) both sexes are addressed in the Sonnets devoted to Southampton—the *Latter series being purposely excluded for the time being* ; that (2) there are two *speakers*, the one being at home as the Writer, the other abroad as the Speaker ; that (3) these two speakers are the opposite of each other in character, one being the accuser of another person, that other person being the excuser of himself. Also the precise charges advanced by one Speaker are the very sins which are confessed and bewailed by the other.

And in the first two quotations we have the charge and counter-charge between the two speakers. When once we have thus demonstrated that the Sonnets are spoken by two or more speakers the Personal Theory must go, because the dramatic hypothesis is made actual, and concrete, and matter-of-fact for ever.

And now we are ready to apply the KEY-SONNET quoted at the commencement of the present chapter.

It is my intention to show that after our Poet had written a certain number of personal Sonnets to the Earl, his dear friend, advising him to marry, and for the purpose of perpetuating his portrait in verse, he, the Earl, did afterwards fall in love with the "faire Mistress Vernon," as she was called, and that Shakspeare then began to write Sonnets for Southampton as well as to him on the subject of the Earl's love, and at his friend's own suggestion. The intimacy, as we have seen from the Sonnets which are personal, was of the nearest and dearest kind that could exist between the two men. Were there no proof to be cited it would not be so great a straining of probability to imagine the intimacy close and secret enough for Shakspeare to write Sonnets on Southampton's love, in this impersonal, indirect way, as it is to suppose it was close enough for them to share one mistress, and for Shakspeare to write Sonnets for the purpose of proclaiming the mutual disgrace and perpetuating the sin and shame. It might be argued also that the intimacy being of this secret and sacred sort, would naturally take a greater delight in being illustrated in the unseen way of a dramatic treatment. It would be sweeter to the Earl's affection; more perfectly befitting the Poet's genius; the celebration of the marriage of two souls in the most inner sanctuary of friendship. But, independently of this consideration, the dramatic method of treatment would be imposed on the Poet by the impersonal nature of the subject. Moreover, the only way in which Shakspeare could devote Sonnets to Southampton's affairs, when he said in his dedication to *Lucrece*, "What I *have to do* is yours," would be by his adoption of the dramatic method. If he referred to his Sonnets in that dedication of *Lucrece*, as I maintain he did, there is but one way in which the allusion could apply. He would not have promised to write a book, or a series of Sonnets, and speak of them as a part of what he had to do for the Earl if they were to be mere poetical exercises or personal to himself. Such must have been altogether fugitive—the subjects unknown beforehand. Whereas he speaks of the work as devoted to the Earl's service—something that is fixed, and fixed, too, by or with the knowledge of the person addressed. This I take to refer to the fact that, at his friend's suggestion, he had then agreed to write dramatic Sonnets on the subject of Southampton's courtship; the secret method being selected on account of the secret nature of the argument.

For all who have eyes to see, the 38th Sonnet tells us most explicitly that the writer has done with the subject of the earlier Sonnets. There was no further need of advising the Earl to marry when he was doing all he could to get married. But, says the Poet, he cannot be at a loss for a subject so long as the Earl lives to *pour* into his verse his *own sweet argument*. The force of the expression "*pour'st* into my verse," shows that this is in no indirect suggestive way, but that the Earl has now begun to supply his own argument for Shakspeare's Sonnets. This argument is too "excellent," too choice, in its nature for "*every vulgar paper to rehearse*." Here is something "secret, sweet and precious," not to be dealt with in the ordinary way of Personal Sonnets. This

excelling argument calls for the most private treatment, and to carry it out a new leaf is turned over in the Books of Sonnets. If the result be in any way worthy the Earl is to take all credit, for it is he who has suggested the new theme, supplied the fresh argument, and struck out a new light of invention; he has "*given Invention light*," lighted the Poet on his novel path, tells him what and how he is to write. Thus, accepting the Earl's suggestion of writing vicariously on the subjects given, the Poet calls upon him to *be*, to *become* the tenth Muse to him. Obviously he had not so considered him whilst writing to the Earl; but as he is about to write *of* or *for* him dramatically, he exclaims, "*Be thou the tenth Muse!*" Shakspeare actually creates another Muse to call upon in describing this new mode of being inspired by the friend's invention, or imagination, and "*own sweet argument*." This is echoed in Sonnet 76, where he tells his friend that "*You and love are still my argument*." It is re-echoed in Sonnet 79, when he writes—

"I grant, sweet Love, thy lovely argument  
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen."

The argument is the subject-matter, and this in Sonnet 38 is to be furnished by the friend himself as something "*too excellent for every vulgar paper to rehearse*," the friend being treated by Shakspeare as the veritable author of future and forthcoming Sonnets that are to be presented to him, or "stand against his sight," when written in his own Book. Here we affirm that the statements are as plain as the matter is important. And yet this Key-Sonnet is passed over by the Autobiographists as if it contained nothing particular, or as if its significance could be suppressed by their non-recognition.

Moreover, Shakspeare himself distinguishes between his Personal and Dramatic Sonnets in a manner not to be mistaken if we do but listen to his words. He distinguishes betwixt those that are the result of his friend's invention and his own. He tells us (Sonnet 105) that his *own invention* is spent on *one* subject, that being the *constancy* of his friend. He writes to one of one who is constant in relation to him, and therefore *his* verse, *his* invention, is confined to celebrating that constancy! Whereas several groups are devoted to the theme of *inconstancy*. How is that? These are claimed to be dramatic Sonnets; and the inconstancy is in relation to some other person or persons than Shakspeare. This writing vicariously involves other characters, and it is identifiably the result of Southampton's suggestion when he began to supply the subject-matter, his "*own sweet argument*," and "*give invention light*" for Sonnets that the Poet does not attribute to his own invention, but to that of Southampton, who had become the tenth muse in this 38th Sonnet—

"How CAN my muse WANT subject to INVENT  
Whilst thou dost breathe that *pour'st into my verse*  
Thine *own sweet argument*, too excellent  
For every vulgar paper to rehearse."

The new matter is not only to be manipulated, it is likewise to be recorded in another way, and not to be written on common paper. The Dramatic Sonnets are to be inscribed in the friend's own book, where they are to "stand against" his sight. Also the "Private Friends" who are mentioned by Meres are evidently alluded to in the two last lines—



"If my slight muse do please these curious days,  
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise,"

because he had supplied the invention of the method and the subject-matter for Dramatic Sonnets.

It has been said that such amorous wooings as these of Shakspeare's Sonnets, when personally interpreted, were common betwixt man and man with the Elizabethan sonneteers. But where is the record of them? In whose Sonnets shall we find the illustration? Not in Spenser's nor Sidney's, Drayton's nor Daniel's, Constable's nor Drummond's. Warton instanced the *Affectionate Shepherd*; but Barnefield, in his address "To the curteous Gentlemen Readers" prefixed to his *Cynthia*, &c., expressly forbids such an interpretation of his "conceit," and states that it was nothing else than "an imitation of Virgil in the 2nd Eclogue of Alexis." There is no precedent whatever, only an assumption, a false excuse for a baseless theory. The precedent that we should find if we sought for one is for such Sonnets being written dramatically. It was by no means uncommon for a Poet to write in character on behalf of a Patron, and act as a sort of secretary in his love affairs, the letters being put into the shape of Sonnets. In Shakspeare's plays we meet with various allusions to courting by means of "Wailful Sonnets, whose composed rhymes should be full-fraught with serviceable vows." Thurio, in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, goes into the city to seek a gentleman who shall set a Sonnet to music for the purpose of wooing Sylvia. Gascoigne, who died 1577, tells us, many years before Shakspeare wrote in this way for his young friend, he had been engaged to write for others in the same fashion. The author of the *Forest of Fancy* (1579) informs us that many of the poems were written for "*persons who had occasion to crave his help in that behalf.*" Marston in his *Satyres* (1598) accuses Roscio (Burbage), the tragedian, of having written verses for Mutio, and he tells us that "*absolute Castilio had furnished himself in like manner in order that he might pay court to his Mistress.*" And as he is glancing at the Globe Theatre, it is more than likely that by "absolute Castilio" he meant Southampton, who was well known in the Spanish wars, and who could be as high-heeled and haughty as any Spanish Don. Drayton tells us in his 21st Sonnet that he knew a gallant who wooed a young girl, but could not win her. He entreated the poet to try and move her with his persuasive rhymes. And such was the force of Poesy, whether heaven-bred or not, that he won the Mistress for his friend with the very first Sonnet he wrote; that was sufficient to make her dote on the youth beyond measure. So that in showing Shakspeare to have written dramatic Sonnets for the Earl of Southampton, to express his passion for Mistress Vernon, we are not compelled to go far in search of a precedent for the doing of such a thing; it was a common custom when he undertook to honour it by his observance, and carried it indefinitely farther than others had done. In the Sonnet just quoted Shakspeare accepts the Earl's suggestion that he should write dramatic Sonnets upon subjects supplied by Southampton, who has thus "GIVEN INVENTION LIGHT."

It is enough for the present to establish the fact that when the change occurred in the mode of writing Sonnets thus dictated or suggested by Southampton, who became the Tenth Muse that inspired the Poet, and so gave invention light, this new departure from the earlier practice of writing the Personal Sonnets implied the dramatic mode of treatment, the result of which must be Sonnets that are not personal to Shakspeare.

Moreover, the Sonnets now to be written under the changed conditions suggested by the inspirer of the subject-matter and inventor of the new method are not to be entrusted to common paper, but are to be recorded in the lover's own Book, as befits the nature of the subjects. We shall find this same Book again referred to.

Shakspeare writes the 77th Sonnet *in the Book that belongs to his friend*. He calls it "*Thy Book*." Whilst in the act of writing in it he invites Southampton to enrich it by writing in it himself. Moreover, this book is a register in which the lapse of time may be read; therefore it must have chronicled in its course the various stories told by the Sonnets. "And of *this Book* this learning mayst thou taste," because it shows "time's thievish progress." The stealth seen on the dial and in the face of youth is likewise reflected by group after group of the Sonnets.

In going through the Sonnets we shall find that numbers of them are strung upon some historical thread, but that the historical matter cannot be made personal to Shakspeare as the speaker, whereas it can be identified with the life, the circumstances, and character of the man who was to "give invention light" and breathe his "own sweet argument" into Shakspeare's verse.

It will be shown that whether the Sonnets be addressed to the object of them by Shakspeare himself, or spoken dramatically, it is the character of Southampton and that alone, with its love of change, its inconstancy, its shifting hues, its passionate impetuosity, its spirit restless as flame, its tossings to and fro, its hurrying here and there to seek in strife abroad the satisfaction denied to him in peace at home, that we shall find reflected through a large number of them, and Southampton only who is congratulated in Sonnet 107 on having escaped his doom of imprisonment for life, through the death of the Queen; for, the present interpretation of the Sonnets themselves will be corroborated all through by the history of the time.

And I contend that there is not a character in the Plays more fully portrayed from the heart of it, more definitely outlined in the face of it, no more speaking likeness than this of Southampton in love, in "disgrace with Fortune," in enforced absence, in being with his beloved whilst far away from her, and finally in being a prisoner "impeached" for treason, for the part he took in Essex's attempt at rebellion.

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton when in "disgrace with Fortune" solaces himself with thoughts of his new love, Elizabeth Vernon.

*When in disgrace with Fortune, and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends pos-*

*sessed,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least ;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on Thee,—and then my state,  
Like to the Lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at Heaven's*

*gale ;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth  
brings,  
That then I scorn to change my state with  
Kings.* (29)

*When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past ;  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new-wail my dear time's*

*waste :  
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless  
night,*

*And weep afresh love's long-since cancelled woe,<sup>1</sup>  
And moan the expense of many a vanished  
sight :*

*Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,  
Which I new-pay as if not paid before :  
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.* (30)

*Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,  
Which I, by lacking, have supposed dead ;  
And there reigns love, and all love's loving  
parts,*

*And all those friends which I thought buried :  
How many a holy and obsequious tear  
Hath dear-religious love stolen from mine eye  
As interest of the dead, which now appear  
But things removed, that hidden in thee lie !  
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,  
Hung with the trophies<sup>2</sup> of my lovers gone,  
Who all their parts of me to thee did give,  
That due of many now is thine alone :  
Their images I loved I view in thee,  
And thou, all they, hast all the all of me.* (31)

Leaving the two stray Sonnets, Nos. 27 and 28, for the moment to be gathered up in their proper place a little further on, we now come to the opening act of the "Secret Drama." These three Sonnets are amongst the most beautiful that Shakspeare ever wrote. A greater depth of feeling is sounded in them ; a new and most natural stop is drawn, which has the power to "mitigate and suage with solemn touches troubled thoughts," and make the measure dilate into its stateliest music. The poetry grows graver and more sagely fine. Point by point, note by note, the most special particulars are touched, and facts fresh from life and of the deepest significance are presented to us, yet we are unable to identify one of them as belonging to the life and character of Shakspeare. The music is full of meaning—the slower movement being necessary because of the burden it bears—but we do not know *what* it means. If we

<sup>1</sup> Southampton's father had been dead some twelve years ; his brother eight years.

<sup>2</sup> "Hung with the trophies." An allusion to the ancient custom of hanging wreaths upon monumental statues. Here the dead have bequeathed their crowns to adorn this present image of past love.

suppose Shakspeare to be speaking, the more pointed the verity, the greater the vagueness. We cannot tell what he is talking about in so sad a tone. It is possible that he may have lost dear friends, although, so far as we know, when these Sonnets were written he had not even lost a child. Also, it is possible that, full of winning cheerfulness and sunny pleasantness, and "smiling government" of himself as he was, he had his night-seasons of sadness and depression; that he experienced reverses of fortune at his theatre, and sat at home in the night-time whilst his fellows were making merry after work, and nursed his hope and strength with cordial loving thoughts of his good friend. But we cannot picture Shakspeare turned malcontent and miserable; looking upon himself as a lonely Outcast, bewailing his wretched condition; nursing his cankering thoughts prepensively, and rocking himself, as it were, over them persistently. This cannot be the man of proverbial sweetness and smoothness of disposition, the incarnation of all kindliness, the very spirit of profound and perennial cheerfulness, who in Sonnet 32 calls *his* life a "well-contented day!" If Shakspeare had at times felt depressed and despondent for want of sympathy, it was surely most unlike him to make such dolorous complaints to this dear friend whom he had just addressed as being more to him than all the world beside, and whose love had crowned him with a crown such as Fortune could not otherwise confer. In making the Poet his friend, he had honoured Shakspeare (his own words) beyond the power of the world's proudest titles; enriched him with a gift of good that Fortune could not paragon. How then, into whatsoever "disgrace" he had fallen, could he pour forth his selfish sorrow to this friend who was his supremest source of joy? How could he talk of being friendless and of envying those who had friends when he was in possession of so peerless a friend? How should he speak of "troubling *deaf* Heaven with his *bootless* cries," when Heaven had heard him and sent him such a friend, and his was the nature to straightway apprehend the Giver in the gift? How could he "curse his fate," which he held to be so blessed in having his friend? How should he speak of being "contented least" with what he enjoyed most when he had said this friend was the great spring of his joy? How should he exclaim against Fortune when he had received and warmly acknowledged the best gift she had to bestow? Whence came this wretchedness, and the right to express it in this way to the man who alone had a true cause of complaint against Fortune, and a real right to utter every word that has been ascribed to Shakspeare himself in these exclamatory Sonnets, with their wistful looks, and dolorous ejaculations, and tinge of lover's melancholy? We may rest assured that Shakspeare was the last man to have made any such mistake in Nature and in Art. He had too keen a perception of appropriateness, and was too refined in feeling. If he had his sorrows he would have kept them out of sight whilst his friend was suffering; he who has nearly kept himself out of sight altogether, and who comes the closest to us just for the sake of smiling up into the face of this friend, and of showing us that this was the man whom he once loved, as he told us, the only times he ever spoke in prose, and proclaimed that his love for him was without end.

Milton had good cause to complain when he stated with much dignity in his desolate condition that he had fallen upon "evil days and evil tongues." Not so Shakspeare. Nothing is known of evil days befalling him; and the worst tongues that assailed him were those of Nash and Greene, which only elicited a

laughing reply. Supposing he had a failure or two with his Plays, his was not the nature to turn Byronic or abuse the public, or, like Ben Jonson, curse his fate, or moan over the disgrace. He was not the man to turn malcontent and sit with folded arms frowning back at Fortune's frown. He was buoyant with inspiration, full of hope, overflowing with energy, and power of retrieval.

Instead of magnifying his trifling misfortune into a great misery, or sitting down to bewail his "dear time's waste," he would be up and at it again, writing another new play or possibly two. Precious little time did Shakspeare waste when he once got to work in London! He was not at all this beclouded moody kind of man. If he were the speaker here he would lay himself open to the reproof of Friar Laurence, or rather to his own rebuke—

"Happiness courts thee in her best array,  
But like a mis-behaved and sullen wench  
Thou pout'st upon thy Fortune and thy Love!"

This same Play will furnish us with a test. In the original story of Romeo and Juliet as told by Brooke there is no Mercutio except the mere name. This character is entirely created and added by Shakspeare. Mercutio with his rapier wit and radiant vivacity, as the vitalizing soul of the Play, is pure Shakspeare, the plus or overplus that he gave to it of his own abounding life and quickening spirit. Again Jacques says—"Will you sit down with me? and we two will rail against our mistress, the world, and all our misery." Orlando replies, "I will chide no breather in the world but myself: against whom I know most fault." That speaks for Shakspeare, who was no melancholy-sucking Jacques. Moreover, Fortune appears to have smiled very steadily on Shakspeare's labours for the theatre by which he made his fortune!

We may safely assume, in accordance with the Poet's sense and use of the word "Fortune" in his Plays, that he never could have considered himself to be in disgrace with her ladyship, much less subject to her deadliest, extremest, bitterest spite. He positively exults in Sonnet 25 that he is beyond the reach of Fortune in any such sense. He lives and loves, does his work, and is "well-contented" with his life and lot. He "loves and is beloved where he may not remove nor be removed."

Shakspeare was not crippled by the grievances or excessive spite of a pursuing evil Fortune. Neither was he poor or despised. And if he had been he was not the man to complain and whine about it in Sonnets to his dear generous friend, for whose pleasure and delight the Sonnets were written. The word "outcast" is very exceptional and strong! Shakspeare has only employed it twice throughout the Plays. In this Sonnet it is used as if to be an "outcast" were the common condition for him who is in such disgrace with Fortune and the eyes of men. The sentiment of the speaker is not that of Shakspeare envying the superior art of any rival writer for the stage. After the death of Marlowe in the middle of 1593 he reigned supreme. It is the feeling expressed by Cordelia, who says—

*"I want that glib and oily  
Art to speak and purpose not."*—Lear, I. i.

The personal reading is altogether wrong; it does not touch these Sonnets at any one point, much less fathom the depth of their full meaning. The character expressed is in heart and essence, as well as in every word, that of a youthful

spirit who feels in "disgrace with Fortune," and the averted eyes of men, and whose tune is "Fortune, my Foe, why dost thou frown," because for the present he is condemned to sit apart inactive, or in disgrace.

This talk about "Fortune" was to some extent a trick of the time, and a favourite strain with Sidney and Essex. Perez, the flashy foreign friend of this Earl, also indulged much in it, calling himself "Fortune's Monster," which was the motto he inscribed on his portrait. It is the young man of action doomed to be a mere spectator. He has seen his fellow-nobles, the "choicest buds of all our English blood," go by to battle with dancing pennons and nodding plumes (as Marston describes them), floating in feather on the land as ships float on the sea, or, as Shakspeare may have described them—

" All furnished, all in arms,  
All plumed like estridges that wing the wind,  
Bated like eagles having lately bathed ;  
Glittering in golden coats, like Images ;  
As full of spirit as the month of May,  
And gorgeous as the sun at Midsummer."

Some are off to the aid of the French King ; others to the Low Countries to help the Dutch ; others are away with Raleigh and Hawkins, going to do good work for England, and strike at the Spaniard a memorable stroke. The land has rung from end to end with the fame of Grenville's last great deed and glorious death. A few years before Cavendish had come sailing up the river Thames with his merry mariners clad in silk ; his sails of damask, and his top-masts cloth of gold ; thus symboling outwardly the richness of the prize they had wrested from the enemy. The spirit of adventure is everywhere in motion, sending

" Some to the wars, to try their fortune there ;  
Some to discover islands far away."

The hearts of the young burn within them at the recital of their fathers' deeds, the men who conquered Spain in 1588, when all her proud embattled powers were broken. The after-swell of that high heaving of the national heart catches them up and sets them yearning to do some such work of noble note.

He, too, is anxious for active service and warlike "chevisaunce," wearying to mount horse and away. The stir of the time is within him, and here he is compelled to sit still. He shares the feeling of his friend Charles Blount, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, who, twice or thrice, stole away from Court, without the Queen's leave, to join Sir John Norris in Bretagne, and was reproached by her Majesty for trying to get knocked on the head as "that inconsiderate fellow Sidney had done." He hears the sounds of the strife, the trumpet's golden cry, the clash and clangour of the conflict, and his spirit longs to be gone and in amidst the din and dust of the arena—he who is left by the wayside, out of harness and out of heart. He feels it as a dishonour to sit there alone doing nothing but wasting precious time, and looks upon himself as a lonely Outcast. He wishes that he were of a more hopeful disposition, so that he could look on the bright side of things and see the silver lining to his cloud. But, his love being the "Child of State," he can neither be married nor get leave to go away. He must not quit without the Queen's permission—

“ I have considered well his loss of time,  
 And how he cannot be a perfect Man  
 Not being tried and tutored in the world.”

If he only had friends like this one at Court to get the ear of the Queen ; or if he had but the Courtier's art of that one who seems to obtain all he asks for ; or if he shared but the other's scope and free-play for his sword to clear a space for himself and win a prouder name for his beloved to wear ! For he is deeply in love, which makes his spirit more than ever restless, and doubles his sadness with its delicious pain. The thought of her is a spur to his eager spirit ; for her sake he would be earning name and fame, and here he is compelled to wait wearily, watch wistfully, wish vainly, and weep over this “ dear waste ” of his best time. Yet he almost despises himself for having such thoughts, when he thinks of her whose love he has won. However poor his prospect, he has the love of her within his soul, and is really richer than the whole world's wealth could make him. She is a prize precious above all those that glitter in imagination, and, however out of luck, self-tormented, and inclined to read “ his own fortune in his misery ” of the moment, he sits in her heart ; that is his throne, and he would scorn to change condition with kings.

It is the time, too, of the lover's life when sweet thoughts bring a feeling of sadness, and he is apt to water his wine of love a little with tears, and find it none the less sweet. The heart, being so tender to this new present of love, grows more tender in thinking of the past, and seems to feel its old sorrows truly for the first time. The transfiguring touch of this fresh spring of love adds a new green to the old graves of the heart ; this precious gain of the lover's enriches also his sense of loss, and to the silent sessions of sweet thought it calls up the remembrance of things past, the old forms of the loved and the lost rise from their grave of years in “ soft attire,” and he can weep who is unaccustomed to shed tears. All his troubles come gathering on him together, and he grieves over “ grievances foregone ; ” wails over the old long-since cancelled woes anew, and pays once more the sad account of by-gone sorrows. Like another of Shakspeare's characters who speaks of

“ Raining the tears of lamentation,  
 For the remembrance of my Father's death ” (*Love's Labour's Lost*),

the speaker here is one who has been bereaved of his dearest and most precious friends, friends in the closest kinship. Their loss is the sorrow of a life-time, the relationship the nearest to nature, and the deaths occurred years ago. They are friends whom the speaker has greatly lacked and needed in his life. His love for them is “ dear religious love,” the tenderness and tears are reverential, the affection is high and holy. We cannot attach these friends or this feeling to Shakspeare himself by any known facts of his life. And had there been any such facts in his experience, to sing of which would interest his patron, we also are concerned to know them. In Southampton's life alone can we identify the facts and find the counterpart to these Sonnets. In that we have the fullest and most particular confirmation ; it matches the Sonnets perfectly, point by point, through all the comparisons ; it accounts for the feeling, and sets the story sombrely aglow, as if written in illuminated letters on a ground of black ; gives it the real look of life and death. The Earl's father had died October 4th, 1581, when Henry Wriethesley was two days short of eight years old ; and

about four years afterwards his elder brother died. Here are the precious friends whom he lacked so much ; here is the "dear religious love" that made him weep such "holy" and funeral tears ; here is the precise lapse of time. And in this new love of the Earl for Elizabeth Vernon he finds his solace. She comes to restore the old, to replace what he has lost, to reveal all that Death had hidden away in his mortal night. She is the heaven of his departed "loves ;" in her they shine down on him starrily through a mist of tears. "Love's long-since cancelled woe" is something very expressive but hardly applicable to this new love. How can such a loss, such a woe, have been *cancelled* at all? I answer, only in one sense, which warrants the legal expression, and only in Southampton's case. The "woe" was the loss of his father, who died when Southampton was eight years old, and it was "*cancelled*." "long since" by the re-marriage of Lady Southampton to Sir Thomas Heneage, who became an affectionate stepfather to the young Earl, and, as such, as well as from his relationship to the players, was thought worthy of the allusion.

In applying the comparative method we shall find the likeness to these Sonnets, the dramatic position, the personal relationships of the speaker reflected in the Play of *All's Well that ends Well*, where Bertram, like Southampton, is left fatherless. In the opening words of the Play the Countess says—"In delivering my son from me I bury a second husband." Bertram replies, "And I in going, Madam, weep o'er my Father's death anew, but I must attend his Majesty's command, to whom I am NOW IN WARD, EVERMORE IN SUBJECTION." And in speaking to the king Bertram says of his dead father—

" His good remembrance, Sir,  
Lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb ;  
So in approof lives not his epitaph  
As in your speech."

Helena also writes—

" I, his despitiful Juno, sent him forth  
From courtly friends with camping foes to live,"

and one of the lords remarks—" *How mightily, sometimes, we make us comforts of our losses : and how mightily, some other times, we drown our gain in tears !*" which paints the very replica of Sonnets 30 and 31, now assigned to young Southampton as speaker.

Leigh Hunt had the Poet's true perception of nature in these Sonnets without knowing they were written vicariously when he observed that "the gladdening influences of a lover's thoughts, the cheering light of a pure affection, were never depicted with truer feeling than in this Sonnet" (30).

In these Sonnets we may perceive a touch of Shakspeare's art, which peeps out in his anxiety to see his friend married. How steadily he keeps in view of the Earl, this star of his love that tops the summit and gilds the darkest night ; this calm influence that is to clear his cloudy thoughts ; this balm of healing for his troubled heart ; this crown and comfort of his life. Also in these, the first Sonnets spoken by the Earl, the Poet gives us a suggestive hint of his friend's character, and reveals a presaging fear that fortune has a spite against him, of which we shall hear more yet, and which was amply illustrated in his after life.



A proof that the love of Shakspeare for his friend was tender enough to be tremulous with a divining force.

Let me sketch the position now with Southampton as the speaker. In glancing forward for a moment to Sonnet 124, the speaker there says—

“If my dear love were but the Child of State,  
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfathered,  
As subject to Time's love, or to Time's hate.”

This it has been ; this it is no longer. The “love” of the speaker had also been subject to state-policy, which it has at last defied by a policy of its own, and thus has made itself independent. My explanation is that Southampton is also the speaker of that Dramatic Sonnet. His love was the Child of State. In consequence of his being left fatherless, he was made the ward of the wily old statesman Burleigh, and brought up under the Queen. The fatherlessness is glanced at allusively. Having no father, his affairs were taken in hand, his love included, by the diplomatist, acting under the Queen. The match was made which Southampton broke, because his heart was not in it, and consequently the young Earl fell into “disgrace with fortune and men's eyes.” Sooner or later he was in love, but this was with Elizabeth Vernon, and not with the Lady de Vere. The Queen opposed his wish to marry her cousin. If he would not have the one chosen for him he should not possess the one he had wilfully chosen for himself. This opposition was long and bitterly determined. It was the curse of his early life. Southampton persisted and fought it out to the end. In this long struggle Shakspeare stood beside him, and tried to help him man the gap. He sides with him and does battle for him all through the fight against the persecution of outrageous fortune and the prolonged and potent tyranny of Time.

“When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,”

the thwarted lover sits alone bewailing his outcast state, “troubling deaf heaven” with his “bootless cries,” cursing his fate, and then despising himself for his own weakness in wishing himself like others who have friends at Court, desiring the scope of this one, the art of the other, *i. e.*—

“The art o' the Court, whose top to climb  
Is certain falling, or so slippery that  
The fear's as bad as falling,”—

Shakspeare is with him, whispering at the heart of him with comforting words of good cheer, and thinking happier thoughts for him ; looking through his eyes to see things a little brighter and more hopeful than he could see them for himself. When the Earl is in love, and his wretchedness is doubled on behalf of the beloved, because of the “spite” which separates them and will not let him marry, Shakspeare tries to keep his look directed toward the fulfilment and fruition of this love. Busy as a bee that will suck and secrete some honey even from most bitter flowers, the Poet extracts all the sweetness he can from the lover's bitter lot. To give him solace and to light and lead him on, he kindles starry thoughts of his lady and her love, with which he glorifies the darkest heaven overhead. What are all his losses when compared with this great gain? Her love is not only precious and blessed in itself, all the love that he has ever lost and lacked has its resurrection now. In her “all losses are restored, and sorrows end.” The remembrance of her ought to bring such wealth to him that

he would scorn to change his outcast state with kings. Then as the proud, impetuous spirit of the thwarted and ill-treated lover gets wilful and devil-may-care, and breaks out more and more to make him the subject of public scandal, we find the affection of Shakspeare grows more fatherly in its graver mood. When he is wasting his youth in bad company and infectious society, Shakspeare expresses profound regret—

“Ah, wherefore with infection should he live.”

Keep your youth, O young man, he says, for love of me, and for love's sake,—for her sake, if not for your own.

He portrays himself as looking far older than he is whilst playing this paternal part, and assuming the right of paternal affection to protect, to warn and to admonish. When Southampton wades deeper and deeper in the dividing stream that gets wider and wider between him and his mistress, he paints her standing with her lamp of love as the beacon shining on the far shore, to keep his heart heaving high above the biggest billows. He is with him in spirit amid the deepest waters on the darkest night, trying to aid the strength of the swimmer. All through the courtship he is the living link unbroken betwixt the two lovers.

It is here, and here only, in the Dramatic Sonnets that we can get to the heart of the whole matter; the heart of the friendship; the honeyed heart of the poetry; the true and tried and trusty heart of the man Shakspeare. All true lovers of the Poet, especially women, who enter the secret inner presence-chamber opened with this key, will indeed want to lay down my book and “love him over again,” as if they had not held him half dear enough till now. Those who can give up the personal reading where the Sonnets are dramatic will find the nature of the poetry incalculably enriched, and themselves amply rewarded for letting go the untrue interpretation.

As before said, our foundations are laid in the Personal Sonnets, where the speaker is the writer. The 25th is personal to Shakspeare. In this he tells us indirectly that his young friend is not in favour. He says—

“Let those who *are* in favour with their Stars,  
Of public honours and proud titles boast!”

Clearly the person addressed was not one of these, or the comparison would have been most personally inappropriate. This is Shakspeare's recognition, made in his allusive manner, of the fact that his friend is not in favour with Fortune, nor the recipient of public honours; and at the time of writing he has no reason to boast of being a man of title. The context shows that the loss of favour and good fortune is in relation to the Court, where he had been saluted as the “World's fresh Ornament.” The Poet, in solacing himself with the great honour conferred on him by this friendship, also tries to solace his friend with the reflection that those who are in favour may soon come to their fall:

“Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread,  
But as the Marygold<sup>1</sup> at the Sun's eye;  
And in themselves their pride lies buried,  
For at a frown they in their glory die.”

<sup>1</sup> The Sunflower.

Southamp'on had already lost the royal favour, his conflict with fortune had begun, and the Poet comes all the closer to him. The same position is here most delicately indicated by Shakspeare in a personal Sonnet that Southampton occupies as the speaker of Sonnet 29, who is in "disgrace with Fortune" and the eyes of men, where the language becomes perplexing in its decisiveness because of its dramatic character. The personal and the dramatic treatment, however, present the obverse and reverse of the same historic fact.

The Sonnet next to the three that head this chapter is personal to Shakspeare (No. 32). It divides two groups of the dramatic ones as it stands in Thorpe's Collection. It is in this that the Poet calls his life a "*Well-contented day*," in direct opposition to the Malcontent who speaks in Sonnet 29.

A PERSONAL SONNET.

"If thou survive my well-contented day,  
 When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,  
 And shalt by fortune once more re-survey  
 These poor rude lines of thy deceased Lover,  
 Compare them with the bettering of the time,  
 And though they be out-stripped by every pen,  
 Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme  
 Exceeded by the height of happier men ;  
 Oh then vouchsafe me but this loving thought,  
 Had my friend's Muse grown with this growing age,  
 A dearer birth than this his love had brought  
 To march in ranks of better equipage :  
 But since he died and Poets better prove,  
 Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love. (32)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Elizabeth Vernon to her Lover the Earl of Southampton.

The Dark Story : or Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of her cousin Lady Rich.

*Full many a glorious morning have I seen  
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,  
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,  
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy ;  
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride  
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,  
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,  
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace :  
 Even so my Sun one early morn did shine  
 With all-triumphant splendour on my brow,  
 But out, alack ! he was but one hour mine ;  
 The region-cloud hath masked him from me  
 now :  
 Yet him for this my love no whit dis-  
 daineth ;  
 Suns of the world may stain when Heaven's  
 sun staineth.* (33)

*Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day  
 And make me travel forth without my cloak,  
 To let base clouds o'ertake me on my way,  
 Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke ?  
 'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou  
 break  
 To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,  
 For no man well of such a salve can speak  
 That heals the wound, and cures not the dis-  
 grace :  
 Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief ;  
 Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss ;  
 The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
 To him that bears the strong offence's cross :  
 Ah ! but those tears are pearl which thy love  
 sheds,  
 And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.* (34)

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done :  
 Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud ;  
 Clouds and eclipses stain both Moon and Sun,  
 And loathsome cankers live in sweet'st bud :  
 All men make faults, and even I in this,  
 Authorising thy trespass with compare,  
 Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss ;  
 Excusing their sins more than their sins are ;  
 For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,—  
 Thy adverse party is thy Advocate,—  
 And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence ;  
 Such civil war is in my love and hate,  
 That I an accessary needs must be  
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me. (35)

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits  
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart,  
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,  
 For still temptation follows where thou art :  
 Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,  
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailed ;  
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son  
 Will sourly leave her till she have prevailed ?

#### ELIZABETH VERNON TO HER COUSIN LADY RICH.

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan  
 For that deep wound it gives my Friend and me !  
 Is it not enough to torture me alone,  
 But slave to slavery my sweet'st Friend must be ?  
 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,  
 And my next self thou, harder, hast engrossed ;  
 Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken ;  
 A torment thrice three-fold thus to be crossed !  
 Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,  
 But then my Friend's heart let my poor heart bail ;  
 Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard ;  
 Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail :  
 And yet thou wilt ; for I, being pent in thee,  
 Perforce am thine, and all that is in me. (133)

So, now I have confessed that he is thine,  
 And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,  
 Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine  
 Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still :  
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,  
 For thou art covetous and he is kind ;  
 He learned but surely-like to write for me  
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind :

Ah me ! but yet thou might'st my Seal forbear,  
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,  
 Who lead thee in their riot even there  
 Where thou art forced to break a two-fold  
 truth,—  
 Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee ;  
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me ! (41)

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief ;  
 And yet it may be said I loved her dearly ;  
 That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,  
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly :  
 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye !  
 Thou dost love her, because thou know'st I love  
 her ;  
 And for my sake even so do'h she abuse me,  
 Suffering my Friend for my sake to approve her ;  
 If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,  
 And losing her, my Friend hath found that  
 loss ;  
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,  
 And both, for my sake, lay on me this cross ;  
 But here's the joy ; my Friend and I are one,  
 Sweet flattery ! then she loves but me alone. (42)

The statue of thy beauty thou wilt take,  
 Thou usurer that putt'st forth all to use,  
 And sue a friend came debtor for my sake ;  
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse !  
 Him have I lost ; thou hast both him and  
 me ;  
 He pays the whole, and yet I am not free. (134)

Take all my loves, my Love, yea, take them all,  
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst  
 before ?  
 No Love ! my Love, that thou may'st true love  
 call,  
 All mine was thine, before thou hadst this  
 more :  
 Then if for my love thou my Love receivest,  
 I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest ;  
 But, yet, be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest  
 By wilful taste of what thyself refusest :  
 I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,  
 Although thou steal thee all my poverty !  
 And yet, love knows, it is a greater grief  
 To bear love's wrong, than hate's known in-  
 jury :  
 Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
 Kill me with spies ! yet we must not be foes. (40)

As the reader will perceive, two of the "Latter Sonnets" have here been brought forward ; but in grouping these Sonnets together I am not trying to steal any advantage over my opponents, nor am I loading the dice on purpose

to play falsely. I was not the first to recognize a relationship in these Sonnets which proves that there has been a change of places. Gervinus, followed by others, admits the relationship of these groups, only he would drag Sonnets 40-2 into the back slums of the Latter Sonnets,—not knowing what else to make of them; whereas I bring two of the Latter Sonnets (three altogether) forward, and am able to offer the best of reasons for so doing. The comparison already made points to their alignment with plays that were far earlier than the time of the Latter Sonnets (see p. 43). We are in agreement then with Gervinus as to their relationship, although differing completely as to the story they have to tell.

According to the Autobiographical interpretation, it has been assumed that Shakspeare having a wife at Stratford, also kept a mistress in London, this being the bestializing Circe who is described in the Latter Sonnets as an adulteress in the very "refuse of her deeds;" foul with all unfaithfulness in marriage, the breaker of her own "bed-vow," who had "robbed others' beds' revenues of their rents," and who was so public a prostitute that she could be called the "bay where all men ride," the "wide world's common place." This is the woman who, as they say, seduced Shakspeare's young friend from his side and thus caused the Poet to suffer a "hell of time" in purging fires. Mr. Furnivall asserts that in Sonnets 40-2 "*Will has taken away Shakspeare's mistress,*" although he tells us a few lines later on, that in Sonnets 66-70, "*Shakspeare is SURE he is PURE, and excuses him!*"<sup>1</sup> This "Will," as previously shown, is an impostor of their own manufacture. It is a lying delusion to assert or suppose that any person named "Will" is addressed in the Sonnets from the first to the final one. And if the young friend of the Poet did steal his mistress, it must of necessity have been the man whose poet he was, the man who "made the dumb on high to sing," the living original of Shakspeare's Adoni.; that is, the Earl of Southampton, as already established by data the most definite and indubitable. However, this is a fact the autobiographists will not, dare not, look in the face.

Now, if there were any grounds for such a story, we are bound not to shirk it. We ought not to lie about Shakspeare *because* we love him. We should have no right to alter any known fact of his life. It might have been pleasant too could we have proved that he had such failings and errors as afforded a satisfactory set-off to his splendour—the foil which should render his glory less dazzling to weak eyes. There are tastes that would have appreciated his fame all the more for a taint in it! Besides, we all know what mad things love has done in this world; that while it can see so clearly on behalf of others, it is so often blind for self. We know how this passion has coloured some lump of common earth; how it has clothed spiritual deformity with splendour and grace; how it has discrowned the kingly men and made fools of the wise ones; snatched the empire of a world from Antony; made great heroes lay down their heads and leave their laurels in a wanton's lap; set the wits of many a poor poet dancing like those of a lunatic. As Armado reminds us, "Sampson was so tempted, and he had an excellent strength; Solomon was so seduced, and he had a very good wit." Shakspeare with his ripe physical nature, fine animal spirits, and magnificent pulse of rich life, might have been one victim more. It might have been possible for this soaring spirit to be

<sup>1</sup> *Leopold Shakspeare*, Introd., v. 65.

sensually subdued by some witty wanton, and transformed for a time into one of the wallowers in her sty.

So many apparent possibilities go to make up the world of might-have-been! Let us admit the possibility. He might have been. But was he, and has he left the evidence for a conviction? Has he written Sonnets to record the mutual shame of himself and that friend whom he professed to love with a love "passing the love of woman," and strove to image forth for endless honour? Did he play the pimp to his own dishonour, as the personal reading of this group of Sonnets would imply? Was he such a stark fool in his confessions as the one-eyed folk assume who cannot distinguish his mask from his face, nor his personality from the part he played? Men may do such things as have been surmised of Shakspeare and his friend, but only Cretins assume that he would have put them into Sonnets to "please these curious days."

But what we are called upon to question here is not Shakspeare's falsehood, to wife or self or friend, or that friend's falsehood to him when he, the friend, was devotedly in love with Elizabeth Vernon; such hypothetical trifles may be thrown in. What we are concerned with first and foremost is the falsehood to nature that would be perpetrated by this our greatest of all human naturalists, in making pleas so second-childishly puerile and excuses so false and foolish, if this were a matter between man and man, and he and Southampton were the two men.

Let us for the moment suppose the lying story true. How then should Shakspeare be the first to attack his friend when he had been the foremost to go astray? How could he blame him for permitting the "*base clouds*" and "*rotten smoke*" to hide his morning brightness, taunt him with sneaking to westward with "*this disgrace*," hold him responsible for the "*base clouds*" overtaking himself, and tell him that tears of repentance would be of no avail, that his *shame* could not "*give physic*" to Shakspeare's grief, for no one could speak well of such a "*salve*" as that which might heal the wound but could never "*cure the disgrace*"? How could he thus throw such puerile and petulant exclamations at the Earl, his young friend, had he been the older sinner? But for his own connection with the woman, his friend would not have been brought within reach of her snares. It would be his own baseness that made the Earl's deception possible. It was he who had *let* the base clouds overtake both. The youth could only have loosely "*strayed*" where the man of years had first deliberately gone. The friend would see what a pretty comment this was on that "*husbandry in honour*" which the Poet had urged so eloquently, if he thus admitted that he was living in such dishonour. The falsehood of falsehoods would be Shakspeare's own, his would be the baseness, black beyond comparison, the *disgrace* that was past all cure.

After the death of Tybalt, Romeo, fearing the effect on Juliet, asks—

"Does she not think me an *old murderer*,  
Now I have stained the childhood of our joy?"

feeling that this blot of blood on the newly-turned leaf of his life has soaked backwards through the whole book. So must the Poet have felt if the Earl had discovered any such black stain in his character; if he had found that all the professions of love, sole and eternal, whispered in private and proclaimed in public, were totally false; if he had proved his vaunted singleness in love to be

a most repulsive specimen of double-dealing. With what conscience could the Poet turn round when caught by the friend, who had only followed his footsteps, and upbraid him for the disgrace to himself, the treachery to their friendship? If he had not had a mistress he would not have lost a friend. Or how could he reproach his friend with breaking a "two-fold truth"—

"Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee;  
Thine, by thy beauty being false to me,"

whilst ignoring his own breach of the moral law and the marriage tie? The Earl would know what a double-dyed sinner he was; he would see through the moral blasphemy of his solemn twaddle. He would appreciate the value of his arguments for marriage, and his consecration of their friendship, when thus illustrated. He would see how apposite was the exclamation, "Ah me, but yet thou might'st, MY SEAT, forbear," and chide him for the "pretty wrongs" committed when he was "*sometime absent*" from the Earl's heart, *if this absence was for such a purpose*. If the story had been true, then the position taken by the Poet would be utterly fatal, and the arguments foolishly false. It would be the hardened sinner obviously playing the part of the injured innocent; every charge he makes against his friend cuts double-edged against himself. How could he dare to speak of the Earl's "sensual fault," and talk of bringing in sense, to look on this weakness of his friend's nature in a sensible way, if he himself had been doing secret wrong to his own reputation, his dear friendship, his wife, his little ones? How could he thus patronize his frail friend who knew that the speaker was far frailer? How should he say, "no more be grieved at that which thou hast done," and try to make excuses for him, if he himself had done that which was infinitely worse? The Earl might weep, and the Poet might speak of the tears as rich enough to ransom all his ill-deeds; but they would not redeem the character of Shakspeare; the friend, with all his repentance, could never have cured the married man's disgrace. He might affect to speak of the Earl's doings as "pretty wrongs" that befitted his years, but his own sins could not be looked on as "pretty"; these could not in any sense befit his own years.

How should Shakspeare ask—

"Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,  
And make me travel forth without my cloak?"

It is not possible for any man to ask such a question under the circumstances supposed. It would be too barefaced a bit of hypocrisy! His cloak! Why, he would have been travelling forth in the cloak of a hideous and disgusting disguise. He would be a lecher cloaking himself in a demure morality. Shakspeare, were he the speaker, could not have travelled forth without his cloak, it would have clung only too near to nature. Such a method of treating the whole matter would be a blunder worse than the crime.

"And yet thou might'st MY SEAT forbear!"

Do you think, now, men or women, that Shakspeare, all alive as he was to an incongruity, the quickest part of whose self-consciousness was his active sense of the ridiculous, would, in the circumstances postulated, claim that "seat" of baseness as *his very own, and his only*? He would be the last man

to overlook the fact that he could claim no private or personal proprietorship in a woman so notoriously public as the Latter Sonnets paint her. She has been false to her husband's bed (152), not in relation to one person merely, for she has "robbed *others'* beds' revenues of their rents" (142). She is described as being all too common for one man to claim or re-claim her as his own. Shakspeare was somewhat learned in the law of property, and quite familiar with the distinction betwixt that which was *several* and *common* property. And the question is very naturally asked (Sonnet 137)—

"Why *should* my heart think that a *several* plot,  
Which my heart knows the wide world's *common* place?"

Why indeed? And therefore why write Sonnets to claim it as *several*? Why resent the intrusion of a friend to the grazing-ground on a world-wide common? Also, it is ludicrously impossible for a woman so notoriously public and depraved to have abused one friend by suffering the other to test and *prove her*, or her *truth to him!* (Sonnet 42.) And therefore why blubber about it, and stand in tears self-pilloried in public for the amusement, disgust, or scorn of those who were to read the Sonnets which were written in the friend's album to please those "curious days"? Shakspeare is supposed to be speaking of or to the *same woman* in the following manner—

## LOOK ON THIS PICTURE!

That sweet thief. (35)  
I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief. (40)  
  
Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits. (41)  
Thou might'st My seat forbear! (42)  
Sweet flattery, then she loves but me alone. (42)

## AND ON THIS!

As black as Hell, as dark as night. (147)  
Robbed other's beds' revenues of their rent. (142)  
  
In act thy bed-vow broke. (152)  
  
The bay where all men ride. (137)  
Which my heart knows  
The wide world's common place. (137)

Surely if the speaker had been a married man, there could have been no need of charging himself with that one least fault in the world, an overmuch charity in construing; "*himself corrupting*" by his large liberality towards his friend. He need not have sought for so far-fetched a fault as that of straining a point in excusing his friend's sins, because "all men make faults," and "EVEN I in this," that is in being so very charitable; the only fault of which the speaker is conscious! A married man could not charge the single one with his shame for what he had done being inadequate to give physic to his grief. Nor could he make that appeal to the public, "for *no man* well of such a salve can speak," if he were known to be a married man who had been found out in keeping a mistress. It would not be the salve of which men would speak, but the moral sore! The attitude, the arguments, the personal consciousness, are all wrong when applied to a man who would be himself compromised; they are only possible to an innocent woman. Nowhere do we meet the blinking glance of conscious guilt; but at every turn of the subject the clear straight-forward look of honest love. Whatsoever the exact meaning or amount of the charges, there is no hint here of the speaker's being guilty of the like or of any kindred offence against morality. The speaker is the victim and not the cause of shame, and



consequently has the just right to censure and condemn. There is not one word of contrition or self-reproach; no single reference to his own breach of the moral law, or marriage tie, in all the sage and solemn personal Sonnets which show us Shakspeare's own soul. How could our Poet, who had so warmly advocated "husbandry in honour" for the Earl, have written Sonnets for the purpose of picturing the married man and his boy-friend as rivals for the embrace of a mistress; and thus publicly proclaimed his own dishonour? How could he have been sensitive to the least whisper of ill-fame that was breathed against the Earl, if he himself had been in the stews with him, and done his best to perpetuate the fact by recording the most damning testimony? How could he have charged his young friend with deception, baseness, and ill-deeds, when, if such things had been true, he would have been first in doing these very offences—ten-fold worse in doing them, and a thousand-fold worse in writing of them? How could he remonstrate with the Earl on his evil courses, warn him about his health, and tell him that he has *grown common*, and that is why men speak ill of him? How should he exclaim—

" Ah, wherefore with Infection should he live ! "

Wherefore, indeed, if Shakspeare and his mistress had been the primary cause of the contamination? How could he think his beloved would show "like an Idol," if he had laboured so sedulously to flaw the image he had set up, and so befouled it with dirt? How would he be able to say at least years after the supposed occurrence—

*" To no other pass my verses tend  
Than of your graces and your gifts to tell."*

How could this be so if he and the Earl had been actors in the dark drama conjectured, and the Poet had written for the purpose of exposure? His songs could not have been "all alike" devoted to the praise of his unchangeable truth and wonderful constancy, if he had denounced his deception and raged in rhyme against his falsehood. It could not have been "all alike" on either side if there had been so marked a change in word and deed. The Earl could not have been constant in his kindness if the reproaches had been aimed at him by the Poet; nor would the verse have been confined to expressing the constancy; nor could "fair, kind, and true" be all his argument if he had passionately proclaimed the Earl as being foul, unkind, and false. Such Sonnets would contain a lie in each line, known to the Earl as such, and be most astounding specimens of stupendous effrontery.

Such a view of Shakspeare's character is insanely absurd. And from all we know and hear of the man—gather from the aim and object of the Sonnets—see of his knowledge of human nature, his instinct for law, his sincerity and fidelity to his friends—we are compelled to indignantly spurn a theory that demands such a sacrifice of truth and probability. Any one who can think that our Poet would be guilty of such a sacrilege to that sacred sweetness of friendship which he had felt so intimately and brooded over so lovingly, can never have drawn near to the spirit of Shakspeare, and apprehended its uprightness and sincereness—its lofty chivalry and sense of honour—the largeness and clearness of his nature—the smiling serenity, as of the fixed stars—the capacious calm that broods over the profound depths of his soul—the abiding strength of

his character, which embodies the idea of power in complaisant plenitude—the infinite sweetness and peaceful self-possession—which are the express qualities of this man, whom Nature bare with so great a love, and endowed with so goodly a heritage. Such a reading would imply chaos where all was order, stark madness in the sanest of men, fearful folly in the wisest, worthlessness in the worthiest, unnaturalness in the most natural, and be altogether truer to Nat Lee at his maddest than to Shakspeare. The personal version is altogether impossible. If Shakspeare had been the lover in the supposed circumstances he could not rebuke his friend for the same “sensual fault” in relation to a proclaimed prostitute: there would be no reason to doubt and no room to question whether there had been a “wilful taste” of her! Neither could she be taken from the speaker nor restored to him in the sense of the Sonnets.

If this trumped-up tale of lechery and treachery had been true, and Shakspeare had written Sonnets to upbraid and blackguard his youthful friend, it must have been very early in their companionship. “*He was but one hour mine,*” says the speaker in Sonnet 33 of the base betrayer, when made the victim of robbery and disgrace. But in Sonnets so late as Nos. 103-4 and 5, which ARE personal to Shakspeare, and are *dated* 3 years after the friends first met, the writer when speaking *for himself* is naturally enough quite ignorant of all that he was previously innocent of. He assures his friend at this time that his Sonnets, those of *his own invention*, have no other purpose than to set forth the virtues and proclaim the gifts and graces of that friend. They are “To one, of one, still such, and ever so;” and of that friend he says—

“Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
Still constant in a *wondrous excellence*;  
Therefore my verse, to *constancy confined*,  
One thing expressing, *leaves out difference*.  
Fair, kind, and true *is all my argument.*”

Here he is speaking for himself and of his Personal Sonnets. The matters entirely opposed to this declaration are excluded because they were NOT personal to the Poet; they belong to the vicarious or dramatic utterances.

Shakspeare's primary and persistent object in composing the Southampton Sonnets, was to do honour to the Earl, to show him gratitude, respect, love, and to embalm his beauty, moral and physical, for posterity; not to drag him in the dirt and hold him up to infamy. He had told all the world that his work was pre-dedicated to this dear friend when he said, “What I have to do is yours.” In every personal glimpse we get, we see a man who feels a most fatherly affection for his young friend. He counsels like a parent. He respects the marriage ties, and is anxious to see his friend throned in the purest seat of honour, the sanctity of a home that is blessed with a wife and children. His spirit hovers about his “dear boy” as on wings of love, in the most protecting way; he cheers, he warns, he comforts him. He begs that he will be as wary for himself as *he will be for him*. The supreme object of his writing is to win *honour* for the Earl. He fondly hopes by and by to *publicly show himself worthy of the Earl's sweet respect*. In his dedication to the first poem he promises to honour him with some graver labour. His verse is to EXALT him in life, and in death it shall be his “gentle monument,” the “living record” of his memory. It is meant to *distil* the sweetness of the friend's life, worth, truth, and goodness; not to haunt him with an ill odour.

*"To no other pass my verses tend  
Than of your graces and your gifts to tell."*

In these his monument shall "shine more bright than unswept stone," and "'gainst death and all-oblivious enmity shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room," as the noble of nature's own crowning; the man whom Shakspeare delighted to love and respect. And it is useless for any one to reply that the disreputable affair may have occurred after some of the Sonnets were written, for this pure and lofty tone is the dominant one up to the Sonnet of 1603.

In the last of the personal Sonnets addressed to Southampton on his release from prison, there is no change in his regards, except that the affection has increased and ripened with time. We see, right through the Southampton Sonnets, that Shakspeare has most absolutely kept the loftiest moral altitude. He has preserved his own purity and integrity of soul to have the right of speaking to the Earl as he does at times, whether personally or vicariously. Whatsoever be the story told or revelations made in this group, it is certain that the Poet HAD reserved, and therefore must have inviolately preserved the right to warn, admonish, and censure his young friend at a later period of the Sonnet-friendship when he has really fallen into evil courses, and is demeaning himself and dishonouring his love and friendship by keeping disreputable company. Also, when this does occur, it is not in conjunction with Shakspeare, who at least WRITES the reproaches to his young friend, and records his sad regrets that his dear friend, his Sweet Boy, should dwell with sinners, or live with those who infect him, and "with his presence grace impiety," that "sin by him advantage should receive;" who reminds him that the shame which he is bringing on himself by his "deeds" is "like a canker in the fragrant rose," that "spots the beauty of thy budding name;" who also suggests that when lilies fester they smell worse than weeds, and flatly tells him that he has grown common in the mouths of men. Unless he had purely preserved his right of elder brotherhood, he could not have exercised it to speak the truth in reproach and rebuke in such a painfully unpleasant way. This plain-speaking would have been the vulgarest impertinence if he had been a fellow-profligate, who had wallowed with his friend in the same soul-staining mire. Such "plain true words" are implied in Shakspeare's claim to speak the truth in love, like the true heart he was, when he reminds his friend that he has been

*"truly sympathized  
In true plain words by thy true-telling friend."*

Again, in one pathetic group of the Sonnets Shakspeare speaks of his own death and the death of his friend, with a soul brimful of tender love as the summer dew-drop is of morning sun. No image of disgrace darkens the retrospect of life; all is purity and peace. The Sonnets treasure up his better part, and they are to "blossom in the dust" with a breath of sweetness and memorial fragrance, when he moulders in the ground. There is no consciousness of any ill odour emanating from them on account of the illicit relationships which he had written of and permanently perpetuated. No sign of the *lues Browniana*, or the "slips in sensual mire." No shadow of the Dark Story. On the contrary, he tells his friend—

"Your monument shall be my *gentle* verse,  
My verse to constancy confined ;"

so far as Shakspeare's own personal feelings had ever been expressed. Moreover, Shakspeare was quite conscious that the Sonnets were intended to be seen by other eyes than Southampton's own. When about to write on the fresh subjects supplied by his friend, according to a new method that had been suggested by him, and in a book that was to remain in the friend's possession, he says,

"If my slight Muse do please these curious days,  
The pain be mine, but *thine shall be the praise.*"

First among these Private Friends would be Elizabeth Vernon after Southampton was in love with her, and seeking to make her his wife. This alone would make it impossible for such a story to be written in that Book, as the Brownites profess to discover in the Sonnets. He would be fully aware of the curious inquisition that would be made by the curious eyes of those "curious days." The student of the Sonnets cannot fail to have noticed the startling discrepancies between Cause and Effect, that is the charges made and the excuses proffered; the ease with which the trespasses, the sins and crimes, are glossed over and condoned. The indictment or complaint is elaborated in twelve lines of a Sonnet, and the excuse or gloss is offered in the final two; *e. g.*,

Yet him *for this* my love no whit disdaineth,  
Suns of the world may stain when Heaven's  
sun staineth. (33)

Ah ! but those tears are pearl which thy love  
sheds,  
And they are rich and ransom *all* ill deeds. (34)

I an accessory needs must be  
To that sweet Thief which sourly robs from me. (35)

Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee ;  
Thine by thy beauty being false to me. (41)

But here's the joy : my friend and I are one ;  
Sweet flattery ! then she loves but me alone. (42)

Since my appeal says I did strive to prove  
The constancy and virtue of your love. (117)

So I return rebuked to my content,  
And gain by ills thrice more than I have spent. (119)

All this the world well knows, yet none knows  
well  
To shun the heaven that leads men to this  
hell. (129)

Yet this shall I ne'er know but live in doubt,  
Till my bad angel fire my good one out. (144)

How inadequate, how puerile, how false would such impotent comments and conclusions be if Shakspeare were the speaker in the circumstances supposed. But with the lovers for speakers in some of these Sonnets, and Shakspeare treating the subject on behalf of others, and making his excuses for the friend, the matter is brought within the pale of the possible when considered to be a subject of sonneteering.

My contention is, that the speaker in these Sonnets is a woman, and that in the second group of them it is also a woman who is addressed. First of the comparative test—to determine Shakspeare's use and wont with regard to the sex. According to the present reading it is a woman who is addressed by the speaker in Sonnet 40 as that

"*Lascivious Grace!* in whom *all ill well shows.*"

And in the Play Cleopatra is called that

“*Wrangling Queen, whom everything becomes !  
The vilest things become themselves in her.*”  
“She did make defect perfection.”

It is a woman likewise who says of a man in Sidney’s *Arcadia*—

“Whatever becomes of me, preserve the virtuous Musidorus.”

And that is the feeling expressed by the woman-speaker of Sonnet 133. So Antony calls Cleopatra the *Armourer of his heart*.

A Sonnet of Sidney’s on the exchange of hearts ought to be compared, as it is likewise spoken by a woman—

“My true-love hath my heart, and I have his,  
By just exchange one for the other given :  
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss ;  
There never was a bargain better driven.  
His heart in me keeps me and him in one ;  
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides :  
He loves my heart for once it was his own ;  
I cherish his because in me it bides.  
His heart his wound received from my sight ;  
My heart was wounded with his wounded heart,  
For as from me on him his hurt did light,  
So still me-thought in me his hurt did smart ;  
Both, equal hurt, in this change sought our bliss,  
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.”—*Arcadia*.<sup>1</sup>

But does Shakspeare himself countenance the hypothesis that a woman may be speaking to a woman in any of the Sonnets? And is there a double tongue in the mouth of the dramatic mask?

According to the present reading, the woman speaker in these Sonnets, who is to be identified with Southampton’s sweetheart, Elizabeth Vernon, reproaches her lover in some of them and pleads on his behalf in others; and in *All’s Well that Ends Well* there is a passage which in character and situation corresponds to the pleading of Elizabeth Vernon in Sonnets 133-4 on behalf of her lover, as face answers to face in a glass. Helena blames herself as being the cause of Bertram’s going away to the wars, and prays for him—

“Do not touch my lord !  
Whoever shoots at him I set him there.  
Whoever charges on his forward breast,  
I am the caitiff that do hold him to it ;  
And though I kill him not, I am the cause.”

Compare this with the pleading of the other lady—

“But then my friend’s heart let my poor heart bail ;  
Whoe’er keeps me, let my heart be his guard.”  
“He learned but surety-like to write for me.”

He only became a debtor for my sake, she urges ; I am the cause of his being in danger. This is quoted as the testimony of sex to the truth of my

<sup>1</sup> Grosart, 49.

interpretation. The most curious thing is, that Helena writes her letter of parting in the form of a Sonnet. In this she says—

“I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth  
From courtly friends with camping foes to live.”

And she offers to embrace death to set her lover free, just as the other lady offers to be kept a prisoner, so that her lover may go free. Again, this sentiment of love being the armour protecting the breast is very prettily turned by Imogen, a woman and a wife—

“Come, here's my heart ;  
Something's afore't : soft, soft ; we'll no defence ;  
Obedient as the scabbard.—What is here ?  
The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,  
All turned to heresy ? Away, away,  
Corrupters of my faith ! You shall no more  
Be stomachers to my heart.”

That is, her husband, in the shape of his love-letters, must be torn away for the blow to be struck.

According to this reading Elizabeth Vernon says to her lover with regard to the lady of whom she is jealous, and who is an intimate friend of both—

“Thou dost love her, *because* thou know'st I love her.”—*Sonnet 42.*

That is an impossible argument if a man were the speaker. But the comparative evidence tends to show that it is a woman speaking to a woman. It is the very argument used by Rosalind, who when speaking of her lover says to her cousin Celia, “Let me love him for that, and *do you love him because I do !*” Rosalind had just said to her cousin, “*Hate him not for my sake !*” thus echoing the Sonnet's

“*Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her.*”

Again, it is a woman speaking to a woman, Viola to Olivia, in *Twelfth Night*, who says of a lover—

“And he is yours, and his must needs be yours ;  
Your servant's servant is your servant, madam,”

which contains a repetition direct from Sonnet 134—

“So now I have confessed that he is thine,  
And I myself am mortgaged to thy will.”

Elizabeth Vernon calls the “Lascivious Grace,” whom she has suspected as being a thief of love—

“That sweet thief which sourly robs from me,”

but says to her—

“I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,  
Although thou steal thee all my poverty.”

And in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Hermia says to Helena—

“O me ! you Juggler ! you canker-blossom !  
You Thief of love ! what, have you come by night,  
And stolen my Love's heart from him ?”

In both instances it is woman to woman. The chief importance of these comparisons lies in the fact that the women are Two Cousins in both of the Plays, as I claim them to be in the Sonnets; and so far as the comparative evidence goes we find that Shakspeare allows, illustrates, and warrants this claim. Further on, the same "Forgery of jealousy" will be traced between Helena and Hermia in the dream-drama that we find in the Sonnets now ascribed to Elizabeth Vernon as speaker to her lover, Southampton, and her cousin Lady Rich. We are able to apply another comparative test so far as it goes.

In Elizabethan love-language the names of endearment, "love" and "friend," are often used indifferently, and without distinction of sex. It was, however, a custom of the earlier time to reverse them, "friend" being used for "love," as though it were the dearer epithet. The mother of Essex in writing to him habitually speaks of Christopher Blount, who was her third husband, as "My friend." An original love-letter written by Sir George Hayward in 1550 begins, "My dearest Friend."<sup>1</sup> A lover in one of Dekker's plays apostrophizes his lady's portrait—

"Thou figure of my friend!"

Surrey calls his lady "my friend," and speaks of himself as her friend. John Davies says of Paris, "Fair Helen beheld her love, her dear, her friend." This custom is quite familiar to Shakspeare in the Plays. Beatrice, in love with Benedick, calls him her "friend"—"For I must ne'er love that which my friend hates;" which is exactly what Southampton says in speaking of himself to his mistress—

"For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate."

"He hath got his friend with child," says Lucio of Claudio. "Gentle friend," Hermia calls her lover. "A sweeter friend," Proteus calls Silvia; whilst "friend" is the most endearing name that Juliet can find for Romeo as a climax to the line—

"Art thou gone so, Love, Lord, my Husband, Friend?"

The significance of the title is still extant with the sexes, although it has been degraded from its earlier rank. My analysis of the Southampton series shows that in the Personal Sonnets Shakspeare almost invariably calls Southampton his "love." *This title is used seven times over in the first 26 Sonnets*; and "friend" not at all. But with the change to the dramatic method there is also a change to the style of "friend." In Sonnet 30, *the first of these*, the person addressed is called "Dear Friend" (p. 103). According to my reading of what are here termed the Dramatic Sonnets, Southampton calls Elizabeth Vernon "dear friend" in Sonnet 30. In Sonnet 42 Elizabeth Vernon calls Southampton "my friend" three times. In Sonnets 50 and 56 Southampton speaks of his lady as his "friend." In Sonnet 110 she is an "older friend" (*i.e.* in antithesis to "newer proof"), and in Sonnet 111 "dear friend." Elizabeth Vernon calls Southampton "my friend" twice. In Sonnet 133 he is her "friend," "her sweetest friend," and she speaks of him as a friend in Sonnet 134. In alternation with this, Shakspeare calls himself "friend" in Sonnets 32 and 82, and Southampton (his dearest friend) is only called by that name *once*—"fair friend," Sonnet 104, where the epithet fair supports the tenderer significance of

<sup>1</sup> Howard's *Collection*, p. 521.

the word friend, whereas the writer addresses Southampton as his *love some twenty times over*. Although the epithets are not quite invariably applied, there is a large balance to be claimed as the unconscious testimony of a custom of the time in favour of my interpretation of the sexes, and of their relationship in the respective Sonnets. Hitherto, the one modern sense of the word "friend" has prevailed with readers of the Sonnets, the *other* curiously corroborative use of it being ignored, and made them think that Shakspeare must be addressing his male "friend," whereas the language tells in just the opposite way. "Love" is the most familiar title, and it is the earliest.

The attitude of the speaker in Sonnets 33, 34 is that of one who has been wronged, but who has done no wrong; it is the person addressed who is the doer of "Ill deeds," the culprit or criminal. It is the person expostulated with who has deceived and made the speaker travel forth without a cloak. The person addressed is the cause of all the disgrace, whereas if the speaker were Shakspeare it would be he who had led his young friend into it. Instead, we hear the unmistakable voice of virgin love and maiden modesty; of a shy affectionate nature that fears lest it may have trusted too soon, and feels that it has let fall a veil to be exposed to the public gaze. Still, the real subject-matter of the Sonnet is not illicit love, or the lady would not try to smile so gaily through her tears of grief and vexation. No lady in love could say to a guilty pair of illicit lovers—her own lover being one of them—

" Loving Offenders, thus I will excuse ye !  
 Thou dost love her because thou know'st I love her ;  
 And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,  
 Suffering my Friend for my sake to approve her.  
 But here's the joy ; my friend and I are one,  
 Sweet Flattery ! then she loves but me alone ! "

Nor would such pimpish philosophy be possible to Shakspeare as speaker. It is only a robbery so far that the speaker can forgive, and call her cousin "*gentle thief*" so long as she does but steal her lover's society, because it is *not* a case of illicit love. Thus much is evident from the warning given, "But yet be blamed if thou thyself deceivest by *wifful taste* of my love in the wrongful way." She is jealous, suspicious, and fearful—

" Since doubting things go ill often hurts more  
 Than to be sure they do : for certainties  
 Either are past remedies, or, timely knowing,  
 The remedy then born."

And

" Where Love reigns disturbing jealousy  
 Doth call himself affection's Sentinel."

But the speaker does not know that which the autobiographists pretend to know. She distinguishes betwixt those "*pretty wrongs which liberty commits,*" and the "*taints of liberty,*" or the "*drabbing*" of the libertine. These are such flirtations as befit him who is sure to be tempted and wooed by such a syren as her Vivien-like cousin. The two-fold truth, however, that he breaks cannot be very vital when described as—

" Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee ;  
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me."



*The grosser version of Sonnet 42 is no more possible to a woman than it is to Shakspeare.*

The expression, "Beshrew my heart," is also in my favour. Although not limited by Shakspeare to his female characters, it is an essentially effeminate oath, or rather a feminine form of curse.

I admit there is one point that may be made and urged against the speaker being a woman. In lines 11 and 12, Sonnet 34, we read—

"The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
To *him* that bears the strong offence's cross!"

And if the male sex could be otherwise identified, this "*him*" would be brought home to the speaker. But there is no other determinative note of sex, which makes it possible that this is merely a generalization of a well-known fact; "*to him*" being used proverbially in the sense of "to one" who bears. Besides which, it was not Shakspeare's cue to communicate the sex of the speaker to us. That is suppressed, or left to be inferred.

"All men make faults, and even I in this,"

shows me the speaker is a woman. I read the sense as "All men make faults, and even *I, who am not a man,*" do so.

"All men make faults; and even I in this,  
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,  
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,  
Excusing their sins more than their sins are."

In a forgiving mood the lady excuses her lover on the ground that all men make faults—that is, commit offences in this way, and she has exaggerated *their* sins on purpose to make the greater excuse for him. In this case, as in a hundred others still more obscure, the true sense has not been perceived, only here it seemed *possible to make* sense by altering the text. Modern editors following Malone usually print line 8 of Sonnet 35 thus—

"Excusing *thy* sins more than *thy* sins are."

Whereas the original quarto reads—

"Excusing *their* sins more than *their* sins are."

This is the true lection. The plural belongs to all men, and there was no warrant for the alteration which was made and is still maintained in the interest of the personal theory. The speaker says, "All men commit faults,"—just as Juliet says of Fortune, "All men call thee fickle!"—"and even I who am not a man do so in authorizing your trespass by comparison with theirs"—not with *ours*, mark! In doing this she is "salving" his "amiss" by excusing "*their* sins more than *their* sins are." That is, she exaggerates the sins of men in general, and their proneness to faults, on purpose to make less of his, not to excuse his faults more than his faults are. The only personal fault of which the speaker is conscious is that of corrupting herself in authorizing the lover's trespass by making this comparison in his favour—"Even *I in this* am to blame, but such is my love I cannot help it." Here is absolute proof that the speaker is not and cannot be that *corrupt* married man supposed. If he had been so

*corrupt* it did not remain for him to *corrupt himself* by being so charitable when *salving* the misbehaviour of his young friend.

The subject, however, has a sufficiently serious side. Lady Rich was a woman who might make any other woman jealous for her own lover, if the "adulterate eyes" of Stella should "give salutation" to his "sportive blood"; and that is the possible position from an amatory point of view. It is not for me to say or suggest that Southampton was really in love with Lady Rich; not merely because she was ten years older, for she was one of those that laugh at age, and make a fool of Time. I have nowhere said that he "approached her with any speech of love," or any "avowal of guilty love, so openly as to have caused a family and public scandal," or that Southampton had done this and then asked Shakspeare "to endow his sin with poetic life," as has been alleged. It would have been very shallow to have suggested anything so absurd. I said there was only matter enough in this "jealousy" to supply one of the subjects for Shakspeare's Sonnets among his "private friends." I treated it all through as a case of suspicion, natural and pardonable, on the part of Elizabeth Vernon, considering the fascinating influence of her cousin. I stated that the most desperate Sonnet of all (144) was only tragic in terms, expressing nothing more than a doubt, and this will be proved. I could not and did not charge the Earl of Southampton with any guilty love for Lady Rich, when I hold him in Sonnet 120 to tell his mistress that she wronged him by her unjust suspicions in this particular affair of the "jealousy." But I see no difficulty in supposing that Shakspeare may have cautioned and pleaded with Southampton and "pitched into" him, dramatically, when I find that he has done the same things in other Sonnets. One of two things: either the story told in this group of Sonnets is personal to Shakspeare, or it is not. If it be a woman speaker, and that it is so there is abundant evidence, it cannot be the corrupt married man supposed; therefore it is not Shakspeare.

It must be borne in mind that we are endeavouring to decipher a secret history of an unexampled kind. We can get little help except from the written words themselves. We must rely implicitly on that inner light of the Sonnets, left like a lamp in a tomb of old, which will lead us with the greater certainty to the precise spot where we shall touch the secret spring and make clear the mystery. We must ponder any the least minutiae of thought, feeling, or expression, and not pass over one mote of meaning because we do not easily see its significance. Some little thing that we cannot make fit with the old reading may be the key to the right interpretation.

I maintain that Elizabeth Vernon, Southampton's mistress, is the speaker of these nine Sonnets; that the speaker is a woman addressing her lover and the woman-rival who has drawn her lover away from her side; a woman whose love is pure, and who being free from personal blame has a right to reproach both the Earl and the lady who had professed to be the friend of both, and whom she may well suspect of having taken advantage of their friendship to ensnare the Earl and keep him in the strong toils of her wanton grace. The speaker has suffered an injury through the misbehaviour of her lover, who has exposed her to public comment.

She reproaches him for having been led away from her when it was yet the early dawn of their love, immediately after they had met. Her sun had but shone for "one hour" with "all triumphant splendour" on her brow, when the

“region-cloud” came over him, and hid him from her. Still, she will think the best in his eclipse. Her love shall not turn from him. Even though darkly hidden from her, she will have faith that he will shine again with all the early brightness. She will believe that the sun in heaven will be sullied by the clouds that pass over it as soon as that her earthly sun can be stained by the clouds which mask him from her now. But the fear increases and the feeling deepens in the next Sonnet. She pleads—

“Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,  
And MAKE me travel forth *without my cloak*!”

Trustingly, confidingly, she has left her wonted place of shelter; she has ventured all on this new affection. The morning was so bright, the sun shone with such promise of a glorious day, she has come forth unfit to meet the storm which the gathering clouds portend. Her unprotected condition is portrayed most exquisitely with that natural touch and image, solely feminine when figuratively employed, of her having travelled forth “*without her cloak*.” Why did her lover make her do this, and let “base clouds” overtake her on her way? It will not be enough for him to break through that “rotten smoke” of cloud to kiss the tears off her storm-beaten face, because others have seen how he has treated her. Her maiden fame has been injured, her maiden dignity wounded. No one can speak well of such a “salve” as heals the personal wound and cures not the public disgrace; others are witnesses that she has been mocked. Though he may repent, yet she has lost that which he cannot restore. The offender may be sorry, yet, as every one knows, that lends but a weak relief to the victim who has to bear the “cross” of a weighty burden.

There is a passage in the *Faery Queen* (Book II. ch. i.) somewhat illustrative of Sonnet 34, as assigned by me to the wronged lady, Elizabeth Vernon, who says—

“Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,  
And make me travel forth without my cloak?  
\* \* \* \* \*  
For no man well of such a salve can speak,  
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace;  
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief.”

In the *Faery Queen* we have—

“*All wrongs have mends, but no amends of shame.*  
Now, therefore, lady, rise out of your pain,  
*And see the salving of your blotted name.*”

This is written on behalf of a woman who is supposed to have been wronged by a man! And here too the woman is in disguise—

“Her purpose was not such as she did feign,  
Ne yet her person such as it was seen;  
But under simple show and semblant plain  
Lurkt false Dussia secretly unseen,  
As a chaste virgin that had wronged been.”

One easily perceives how Shakespeare would take the hint from Spenser and

apply it to his *real* case of a maiden that had "wrongèd been." Also he makes another of his women, Duchess Elenor, exclaim—

"My shame will not be shifted with my sheet."

Then comes the revulsion of feeling, the relief of thought; she pictures his repentance—

"Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,  
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds!"

Do not grieve any more, she continues in the next Sonnet, and in a most loving spirit she will make all the excuses she can for him. Sun and moon have their clouds and eclipses, the sweetest buds their cankers, the roses their thorns. All men have their faults, and even she who is not a man will make a fault in this, that she is authorizing his fault or transgression by comparison with the faults of others, corrupting herself, or herself sinning, in "salving" over his misbehaviour, and in the largeness of her charity, excusing their sins even more than they are; magnifying them to make his less. She will not only look on this fault of his nature sensibly, but will also try and take part against herself in favour of the "sweet thief" who has robbed her of her lover's presence; such "*civil war is in her love and hate*" that she must needs be accessory to the theft. The excuses are still carried on in the fourth of the Sonnets spoken to the Earl. It is perfectly natural that he should have this tendency to commit these pretty wrongs when she is sometimes absent from his thoughts. It is a little "out of sight, out of mind." He is young and handsome, and pursued by temptation. He is beautiful, therefore sure to be assailed. He is kind and yielding, therefore he may be won, especially, as in the present instance, when a woman woos, and a woman like this cousin of hers, who has such power in floating men off their feet, once she has fixed her fatal eyes upon them; in whose every grace there "lurks a still and dumb-discoursing devil that tempts most cunningly."

"Ah me, but *yet thou might'st my Seat forbear,*  
And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,  
Who lead thee in their riot even there  
Where thou art forced to break a two-fold truth;  
Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee;  
Thine, by thy beauty being false to me."

Then follows a bit of special pleading, partly very natural and partly sophistical. With all the playfulness, however, the earnestness is unmistakable. Naturally enough she is sorry if she should lose her female friend, for she loved her dearly; but still more naturally she confesses that the loss in love which would touch her most nearly would be the loss of her lover. The rest of the Sonnet is ingenious for love and charity's sake. Surely her lover only loves the lady because he knows that she loves her, and the lady loves him solely for the speaker's sake. Both have combined to lay this cross upon her; they are just trying her; but—

"Here's the joy: my friend and I are one;  
Sweet flattery! then she loves but me alone."

This is the tone in which a woman laughs when her heart wants to cry.

In the next three Sonnets the address is direct from woman to woman, face to face, and the feeling is more passionate, the language of more vital import.

Here are matters that have never been fathomed; expressions that have no meaning if a man were speaking to a man. These I interpret as follows:—

Before the Earl of Southampton met with Mistress Vernon, and became enamoured of her, he was somewhat at variance with the Earl of Essex. In the declaration of the treason of the Earl, signed D., and quoted by Chalmers in his *Supplemental Apology*, we are told that *emulations* (envious rivalries) and *differences* at Court had risen betwixt Essex and Southampton, but the latter Earl's love for the cousin of Essex came to heal all, and it bound the two up in a bond, strong and long as life, which was only loosened by death. Also, at the time of Southampton's marriage, the Earl of Essex fell under her Majesty's displeasure for furthering, and, as we learn by Mr. Standen, for "*gendering*" the matter. So that from the hour when Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon became one in love, years before they were one in law, the Earl was committed in feeling, and, as we now see, in fact, to the fortunes of the Earl of Essex.

He followed him through good and evil report. He held to him although he had to share the frowns of Her Majesty without sharing the smiles which fell on the favourite. The influence of Essex was often more fatal to friends than to foes, and in this respect the Earl of Southampton was far more justly entitled to the epithet "unfortunate" than was Essex himself. He *was* most unfortunate in this friendship, for it seemed perfectly natural when Essex got in the wrong, for all eyes to turn and look at his friends to see *who* was the cause. Her Majesty often offered up a scapegoat from amongst his friends in this way. The worst of it being that these had to stand in the shadow even when he was visited with a burst of sunshine. In fact, his friends were always in the shadow which he cast. In these Sonnets, Elizabeth Vernon, as Lady Rich's cousin, feels that she is responsible for bringing Southampton under this "bond" of friendship which binds him so fast through her. She is bound to the "*slavery*" of the Essex cause by family relationship, and through his love for her, Southampton has been brought under the influence of Lady Rich's fascinating eyes, through which there looks alternately an angel of darkness and an angel of light, according to her mood of mind; that fatal voice, made low and soft to draw the fluttering heart into her snare; that wanton beauty, which can make all ill look lovely, and whose every gesture is a dumb-show that has but one interpretation for those who are caught by her amorous arts and luring lapwing-wiles, and also for those that watch and fear for them. Elizabeth Vernon feels that she is the innocent cause of bringing her dear friend the Earl into this double danger—the danger of too familiar an acquaintanceship with Lady Rich, and the danger of a too familiar friendship with Essex, whose perturbed spirit and secret machinations are known to her. She blames herself for her "unkind abuse" in having brought them together. "Evil befall that heart," she exclaims to her lady cousin, "for the deep wound it gives to me and my friend. Is it not enough for you to torture me alone in this way, I who am full of timid fears, but you must also make my sweetest friend a slave to this slavery which I suffer, and was content to suffer whilst it only tormented me? You held me in your power by right of the strongest; your proud cruel eye could do with me almost as you pleased. I was your prisoner whom you kept in confinement close pent. You hold me perforce, and I will not complain of that if I can only shield my lover from all danger; whoever defends me, let my heart be his guard. I plead with you; but, alas! I know it is in vain; you *will* use rigour

in your gaol, and torture your poor prisoners. I confess he is yours, and I myself am mortgaged to do your bidding. But let me forfeit myself, and do you restore my lover to be my comfort. Ah, you will not, and he will not be free. You are covetous and he is kind. He did but sign his name, surety-like, for me under *that bond* which binds him as fast as it binds me, and you will sue him, a friend, who has only become a debtor to you for my sake, and take the statute of your beauty, the right of might, you 'usurer that put forth all to use;' that is, she who takes advantage of her loveliness to turn friends into lovers and lovers into political adherents to the Essex cause; "take all you can, in virtue of your beauty and our bond. Him have I lost; you have us both. He pays all, yet I am not, cannot be free." The speaker acknowledges a power which compels her submission. Then she tries a little coaxing. "'Take all my loves, my Love,' what then? You have only what you had before. All mine was yours in one sense, but 'be blamed' if you deceive yourself and take it or wilfully taste of it in another sense. If you would eat of the fruit of my love, come to it fairly by the right gate; do not climb over the wall, as a thief and a hireling, to steal. For his sake I will forgive your robbing me of his presence and company, although love knows it is far harder to bear this unknown wrong of love than it would be to suffer the injury of hatred that was openly known." And now we have the summing up of the whole matter, the moral of the story. The speaker makes her submission almost abject, in obedience to a hidden cause,

"Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
*Kill me with spites, yet we must not be foes.*"

Admitting the speaker to be a woman, there must be more than a story of rivalry in love implied in those lines. Because if one woman be too friendly with another woman's lover, the sufferer would argue that the sooner she and the one who robbed her mind of its peace were foes the better for all parties. Rather than continue to suffer and bear until quite "killed with spites," she would say we *must* be foes, for I cannot, need not, will not bear any longer. All the more that it is the woman who pursues, an ordinary case would be simple enough. But there is a secret and sufficiently potent cause why these two should not become foes. The lady fears the fierce vindictive nature of her cousin; she dreads lest the black eyes should grow baleful, and would almost rather they were turned on the Earl in wanton love than in bitter enmity; so deep is her dread of the one, so great her affection for the other. For his sake she resolves to bear all the "spites" which her cousin's conduct can inflict upon her. For his sake, she and this cousin must not be foes. Such is the binding nature of their relationship, that the speaker feels compelled to be an accessory to the "sweet thief" that "sourly robs" from her, by drawing her lover away, possibly to political meetings. She will be the slave of her high imperious will, and bear the tyranny that tortures her, rather than quarrel. She will likewise be subtly politic with her love's profoundest cunning. And this is why there is such "civil war" in her "love and hate;" herein lies the covert meaning that has for so long lurked darkly in these lines.

No one accustomed to judge of evidence in poetry can fail to see that the old story of a male speaker—a man who is married and keeps his mistress too—and that man Shakspeare, has been told for the last time, so soon as we have discovered a woman speaker, who is thus identified by inner character and outward

circumstances. The breath of pure love that breathes fresh as one of those summer airs which are the messengers of morn, is sweet enough to disinfect the imagination that has been tainted by the vulgar story, whilst the look of injured innocence and the absence of self-reproach, the chiding that melts into forgiveness, which was only intended to bring the truant back; the feeling of being left uncovered to the public gaze and cloakless to the threatening storm; the face in tears, the rain on the cheek, those "women's weapons, water-drops;"<sup>1</sup> the natural womanliness of the expression, "Whoe'er keeps (*i.e.* defends) me, let my heart be his guard," the lines—

"Myself I'll forfeit so that other mine  
Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still!"

—the wrong done to love, which, though unknown, is worse than the known injury of open hatred; the motive, feeling, and excusing words—all are exquisitely feminine; whilst the imagery and symbols correspond in the thoroughest way to the womanly nature of it all.

The expression "*Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows, kill me with spite,*" as spoken from a woman to a rival, and applied, according to the story for the first time told by me, is just one of those flashes of revelation by which we see nature caught in the fact! And by the same sudden illumination we catch sight of that Elizabethan Helen, the Lady Rich, seen and known the moment she is named, never to be forgotten. It is in the political aspect, however, that these Sonnets are most profoundly interesting. When we can adopt the dramatic view, if but tentatively, it becomes evident that the purpose of Shakspeare's writing is not merely amatory. His jealousy of Lady Rich on behalf of his friend or friends is the genuine passion. He sees whither the lady is leading. He knows something of her intrigues, political as well as amatory, for he has watched her out of the corner of his eye this long time past. His attention to her had been attracted and arrested by Sidney's celebration of *Stella*. He has seen the wiles of Cleopatra in the spell she has cast on Mountjoy, her Antony. He had felt how her black eyes could burn into the souls of men and brand them as slaves bound for the triumph of her baleful beauty.

As a life-study of the nude in nature she was an incomparable model. By lightning-flashes he saw in her the revelation of his witty, wanton Rosaline, and brilliant, wilful Beatrice, who reflect somewhat of her daring devilry and wicked wit. Later, as crowning creations on her line of development, the sumptuous gipsy Cleopatra and the grandly guilty Lady Macbeth. He studied her, he drew from her, he gloried in her plenitude of power and towering will, but he feared for her influence over his dear friend. The dark lady attained her darkest and most traitorous character as the political plotter, and he fought against her with all his presaging feeling. On account of their own blood-relationship the one cousin, Elizabeth Vernon, has brought her lover, Shakspeare's friend, into the toils of the political plotter, Rialta, the promoter of treason against the queen—as we now know her to have been as early as the year 1589.

Elizabeth and her enfettered lover both drew together under the same

<sup>1</sup> "Let not women's weapons, water-drops  
Stain my man's cheeks."—*Lear*, II. iv.

yoke imposed upon them by her cousin in the Essex cause, or rather in the cause of James, for whom Lady Rich plotted secretly and laboured strenuously during many years, to be rewarded at last like a worn-out slave by him who called her a "fair woman with a black soul."

It is in the political, not in an amatory relationship, that the bondage indicated by strictly legal language applies (Sonnet 134). The speaker as cousin of Lady Rich was already in bondage to that plotter's imperious will, as she confesses—"I myself am mortgaged to thy will;" and this being so, she has brought her lover into the same bondage, the same "toils of grace." Hence the pathetic plea of love that he may be allowed to go free.

"He learned but, surety-like, to write for me,  
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind."

He only became a debtor for her sake—the surety for herself. Thus, if the speaker's jealousy be sexual the writer's is political, and this is one of the ways in which Shakspeare wore the dramatic mask and wrote the "Secret Drama" of his Sonnets. Later on, in Sonnet 120, we shall find the ranging and returning lover, when in the confessional, does admit that he has been subject to wretched delusions and made the victim of "siren tears"; saluted by "false adulterous eyes;" spied upon and mis-reported. He there pleads guilty to that "aensual (*i.e.* selfish) fault" of his nature which he is charged with in these Sonnets, but not in this instance. He emphatically denies that he was guilty in this particular case. He says his lady wronged him by her unkindness. He suffered in "her crime." And there is proof that she had done so in the fact of her being first to ask forgiveness and tender the "*humble salve*," the healing balm offered in a penitent attitude, which was most suited to the heart she had so wounded. The *humble salve* shows that the lady, on finding herself mistaken, her suspicions wrongful, had eaten "humble pie," and eaten it with a good grace. And this defence is warranted by the uncertainty and indefiniteness of the Sonnets supposed to contain the charge she made against him.

This jealousy of Mistress Vernon does not appear to have gone very deep or left any permanent impression. It certainly did not part the fair cousins, for their intimacy continued to be of the closest, at least up to the time of Essex's death, as is shown by Rowland White's letters. It was to Lady Rich's house that Elizabeth Vernon retired in August, 1598, and there her babe was born, which she named Penelope, after her cousin. The intimacy between the three friends remained unbroken after the marriage of Southampton, who we find was one of the chief mourners at the funeral of Mountjoy. Dr. Grosart, in his sketch of Sidney, prints one of Lady Rich's Letters to Southampton, the post-script of which shows that she had betted upon his forthcoming child being a boy. She writes, "*I hope by your son to win my wager*" (*vide Biographia*). There was only matter enough in it to supply one of the subjects for Shakspeare's poetry "among his private friends." The Sonnets themselves have no such sombre shadows or ominous significance as they seemed to have when read as personal utterances of the writer. The most searching investigation yet made will prove that there is not the least foundation for the dark story as told against our Poet, save that which has been laid in the prurient imagination of those who have so wantonly sought to defile the memory of Shakspeare. And



for the rest of our lives we may safely and unreservedly hold of him, that he was "*too wise to be abused; too honest to abuse.*"

The 144th Sonnet will help us forward another good stride towards effectually clearing up this most complex matter.

## ELIZABETH VERNON'S SOLILOQUY.

*Two Loves I have of comfort and despair,  
Which like two Spirits do suggest me still;  
The better Angel is a man right fair;  
The worser Spirit a woman coloured ill:  
To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Tempteth my better Angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil;  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride:  
And whether that my angel be turned fiend,  
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;  
But being both from me, both to each friend,  
I guess one angel in another's hell!  
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,  
Till my bad angel fire my good one out. (144.)*

The above is admitted by the autobiographists to be a key-Sonnet! And such indeed it is. They look upon it as a key to the whole difficulty. So it is. But in a way they have little suspected, and no doubt they will still cling to their treasured charcoal. This Sonnet has to supply their proof positive that Shakspeare kept a mistress, who is the woman described in the Latter Sonnets as being the vilest of the vile; common as any strumpet of the street. They are quite sure that Shakspeare was frantically infatuated with such a woman; that his love for her was founded on her unworthiness to be loved, and that he loved her because of the hatefulness of her character (Sonnet 150). This Sonnet is held to make his confession of the fact that he worshipped this swarthy siren, or "Woman Coloured ill;" that she tempted his fair friend from his side, and that he wrote Sonnets denouncing his friend with being a perjured thief and a robber. They entertain no manner of doubt that this was the precise position; for them it is an immoral certainty.

It is here the personal theorists feel themselves most securely entrenched, and altogether unassailable. It is here they lift the vulturine nose triumphantly and snuff the carrion that infects the air. They have no misgivings that the scent may be carried in their own nostrils. And when one ventures to doubt whether the vulturine nose may be the best of all possible guides in a matter which demands the most delicate discrimination, the nicest intuition, the vulturine nose is forthwith elevated in disgust and scorn. Why, the facts are as plain, to them, as the nose in their face. If there be one fact patent in the Sonnets, it is that Shakspeare was a scamp and a blackguard, and that he told all the world so, only the world has been too bigoted to believe him. If you hint that there may be another reading possible; one that is compatible with the Poet's purity, they think you very good to say so; very good indeed, excessively amiable; but you are too youthful, too simple, too unsophisticated.

"Such a view is perfectly untenable to us who know the Sonnets." By *knowing* the Sonnets, they mean accepting all the squinting constructions which tend to suggest the moral obliquity of Shakspeare.

But what says the speaker who sums up the argument *pro* and *con* regarding the position in the last two lines of this key-Sonnet? "Yet *this*" (which includes all they have charged Shakspeare with!)

"Yet *this* shall I *ne'er* know, but *live* in doubt,  
TILL my bad angel fire my good one out."

That is strangely diffident language after all the certitude of the autobiographists. The speaker feels no certainty whatever. It is a case of temptation, of fear and suspicion only! The speaker says she (or he) *may* suspect and "guess," but *cannot directly tell*; having *no other evidence* except that the two are and *have been* personal friends, and both are away from her. The actual truth or state of affairs *must be unknown to one who does not know*, and who unrestfully remains in a state of doubt! If Shakspeare were the speaker in this Sonnet then it would give the lie to the story previously told with him as speaker. Because if that had been true no room could have been left for any doubt or conjecture here. His friend could not be now described as "a saint" if he had been the guilty sinner already denounced. Nor could Shakspeare have waited until the present time to be drawn to hell in consequence of his young friend being lured from his side, any more than the friend could have preserved his purity from being corrupted by the same temptress. The position here is that so far as the speaker *knows* the friend HAS preserved both his purity in love and fealty in friendship. Therefore he can be called "my saint." Neither is this a new temptation and a case of suspicion as such, for the two absent ones were already friends. The earlier copy of 1599 reads—

"But being both *to* me both to each friend."

So that they were all three knit together in friendship beforehand.

According to the personal reading the woman had previously corrupted his *saint*—save the mark!—to be a devil, and they could be enjoying themselves very comfortably in the lady's hell! Whereas, according to this Sonnet (144), the friend "right fair" had not fallen, or he would not be called a saint. As he *had* kept his purity until now, when the siren is supposed to be wooing it with her fair (or foul) pride, the previous story deduced from the Sonnets could not have been true.

And yet they say the Sonnets are in their proper order, and that the "Gentle Thief" who was Shakspeare's friend (no matter for the moment which) had already robbed the Poet of his mistress a hundred Sonnets earlier! In face of the damning charges already made, in the earlier Sonnets, respecting which the autobiographists have no doubt; in face of the character ascribed to the woman all through the Latter Sonnets, the poor simpleton Shakspeare does not yet know, he only *suspects*, makes a *guess*, and *lives in doubt*, until something occurs which can only be described in the language and imagery of the then familiar game of "Barley-Break."

One needs must feel it to be lamentably iconoclastic to reduce this greatest of all Shakspearian tragedies to a Sonnet on a woman's jealousy, and the Inferno in

which the Poet suffered his "hell of time" to the hell that the couple have to suffer in at barley-break ; but this has to be done.

The game of "Barley-break" turns upon breaking the law,<sup>1</sup> and also on being caught and condemned to Hell. Those who are in Hell are the bad Angels ; those who are outside are the good. To tempt, or lure, catch or carry, the good one to Hell, the female pursues the male player. When she has caught him he must go to Hell with her and become a devil in the Hell of the Bad Angels. The catching is followed by kissing in Hell as it is in the game of "Kiss-in-the Ring." And the speaker in the Sonnet has a presaging fear lest this part of the game should be carried out in earnest. The game itself is played by three couples as described in Sidney's *Arcadia*<sup>2</sup>—

" Then couples three be straight allotted there ;  
They of both ends, the middle two do fly,  
The two that in mid place, Hell callèd were,  
Must strive with waiting foot and watching eye  
To catch of them, and them to Hell to bear,  
That they, as well as they, Hell may supply :  
*Like some which seek to salve their blotted name  
With others' blot, till all do taste of shame !*"

In the course of the game, as further described by Sidney, Strephon and Nous form one of the three pairs of lovers. He runs away from her, and it is her part to pursue and catch him ; these being two of the Good Angels who are not in Hell. But whilst he is running he plays into the hands of the temptress, and lets himself be caught by Uran, a Bad Angel, the "woman coloured ill," who leads him to her Hell. And it is said—

" So caught, him seem'd he caught of joys the bell,  
And thought it heaven so to be drawn to Hell."

Now, in accordance with the law of the game, when the lover is thus taken by the bad angel, his own female partner *must* also accompany him to Hell. Thus the way to win her to Hell is to tempt the Better Angel from her side and secure him first, as Uran secures Strephon when he is in the act of fleeing from his own sweetheart.

" To Hell he goes, and Nous with him must dwell ;  
Nous swore it was not right for his default,  
*Who would be caught, that she must go to Hell ;*  
But so she must."

Shakspeare's meaning in this Sonnet can only be apprehended by following it according to the laws of Barley-Break. The rules of the game, and these alone, will explain the lines—

" To win ME soon to Hell my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side."

The two Good Angels who are out of Hell are safe from pursuit whilst they keep coupled together. All the danger lies in their being caught apart by the Bad

<sup>1</sup> I adopt Dr. Nicholson's suggestion, quoted by Dr. Grosart, p. 187, v. 2, Sidney's Poems (Fuller's Worthies Library) to the effect that the name of Barley-Break is derived from Bar-Law, the exclamation of "Barley" meaning beyond reach of the law, or exempted from the penalty.

<sup>2</sup> 10, 225—238, p. 36, v. 2, Grosart.

Angels. The speaker *would* have to go to Hell perforce if her lover went, just as Nous is compelled to go there when Strephon is caught, because the game is played by couples of one male and one female each, and when the male is caught and carried off to Hell his female mate is bound to accompany him.

In Sidney's description, Strephon is taken prisoner by Uran, who represents the "Woman coloured ill" as the evil angel of the Sonnet. Uran "laid hold on him with most lay-holding grace." Whilst any pair, male and female, are coupled together outside they are safe from pursuit. But it was Strephon's desire to be caught when he was running apart from his mistress, and he was caught accordingly. The player who is pursued by the Bad Angel may be saved by a Good Angel, who is one of an out-couple, *if of the opposite sex*; but *not a male by a male*. "Barley-break" is based on the sexes, and *no man can be seduced or saved by a male*.

We learn then from the rules of "Barley-Break" that the "Man right fair" could only be the "better angel" to a speaker who *is a Woman*; that the "better angel" as a male could only be tempted from the side of *a woman*, and therefore it is doubly impossible for the speaker to be Shakspeare or any other man. Of course the Poet's object in adopting the imagery of Barley-Break was to represent and not to misrepresent the exact situation. Now, as the laws of Barley-Break are strictly observed all through the Sonnet we have only to follow the Rules of the game and *play fair* to see that *the speaker of the Sonnet cannot be a man and must be a female!* The game did not permit of a male pair that could be either severed or saved in this way. Had the speaker of the Sonnet been a man there would be no meaning in the metaphor. I repeat, the couples were always male and female, whether in Hell or out. A man could not be the "better angel" to a man—only to a woman, and therefore in accordance with the laws of the game chosen to illustrate the facts from life *the speaker must be a woman*. The female nature of the speaker may likewise be glossed and somewhat corroborated by the language of Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, when she says to Viola, whom she looks upon as a "man right fair," "A fiend like thee might bear my soul to hell!" The game of Barley-Break could not be applied comparatively with any likeness to life if either Shakspeare, Southampton, or Herbert were the speaker, but with Elizabeth Vernon as the speaker the *vraisemblance* is complete. She has two Loves, one of whom is her comfort, the other is a cause of trouble to her on account of her known character, political and amatory. The one is a "man right fair," the other that "Lascivious Grace" who is a "Woman coloured ill." She has the complexion of the Dark Lady who is to be identified in her later character with Lady Rich, the black beauty of Sidney's Sonnets.

These two Loves, her Lover and female friend, are both away from her and both are friends to each other. Naturally enough, Elizabeth Vernon is jealous of this "female evil," this "Lascivious Grace," in whom all ill looks well; such is the subtlety of the traitor's charm. Her fear and suspicion of the actual state of affairs are expressed in the imagery, figures, positions, and the characters of Barley-Break. Her lover being away from her is open to be assailed and caught by the bad Angel, if she should "woo his purity with her foul pride;" she who is so winning in her witchery that she has the power to tempt a saint to become a devil. But whether the Good Angel has turned fiend and joined the Bad Angel in Hell or not the speaker does not know with any certitude. She

*guesses* the good Angel *may* be in the bad one's Hell, but *lives in doubt* until the Bad one "fire the good one out." Much usually does turn upon an "if," and *all* turns upon it here. It is *IF* the Angel has turned fiend; *IF* the friend has played false; *IF* the woman should wilfully taste of the speaker's love in an illegitimate way! Thus the Sonnet which has been considered the most conclusive by the autobiographists is based on a fear, a jealous doubt, a supposition, and is provably, positively inconclusive of anything against Shakspeare or anybody else. For *it is but Sonneteering after all!* and this game of Barley-Break is not the tragedy of Shakspeare's heart-break. Of course it is open to the autobiographists to swear that Shakspeare *did* reverse the imagery here, as they are forced to make him violate the sex in its imagery elsewhere, and to say that he adopted on purpose to apply the game of Barley-Break in that one relationship of the sexes, *i. e.* to the coupling of two males, wherein it did not and could not apply! But we know better than that. Shakspeare's poetic accuracy is scientific in its verifiable truth to nature. Those who do not know this cannot know him; and it is rigorously impossible that he should have taken the "Game of Barley-Break" for the express purpose of portraying the position of lovers, and applied its elaborate figures to a case wherein it could not be made to apply. The Game was thoroughly understood by the readers of that "Curious age." And this will supply my concluding proof that the speaker of these Sonnets is a woman. The present explanation presents a case of swallow or choke for the autobiographists. The worst of it is they are so ludicrously lacking in all sense of the absurd. There is nothing too ridiculous for them to entertain it seriously. They fail to see the humour of the positions they suggest. If Shakspeare were the speaker in Sonnet 134 who says, "but thou wilt not" (restore him) "nor he will not *be free*," the obvious retort would be that his friend had been too free already. Again, if he were the speaker in Sonnet 34 who says, "Though thou repent yet I have still the loss," the natural reply would be "Why so? You can have the woman again. Her character remains as it was." With a most owlsh gravity Mr. Tyler can express his doubt in a public meeting, and then repeat it in print, whether *his* dark lady, Mary Fytton (who is not known to have been dark of complexion nor of so black a character), did actually reside in the same lodging with Shakspeare! And why! Because Sonnet 144 says, "*I guess one Angel in another's Hell!*" *Her Hell being opposed to his dwelling-house.* We want Charles Lamb to lend a hand and share the laugh at so huge a joke! No one person is equal to the enjoyment of it! We cannot but wish that they had among them one thousandth part of Shakspeare's own ticklesome humour and protective sense of the ridiculous.

Finally, in questioning this hypothesis of Shakspeare's guilt being thus exhibited by himself, an earnest inquirer might like to ask its supporters why they should limit Shakspeare to having one mistress? Why? If he were the speaker of Sonnet 40 in the circumstances supposed, instead of "offering to give up his mistress to his friend Will," as Mr. Furnivall witnesses, he would be surrendering a whole harem of them, for the speaker begins this Sonnet by saying—

"Take all my Loves, my Love, yea take them all!"

Here the charge of his keeping a mistress is ludicrously falsified by the language

of Shakspeare himself, who would confess to keeping such a number that one might be reckoned none. With a chance like this for charging him with keeping a harem of lady-loves, it is manifestly puerile to prefer the minor charge of keeping a mistress! So little do these traducers know their own trade; so unworthy are they of the liberty offered to them by the Sonnets; so blind are they to their own folly from lack of the protective sense of humour.

### A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Shakspeare to the Earl, who is leaving England.*

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,  
 When thou art all the better part of me!  
 What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?  
 And what is't but mine own when I praise thee!  
 Even for this let us divided live,  
 And our dear love lose name of single one,  
 That by this separation I may give  
 That due to thee, which thou deserv'st alone!  
 Oh, Absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,  
 Were it not thy sour image gave sweet leave  
 To entertain the time with thoughts of love,  
 Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive,  
 And that thou teachest how to make one twain,  
 By praising him here, who doth hence remain. (89)

In this Sonnet there is an absence contemplated. But not the absence of the speaker. Shakspeare would not speak of his own absence as proving a torment to his friend! It is Southampton who is going away, and the Poet proposes to take advantage of this separation by writing about his friend during his absence abroad. He will entertain the time of his friend's absence with thoughts of love. To praise the friend whilst they are together is unnecessary, because they are so much one that it is like praising himself. Even for this, he says, let us be divided by distance, if by nothing else, so that he can, as it were, hold his friend, the better part of himself, at arm's length, to look on his virtues and praise his worth, and give that due to him which is the friend's alone. This Sonnet establishes the fact that the Earl is about to go abroad or to leave home, and that Shakspeare intends to sing of him, to write about him, whilst he is away. The Poet stops at home—"here"—to sing of him who "doth hence remain." It is a somewhat fantastic excuse for a parting, and very different from the lovers' parting that follows, but it suffices to show what the Poet was expected to do in the absence of that friend who supplied his own "sweet argument" for the Love-Sonnets, and lent the Poet's imagination light. He is to represent Southampton dramatically, and double him by writing about him during his absence abroad.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

*Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon—at parting, in absence abroad, and on the return home.*

*Let me confess that we two must be twain,  
Although our undivided loves are one :  
So shall those blots that do with me remain  
Without thy help by me be borne alone :  
In our two loves there is but one respect,  
Though in our lives a separable spite,  
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,  
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's  
delight :*

*I may not evermore acknowledge thee,  
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame,  
Nor thou with public kindness honour me,  
Unless thou take that honour from thy name :  
But do not so, I love thee in such sort,  
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.*  
(36)

*As a decrepit father takes delight  
To see his active child do deeds of youth,  
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,  
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth ;  
For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,  
Or any of these all, or all, or more,  
Entitled in thy parts do crown'd sit,  
I make my love engrafted to this store :  
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,  
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance  
give,*

*That I in thy abundance am sufficed,  
And by a part of all thy glory live :  
Look what is best, that best I wish in thee ;  
This wish I have ; then ten times happy me.*  
(37)

*Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,  
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired ;  
But then begins a journey in my head  
To work my mind when body's work's expired :  
For then my thoughts (from far, where I  
abide)*

*Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,  
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,  
Looking on darkness which the blind do see :  
Save that my soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beautiful, and her old face  
new :*

*Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my  
mind  
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.*  
(27)

*How can I then return in happy plight,  
That am debarred the benefit of rest ?*

*When Day's oppression is not eased by Night,  
But Day by Night and Night by Day  
oppressed ;*

*And each, though enemies to either's reign,  
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,  
The one by toil, the other to complain  
How far I toil ; still farther off from thee :  
I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright,  
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the  
heaven :*

*So flatter I the swart-complexioned Night,  
When sparkling stars twine not, thou gild'st  
the Even :*

*But Day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,  
And Night doth nightly make grief's length  
seem stronger.*  
(28)

*When most I wink then do mine eyes best see,  
For all the day they view things unrespected :  
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,  
And, darkly bright, are bright in dark  
directed !*

*Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make  
bright,  
How would thy shadow's form form happy  
show*

*To the clear day with thy much clearer light,  
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so !  
How would—I say—mine eyes be blessed made  
By looking on thee in the living day,  
When in dead night thy fair, imperfect shade  
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay !  
All days are nights to see till I see thee :  
And nights bright days when dreams do show  
thee me.*  
(43) \*

*Is it thy will thy image should keep open  
My heavy eyelids to the weary night ?  
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,  
While shadows, like to thee, do mock my sight ?  
Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from the  
So far from home, into my deeds to pry ;  
To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy ?  
Oh no ! thy love, though much, is not so great ;  
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake ;  
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,  
To play the watchman ever for thy sake :*

*For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake else-  
where,  
From me far off, with others all-too-near.*  
(61) \*

\* See next page.

*If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,  
Injurious distance should not stop my way,  
For then, despite of space, I would be brought  
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay,<sup>1</sup>  
No matter then altho' my foot did stand  
Upon the farthest earth removed from thee,  
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,  
As soon as think the place where he would be :  
I ut, ah ! thought kills me that I am not thought  
To leap large lengths of miles<sup>2</sup> when thou art  
gone,*

*But that so much of earth and water wrought  
I must attend Time's leisure with my mourn ;  
Receiving nought by elements so slow  
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.* (44)

*The other two, slight Air and purging Fire,  
Are both with thee, wherever I abide ;  
The first my thought, the other my desire,  
These present, absent with swift motion slide :  
For when these quicker elements are gone  
In tender embassy of love to thee,  
My life being made of four, with two alone  
Sinks down to death oppressed with melancholy,  
Until life's composition be recured  
By those swift messengers returned from thee,  
Who even but now come back again, assured  
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me !*

*This told I joy, but then no longer glad,  
I send them back again, and straight grow  
sad.* (45)

*Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,  
How to decide the conquest of thy sight ;  
Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would  
bar,*

*My heart mine eye the freedom of that right :  
My heart doth plead that thou in him doth lie,  
(A closet never pierced with crystal eyes)  
But the defendant doth that plea deny,  
And says, in him thy fair appearance lies ;  
To 'cide this title is impanelled  
A 'quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart,  
And by their verdict is determined  
The clear eye's moiety, and the dear heart's part :  
As thus,—mine eye's due is thine outward  
part :*

*And my heart's right thine inward love of  
heart.* (46)

*Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,  
And each doth good turns now unto the other :  
When that mine eye is famished for a look,  
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,  
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,  
And to the painted banquet bids my heart ;  
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,  
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part :*

<sup>1</sup> I.e. I would be brought from "limits far remote" where I am, on distant shores, to where thou dost stay, at home.

<sup>2</sup> So in *King John*—

" Large lengths of seas and shores  
Between my father and my mother lay."

\* SIDNEY IN ABSENCE FROM STELLA.

*Now that of absence the most irksome night  
With darkest shade doth overcome my day :  
Since Stella's eyes, wont to give me my day,  
Leaving my hemisphere, leave me in night ;  
Each day seems long, and longs for long-stayed  
night,  
The night, as tedious, woos th' approach of  
day :  
Tired with the dusty toils of busy day,  
Languished with horrors of the silent night ;  
Suffering the evils both of day and night,  
While no night is more dark than is my day,  
Nor no day hath less quiet than my night :  
With such bad mixture of my night and day,  
That living thus in blackest Winter night,  
I feel the flames of hottest Summer day.  
Astrophel and Stella—Sonnet 89.*

\* SIDNEY ON THE IMAGE OF STELLA  
SEEN BY NIGHT.

*This night, while sleep begins with heavy  
wings  
To hatch mine eyes, and that unbitted thought  
Doth fall to stray, and my chief powers are  
brought  
To leave the sceptre of all subject things ;  
The first that straight my fancy's error brings  
Unto my mind is Stella's image, wrought  
By Love's own self, but with so curious  
draught  
That she, methinks, not only shines but sings :  
I start, look, hark ; but what in closed-up  
sense  
Was held, in opened sense it flies away,  
Leaving me nought but wailing eloquence :  
I, seeing better sights in sight's decay,  
Called it anew, and wooed Sleep again ;  
But him, her host, that unkind guest had  
slain.*

*Astrophel and Stella—Sonnet 38.*



So, either by thy Picture or my love,  
Thyself away art present still with me ;  
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst  
move,  
And I am still with them, and they with thee ;  
Or if they sleep, thy Picture in my sight  
Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.<sup>1</sup>  
(47)

How careful was I, when I took my way,  
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,  
That to my use it might unused stay  
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of  
trust :

But thou, to whom my jewels<sup>2</sup> trifles are,  
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,  
Thou best of dearest, and mine only care,  
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief ;  
Thee have I not locked up in any chest,  
Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,  
Within the gentle closure of my breast,  
From whence at pleasure thou may'st come and  
part ;  
And even thence thou wilt be stolen, I fear,  
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.  
(48)

Against that time, if ever that time come  
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,

When as thy love hath cast his utmost sum,  
Called to that audit by advised respects ;  
Against that time, when thou shalt strangely  
pass,  
And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,  
When love, converted from the thing it was,  
Shall reasons find of settled gravity ;  
Against that time do I ensconce me here  
Within the knowledge of mine own desert,  
And this my hand against myself uprear,  
To guard the lawful reasons on thy part :  
To leave poor me thou hast the strength of  
laws,  
Since, why to love, I can allege no cause.  
(49)

How heavy do I journey on the way,  
When what I seek—my weary travel's end—  
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say  
" Thus far the miles are measured from thy  
friend ! " <sup>3</sup>  
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,  
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,  
As if by some instinct the wretch did know  
His rider loved not speed being made from thee :  
The bloody spur cannot provoke him on  
That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide  
Which heavily he answers with a groan  
More sharp to me than spurring to his side :

<sup>1</sup> Sonnets 46 and 47 are obviously based on one of Drayton's that was printed in 1594 ; which agrees with the most probable date for the group. The difference turns upon the possession of an actual picture, and on the use of legal terminology.

HEART AND EYES.

" Whilst yet mine eyes do surfeit with delight,  
My woful heart imprisoned in my breast  
Wisheth to be transformed to my sight,  
That it, like those, by looking, might be blest ;  
But, whilst mine eyes thus greedily do gaze,  
Finding their objects evermore depart,  
These now the other's happiness do praise,  
Wishing themselves that they had been my heart :  
That eyes were heart, or that the heart were eyes,  
As covetous the others' use to have ;  
But, finding Nature their request denies,  
This to each other mutually they crave,  
That since the one cannot the other be,  
That eyes could think of that my heart could see."

Drayton—Sonnet 33.

<sup>2</sup> " My jewels." So Bertram, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, while preparing for a journey, says—

" I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure,"

<sup>3</sup> So Bolingbroke when going into banishment, says—

" Every tedious stride I make  
Will but remember me what a deal of world  
I wander from the jewels that I love."—*Richard II.*, I. iii.

*For that same groan doth put this in my  
mind ;  
My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.*  
(50)

*Thus can my love excuse the slow offence  
Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed ;  
From where thou art why should I haste me  
thence ?*

*Till I return, of posting is no need :  
O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,  
When swift extremity can seem but slow ?  
Then should I spur though mounted on the  
wind ;*

*In winged speed no motion shall I know :  
Then can no horse with my desire keep  
pace ;*

*Therefore Desire, of perfect<sup>st</sup> love being made,  
Shall neigh no dull flesh in his fiery race,<sup>1</sup>  
But love, for love, shall thus excuse my jade—  
Since from thee going he went wilful  
slow,*

*Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave  
to go.*  
(51)

*So am I as the rich whose blessed key  
Can bring him to his sweet, unlock'd treasure,  
The which he will not every hour survey,  
For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure :*

*Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare :  
Since, seldom coming in the long year set  
Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,  
Or captain jewels in the carcanet :  
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,  
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,  
To make some special instant special blest,  
By new unfolding his imprisoned pride :  
Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,  
Being had—to triumph ; being lacked—to  
hope !*  
(52)

*Sweet love, renew thy force ; be it not said,  
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,  
Which but to-day by feeding is allayed,  
To-morrow sharpened in his former might :  
So love be thou ; although to-day thou fill  
Thy hungry eyes e'en till they wink with  
fulness,*

*To-morrow see again, and do not kill  
The spirit of love with a perpetual dulness :  
Let this sad interim,<sup>2</sup> like the ocean be  
Which parts the shore, where two contracted  
now*

*Come daily to the banks, that, when they see  
Return of love, more bleas'd may be the view :  
Or call it winter, which, being full of care,  
Makes summer's welcomes thrice more wish'd,  
more rare.*  
(56)

The speaker in these Sonnets is the same as in Sonnet 29, where he was an outcast out of favour, out of luck, and out of heart, because in "disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes;" a bankrupt in most things, but rich in the possession of his lady's love. Southampton is in disgrace at Court, from whatsoever cause, and there is a compulsory parting from his mistress. The lovers must be twain, although they are undivided in their love. There is a separating spite betwixt them. This is the primary cause of his banishment, although he himself is much to blame. The more immediate cause is something he has done, for which he holds himself solely guilty. This parting will not change their feeling toward each other, though it will steal sweet hours from their delight by the enforced absence. He may not call her his any more, lest the guilt which he bewails should shame her, nor must she notice him for others to see ; must not show him any kindness publicly or in presence of the Court, else it will be to her own dishonour. He loves her so that her good report is his, and rather than endanger it further, he accepts the parting as being necessary for her sake. In this way those blots that remain with him shall be borne by him alone, without her having to share the burden of his blame. The outcast condition is continued in Sonnet 37. The speaker is "made

<sup>1</sup> The image is used by one who rides a horse among horses, and horses are in the habit of neighing when they salute each other ; they will do this, too, if speed be ever so important. And the writer says, his desire being made of perfectest love, having nothing animal about it, shall not *salute* any dull flesh in his fiery race ; only he continues the use of the image by means of the word "*neigh*." Perhaps the Poet was thinking of the words of the prophet Jeremiah—"They were as fed horses in the morning : every one neighed after his neighbour's wife."

<sup>2</sup> *Interim*, printed in italics in the quarto.

lame by Fortune's dearest spite," disgrace at Court has disabled him from service. In this plight he takes all his comfort and delight in his lady's "worth and truth;" he lives by a part of all her glory, and in sharing her abundance is "sufficed;" possessing her he is no longer lame or poor or despised. As in the previous Sonnets (29, 30, 31), she is looked up to as the crown of his life; the solace of his thoughts when parting from her, or when he is alone in exile. On the journey, wearied with the daily march, he hastens to bed, but not to sleep. He cannot rest for thinking of his beloved left behind. Another journey by night follows the travel by day to work his mind when his bodily toil is over. His thoughts return upon a zealous pilgrimage to her; they go back from afar where he is staying—

"Lo, thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,  
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find."

How can he then return in "happy plight" to renew his travel, who has no benefit of rest? Night shows her to him in vision; the day takes him farther and farther away from her. He tells them stories of his love and of her loveliness, to wile away the time. It is all in vain. For the day still draws out the distance longer and longer, and the night doth nightly make stronger that length of grief drawn out by day. He sees best when he shuts his eyes. Her image in his mind shines with such splendour that it makes the night luminous and the day dark. But how blessed would his eyes be made if he could but look on her real self in the living day instead of in the dead of night, when he thus sees her "imperfect shade." Sonnet 61 is one of those that have gone astray, and is now restored to an appropriate place. Is it her will, he asks, to keep his eyes open, his mind awake, to mock him with these shadows of herself? Or does she send her spirit so far from home to pry into his deeds—

"To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?"

Oh, no! he says, it is not her love nor her jealousy, but his own, that keeps him awake and on the fret—

"For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,  
From me far off, with others all too near."

If mind and matter were but identical, he thinks how swiftly would he be brought from "limits far remote" to where she dwells. But he is composed of the four elements, and cannot be all thought to "leap large lengths of miles" when her image has fled from his mental vision. The dull and heavy elements of earth and water are too much for him, but he is with her in thought and in desire. Those quicker elements, all air and fire, are the swift messengers that visit her in tender embassy of love. These can go to her and return to tell him of her "fair health." They give their messages to him and straightway does he send them back again to her. Now the lover looks upon two different portraits of his lady. He has one likeness of her at heart, the other he can doat on with his eyes and fondle in his clasp. He is in possession of a real objective picture palpable to his visual sense—the "painted banquet" of his "love's picture" which is still present for the eyes to feast on when the original is far away. This alone will account for the conflict between the eyes and the heart, and for

the league of amity that followed by means of which the eyes would let the heart see their objective picture at one time, and the heart could show its inner likeness to the sight another, so that whether he wakes or sleeps, he can see her likeness still. She is present with him in the shape of her miniature—

“ So either by *thy picture* or my love,  
Thyself away art *present still* with me.”

We are also reminded of Sidney's lines—

“ Whose presence absence, absence presence is,  
Blest in my curse, and cursèd in my bliss.”

*Astrophel and Stella*—Sonnet 60.

Now occurs the very natural thought of his care on leaving home, in securing his jewels and locking up his trifles ; and he has left this precious jewel of his love exposed as the unprotected prey of any common thief. Her he could not lock up, except in his heart. He fears she will be stolen from him, as the

“ Truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.”

Then he reverts to the reasons of his banishment, speaks of his defects, his unworthiness of her, and confesses that if she ever should determine to leave him he can allege no cause why she should continue to love him. When going away from his beloved, he journeys heavily on the road ; the horse bears him slowly, as if it were conscious that his rider was in no haste, and it felt the weight of his woe. Thus, thinking of his grief that lies before and his joy behind, he can excuse the slow pace of his steed. But if he were returning to his beloved, what excuse could his horse then find ?

“ Then should I spur though mounted on the wind ;  
In wingèd speed no motion shall I know.”

He would come back on wings of desire ; no horse could keep pace with him. His horse, Desire, should neigh, that is, *salute*, no dull flesh in his fiery race, as his horse is in the habit of doing whilst trooping in company with other horses. Then he tries to give an ingenious turn to the enforced absence. He makes it look as though he had a choice in the matter, and the separation was only to put a finer point upon the pleasure of meeting. He is rich in a locked-up possession, of which he keeps the key ; but he will not look in upon his treasure too often, lest it should dull his sense of the preciousness, make the privilege too common. The “time that keeps” the beloved is his “chest,” or jewel-casket ; or rather it is the wardrobe that hides the robe which is to make blest some special moment by a fresh unfolding of the shut-up richness, his imprisoned pride—

“ Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,  
Being had—to Triumph ; being lucked—to Hope ! ”

In Sonnet 56 the poet dramatizes the return home, and makes an appeal for the return of love. We see the meeting of the affianced pair, the two who were compelled to be twain at parting are now “contracted new” ; the lapse of time during the absence being recognized as a “sad interim”—the Winter that is now to be followed by the Summer of love's smile.

The autobiographic reading of these Sonnets pre-supposes Shakspeare to be the speaker ; Shakspeare who is so deeply in disgrace that it is a matter of

necessity for his friend to "cut" him altogether. He must not acknowledge our Poet as his companion any more; must not take any further notice of him, or show him any public kindness whatsoever, lest the personal guilt which the speaker bewails should bring his friend to dishonour and cover him with shame. So bad a case was it that we have to suppose it necessary for the Poet to go abroad and get disinfected in foreign air. There are no grounds for thinking that Shakspeare ever undertook a long journey like this; no reason to believe that he was ever out of England, unless he went to Scotland when his Theatrical Company was on a visit to the Northern Court. Even then the only journey known to have been made by the players to the Scottish capital was too late to be referred to in Sonnets that were extant in 1598.

Here is a man who is certainly a lover on his travels, performing a long and wearisome journey on horseback day by day. He plods on farther and farther away from the person addressed and adored. In Sonnet 27 he is so far away that he can speak of his thoughts making a pilgrimage home again. If he could be all spirit, and move swift as thought, then the great and perilous distance that lies between them should not stop him. In spite of space, he would come from the distant shores, "limits far remote," to the place where his beloved stays! It was a journey also for which considerable preparations had to be made. Long time of absence was contemplated, and the speaker's personal property placed in sure wards of trust, as it was customary to deposit jewels and other treasures in some banker's safe. So Bertram in *All's Well*, when starting on his journey says—

"I have writ my letters; casketed my treasure."

But it may be assumed that Shakspeare's personal jewels at the time of writing were hardly worth mentioning in this comparison with a nobleman! Besides, the voyage was on account of a compulsory banishment. The absence was enforced. The speaker says—

"I must attend *Time's leisure with my moan.*"

It has been assumed, as Brown suggested, that Shakspeare may have written thus of his journey and his jewels, the "large length of miles," the "limits far remote," the "sea and land," that lay between him and the friend who might be filched from him in his absence, when he ventured to make his long and perilous journey to Stratford. Thus Shakspeare on his way home to visit his wife and dear little ones must be supposed not only to bemoan the parting from his "Best of Dearest" and his "Only Care," but also to assert that his "Grief lies onward" and his "joy behind." A clear confession that he had trouble with Anne, and was unhappy in his married lot! This is the sort of evidence they rely on to prove it. And then to think of his poor deserted friend Southampton, whom he has left at large in London, not locked up in any chest or banker's strong box—left him all unprotected to become the "prey of every vulgar thief!" It would be heartrending indeed! One of my critics objected to Southampton being mounted on a "jade," a hack, and thought it far more fitted for Shakspeare on his way to Stratford; not perceiving that this is an instance of the "pathetic fallacy," and that the horse is "jaded" by the rider's feeling.

King Richard II. says of his pet roan Barbary,

"The *jade* hath ate bread from my royal hand,"

L

and of himself—

“Down, down, I come ; like glistening Phaeton,  
Wanting the manage of unruly jades.”—*Richard II.*, III. iii.

It is only intellectual eunuchs who could imagine that men ever dream of one another in the night-season, and fear lest their mate may be stolen, and write of their jealousy by day in this fashion! The Sonnets tell us that this traveller by land and sea, this wanderer abroad, was not Shakspeare, whose work it was to stay at home all the time and write about his friend. It was this absence that taught the Poet—

“How to make one twain  
By praising him *here* who doth *hence* remain.”

He could not speak more plainly for himself. His mole of praising or writing about his friend was to express the thoughts and feelings, the day-dreams and visions of the night, the heart-yearnings and jealous fears of a lover, in the lover's own language and imagery of love. “Myself have played the interim,” says the chorus in *King Henry V.*, V. ; and this was exactly what Shakspeare had done for the pair of ill-starred lovers—he had “played the interim,” and filled in all he could with the aid of vicarious or Dramatic Sonnets.

Without comprehending the purpose and object, we may say the sex, of Sonnets like these, it was impossible to perceive their full significance. It was like seeing only the beauty of the flower in form and colour, without being able to smell its sweetness.

The comparative test will afford some evidence that it is a woman who is addressed by her lover in this group of Sonnets. In the lines—

“Let me confess that we two must be twain,  
Although our undivided loves are one,”

the Poet was reversely applying the marriage text of Matthew (xix. 6), “They are no more twain, but *one flesh*,” which affords good evidence in favour of the two sexes, and is an obvious reminder of the joining together that was not to be put asunder. So Pandarus, speaking to Helen of Cressid and Paris, says, “She'll none of him ; they two are twain,” which also applies to both sexes. So in the old ballad of *Clerk Saunders*—

“It were great sin true love to twain.”

Further, the comparative test applied to these Sonnets and to the play of *Roméo and Juliet* will likewise show us that it is a lover who addresses his mistress in both. Romeo says of Juliet—

“It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.”

And the lover in the Sonnets had said—

“My soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.”

Again, Romeo says,

“I dreamt my lady came and found me dead.  
S'range dream ! that gives a dead man leave to think !  
Ah me ! how sweet is love itself possessed,  
When but love's shadows are so rich in joy !”

This is curiously turned from the Sonnets where the eyes of the lover see the image of his lady in a dream, and he says—

“ In dreams they look on thee,  
Then thou, whose Shadow shadows doth make bright ;  
How would thy Shadow's form form happy show  
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,  
When to unseeing eyes thy Shade shines so ! ”—*Sonnet 43.*

This is Shakspeare's own testimony in his drama to the nature of his imagery and the sex of the characters in the Sonnets. The comparison with Sidney's Sonnets addressed to Stella also tends to show that the same likenesses were applied by Shakspeare to a woman, and not to a man, in his Sonnets. The language, the images, the feelings, the Plays, the example of Sidney, the situations, all point to the female sex. Sidney is not only followed, he is also borrowed from.

“ My drooping eyelids open wide,  
Looking on darkness which the blind do  
see.”—*Sonnet 27.*

“ With windows ope, then most my mind  
doth lie,  
Viewing the shape of darkness.”  
*Astrophel and Stella, 99.*

The following Sonnet should be especially compared with Shakspeare's (No. 50-51)—

“ I on my horse, and Love on me, doth try  
Our horsemanship, while by strange work I prove  
A horseman to my horse, a horse to Love,  
And now man's wrongs in me, poor beast ! descry.  
The rein wherewith my rider doth me tie  
Are humbled thoughts, which bit of reverence move,  
Curbed-in with fear, but with gilt bosse above  
Of hope, which makes it seem fair to the eye :  
The wand is will ; thou, Fancy, saddle art,  
Girt fast by Memory ; and while I spur  
My horse, he spurs with sharp desire my heart ;  
He sits me fast, however I do stir ;  
And now hath made me to his hand so right,  
That in the manage myself take delight.  
*Astrophel and Stella—Sonnet 49.*

Here, as elsewhere, it is an intensely interesting study to watch Shakspeare at work. In his selection of material only the fittest survives. It is curious to note what he did take, but still more instructive to observe that which he left behind. Sidney turns his desire into a horse, and then identifies himself with the horse ; he becomes “ a horse to love.” In Shakspeare's Sonnets Desire is identified with the horse—a horse that does not neigh ; but he does not repeat the direct comparison, and so avoids that element—something between a *naïveté* and *naïserie*—which is natural to Sidney, but too unripe for Shakspeare.

It is the horse in Sidney's Sonnet that enables us to understand the imagery of Shakspeare's, which has perplexed commentators, concerning the Desire that is not to neigh like a horse. Another difficulty may be cleared up with the aid of Sidney. He says of his Star (Stella) that it “ not only shines, but sings ” (p. 140). Sidney listens in spirit to the star that in its motion seems to sing.

This magnificent image is converted by Shakspeare into a sparkling star that twines, or reversely,

“When sparkling stars twine not.”—*Sonnet 28.*

which expression has bequeathed to us one of the critical cruces of the Sonnets.

Twiring is equivalent to quiring, or singing. Skinner says “twyreth is interpreted singeth.” This sense is extant in Chaucer, who uses it for the intermittent sounds of a bird. Beaumont and Fletcher have applied it to the braying of an ass—“You are an ass, a twire-pipe.” Twire is also employed for visible motion as well as audible. In both senses, or to both senses, it is a quivering, hence the application to a star that sings as well as shines. This treatment of Sidney's image gives us an enlightening glimpse of Shakspeare's art of fusing two things into a third, or two meanings into one word. For a moment we seem to fathom the secret of his magic by such a revealing flash. Lastly, the comparative process shows us for residual result that the writer does not derive those *incidents* and *events* from Sidney which go to make up the story of Southampton's Sonnets. In these Shakspeare is drawing directly from the life, the love, the character, the personal history of his friend, and no genuine lover of poetry can fail to feel how these Sonnets dilate with life when spoken by a lover who is far away from his mistress. Thus interpreted, they are profoundly beautiful; the beauty reaching its best in Sonnets 48 and 52. How much nearer to nature they nestle when we know the yearnings are womanward. This gives to them the true bitter-sweet. How tender and true and *naïvely* winsome is the expression! How deep-hearted the love! The dramatic mood shows the Poet to us likest himself; the poetry kindles with a new dawn, and breathes the aroma of Shakspeare's sweetest love-lines; it takes us into a presence akin to that of Perdita and Viola, Helena, Juliet, Imogen, and the rest of those fragrant-natured women whom he “loved into being;” and this veiled presence which has so perplexed us, when told that all these tender perfections of poetry, caresses of feeling, and daintinesses of expression were lavished on a man, and the natural instinct fought against the seeming fact, is the presence of Mistress Elizabeth Vernon, with whom Southampton was in love, and from whom he was parted by a “separating spite.”

It was in May 1595 that, according to Mr. Standen, the Earl of Southampton had got into disgrace at Court, and that Elizabeth Vernon and her *ill good man* waited upon her irate Majesty to know her resolution in the matter. Her Majesty sent out word to say firmly that she was *sufficiently resolved*. In September of the same year, White tells us that the Earl of Southampton has been courting the fair Mistress Vernon *with too much familiarity*; the meaning of which is too plain for the need of comment. The Queen's resolve was, without doubt, that Southampton should quit the Court in consequence, which was followed by his leaving England for a time. Hence the “separating spite.” Hence the Sonnets spoken by Southampton during his absence, with which Shakspeare did “entertain the time with thoughts of love,” and so played the part of Viola, who says to Olivia, “I did woo you in my master's flame.”



## PERSONAL SONNETS.

What is your substance? whereof are you  
made,  
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?  
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,  
And you, but one, can every shadow lend:  
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit  
Is poorly imitated after you;  
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,  
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:  
Speak of the spring and foison of the year:  
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,  
The other as your bounty doth appear,  
And you in every blessed shape we know:  
In all external grace you have some part,  
But you like none, none you, for constant  
heart. (53)

O how much more doth beauty beauteous  
seem,  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth  
give!  
The Rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem  
For that sweet odour which doth in it live:  
The Canker-blooms have full as deep a dye,  
As the perfum'd tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly  
When Summer's breath their masked buds  
discloses:  
But for their virtue only is their show,  
They live unwooded, and unrespected fade;  
Die to themselves: Sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours  
made:  
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,  
When that shall fade, my verse distils your  
truth. (54)

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of Princes, shall out-live this powerful rhyme;  
But you shall shine more bright in these con-  
tents  
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish  
time:  
When wasteful Wars shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall  
burn  
The living record of your memory;  
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still  
find room,  
Even in the eyes of all posterity,  
That wear this world out to the ending doom:  
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.  
(55)

If there be nothing new, but that which is  
Hath been before, how are our brains beguile,  
Which labouring for invention bear amiss  
The second burden of a former child!  
Oh, that record could with a backward look,  
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,  
Show me your image in some antique book,  
Since mind at first in character was done!  
That I might see what the old world could see  
To this compos'd wonder of your frame;  
Whether we are mended, or where better  
they,  
Or whether revolution be the same;  
Oh! sure I am, the wits of former days  
To subjects worse have given admiring  
praise. (59)

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled  
shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end,  
Each changing place with that which goes  
before  
In sequent toil all forwards to contend:  
Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift con-  
found:  
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,  
And delves the parallels on Beauty's brow;  
Feeds on the rarities of Nature's truth,  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:  
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall  
stand,  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.  
(60)

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye  
And all my soul and all my every part;  
And for this sin there is no remedy,  
It is so grounded inward in my heart:  
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,  
No shape so true, no truth of such account;  
And for myself mine own worth do define,  
As I all others in all worths surmount:  
But when my glass shows me myself indeed,  
Beaten and chopped with tanned antiquity,  
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;  
Self so self-loving were iniquity:  
'Tis thee—myself—that for myself I praise,  
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.  
(62)

Against my Love shall be, as I am now,  
With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'er-  
worn;

When hours have drained his blood and filled  
 his brow  
 With lines and wrinkles ; when his youthful  
 morn  
 Hath travelled on to Age's steepy night,  
 And all those beauties whereof now he's

king,  
 Are vanishing or vanished out of sight,  
 Stealing away the treasure of his Spring ;  
 For such a time do I now fortify  
 Against confounding Age's cruel knife,  
 That he shall never cut from memory  
 My sweet Love's beauty, though my Lover's

life :  
 His beauty shall in these black lines be  
 seen,  
 And they shall live, and he in them still  
 green. (63)

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced  
 The rich, proud cost of outworn buried age :  
 When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,  
 And brass eternal slave to mortal rage ;  
 When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
 Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
 And the firm soil win of the watery main,  
 Increasing store with loss, and loss with store :

When I have seen such interchange of state,  
 Or state itself confounded to decay ;  
 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,  
 That time will come, and take my Love away :  
 This thought is as a death, which cannot  
 choose

But weep to have that which it fears to lose.  
 (64)

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor bound-  
 less sea,

But sad mortality o'ersways their power,  
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower !  
 O, how shall Summer's honey breath hold out  
 Against the wreckful siege of battering days,  
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
 Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays !  
 Oh fearful meditation ! where, alack !  
 Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie  
 hid !

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot  
 back ?

Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid ?  
 Oh none, unless this miracle have might,  
 That in black ink my love may still shine  
 bright. (65)

Shakspeare's argument for marriage would naturally lapse when his friend Southampton had fallen in love with Elizabeth Vernon, and was only too desirous of marrying her as soon as possible. As it did. Then the vicarious Sonnets began to tell the love-story ; but the writing had to be deciphered reversely in the Dramatic Mirror, and could not be directly read.

The "Sugared Sonnets," that is, Sonnets which preserved the sweets of love poetry, were written for and known amongst the Poet's "private friends." Next to Southampton, who supplied his own arguments for dramatic treatment, the chief reader of the Sonnets would now be Elizabeth Vernon, the most interested and delighted of the private friends. Shakspeare now saw and sang of Southampton for more than himself ; saw him with the lady looking through his eyes, and sang of him with her looking over the words. And how she would love the friend who had thus admonished Southampton in lines to doubt—

"O, therefore, love, be of thyself so wary  
 As I, not for myself, but for thee will ;  
 Bearing thy heart which I will keep so chary  
 As tender nurse her babe from faring ill."

These warm expressions in praise of the young man's beauty, his mental accomplishments, his attractive grace of manner, his constancy in love, are no longer to be uttered by the Poet for himself alone. He speaks for another loving listener now. He is like one who at a banquet returns thanks for the ladies. He loves, admires, and finds expression for, both sexes. Thus in Sonnet 53 Southampton is addressed on behalf of the two sexes, and described as Adonis for the lady and Helen for the friend,—that is the warrant for applying the bi-sexual imagery. It is as her lover that Shakspeare lauds his friend with all the more emphasis and fervour.

The new theme added is the lover's truth. The verses in which his beauty had been preserved are now employed to distil his truth. "Oh, how much more" than all the outward beauty is that "sweet ornament which Truth doth give!" But what truth? not mere unflinching patronage of the Poet, Playwright, or male friend. It was not for that he was to live in these Sonnets and "dwell in lovers' eyes," (55) until the day of "ending doom," but as the lover who was faithful to his lady's love in spite of Time, and Fortune, and enmity, and all opposing powers. That is the truth the Poet was to make immortal, the jewel destined for his friend's eternal wear, which was dropped, and has been long-lost at the bottom of the well in these Sonnets.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Elizabeth Vernon's sadness for her lover's reckless course of life.

*Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,—  
As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily foresworn,  
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
And strength by limping sway disabled,  
And Art made tongue-tied by Authority,  
And Folly, doctor-like, controlling Skill,  
And simple truth, miscalled simplicity,  
And captive Good attending captain Ill :<sup>1</sup>*

*Tired with all these, from these I would be  
gone,*

*Save that to die, I leave my Love alone !*  
(86)

*Ah ! wherefore with infection should he live,  
And with his presence grace impiety,  
That Sin by him advantage should achieve,  
And lace itself with his society ?*

*Why should false painting imitate his cheek,  
And steal dead seeming of his living hue ?  
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek  
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true ?  
Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,  
Beggared of blood to blush through lively veins ?  
For she hath no exchequer now but his,  
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains :*

*O ! him she stores, to show what wealth she  
had*

*In days long since, before these last so bad.*  
(67)

*Thus is his cheek the map of days out-worn,  
When Beauty lived and died as flowers do now,  
Before these bastard signs of fair were born,  
Or durst inhabit on a living brow ;  
Before the golden tresses of the dead,  
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away  
To live a second life on second head,  
E'er Beauty's dead fleece made another gay :*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wordsworth's fine passage written on this line of thought—

“ And here was Labour, his own bond-slave ; Hope,  
That never set the pains against the prize ;  
Idleness halting with his weary clog,  
And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,  
And foolish Pleasure foraging for Death ;  
Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray ;  
Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile,  
Murmuring submission, and bald government,  
(The idol weak as the idolator,)  
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,  
And blind Authority beating with his staff  
The child that might have led him ; Emptiness  
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth  
Left to herself unheard of and unknown.

Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Book III.

*In him those holy antique hours are seen,  
Without all ornament, itself and true,  
Making no summer of another's green,  
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new ;  
And him as for a map doth Nature store,  
To show false Art what beauty was of yore.*  
(68)

*Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view  
Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend :  
All tongues—the voice of souls—give thee that due,  
Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend :*

*Thine outward thus with outward praise is crown'd ;  
But those same tongues that give thee so thine own,  
In other accents do this praise confound,  
By seeing farther than the eye hath shown :  
They look into the beauty of thy mind,  
And that in guess they measure by thy deeds ;  
Then (churls) their thoughts, although their eyes were kind,  
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds !  
But why thy odour snatcheth not thy show,  
The solve is this—that thou dost common grow.*  
(69)

If Shakspeare were the speaker in this group of Sonnets they might be suspected of belonging to what has been termed his "unhappy period," during which he wrote his profoundest Plays. Which "unhappy period," when judged by the Sonnets, must have been somewhat frequent, or else continued very long. Here the speaker is dejected enough to wish for death ; unhappy enough to long for it and to cry for it—for "restful death I cry." The speaker is weary of beholding the wrongs that are done, the general wryness of things, and sick of seeing how desert is born in beggary, "needy nothing trimmed in jollity," faith foresworn, gilded honours shamefully misplaced, maiden virtue strumpeted, strength disabled by "limping sway," art made tongue-tied by Authority, and other things that were common enough in any Court, and not limited to any particular time. But the wearisomeness of life which suggests these excuses has a more particular cause than that of things in general. These are but as the shadowy imagery of the feeling of sadness thus externalized, and attired, as it were, in the blots and blemishes of the social state.

These facts did not constitute the root of the matter—the truth that was worth dying for, or wanting to die. Nor was the desire to die and get out of such a world in the least like Shakspeare, as we know him from the Plays. This world was good enough for him. His philosophy of life has no such effeminateness.

There is a root of bitterness beyond all these. And yet this is not in the speaker's own life, or deeds, or personal character. The unhappiness is not self-caused, nor is it felt on behalf of self. This cry for restful death is not on account of any sins committed by Shakspeare even if he were the speaker. The cause of it all is the person addressed—

*" Ah ! wherefore with infection should he live ? "*

This desire to close the eyes in death, and get rid of all the sorry contrasts to be seen in life, is to shut out the sight of this the saddest of all contrasts—this of the person addressed dwelling in infectious society.

*" Ah ! wherefore with infection should he live,  
And with his presence grace impiety ;  
That sin by him advantage should achieve,  
And lace itself with his society ? "*

The pity of it is, that he who was the "world's fresh ornament" should be spending his days, wasting his life, and shedding the bloom of his manly beauty,

to give a breath of health and a touch of nature to a disreputable lot who paint and decorate themselves with graveyard hair. Possibly reports have been brought by some Iachimo of the lover's gallantries among the painted Jays of Italy, or the devotees of "false Art" in Paris. However this may be, the cause of the speaker's wretchedness is the doings of the person addressed. And the explanation is that he has been living in infectious company, and consequently grown common in the mouths of men. The speaker holds him to be true at heart in spite of all that is done by him, or said about him, although others will judge the inner man by his outer deeds, and these are of a kind to add the rank smell of weeds to that flower which had been the glory of his spring. Now the person here addressed, who is the cause, or whose "deeds" have given cause, for such mental misery as could make the speaker almost despair and cry for death, becomes the speaker in a group of later Sonnets, where he responds and replies to the very charges here made and implied.

Thus there are two speakers, whoever they may be, and the fact suffices to establish the dramatic nature of these Sonnets. But the speaker who replies to the charges will prove absolutely that it is not Shakspeare who now bewails the evil courses that are yet to be confessed! He will there address the present speaker as his "Sum of Good," his Rose! his "best of love," his "Cherubin," his Divine love, to whom he was affianced or confined; his "All-the-world," his "All," because he will then be addressing a woman who is his affianced mistress; and he replies charge by charge, and word by word, to the speaker of the foregoing Sonnets. He admits having dwelt in infectious society, and offers to drink vinegar or "potions of Eysel" to disinfect himself. He confesses to the "harmful deeds" that have made him the subject of public scandal. He acknowledges all, and more than he has been charged with, he fully identifies himself as the cause of all and more unhappiness than was previously expressed in these and other Sonnets. He confesses and regrets the blots and stains on his character, but protests that, despite these blots, he cannot "so preposterously be *stained*" as to "leave for nothing all thy sum of good."

Now, as these later Sonnets are not addressed in reply to Shakspeare, but to a woman, it follows that the person who utters the charges should be the woman, and not Shakspeare: thus the drama would be most perfectly complete. It is more dramatic and more credible to think that Shakspeare should only be the writer in both cases, leaving the two lovers to speak their parts, and so complete the circle in a natural embrace.

Therefore I hold the present speaker who wishes for death, except for having to leave her lover alone in the world, who so sadly bewails his harmful deeds and his dwelling with infection, is none other than Elizabeth Vernon, one of the two chief *Dramatis Personæ* of Shakspeare's Sonnets.

The following Sonnet is personal to the poet speaking without the mask—

#### A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Shakspeare in defence of his friend.*

"That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,  
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair,  
The ornament of beauty is suspect,  
A Crow that flies in Heaven's sweetest air!

So thou be good, slander doth but approve  
 Thy worth the greater, being wooed of Time ;  
 For canker Vice the sweetest buds doth love,  
 And thou present'st a pure unstained prime :  
 Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,  
 Either not assailed, or victor being charged ;  
 Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,  
 To tie up Envy evermore enlarged :  
 If some suspect of ill masked not thy show  
 Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts should'st owe." (70)

This Sonnet I read as the Poet's comment on the foregoing subject. It is written upon an occasion when the Earl has been suspected and slandered, and Shakspeare does not consider him to blame. Suspicion has been at work, and the Poet tells his friend that for one like him to be suspected and slandered is no marvel whatever. Suspicion is the ornament of beauty, and is sure to be found in its near neighbourhood ; it is the crow that flies in the upper air. A handsome young fellow like the Earl is sure to be the object of suspicion and envy. He has been suspected, and the suspicion has given rise to a slander. Therefore the Poet treats the charge of the jealousy Sonnets as a slander. Sonnet 122 may throw a little light upon it. In that the Earl aims at some Court lady who had slandered him, and on his frailty been a frailer spy. This excited the jealousy of Elizabeth Vernon. We saw in a previous group that the speaker herself was not sure if her suspicions were true—did not know if the absent ones were triumphing in their treachery—and Shakspeare in person implies that they were not. He speaks also to the Earl's general character on the subject ; says his young friend "presents a pure unstained prime" of life ; alludes to his having been assailed by a woman, and come off a "victor being charged." In the previous Sonnets, as we saw, it was a woman who had wooed and tried to tempt the Earl from his mistress. But, pure and good as he may be, and blameless as his life has been, this is not enough to tie up envy. This Sonnet, then, illustrates the story of Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy. It gives us the Poet's own view of the affair, together with his personal conclusions ; it is the Poet's general summing-up in defence of his friend.

#### PERSONAL SONNETS.

No longer mourn for me, when I am dead,  
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
 Give warning to the world that I am fled  
 From this vile world with vilest worms to  
 dwell :  
 Nay, if you read this line remember not  
 The hand that writ it ; for I love you so  
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be  
 forgot,  
 If thinking on me then should make you woe :  
 O if—I say—you look upon this verse  
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,  
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,  
 But let your love even with my life decay :  
 Lest the wise world should look into your  
 moan,  
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

(71)

O, lest the World should task you to recite  
 What merit lived in me, that you should  
 love  
 After my death, dear Love, forget me quite,  
 For you in me can nothing worthy prove ;  
 Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,  
 To do more for me than mine own desert,  
 And hang more praise upon deceased I  
 Than niggard truth would willingly impart :  
 O lest your true love may seem false in  
 this,  
 That you for love speak well of me untrue,  
 My name be buried where my body is,  
 And live no more to shame nor me nor you !  
 For I am shamed by that which I bring  
 forth,  
 And so should you, to love things nothing  
 worth.

(72)

That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the  
cold

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds  
sang!

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take  
away,

Death's second self, that seals up all in rest!  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished  
by:

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love  
more strong

To love that well which thou must lose ere  
long. (73)

But be contented! when that fell arrest  
Without all bail shall carry me away,  
My life hath in this line some interest,  
Which for memorial still with thee shall  
stay:

When thou reviewest this, thou dost review  
The very part was consecrate to thee:  
The Earth can have but earth, which is his  
due;

My spirit is thine, the better part of me!  
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,  
The prey of worms—my body being dead—  
The coward-conquest of a wretch's knife,  
Too base of thee to be remembered:

The worth of that is that which it contains,  
And that is this, and this with thee remains. (74)

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,  
So far from variation, or quick change?  
Why, with the time, do I not glance aside  
To new-found methods and to compounds  
strange?

Why write I still all one, ever the same,  
And keep invention in a noted weed,  
That every word doth almost tell my name,  
Showing their birth, and where they did proceed?

O know, sweet Love, I always write of you,  
And you and love are still my argument;  
So all my best is dressing old words new,  
Spending again what is already spent:  
For as the sun is daily new and old,  
So is my love still telling what is told. (76)

Thy Glass will show thee how thy beauties  
wear,

Thy Dial how the precious minutes waste;  
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will  
bear,

And of this Book this learning may'st thou  
taste!

The wrinkles which thy Glass will truly show  
Of mouthèd graves will give thee memory;  
Thou by thy Dial's shady stealth may'st know  
Time's thievish progress to eternity:

Look, what thy memory cannot contain  
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt  
find

Those children nursed—delivered from thy  
brain—

To take a new acquaintance of thy mind:  
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,  
Shall profit thee, and much enrich thy Book. (77)

This is a group of very touching Sonnets. Nowhere else shall we draw nearer to the poet in his own person. They look as if written in contemplation of death. They have a touch of physical languor—the tinge of thought at the last parting. And if they were composed at such a time, they show us how limitedly autobiographic the Sonnets were intended to be. He did not write them either to pourtray himself or express his personal opinions. He keeps strictly to the subject, the business in hand, in accordance with the limits of the Sonnet. Therefore we shall look in vain for his religious views when he stands apparently in presence of death. We might say that he is profoundly reticent, cruelly economical in revelation of himself, only it was not his object to reveal himself to us, or tell us what he thought in his own person. He took no thought of the morrow for himself. He did not seek to promulgate opinions nor to proselytize. He wrote for his own particular friend, but was entirely oblivious of any general reader.

The Sonnets, so far, were Southampton's; they were written to him, written for him, written of him, and they are to remain his "gentle monument" for all time. Shakspeare could not protest more emphatically against the autobiographic delusion than he does here without intending it. He never speaks of himself

except in relation to Southampton ; and here his request is that, should he die, his friend will not mourn for him any longer even than the death-bell tolls. He would rather be forgotten than his friend should grieve for him when he is gone. Also, he begs that the Earl will not so much as mention his name, lest the keen hard world should see the disparity betwixt what the friend in his kindness may have thought of the Poet and its own shrewder estimate ; for if the world should task the living to tell what merit there was in him that is dead, the Earl will be put to shame, or be driven to speak falsely of one whom he loved truly.

The mood in Sonnet 73 is akin to Macbeth's when he says—

"My way of life  
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,"

and is therefore indicative of failing health. It denotes illness rather than age ; and four of these Sonnets may very well have been the Poet's reply to a kind inquiry from Southampton concerning his health at the time of some breakdown from over-work. The Poet is urging excuses with accustomed modesty, and in case he should die, he is making the best of it for his friend. He decries his own appearance as one that sees himself in the glass when worn and broken by suffering. He feels his life to be in the wane. The boughs are growing bare where the sweet birds lately sang. The twilight is creeping over all, cold and gray. The fire that he has warmed himself by is sinking ; there is more white ash than ruddy glow. All this he urges in case the flame should go out suddenly. He is minimizing any cause there might be for mourning. The Sonnet concludes with another excuse. Because this is so, and the Earl sees it, that is why his love grows stronger, fearing lest it should lose him. "But do not mind," he says, "though I should die, yet shall I be with you ; I shall live on in the lines which I leave ; these shall stay with you as a memorial of our love. When you look at these Sonnets, you will see the very part of me that was consecrated to you. Earth can but take its own as food for the worms. My spirit is yours, and that remains with you." In Sonnet 76 (p. 155), there is a kind of "hush !" He speaks of his friend so plainly, that "every word doth almost tell *my* name," and from whom the Sonnets proceeded, as if that were self-forbidden. He assures his friend of immortality, he speaks of having an interest in the verses, for they contain the "better part" of himself consecrated to his friend, but he does not contemplate living in them by name.

These Sonnets have the authority of parting words, and that in a double sense ; for not only are they written when Shakspeare was ill, as I understand him, but they are written when he fancied the Southampton series was just upon finished. How, then, was the immortality to be conferred ? How was the monument erected by Shakspeare to be known as the Earl of Southampton's ? How were the many proud boasts to be fulfilled ? In this way I imagine. Sidney had called his prose work *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, and in all likelihood, when these Sonnets were written, it was Shakspeare's intention, if they ever were published, to print them as the Earl of Southampton's. The fact of his having written in the Earl's name points to such a conclusion. This view serves to explain how it was that the Poet could care so little for fame ; seem so unconscious of the value of his own work, and yet make so many proud boasts of immortality. It is whilst fighting for his friend that we have this escape of



consciousness, if it amounts to that, not whilst speaking of himself, nor whilst contemplating living by name, and the Sonnets are to be immortal because they are the Earl of Southampton's, rather than on account of their being William Shakspeare's.

The subject of the writer's death is limited to four of these six Sonnets, ending with number 74. In number 77 we see the Poet is writing in a Book of Sonnets that belonged to his friend. This book was referred to in Sonnet 37, where, as we saw, the Poet was no longer to write on any common or "vulgar paper," but in the book which Southampton had provided for the special purpose. In Sonnet 77 Shakspeare speaks of it as "this book" which he was writing in at the time, and he also calls it "THY Book." He wants his friend to write in the Book of Sonnets as a means of drawing him out of self, and set him brooding on his thoughts of love instead of grizzling over his ill fortunes and bad luck. Exercise your mind in writing, he says—

"The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear ;  
Look what thy memory cannot contain  
Commit to *these* waste blanks."

If he will do this his book will be much enriched. This, as I understand the matter, was the Book of Southampton's Sonnets, for which he supplied his own arguments, subjects, or themes, and Shakspeare whilst writing in it here identifies it as Southampton's own.

It has often been a matter of wonder how Shakspeare could have drawn upon the Diana of Montemayer so long before a translation was printed in 1598. But I suspect that Shakspeare himself had some knowledge of Spanish, at least enough to turn a proverb to account. He appears to render or adapt one when writing Sonnet 110, where the speaker says of his love, "Now all is done have what shall have no end ;" the Spanish proverb has it, "*Amor sin fin, no tiene fin*"—love without end hath no end ; and in this Sonnet 77 he seems to have had in mind the saying, *Escritura es buena memoria*,—writing is good memory.

## SHAKSPEARE AND MARLOWE.

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,  
And found such fair assistance in my verse,  
As every alien pen hath got my use,  
And under thee their poesy disperse !  
Thine eyes, that taught the Dumb on high to  
sing,  
And heavy Ignorance aloft to flee,  
Have added feathers to the Learned's wing,  
And given Grace a double majesty :  
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,  
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee :  
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,  
And Arts with thy sweet graces graced be :  
But thou art all my Art, and dost advance  
As high as Learning my rude ignorance.

(78)

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,  
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace ;  
But now my gracious numbers are decayed,  
And my sick Muse doth give another place !  
I grant, sweet Love, thy lovely argument  
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen ;  
Yet what of thee thy Poet doth invent,  
He robs thee of, and pays it thee again :  
He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word  
From thy behaviour ; beauty doth he give  
And found it in thy cheek ; he can afford  
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live :  
Then thank him not for that which he doth  
say,  
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost  
pay.

(79)

O, how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your  
fame !

But since your worth—wide as the ocean is—  
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,  
My saucy Bark, inferior far to his,  
On your broad main doth wilfully appear :  
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,  
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride ;  
Or, being wrecked, I am a worthless boat,  
He of tall building, and of goodly pride :  
Then if he thrive, and I be cast away,  
The worst was this ; my love was my decay.  
(80)

Or I shall live your Epitaph to make,  
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten ;  
From hence your memory Death cannot take,  
Although in me each part will be forgotten :  
Your name from hence immortal life shall  
have,  
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die :  
The earth can yield me but a common grave,  
When you entombèd in men's eyes shall lie :  
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read ;  
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,  
When all the breathers of this world are dead ;  
You still shall live—such virtue hath my  
Pen—  
Where breath most breathes—even in the  
mouths of men.  
(81)

I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,  
And therefore may'st without attain't o'erlook  
The dedicated words which writers use  
Of their fair subject, blessing every Book :  
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,  
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise,  
And therefore art enforced to seek anew  
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days !  
And do so, Love ! yet when they have devised  
What strained touches rhetoric can lend,  
Thou, truly fair, wert truly sympathised  
In true-plain words, by thy true-telling friend ;  
And their gross painting might be better used  
Where cheeks need blood ; in thee it is  
abused.  
(82)

I never saw that you did painting need,  
And therefore to your fair no painting set !  
I found, or thought I found, you did exceed  
The barren tender of a Poet's debt !  
And therefore have I slept in your report,  
That you yourself, being extant, well might  
show  
How far a modern quill doth come too short,  
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth  
grow :

This silence for my sin you did impute,  
Which shall be most my glory, being dumb :  
For I impair not beauty being mute,  
When others would give life and bring a tomb :  
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes  
Than both your Poets can in praise devise.  
(83)

Who is it that says most ? which can say more  
Than this rich praise—that you alone are you ?  
In whose confine immurèd is the store  
Which should example where your equal grew !  
Lean penury within that Pen doth dwell,  
That to his subject lends not some small glory ;  
But he that writes of you, if he can tell  
That you are you, so dignifies his story ;  
Let him but copy what in you is writ,  
Not making worse what Nature made so clear,  
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,  
Making his style admired everywhere !  
You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,  
Being fond on praise, which makes your  
praises worse.  
(84)

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her st'ill,  
While comments of your praise, richly com-  
piled,  
Reserve their character with golden quill,  
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed !  
I think good thoughts, while others write good  
words,  
And, like unlettered clerk, still cry " Amen "  
To every hymn that able spirit affords  
In polished form of well-refined pen :  
Hearing you praised I say, " 'Tis so, 'tis true, "  
And to the most of praise add something more ;  
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,  
Though words come hindmost, holds his rank  
before :  
Then others for the breath of words respect,  
Me for my dumb thoughts speaking in effect.  
(85)

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,  
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,  
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain in-  
hearse,  
Making their tomb the womb wherein they  
grew ?  
Was it his spirit by Spirits taught to write  
Above a mortal pitch that struck me dead ?  
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night  
Giving him aid, my verse astonished !  
He nor that affable familiar ghost  
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,  
As victors of my silence cannot boast,  
I was not sick of any fear from thence,  
But when your countenance filled up his line,  
Then lacked I matter, that enfeebled mine.  
(86)

This is one of the most interesting groups of Sonnets that are Personal to Shakspeare himself. The subject is those other poets and writers who have followed his example in celebrating the praise of the Earl his friend, or in seeking to publish under the prestige of his name. John Florio dedicated his *World of Words* to the Earl of Southampton in 1598 with the following frank confession of the support he had received. He says—"In truth I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all; yea, of more than I know or can, to your bounteous Lordship, in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years, to whom I owe and vow the years I have to live. But, as to me and many more, the glorious and gracious sunshine of your Honour hath infused light and life."

This shows Southampton's patronage of literary men to have been extensive and well-known. It is not one poet only of whom the speaker is jealous, or professes his jealousy; he says he has so often called on the Earl's name, and received so much inspiration for his verse, that every "alien pen" and outsider have followed suit, and sought to set forth their poesy under his patronage. It was his eyes (his countenance) that taught the Dumb on high to sing; and Ignorance to soar aloft when he promoted the publication of *Venus and Adonis*, and was pleased with Shakspeare's dedication. The Poet accepts the personification of himself as Ignorance which had been flung at him by Nash when he described him as one of the "Unlearned Sots," and a man of a "little country grammar knowledge." He accepts it, and makes a reply to his dear friend that is both pathetic and witty. Not only has Southampton encouraged Shakspeare the ignorant to break silence and appear in print for the first time,—made "heavy Ignorance aloft to flee"—he has also *added feathers to the wing of the "Learned,"* and "given grace a double majesty." But he pleads—"Be most proud of what I write, because it is so purely your own. In the work of others you mend the style, but you are *all my art*, and you set my rude ignorance as high as the skill of the most learned. Whilst I alone sang of you my verse had all your grace, but now my Muse gives place to another, and my numbers are decayed. I know well enough that your virtue and kindness deserve the labour of a worthier pen, the praise of a better Poet; yet what can the best of poets do! He can only repay back to you that which he borrows from you. I feel very diffident," he says, "in writing of you when I know that a far better Poet is spending his strength in your praise, and singing at his best to make me silent. But since you are so gracious, there is room on the broad ocean of your worth for my small bark as well as for his of proud sail and lofty build. And if he ride in safety whilst I am wrecked, the worst is this, it was my love that made me venture forth, and caused my destruction." He then questions himself as to the cause of his recent silence. His Muse is mannerly, and holds her tongue whilst better poets are singing. He thinks good thoughts whilst they speak good words. He is like the unlettered clerk, who by rote cries "Amen" to what his superior says. "Respect others then," he urges, "for what words are worth, but me for my dumb thoughts, too full for utterance! As I am true in love I can but write truthfully. Let them say more in praise of you who are expecting to hear their words re-echoed in praise of themselves. I am not writing with an eye to the sale of my Sonnets. They are written for love alone! I never could see that you needed flattery, and therefore did not think of painting nature. I found that you exceeded the utmost a poet could say. Therefore

have I been silent, and you have imputed this silence for my sin, which shall be my glory, because I have let nature speak for itself; there lives more life in one of your eyes alone than both your poets could put into any number of their verses. Who is it that says most? Which of us can say more than that you are you, and that you stand alone? It is a poor pen that can lend nothing to its subject; but in writing of you, it will do well if it can fairly copy what is already writ by Nature's own hand. The worst of it is, you are not satisfied with the truth thus simply told, you are fond of being written about, and this makes it hard for those who can only say the same old thing of you over and over again. I admit you were not married to my Muse, and that you have perfect freedom to accept as many dedications as you please. Your worth is beyond the reach of my words, and no doubt you are forced to seek for something novel. And do so, dear friend; yet when they have painted your portrait in flaunting colours, I shall say your truth was best mirrored in my unaffected truthfulness.

To get at the life within life of these Sonnets we must look closer into this group, with a full belief that when our poet used particular words he freighted them with a particular meaning; definiteness of purpose and truth of detail being the first recommendation and the last perfection of his Sonnets. The pen with which he wrote for his patron was as pointed as that with which he wrote for his Theatre.

In the first Sonnet of this group Shakspeare is passing in review those writers who are under the patronage of the Earl, and he specifies two or three of these by personifying certain of their well-known qualities; he is telling the Earl what his influence has wrought in divers ways—

“Thine eyes, that taught the Dumb on high to sing,  
And heavy Ignorance aloft to flee,  
Have added feathers to the Learned's wing,  
And given Grace a double majesty.”

Shakspeare stands for Ignorance confessed. He also likens himself to the “unlettered clerk” who responds with his “Amen” to all that the learned may say in praise of his friend. Tom Nash had posed himself as one of the Learned in opposition to the supposed illiterate Player. Tom Nash also wielded an “Alien pen” in the spirit of an Ishmaelite. His hand was against every man, including Shakspeare. He it was who set up so conspicuously for “Learning;” he was one of the learned sort; and he was hitting continually at those who had not received a scholastic nurture, from which, however, he himself had been weaned before his time. In his *Pierce Penitence*, p. 42, he exclaims, “Alas, poor Latinless Authors!” In his epistle to the *Astrophel and Stella* of Sidney, he says, speaking of the works of Sextus Empedocles, “they have been lately translated into English for the benefit of unlearned writers” (not readers). The Nash and Greene *clique* had been the first to attack Shakspeare on the score of his little country grammar; his education at a country Grammar-school; and charged him with plucking the feathers from the wing of Learning for the purpose of beautifying himself—the upstart Crow! And Nash is here personified in his own chosen image. The Poet makes an allusion which the Earl and his friends would appreciate, and he covertly returns the borrowed plumes. He says, in effect, that the Earl has, in patronising Nash, returned those feathers to the wing of Learning, which he, Shakspeare, had been publicly charged by Greene and others with purloining. In a second

allusion he says the Earl's favour has set the rude "ignorance" at which his rivals laughed as high as the learning of which they boasted.

In *Pierce Penilesse, his supplication to the Devil*, we shall find that towards the end of 1592, Nash had not only found a Patron to praise, but had been in some personal companionship with "my Lord"—had been staying with him in the country for "fear of infection." This was at Croydon, where his play of *Will Summers' last Will and Testament* was privately produced in the autumn of 1592, to all appearance, under the patronage of Southampton. The good luck has somewhat softened his "Alien pen" of the earlier pages of that work, which is bitter in its abuse of patrons. At page 42 Nash writes, "If any Mæcænas bind me to him by his bounty, or extend some round liberality to me worth the speaking of, I will do him as much honour as any poet of my beardless years shall in England." He made his supplication to the Devil because he had not then found his Patron Saint. At page 90 he has discovered his man. He calls him "one of the bright stars of nobility, and glistening attendants on the true Diana." He is also "the matchless image of honour, and magnificent rewarder of virtue; Jove's eagle-born Ganymede; thrice noble Amyntas; most courteous Amyntas!" Todd supposes that Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, was meant; because Spenser, in his *Collin Clout's come home again*, calls him by the common pastoral name of "Amyntas." But Amyntas was a name applied to any patron or friend of poets after the Macedonian king who befriended Æschylus. Todd might have seen that Spenser does not confine the title to the Earl of Derby.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there anything known to connect Nash with this Earl, as there is with Shakspeare's patron and friend. The description fits no one so perfectly as it does the young Earl of Southampton. It sets before us the very image of youth which Shakspeare calls more lovely than Adonis; Ganymede having been the most beautiful of mortal youths, Jove's boy-beloved; the Court's "fresh ornament" of Shakspeare's first Sonnet is here one of the "glistening attendants on the true Diana." The "matchless image of Honour" corresponds exactly to Southampton, the anagram made out of whose name was the "Stamp of Honour." Also, he is supposed not to have been heard of as yet out of the echo of the Court. We know that Nash was under the patronage of Shakspeare's friend. In the year 1594, he dedicated his *Life of Jack Wilton* to the Earl of Southampton, with a reference to the difference betwixt it and earlier writings, and this work, though not published until 1594, was dated 1593. So that I can have no doubt of *Pierce Penilesse* being really inscribed to the Earl of Southampton in person if not by name, or that Nash's was the "Alien pen" that had followed Shakspeare in writing privately to the Earl. What other "poesy" Nash may have sought to "disperse" under the Earl's patronage I know not. He must have written things that have not come down to us. He informs us, in his *Pierce Penilesse*, that his Muse was despised and neglected, his pains not regarded, or but slightly rewarded. Meres places him with the poets of the time, as one of the best for comedy. Harvey calls him a Poet, and Drayton accords him a leaf of the Laurel. I conjecture that the Sonnet at the end of *Pierce Penilesse* is addressed to the Earl of Southampton,<sup>2</sup> and that this method

<sup>1</sup> *Faery Queen*, B. 3, Canto 6, 45.

<sup>2</sup> "Pursuing yesternight, with idle eyes,  
The Fairy Singer's stately-tuned verse,  
And viewing, after chapmen's wonted guise,  
What strange contents the title did rehearse ;

of passing off his poetry gives the aptness to Shakspeare's use of the word "disperse." It may be the "dedicated words that writers used" likewise contains a hit at Nash's eulogistic hyperbole. The *Life of Jack Wilton* was inscribed with a most high-flown dedication to the Earl of Southampton, whom he called "a dear lover and cherisher, as well of the lovers of poets as of poets themselves;" and he adds, "*Incomprehensible is the height of your spirit, both in heroical resolution and matters of conceit. Unretrievably perisheth that book, whatsoever to waste paper, which on the diamond rock of your judgment disastrously chanceth to be shipwrecked.*"

Another specimen of over-reaching laudation may be seen in Nash's "dedicatory Words" to Sidney's *Arcadia* (Quarto, 1591), when he inscribed that work to the Countess of Pembroke, and where he certainly employed

"The dedicated words which Writers use  
Of their fair subject, blessing every Book."

Whoever Amyntas may have been, Tom Nash was one of the "Learned" who wielded an "Alien Pen." But the chief interest concerning the rival writers centres in that man who is the other poet of the group; the other poet of two where Shakspeare as writer is one. Mr. Brown remarks of the rival poet in Sonnet 86, "who this rival poet was is beyond my conjecture; nor does it matter! These allusions to the now forgotten rival are vague and unavailing. Nothing can be traced from them towards his discovery."<sup>1</sup> But, it does matter immensely. There is no fact more important for those who value those dates and data which are our sole criteria of the truth. "Is it Marlowe?" asks Professor Dowden. "His verse was proud and full, and the creator of Faustus may well have had dealings with his own Mephistopheles, but Marlowe died in May, 1593 (should be June 16th, 1593), the year of *Venus and Adonis*." That is the reply. It cannot be Marlowe, because Herbert stops the way! Here, he continues, "we are forced to confess that the *Poet remains as dim a figure as the Patron*."<sup>2</sup> The dimness, however, is not in the look of either Poet or Patron, but in the mode of eyeing their figures!

Forced to confess, because stultified by a false Theory, which prevents them from facing or recognizing the facts with which the Sonnets abound. The Poet cannot be Marlowe, and the patron at the same time be Herbert, as he was but 13 years of age when Marlowe died! Therefore those who are determined that Shakspeare's dear friend shall be Herbert and not Southampton are compelled

---

I straight leapt over to the latter end,  
Where, like the quaint comedians of our time  
That when their play is done do fall to rhyme,  
I found short lines to sundry Nobles penned,  
Whom he as special mirrors singled forth  
To be the patrons of his poetry.  
I read them all, and revered their worth,  
Yet wondered he left out thy memory!  
But therefore guessed I he suppressed thy name,  
Because few words might not comprise thy fame."

A delightful confession and an interesting picture of Nash on the look-out for some one to flatter, and hurrying eagerly over the list of Spenser's patrons!

<sup>1</sup> Brown, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Shakspeare's *Sonnets*. Dowden, *Introd.*, p. 37.

to set up Chapman, or Daniel, or John Davies, or Dante, or anybody, in order that they may get rid of Marlowe, and a definite date. At sight of any and every fact that is fatal to them there is no resource left but to stick their heads in the sand after this most preposterous fashion!

For all who can weigh evidence and are free to do so, it will have been demonstrated that Southampton, and not Herbert, was the *first* friend of Shakspeare who is celebrated in the Sonnets. This makes it possible for Marlowe to be the other Poet who is acknowledged to have been Shakspeare's great rival. The Patron has "given grace a double majesty." His "eyes" that made the Dumb to sing, heavy Ignorance to mount, have added feathers to the wing of "Learning" itself, given to grace a double majesty. It is a somewhat singular expression. The "double majesty" is very weighty to apply to such a word as "grace!" It would not be used without an intended stress. A poet is here praised for the sensuous grace of his poetry and majesty of his music. The chief characteristics of his poetry are that it is sensuous and majestic; the very qualities of all others that we, following the Elizabethans, associate with the march of Marlowe's "mighty line!" Nothing could better give us our Poet's view of himself and the rival in Sonnet 80 than the image drawn from Drake and the Spanish Dons; afterwards used by Fuller in his description of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. His rival is here represented as the great portly Spanish galleon, of tall build and full sail, and goodly pride, and Shakspeare is the small trim bark—the "saucy bark" that can float with the "shallowest help;" venture daringly on the broad ocean, and skip lightly round the greater bulk of his rival. Marlowe was a "Master of Arts," and doubtless proud of his title. Nash seems to have felt his own failure to become one, and in his Epistle to Greene's *Menaphon* makes frequent reference to "Art-Masters." This fact is also to be found in Shakspeare's Sonnet. He acknowledged the Master of Arts when he sang to Southampton—

"And Arts with thy sweet graces graced be."

And he continues—

"But thou art *all my Art*, and dost advance  
As high as Learning my rude Ignorance."

That is, Southampton's patronage and friendship made Shakspeare equal to either the Man of Learning, who was not M.A., or the Man of Arts, who was. He accepts because he replies to Nash's impersonation of Ignorance applied to the man of a little "Country Grammar" in the year 1590.

Shakspeare makes a further and a prouder answer in public. When he enters the arena with his *Venus and Adonis* as his offering to Southampton, and glancing in the direction of Nash and Marlowe says, "*Let the mob marvel at things base, to me also golden-locked Apollo shall supply cups filled with the Water of Castaly.*" Which quotation from Ovid also relates to the same rivalry that is expressed in the Sonnets, and must have been chosen for the purpose of reply.

If we believe that Shakspeare had any power of compelling spirits to appear dramatically—any mastery of stroke in rendering human likeness—any exact and cunning use of epithet—how can we doubt that the name to be written under this portrait depicted by Shakspeare should be that of Christopher Marlowe?





He had also written in his *Tears of Peace* (p. 123, col. 2)—

"Still being persuaded by the shameless night,  
That all my reading, writing, all my pains,  
Are serious trifles, and the idle veins  
Of an unthrifty angel that deludes  
My simple fancy."

These, says Mr. Furnivall, "These make a better case for Chapman being the rival, than has been made for any one else." I do not cite Mr. Furnivall as an authority but as an example. *The 'Tears of Peace' was not published until the year 1609!* And the Sonnets of Shakspeare were known to Meres in 1598. This chasm is crossed by Mr. Furnivall with all the indifference of a fly, and a passing "no doubt" that Chapman had set up a claim years before, and no doubt that Shakspeare had heard of it! But the Rival Poet "was taught by spirits to write," not by Homer. Also the one particular spirit mentioned as the "Affable familiar Ghost" can scarcely be the truthful spirit of Homer inspiring Chapman, because it gulls the Poet nightly with false intelligence. Chapman is only being trailed like a red herring across the scent to mislead the unwary; yet on the strength of this surmise Mr. Furnivall can ask, "*Is it possible that Shakspeare's envy of Chapman had anything to do with Shakspeare's deliberate debasing of the heroes of that Homer whom Chapman Englished?*" No, it is not possible. The suggestion is so dishonouring, so shameful, it makes one blush as if from a blow. This unworthy imputation is quite worthy, however, of the theory in support of which it was hazarded. First, the friend of Shakspeare is falsely assumed to have been William Herbert. Next it is asserted that Marlowe cannot be the Rival Poet, because he died in June 1593, when Herbert was only 13 years old. Thirdly, it is assumed that Chapman was the rival Poet, without the slightest chance of substantiating it, because some one must be put in the place of Marlowe, as the result of Herbert's being substituted for Southampton. Lastly, the friendly rivalry for the Patron's favour is transformed into envy,—envy of Chapman felt by Shakspeare!—and then it is asked whether the great blithe-hearted Poet of the sweetest nature known could be mean and malign enough to have *debased* and blackened Homer's heroes many years afterwards, because he was inspired by a long-abiding spirit of revenge against Chapman. Such is the overshadowing curse of a misleading theory that darkens the mind and distorts the vision of those on whom it falls. The simple answer is—Shakspeare knew that Homer's heroes were mythical characters, and not men and women of God's making. As such he re-portrayed some of them. That was all. It was not his *rôle* to create heroes by turning the figures of fable into human characters, and he had no sympathy with that kind of counterfeiting and falsifying from which we have suffered so long and seriously in poetry as well as in theology.

For those who have any real knowledge of the matter, such as Marlowe and Shakspeare obviously had, there is a difference the most diverse betwixt the *kind* of spiritualism implied by Chapman and this attributed to Marlowe by Shakspeare. The one kind is vague and ideal; it belongs to the stock-in-trade of the Poets like the Inspiring Genius and the mythical Muse of Poetry. The other is the spiritualism of phenomenal fact. What Shakspeare recognizes and describes are the "spirits" which Marlowe evoked with "supernatural

soliciting," as well as the familiar spirit Mephistopheles, who nightly gulled and tempted Faustus. All this futile endeavour not to see the facts; all this labour in vain to obscure and conceal the facts from others, is necessitated in support of the fallacious hypothesis that William Herbert, and not Southampton, was the person addressed in these verses. If Marlowe be the living poet who is Shakspeare's rival here, then it is impossible for Herbert to be the patron, because Marlowe died when Herbert was a lad of thirteen; and if Herbert is to re-place Southampton, Marlowe must first be got out of the way. Hence the anxiety not to read this Sonnet rightly or to have it rightly read; hence the desire to have Marlowe stabbed over again by those who would condemn him to a second death. They dare not and must not admit that the Rival Poet was Marlowe, the author of *Dr. Faustus*, the reputed Spiritualist. They are compelled to suppress facts, to ignore data and dates, until they are driven dateless. Professor Minto desperately declares that there is not a particle of evidence to show that the Sonnets published by Thorpe and those mentioned by Meres are identical, two of which appeared in print in 1599. With regard to Chapman, I weighed every possible claim that he had, or hadn't, for months whilst working at the evidence in favour of Marlowe. And here let me confess what arrested and troubled me most was the line in Sonnet 85—

"To every '*himne*' that able spirit affords."

That made me try hard to fit the square man into the round hole, because Chapman did both write and translate "Hymns." It was not that I had any need to reject Chapman on account of dates, or possible relationship to Shakspeare and Southampton; his *Shadow of Night* was published in 1594, and it contained "hymns"; only these were dedicated to Matthew Roydon,—Chapman's "deare and most worthy friend,"—for whose affection I could not find that Shakspeare was a rival, nor were the hymns bound for the "prize" of either Southampton or Herbert.

I think it probable that the word "*himne*" may be a misprint for *line*, but will not press that point now. For if we read "hymn," then the Rival Poet would be writing hymns in praise of the person addressed by Shakspeare, who was neither Matthew Roydon nor the "Shadow of Night," but who *was* the Earl of Southampton, as already demonstrated. Of such hymns we know nothing, although Chapman, in one of his dedicatory Sonnets prefixed to the *Iliads*, did proclaim Southampton to be the "Choice of all our Country's Noble Spirits." No doubt Chapman was a representative of learning, though it was not him to whom Shakspeare alluded in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when he spoke of—

"The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death  
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary."

That was written immediately after the death of Marlowe, who was slain by Francis Archer, June 16th, 1593, making a most miserable end. Naturally enough, I hold it to mean the same "Learning" as that which in Sonnet 85 wielded the "golden quill," and employed the "precious phrase by *all the Muses filed*;" if Marlowe in the one case, it was Marlowe in both. I had no personal objection to Chapman; no reason to reject him on behalf of my contention that Southampton is the patron and friend addressed in these Sonnets. That will hold the field against all comers, no matter whether the Rival Poet is considered

to be Marlowe or Chapman. As already mentioned, Chapman did dedicate to Southampton. Nothing depends on this poet for *my* purpose, whereas everything depends upon him for the Brownites, or at least upon their getting rid of Marlowe. Chapman might be *one* of the poets who were dedicating poetry to Southampton, especially as he was the finisher of *Hero and Leander*. But when the group is reduced to two—"both you poets"—then it is obvious to me that no one could, can, or ever will compete with Marlowe for the place of the other Poet.

And now it is proposed to turn the tables on the supporters of Chapman thus ! Years ago I saw that the line—

" But when your countenance filld up his line "

should not be copied from the original as "filèd up his line," but as "*filled* up his line." In my first edition it was suggested that Southampton might have promoted the completion of *Titus Andronicus* as Marlowe's work, which on being brought out at Shakspeare's theatre, was wrongly reputed to be Shakspeare's play. My conjecture now is, that the countenance of Southampton was given to the finishing of Marlowe's poem of *Hero and Leander*; and as Chapman was not the author and finisher in one, he is here also excluded from being the other one of the two Poets. He who finished the poem could not be the Poet who left it unfinished. Those last two lines of Sonnet 86 contain matter of great import—

" But when your countenance *filled* up his line  
Then LACKED I matter: THAT enfeebled mine."

Here the quarto prints the word "*fil'd*," which, in following others, I read "filèd." This was wrong. The Shakspearean antithesis demands that it should be read *fil'd* = filled. Shakspeare *lacked* matter for his verse because the patron's countenance had *filled* up the rival's line. This is the innermost secret of the alleged "jealousy." I can have no doubt that Sonnet 80 marks the moment of Shakspeare's first venture in publishing his poem of *Venus and Adonis*. His "saucy bark, inferior far" to that of his rival, is about to be launched afloat on the "broad main," where it *doth* "wilfully appear." In the dedication to the poem he knows not how the world will censure him for choosing so "strong a prop to support so weak a burthen," and in the Sonnet the writer says, "Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat." It also happens that certain of Ovid's *Elegies* were rendered by Marlowe and licensed in 1593, which did not appear in print before 1596. That a venture is intended we gather from the lines—

" Then if HE thrive and I be cast away,  
The worst is this, my love was my decay."

The dedication of a first publication in the verse is as obvious as it is in the prose; the venture is just as primary, the success as problematical, and the first venture of the same Poet can only occur once, whether the dedication be in prose or rhyme! Therefore we may conclude that he refers privately in his poetry to his first publication, when the *Venus and Adonis* appeared in print. Moreover, the Poet says—

" Thou dost (not thou didst !) advance  
As high as Learning my rude Ignorance."

He gives the *raison d'être* for publishing in the lines—

“ But since *your worth* (wide as the ocean is)  
The humblest as the proudest Bark doth bear,  
My saucy Bark, inferior far to his,  
On your broad main *doth wilfully appear.*”

The dedicatory nature of the Sonnet, especially of the line,

“ Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,”

may be glossed by the dedicatory Epistle to *Euphues*, in which Lily had said to his Patron, “ *If your Lordship with your little finger do but hold me up by the chin, I shall swim.*” There is a tint of the most delicate modesty in the plea that if he sinks while Marlowe swims, his love for the friend, his desire to do him honour, will be the cause of his “decay”—not mere literary vanity. Here as elsewhere the Sonnets supply a commentary and an audible conversation upon the external circumstances in the life of both the Poet and his public Patron, who in private was his familiar friend.

As I understand Sonnet 86, there is a change of tense in it. The two preceding ones are spoken in the present—

“ Who is it that *says* most !”

“ My tongue-tied Muse in manners *holds* her still.”

These are both in the present tense at the moment of writing. But the question

“ Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,  
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you !”

refers to something in the past. And as I read the Sonnets, the death of Marlowe lies between that past and present of the writer. The “proud full sail” of Marlowe’s verse, and all its galleon greatness, had been suddenly arrested in mid-voyage, and so the rival never reached the prospective prize. This must be so if the rest of my interpretation be right. Both poets were living and writing when Sonnets 79, 80, 83, and 85 were composed. In the first of these his Muse has given place to a “worthier pen.” In the second the new Poet, the “better spirit,” “the able spirit,” is expending all his might at the time in writing that which is to be dedicated to the Patron’s honour and glory. Sonnet 85 shows this work is still being wrought “in polished form of well-refined pen.” But in Sonnet 85 the “mighty line” has come to an end *unfinished*, and the fragment is to be finished or *filled* up by the countenance or under the patronage of Shakspeare’s friend. This cannot apply to Chapman.

The past and present tenses are mixed in this same Sonnet. Yet both apply to Marlowe, and may be reconciled in this way: although he had died meantime, leaving his poem unfinished, and Shakspeare’s Patron had undertaken to see it filled up, the play of *Faustus* is still running in the present at the opposition theatre. Thus Mephistopheles, the “affable familiar Ghost,” goes on gulling the Doctor nightly on the stage with delusive appearances and lying promises, after the death of Marlowe had occurred. Shakspeare identifies the man and his work in his inclusive, unifying, fusing manner, which somewhat tends to confuse the present with the past unless we distinguish them very carefully. My reading of the whole matter is as follows. Marlowe was the

Man of Arts, the great rival poet, the writer of "great verse," the "better spirit," the Poet whose precious phrase was finished by "all the Muses." Shakspeare's language is identical with Chettle's applied to Marlowe in his *Apology*. "For the first"—i. e. Marlowe—he says, "*whose Learning I reverence*"—"him I would wish to use no worse than I deserve." The recognition of Marlowe as Learning is the same in both. Shakspeare's lines give us the very *viva effigies*, not only of the Poet ("he of tall building and of goodly pride"—Sonnet 80), but of the man whose reputation was so marked as a student of magic. It is a triple account, that only unites in one man, and that man is Marlowe—far and away beyond all possible competition.

Shakspeare and Marlowe had both been engaged in writing poems for the Earl of Southampton; Shakspeare his *Venus and Adonis*, Marlowe his *Hero and Leander*! Southampton was the prize in view that both were bound for. Our Poet makes an allusion to his venture in publishing for the first time under the image of launching his vessel upon the wide ocean of the Patron's worth. Two vessels are starting on the same course for the one port. One of these carries the "proudest sail,"—the proud full sail of Marlowe's great verse. Shakspeare's is the humble bark with the far inferior sail; his venture is but a small one. If he should be wrecked the loss will be little. The other vessel is of "tall building and of goodly pride," sailing out bravely on the "soundless deep," as—to quote Marlowe's own words,

"A stately-built Ship, well-rigged and tall,  
The ocean maketh more majesticall."

But it was the saucy little Boat that came safely into harbour. The mighty galleon went down, and so we are precluded from attaining absolute proof of the port for which it was bound. Shakspeare published his poem. Marlowe came to a sudden, early break-off in his life and work. He did not succeed in cutting out or reaching the prize. His poem was left unfinished and undedicated to the Patron of Shakspeare. Shakspeare admits that the crowning cause of his *Sonneteering* jealousy of his great rival is that the unfinished poem was to be completed under the countenance or patronage of Southampton. At present it cannot be demonstrated that the line "filled up" by Chapman was done under the patronage of Shakspeare's friend, but nothing can be more likely, and nothing can be proved or adduced against this conclusion.

The Poem of *Hero and Leander* was entered on the Stationers' Register Sept. 28th, 1593, three months only after Marlowe's death; which looks as if no time was to be lost in filling up his line, although the completed poem does not appear till 1598. Later research shows that Chapman's continuation was also printed with Marlowe's portion in 1598. In dedicating the published book to Sir Thomas Walsingham, Edward Blunt hints that the poem has had "other foster countenance," but that his name is likely to prove more "*agreeable and thriving*" to the work, which was the view of a sensible publisher, for the other fostering countenance—Southampton's—might not have shed so favourable an influence in 1598, the year in which the finished poem was printed, as he was then in great disgrace at Court!

It was finished by George Chapman, and my inference is, that the foster-countenance under which the poem was completed was that of Southampton, who had been fellow-student at Cambridge with Marlowe. When we come to

consider the miserable end and evil reputation of Marlowe, it appears probable that some potent influence would be necessary to induce a man like George Chapman to take up the half-told story and finish the dead Poet's work. He would hardly do it for love of Marlowe.

Tradition affirms that Marlowe was an atheist, although, according to the same authority, he believed in a Devil, if not in more than one. It further asserts that he practised necromancy as a student of black magic. He was one of those who were denounced for having dealings with the Devil. No doubt his *Dr. Faustus* gave a darker colour to such report, and in the eyes of many, as well as in their conversation, the man and his creation became one. They would commonly call him "Faustus," just as they called him "Tamburlaine." And this is exactly how Shakspeare has treated the subject. In his dramatic way, he has identified Marlowe with Faustus, and he presents him upon the stage where, in vision, if it be not an actual fact, the play is running at the rival theatre, whilst the Poet is composing his Sonnet. Some of us, the present writer included, are beginning to understand WHAT such charges really signified. If Marlowe had lived in our day he would have been known, and in all likelihood maligned, as a phenomenal spiritualist! The fact is fully admitted by Shakspeare himself in this Sonnet; for he not only points out the author of *Dr. Faustus* and his familiar spirit—"they say thou hast a familiar spirit, by whom thou canst accomplish what thou wilt"—the rival Writer has also been taught "*by spirits*" to write "above a mortal pitch;" he receives spiritual visitants in the night hours for the purpose and the practice of spirit communion. "His spirit by spirits (is) taught to write," not by "skill." Such spirits give him aid as his compeers by night. These spiritual compeers are additional to Mephistopheles, the well-known "affable familiar Ghost" of the play, who gulls the doctor nightly with false intelligence. Shakspeare grants the facts of Marlowe's writing under what is now termed "spirit-controul." He acknowledged the supernatural aid thus received by abnormal inspiration, but says it was not this that cowed or overcrowded him, and made him keep silence.

"I was not sick of any fear from thence."

Here, then, is Shakspeare's testimony to the fact that his rival and competitor for the Patron's approval was a student of the occult arts—Black Magic, so-called—or was, as we should say, a "phenomenal spiritualist."

The plays of *Henry VI.* show the writer's acquaintance with the subject of spirit intercourse—

"Well, let them practise and converse with spirits :  
God is our fortress."—1 *King Henry VI.*, II. i.

"But where is Pucelle now ?

I think her old Familiar is asleep."—1 *King Henry VI.*, III. ii.

"He has a Familiar under his tongue."—2 *King Henry VI.*, IV. vii.

Shakspeare's language in the Sonnet is also Biblical. We read in 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 6 : "He observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit." In the Sonnet Marlowe stands doubly identified in two ways, neither of which can apply to any other contemporary, as the known spiritualist, and as the author of *Dr. Faustus*. Marlowe had thought for himself, and had come out of his inquiry unorthodox. He had examined for

himself those facts of abnormal experience which have been denied and denounced for the last 1800 years. He had more than the courage of his opinions, and less than the wisdom needed in dealing with these natural mysteries of the ancient wisdom. That which is not comprehended by the ignorant is so sure to be considered accursed!

The charge of atheism was preferred by Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit* when he said, "Wonder not, thou famous gracer of Tragedians, that Greene, who hath said with thee, like the fool in his heart, 'There is no God,' should now give glory to His greatness!" It is not known whether Marlowe repudiated the charge of Atheism, but we do know from Chettle's Epistle to *Kind-heart's Dreame* that it gave offence to him. Marlowe was likewise charged by Bame with holding damnable opinions; and by Beard with writing a book against the Bible. When he was dead and dumb these Puritans danced on his early grave with ferocious delight. Yet Marlowe's treatment of his subject in *Dr. Faustus*—his practice of unhallowed arts, his selling of his soul to the devil, his miserable death and eternal damnation—was strictly in accordance with orthodox notions of the matter. The poor lame son of the Canterbury Cobbler who worked his way to Shakspeare's side in the race for fame was sadly blackguarded in his lifetime, and most unfortunate in his death; it is not to be tolerated that he should be stabbed over again and robbed of this recognition by Shakspeare for the sake of a false theory of the Sonnets by as incompetent a set of weaklings as ever pretended to be critics. And here it may be urged, parenthetically, that Marlowe's is one of those cases in which the verdict of popular ignorance has to be revised in the light of later knowledge.

Marlowe's early cutting-off was one of the saddest things in fact, and one of the most mournful memories in all the world of "might-have-been;" sad as the unfulfilled life of Shelley, of Keats, or of Chatterton. No one of his contemporaries ever stood abreast or in the near neighbourhood of Shakspeare as Marlowe did in 1592-3. In respect of his thirty years' lifetime, and what he did in it, he was Shakspeare's twin-brother, who strove with him for the birth-right, and pushed into the world a little before him. As the vulgar saying has it, he thus "got the bulge" of Shakspeare in point of time and recognition. Though but one year older, he preceded Shakspeare by several years in fame. His *Tamburlaine the Great* brought out as early as 1587, if not previously, was a triumphant success. "Marlowe's mighty line," Jonson calls it. Chapman says Marlowe "stood up to the chin in the Pierian flood." Drayton wrote of him—

"Next Marlowe, bathed in the Thespian springs,  
Had in him those brave translunary things,  
That the first poets had; his raptures were  
All air and fire, which made his verses clear:  
For that fine madness still he did retain,  
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain."

Marlowe was the poet who preceded Shakspeare in freeing the English Drama from *the rhyming impediment in its speech*; through him our poetry first stood up full-statured in the unfettered freedom of blank verse. He did it manfully too, if somewhat mouthily. Shakspeare appreciated his work, and took advantage of the new track thus struck out by his rival. He would be the first to give him all praise for having, in his use of blank verse, discovered a new

spring of the national Helicon with the impatient pawing-hoof of his fiery war-horse of a Pegasus; but for which Shakspeare himself might possibly have remained more of a rhymer, and not attained his full dramatic stature.

Marlowe in relation to Shakspeare was as Hoche in relation to Napoleon, or Giorgione in relation to Titian; the promise of his dawn was only fulfilled in Shakspeare's perfect day—so great was it!

In 1592-3 Marlowe was the only man worthy of Shakspeare's friendly jealousy (he felt no other), and won it! He was the great rival as playwright at the rival theatre which touched Shakspeare with a spur on behalf of his own. Another reason why the man who pricked on Shakspeare with his *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, and his *Edward the Second* should be the acknowledged superior poet in the Sonnets! Marlowe was the only one of his contemporaries to whom Shakspeare is known to have referred approvingly, I think lovingly, as he does in *As You Like It*—

“ Dead Shepherd, now I know thy saw of might,  
He never loved who loved not at first sight.”

He looks up to him in the Sonnets and lauds him highly. Although it is just possible that there is a shade of double meaning in his characterizing of Marlowe's “great verse,” and that the words “Above a mortal pitch” are said with an underlined, italic look, as though he were gauging the extravagance of Marlowe that inflated his poetry somewhat unnaturally, and elevated the tone at times a little too rhetorically. If so it supplies another sad example of the covert allusiveness and lurking humour of this most demurely double-minded man in his mingling of the critical with the laudatory mood. Marlowe was the first to taste the luxury of words in the English language as with the dainty palate of John Keats. But he had a far more languorous spirit than Shakspeare, who does not produce his drops of sweetness by dissolving his pearls of strength.

“ Infinite riches in a little room,”

that is one of Marlowe's felicitous lines; there are others almost as happy —

“ Of stature tall and straightly fashioned,  
Like his desire lift upward and divine.”

“ Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion.”

“ Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.”

“ Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air,  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.”

#### BEAUTY BEYOND EXPRESSION.

“ If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
And minds, and muses on admired themes;  
If all the heavenly quintessence they 'still  
From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit:  
If these had made one poem's period,



And all combined in beauty's worthiness,  
 Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
 One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the best,  
 Which into words no virtue can digest."

At whose bidding are we to assume that Shakspeare could not recognize his only rival? That he did not know what constituted grace in poetry and majesty in music? Immeasurable is the critical incompetence that can charge Shakspeare with looking up to Chapman in the way he does to Marlowe, and celebrating the grace, the majesty, the "proud full sail" of his great verse in 1593, or up to 1598, when the Sonnets were known to be circulating amongst the "private friends." "*Remember, if e'er thou lookedst on majesty!*" Chapman had but little grace and seldom did attain the gait of majesty. When Marlowe ceases and Chapman tries to continue the strain of *Hero and Leander*, the change is positively painful. The charm is broken, the music turns to discord, the grace is blurred, the glory gone. The full sail of the great verse collapses. The life of Marlowe's poem comes to an end. There is a funeral and a following supplied by Chapman, but no resurrection for the buried dead. I have no desire to decry Chapman because others have placed him in a false position. But these are a few of the unreadable rhymes in his continuation of the poem—

"Till our Leander, that made Mars his Cupid,  
 For soft love-suits, with iron thunders chid."

"If then Leander did my maidenhead *git*,  
 Leander being myself, *I still retain it!*"

"After this accident which, for her glory,  
 Hero could not but make a history."

Such lines occur in what is called "heroic verse."

Shakspeare might consider Chapman's verse big, huge, rugged as of unwieldy strength, but the man who had the sense of melody and the graceful facility to write the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the *Midsummer Night's Dream* before he was thirty could not have felt that it was remarkably graceful, or majestically great, although some of his lines are hewn mightily, as is the Cyclopean masonry of primitive men. I consider it particularly impossible that Shakspeare should have looked upon everything that Chapman had then written as preserving its character with a "golden quill," and "precicus phrase by all the Muses filed," in "polished form of well-refinèd pen."

The Marlowe group of Sonnets is out of place, and ought to be printed earlier, but I have not changed its position, as it is but a matter of chronology. Also, I am positively certain that Sonnet 81 does not belong to the group in which it is found. It breaks the course of the argument, and has the blank stare of a blocked-up window. It is vacant of meaning where it stands. The feeling expressed in it is entirely opposed to that of the Sonnets which precede and those that follow. It comes in the midst of those where the poet is acknowledging his inferiority, especially to one great writer whom he recognizes as the "better spirit," the Poet who is more able than himself to immortalize his friend. This is one of the Earl's *Two Poets*. Shakspeare acknowledges that this abler poet of the two is spending all his might in praise of the same patron; consequently the rival was at least as "able" to eternize the fame of Southampton as was the verse of Shakspeare. And yet if the next Sonnet were in its right

place, the inferior writer would be assuming that his verse alone had the power to confer "immortal life" upon his name—"such virtue hath my Pen." He is not behind in this Sonnet. He is alone, with no one abreast of him. Thus in Sonnet 80 one of the Earl's two Poets is making Shakspeare feel as if under an eclipse. In Sonnet 82 he advises the Earl to patronize a better pen than his. And between these two crest-fallen utterances comes the crow of Sonnet 81, in which Shakspeare stands alone, assuming that it is from his verse and from that solely the Patron is to be immortalized—

"Your monument shall be *my* gentle verse."

Clearly this is an interpolation. The Sonnet belongs to the group on the Poet's possible death, where I previously placed it. This time I am re-grouping far less than before, and so leave it to speak for itself, where it tells the tale of being out of place.

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon.

*Farewell ! thou art too dear for my possessing,  
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate ;  
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing ;  
My bonds in thee are all determinate :  
For how do I hold thee, but by thy granting ?  
And for that riches where is my deserving ?  
The cause of this fair gift to me is wanting,  
And so my patent back again is swerving :  
Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not  
knowing,  
Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking ;  
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,  
Comes home again, on better judgment making :  
Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter ;  
In sleep a king, but waking, no such matter.* (87)

*When thou shalt feel disposed to set me light,  
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,  
Upon thy side against myself I'll fight  
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art for-  
sworn :  
With mine own weakness being best acquainted,  
Upon my part I can set down a story  
(Of faults concealed wherein I am attainted,  
That thou in losing me shalt win much glory :  
And I by this will be a gainer too :  
For binding all my loving thoughts on thee,  
The injuries that to myself I do,  
Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me—  
Such is my love, to thee I so belong  
That for thy right myself will bear all  
wrong.* (88)

*Say that thou did'st forsake me for some fault,  
And I will comment upon that offence :*

*Speak of my laments and I straight will halt,  
Against thy reasons making no defence :  
Thou canst not, Love, disgrace me half so ill,  
To set a form upon desired change,  
As I'll myself disgrace ; knowing thy will,  
I will acquaintance strangle and look strange ;  
Be absent from thy walks, and in my tongue,  
Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell,  
Lest I, too much profane, should do it wrong  
And haply of our old acquaintance tell :  
For thee against myself I'll vow debate,  
For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost  
hate.* (89)

*Then hate me when thou wilt ; if ever, now ;  
Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,  
Join with the spite of Fortune, make me bow,  
And do not drop in for an after-loss :  
Ah ! do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this  
sorrow,*

*Come in the rearward of a conquered woe :  
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,  
To linger out a purposed overthrow !  
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last  
When other petty griefs have done their spite,  
But in the onset come ; so shall I taste  
At first the very worst of Fortune's might ;  
And other strains of woe which now seem woe,  
Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.* (90)

*Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their body's  
force,  
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill,  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their  
horse :*

*And every Humour hath his adjunct pleasure  
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest,  
But these particulars are not my measure,  
All these I better in one general best:  
Thy love is better than high birth to me,  
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments'  
cost;*

*Of more delight than hawks or horses be;  
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast;  
Wretched in this alone, that thou may'st take  
All this away, and me most wretched make.*  
(91)

*But do thy worst to steal thyself away,  
For term of life thou art assurèd mine;  
And life no longer than thy love will stay,  
For it depends upon that love of thine!  
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,  
When in the least of them my life hath end;  
I see a better state to me belongs  
Than that which on thy humour doth depend;  
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,  
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie;*

*O, what a happy title do I find,  
Happy to have thy love, happy to die!  
But what's so blessed fair that fears no  
blot?—  
Thou may'st be false, and yet I know it not!*  
(92)

*So shall I live, supposing thou art true,  
Like a deceived husband: so love's face  
May still seem love to me, though altered new;  
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place:  
For there can live no hatred in thine eye,  
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change:  
In many's looks the false heart's history  
Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles  
strange;*

*But Heaven in thy creation did decree  
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell;  
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,  
Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness  
tell:*

*How like Eve's Apple doth thy beauty grow,  
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!*  
(93)

It is now approaching a parting in downright earnest with Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon. The lover speaks as one who has an "honourable grief lodged here, that burns worse than tears can drown." She is too dear for him to possess. He has called her his for awhile, because she gave herself to him, either not knowing her worth or his unworthiness. She gave herself away upon a mistake, a misconception, his patent having been granted in error; and her better judgment recalls the gift. Farewell! Whatsoever reason she may assign for this course, he will support it, and make no defence on his own behalf. She cannot disgrace him half so badly, whatever excuse she may put forth for this "desired change," as he will disgrace himself. Knowing her will, he will not claim her acquaintance, but walk no more in the old accustomed meeting-places; and should they meet by chance, he will look strange, see her as though he saw her not. He will not name her name lest he—"too much profane"—should soil it, and very possibly tell of their acquaintanceship. He will fight against himself in every way for her; he must never love him whom she hates. "Then hate me when thou wilt; let the worst come, if ever, now, whilst the world is bent upon crossing my deeds. Join with the spite of Fortune, make me bow all at once. Do not wait till I have surmounted my present sorrow. Give not a night of sighs a morrow of weeping, to lengthen out that which you purpose doing. Do not come with the greater trial when other petty griefs have wreaked their worst upon me, but in the onset come, and let me taste the utmost of Fortune's might at one blow. Then—

'Other strains of woe, which now seem woe,  
Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.'

Some glory in their birth, others in their skill, their wealth, their rich raiment. But all such particulars of possession he better in "one general best." Her love is better than high birth, wealth, or treasures. Having her, he has the sum total of all that men are proud of. He is only wretched in the thought that she may take all this away if she takes away herself from him. But she

may do her worst to steal herself away from him : she is his for life. His life is bound up with her love, and both will end together. Therefore he need not trouble himself about other wrongs when, if he loses her love, there is an end of all. On this fact he will plant himself firmly. He is happy to have her love, and will be happy to die should he lose her. That is the position he takes. Still, his philosophy does not supply him with armour of proof. The darts of a lover's jealousy will pierce. He cannot rest in his conclusions, however final. With a lover it is not only Heaven or Hell ; there is the intermediate Purgatorial state. After the magnanimity of feeling this mean thought will intrude !—

“ But what's so blessed fair that fears no blot !  
Thou may'st be false, and yet I know it not.”

If she were to play him false he could not know it, he should live on like a deceived husband ; her looks might be with him, her heart elsewhere. For Nature has so moulded her, and given her such sweetness and grace, that, whether loving him or not, she must always look lovely, and her looks would not show her thoughts, or set the secret of her heart at gaze, even if both were false to him. Pray God it be not so, his feeling cries ! “ How like is thy beauty to that Apple of Eve, smiling so ripely on the outside, and so rotten within, if thy sweet virtue correspond not to the promise of that fair face.”

Surely there ought to have been no mistaking this jealousy of the lover in the pangs of uncertainty ! Also,

“ Thy love is better than high birth to me,”

was hardly the language that Shakspeare could have addressed to a man of high birth, as he would thus proclaim his own superiority to one who was himself a noble born. The Poet was not in a position to look down on high birth when writing to a peer of the realm. Neither could hawking have been a very familiar sport with him personally. Hawks and horses were not to be despised by him. He would be playing with counters, if these lines had been personal to himself. Once more, let us not forget that this was the man of all men who held the mirror up to Nature !

This parting I think must have occurred, or been thus spoken of, after the disgraceful affair in Court, which is chronicled by Rowland White. On the 19th of January, 1598—to repeat the old gossip's words—he writes to Sir Robert Sidney : “ I *hard of some unkindness* should be between 3000 (the No. in his cypher for Southampton) and his Mistress, occasioned by some report of Mr. Ambrose Willoughby. 3000 called hym to an account for yt, but the matter was made known to my Lord of Essex, and my Lord Chamberlain, who had them in Examination ; what the cause is I could not learne, for yt was but new ; but I see 3000 full of discontentments.” Two days later he records that Southampton was playing a game of cards called *Primero* with Raleigh and some other courtiers in the presence-chamber. They continued their game after the Queen had retired to rest. Ambrose Willoughby, the officer in waiting, warned them that it was time to depart. Raleigh obeyed ; but when Willoughby threatened to call in the guard and pull down the board, Southampton took offence and would not go. Words ensued, and a scuffle followed ; blows were exchanged, and Willoughby tore out some of Southampton's hair. When the Queen heard

of the affair next morning, she thanked Willoughby for his part in it, and said he "should have sent the Earl to the porter's lodge to see who durst have fetched him out!" The Queen commanded Southampton to absent himself from Court. He was again in disgrace, with Mistress Vernon as a grieved looker-on. White's letters afford good evidence of the occasion, and go far to identify the particular time.

Southampton then proposed to leave England and offer his sword to Henry IV. of France, and White says: "His fair mistress doth wash her fairest face with too many tears." The allusions in Sonnet 90 are specially applicable to the time when he had but lately returned from the "Island voyage" in October, 1597, to receive frowns instead of thanks for what he had done, and to find the world was bent upon crossing his deeds; the spite of Fortune more bitter than ever; the Queen irate with him because he had dared to pursue and sink one of the Spanish ships without orders from Monson, the Admiral, the man who decried the last great deed of Sir Richard Grenville.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Elizabeth Vernon to Southampton on his ill deeds.

*They that have power to hurt and will do none,  
That do not do the thing they most do show,  
Who moving others are themselves as stone,  
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow;  
They rightly do inherit Heaven's graces,  
And husband Nature's riches from expense;  
They are the lords and owners of their faces,  
Others but stewards of their excellence:  
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,  
Though to itself it only live and die;  
But if that flower with base infection meet,  
The basest weed outbraves his dignity!  
For sweetest things turn sourest by their  
deeds;  
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.* (94)

*How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame  
Which, like a canker in the fragrant Rose,  
Doth spot the beauty of thy building name;  
O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!  
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,  
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,  
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise:  
Naming thy name blesses an ill report:*

*O, what a mansion have those vices got,  
Which for their habitation chose out thee!  
Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,  
And all things turn to fair that eyes can see!<sup>1</sup>  
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege;  
The hardest knife ill-used doth lose his edge.* (95)

*Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness,  
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;  
Both grace and faults are loved of more or less;  
Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort!  
As on the finger of a throned Queen  
The basest jewel will be well-esteemed,  
So are those errors that in thee are seen  
To truths translated and for true things d'c'md:  
How many lambs might the stern Wolf betray,  
If like a lamb he could his looks translate;  
How many gazers might'st thou lead away,  
If thou would'st use the strength of all thy  
state!  
"But do not so: I love thee in such sort,  
As thou being mine, mine is thy good  
report."<sup>2</sup> (96)*

<sup>1</sup> "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple."—(Miranda of Ferdinand.)

"O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!  
Was ever book containing such vile matter  
So fairly bound? O, that deceit should dwell  
In such a gorgeous palace!"—(Juliet to Romeo.)

<sup>2</sup> A repetition from Sonnet 36, p. 139.

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon.

"Vernon Semper Viret."

*How like a Winter hath my absence been  
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!  
What freezings have I felt, what dark days  
seen!*

*What old December's bareness everywhere!  
And yet this time removedous summer's time;  
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,  
Bearing the wanton burden of the primæ,  
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease:  
Yet this abundant issue seemed to me  
But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit:  
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,  
And, thou away, the very birds are mute—  
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer  
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's  
near.* (97)

*From you I have been absent in the spring,  
When proud pied April, dressed in all his  
trim,*

*Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,  
That heavy Saturn laught and leapt with him:  
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell  
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,  
Could make me any summer's story tell,  
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they  
grew:*

*Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,  
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;  
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,  
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those!  
Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,  
As with your Shadow I with these did play.* (98)

*The forward Violet thus did I chide:—  
"Sweet thief! whence didst thou steal thy  
sweet that smells  
If not from my Love's breath? the purple pride!  
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,  
In my Love's veins thou hast too grossly  
dyed!"*

*The lily I condemned for thy hand,  
And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair;  
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,  
One blushing shame, another white despair;  
A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both,  
And to his robbery had annexed thy breath;  
But, for his theft, in pride of all his growth,  
A vengeful canker ate him up to death!  
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,  
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.* (99)

The last two groups of Sonnets are eloquent of love's pains and the pangs of lovers parting. The present thrills with the rapture of return. Both are essentially amatory, and this is full of the flowery tenderness of the grand passion. How could any one think that the greatest of all dramatists would have lavished such imagery on the feeling of man for man, devoted this dalliance with all the choice beauties of external nature as the beloved's shadow, and looked upon the frailest flowers as the "figures of delight," drawn after the pattern of a man? As though our Poet did not know the difference betwixt courting a man and wooing a woman! As though he would have charged the Violet, his own darling, with stealing its sweetness from a man's breath, and its purple pride from the blood of a man's veins! It is Shakspearean sacrilege to suppose that the Poet ever condemned the lily for daring to emulate the whiteness of a warrior's hand. It is an insult offered to the "white wonder of dear Juliet's hand," that Romeo adored; the "snow white hand of the most beauteous Lady Rosaline," that my Lord Biron addressed; the "princess (qy. princeps) of pure white" saluted by Demetrius; the "white hand of Rosalind," by which Orlando swore; the "white hand of a lady" that Thyreus was soundly whipped for kissing; the white hand of Perdita that Florizel took, "as soft as dove's down and as white as it;" and Cressid's hand, "in whose comparison all whites are ink."

"That phraseless hand,  
Whose white weighs down the airy scale of praise."—*Lover's Complaint.*

This was a grace most jealously preserved for the dainty hands of his women, not thrown away on his bronzed fighting men!

The present return of the Earl I conjecture to be from the journey which followed the parting in the last group but one. Southampton left England late in February of the year 1598, and came home for good in November. He paid a hasty secret visit in August to marry Elizabeth Vernon, but the absence altogether corresponds to the one herein described. The third Sonnet contains fifteen lines—a variation which suggests that some of the Sonnets ran on as stanzas in a poem, and that in the present instance this continuity was marked by an extra line.

I have been complimented before now (or twitted) with my eloquent ingenuity just where the eloquence was but the accent of truth, and the ingenuity is only the pleading of nature for the rightness of my reading. Doubtless this mode of discrediting the interpretation will be applied to my reading of the present group of Sonnets. I shall be told that it is my tendency to consider the matter too curiously. My reply is, that it is impossible with a writer so cunning in *curiosæ* as Shakspeare, who was writing so covertly to please those "curious days." It takes a vast deal of ingenuity to be up to him, or to delve him to the root. Indeed, it cannot be done except by aid of the inside view of the Sonnets.

It is no longer necessary for me to combat the suppcision that these Flower-Sonnets are personal to Shakspeare, as I am about to offer the proof that they are personal to Southampton, and that Elizabeth Vernon alone supplied the *raison d'être* for their being written.

The Vernon motto was "*Vernon semper viret*"; Vernon (or Spring) ever flourishes. This could not have escaped the quick attention of Shakspeare, and did not; nor did the chance afforded for the play of his fancy, which was a more serious kind of wit. And here we have an exquisite instance of the deep-brained, delicate subtlety of these Dramatic Sonnets.

Vernon was the natural antithesis to Winter. Vernon *was* the "pleasure of the fleeting year," and therefore the Spring. The Spring, or vernal scason, is the pleasure of the *fleeting* year, as brief as beautiful; and Vernon was the Spring in person as well as the Spring by name. She was the lover's Spring all the year; Vernon *perpetuum*. The returning lover says—

"How like a Winter hath my absence been!"

Whilst he was away from her, although it was Spring and Summer all the while, because *she* was away from him, and because she *was* the Spring, and the

"Pleasure of the fleeting year."

"For Summer and his pleasures wait on thee."

That is, they stay in attendance on the Spring, as the ratheness of the year is followed by the ripeness of the Summer and Autumn. Hence they stayed with or waited upon Vernon. The very birds were mute with her away, whose absence was Winter. Yct seemed it Winter still with Vernon away. Vernon being the Spring by nature and by name, the flowers of Spring and early Summer are but representatives of her. Vernon was present in the April flowers. These, however, were only sweet as reminders of her who was absent;

they were but figures of delight drawn after her who was the pattern of all these, the Spring itself, or Vernon. Hence the lover says—

“As with your likeness I with these did play.”

That is, with the vernal flowers that stole the likeness, the form, the breath of Vernon. She was the “Pattern of all those” after whom their figures were drawn, *because* she was Vernon. The Poet then portrays her shadow or likeness, and paints her picture by finding her features, her colours, her sweetness in the flowers. One of the most lovely and cunning of all poetic conceits is this of the sweets and graces of the external season being stolen from the human Spring personified in Vernon, and kept concealed until now. The white grace of the lily, the blush of the rose, the breath of the violet, the pride of its purple, the glossy buds of the marjoram, these were all derived from her; the flowers of Spring were but figures of delight drawn after her, who was the pattern of all these; the permanent, or ever-flourishing Spring of which these were but the shows that passed away, whilst his Spring lived on in her, *Vernon semper viret!*

This arraignment of the flowers as thieves of the lady's charms, and their shrinking acknowledgment on being found out, is pretty beyond parallel, *when once we know* the lady was *Vernon* herself.

“More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,  
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.”

The likeness is all lady in every feature. Spring is all Vernon in every flower. The Sonnets are all Vernon by nature and by name. The portrait of Elizabeth Vernon with her reddish-brown hair is extant to identify the “buds of marjoram,” which certainly had no likeness in the hair of Southampton or Herbert.

“And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair.”

How careful he was to match the colour! This description of the lady's hair contains the true Shakspearean touch of nearness to nature. We may depend upon it no other comparison would have presented the likeness with the same nicety. To judge from Elizabeth Vernon's portrait at Hodnet by the aid of a sketch in water-colours kindly made for me, it would seem to have been suspiciously reddish, but the writer was desirous of distinguishing the tint with very close exactness. The buds of marjoram are of a darkish red-brown hue, and have a peculiar hair-like lustre or *glossiness*. Peacham notices the glossy buds of marjoram. Thus the buds may be said to have stolen the silky gloss and tint of the lady's hair, which was the very opposite to a dry rusty red.

At the very time, in the year 1598, when this journey of Southampton can be traced, Elizabeth Vernon was about to give birth to her first child. It came perilously near to her being a mother before she was a wife. This fact is visibly reflected in the 97th Sonnet, in the subtly allusive Shakspearean way—

“The teeming Autumn, big with rich increase,  
Bearing the wanton *burden* of the PRIME,  
Like *widowed wombs* after their lords' decease;  
Yet this abundant issue seemed to me,  
But *hope of orphans* and *unfathered fruit!*”



For those who can follow me here to see the facts reflected by the dramatist in the mirror that he holds up to nature, this mode of representation, this appeal to the paternal instinct, must be felt to be ineffably pathetic. The subtlety of his art in reaching the profoundest realities of nature whilst apparently at play with smiling similes is unfathomable. Such strokes of business are effected in pelting his friend with these innocent flowers!

This thought of Vernon as the Spring is present in several of the Dramatic Sonnets. Through all the Winter of the lover's discontent Vernon ever flourished for him as his present or coming Spring. When he mourns over the loss and lack of dear friends dead and gone, and feels the wintry desolation at the heart of life, she comes to him with her love, and is as the presence of Spring, retouching the old graves with new green. Spring ever flourishes in the person, in the presence, or in the absence of Vernon. The Poet could not pun on the name of Vernon, or blab the secret out in words. But all that I am saying is contained in the lines, and Shakspeare conveys the sense or essence of the meaning in thoughts and images without the direct use of the lady's name. It follows that with this reading the Sonnets are fifty-fold more manly, and the writer of them gains a hundred-fold in likeness to the man whom we know from the plays and by all contemporary report.

## PERSONAL SONNETS.

Shakspeare to Southampton after being some time silent.

Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so  
long  
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?  
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,  
Darkening thy power to lend base subjects  
light?

Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem  
In gentle numbers time so idly spent;<sup>1</sup>  
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,  
And gives thy pen both skill and argument:  
Rise, restive Muse, my Love's sweet face  
survey,

If Time have any wrinkle graven there:  
If any, be a satire to decay,  
And make Time's spoils despised everywhere!  
Give my Love fame faster than Time wastes  
life;  
So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked  
knife. (100)

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends  
For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed?  
Both truth and beauty on my Love depends;  
So dost thou too, and therein dignified:  
Make answer, Muse! wilt thou not haply say,  
"Truth needs no colour with his colour fixed;  
Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay:  
But best is best if never intermixed"?

Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?  
Excuse not silence so; for it lies in thee  
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,  
And to be praised of ages yet to be!

Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how  
To make him seem long hence as he is now.  
(101)

My love is strengthened, tho' more weak in  
seeming;  
I love not less, though less the show appear;  
That love is merchandised whose rich es-  
teeming

The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere!  
Our love was new and then but in the spring  
When I was wont to greet it with my lays,  
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,  
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:  
Not that the summer is less pleasant now  
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the  
night,

But that wild music burthens every bough,  
And sweets grown common lose their dear  
delight!

Therefore, like her, I sometimes hold my  
tongue,  
Because I would not dull you with my song.  
(102)

<sup>1</sup> The lost time was redeemed not only by the writing of this group of Personal Sonnets, but also the dramatic series that follows them.

Alack ! what poverty my Muse brings forth,  
 That having such a scope to show her pride,  
 The argument, all bare, is of more worth  
 Than when it hath my added praise beside :  
 O blame me not if I no more can write !  
 Look in your glass, and there appears a face  
 That over-goes my blunt invention quite,  
 Dulling my lines and doing me disgrace !  
 Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,  
 To mar the subject that before was well ?  
 For to no other pass my verses tend  
 Than of your graces and your gifts to tell ;  
 And more, much more, than in my verse  
 can sit,  
 Your own glass shows you when you look  
 in it. (103)

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,  
 For as you were when first your eye I eyed,  
 Such seems your beauty still ; three winters'  
 cold  
 Have from the forests shook three summers'  
 pride ;  
 Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn  
 turned  
 In process of the seasons have I seen,  
 Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned  
 Since first I saw you fresh which yet are green :  
 Ah ! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,  
 Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived ;  
 So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth  
 stand,  
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived ;  
 For fear of which, hear this, thou age  
 unbred ;  
 Ere you were born was Beauty's summer  
 dead. (104)

Let not my love be called Idolatry,  
 Nor my beloved as an Idol show,  
 Since all alike my songs and praises be,  
 To one, of one, still such and ever so :  
 Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence,  
 Therefore my verse to constancy confined,

In this group there is evidence of an absence of the person addressed, and a silence on the part of the speaker. Yet, the person who has been away cannot have been Shakspeare, or *the absence would be the cause of the silence!* The speaker in the previous Sonnets says nothing could make him "any summer's story tell," whereas the speaker in these Sonnets has been telling stories; has been at work on some worthless old story or other, turning it into a play, during the absence of the previous speaker. Hard work, in his friend's absence, is the cause why he has forgotten so long to write of the Earl, and not his own absence from England or London. The length of the absence also is opposed to the idea of it being Shakspeare who was away from his theatre all through the spring, summer, and autumn! These Sonnets show plainly that the Earl, who was the speaker in the preceding three Sonnets, has now returned from abroad, and the Poet stirs up his muse on the subject of the Earl's Sonnets. Return, forgetful

One thing expressing, leaves out difference :  
 Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,  
 Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words ;  
 And in this change is my invention spent,  
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope  
 affords :  
 Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,  
 Which three, till now, never kept seat in  
 one. (105)

When in the chronicle of wasted time,  
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,  
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,  
 In praise of Ladies dead, and lovely Knights,  
 Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,  
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,  
 I see their antique Pen would have expressed  
 Even such a beauty as you master now :  
 So all their praises are but prophecies  
 Of this our time, all you prefiguring,  
 And for they looked but with divining eyes,  
 They had not skill enough your worth to  
 sing :  
 For we, which now behold these present  
 days,  
 Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to  
 praise. (106)

What's in the brain that ink may character  
 Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit ?  
 What's new to speak, what now to register  
 That may express my love, or thy dear merit ?  
 Nothing, sweet boy ! but yet like prayers  
 divine  
 I must each day say o'er the very same ;  
 Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,  
 Even as when first I hallowed thy fair name !  
 So that eternal love in love's fresh case  
 Weighs not the dust and injury of age,  
 Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,  
 But makes antiquity for aye his page,  
 Finding the first conceit of love there bred,  
 Where time and outward form would show  
 it dead. (108)

Muse, he says, and redeem the time that has been spent *so idly* in darkening thy power to lend base subjects light. Sing to the ear that *does esteem thy lays*, and gives thy pen both skill and argument. Rise and see if, during his absence, Time has engraven any wrinkle in his face. If so, be thou the satirist of Time's power, and make his spoils despised, by retouching with tints of immortal youth this portrait that shall be hung up beyond the reach of decay. It will be seen that Shakspeare speaks of his friend with a lighter heart, and once more exalts his virtues, truth, and constancy. The meaning of this may be found in the fact that the Earl has now publicly crowned the secret sovereign of his heart; he has at last married Elizabeth Vernon. This celebration of the Earl's constancy and truth is not in relation to the Poet, but to the Earl's Mistress and his marriage. He is "constant in a wondrous excellence," and therefore Shakspeare's verse is still confined to the praise of that constancy. These Sonnets tell us that the Earl and his love were yet the Poet's only argument. Up to the present hour he had been writing to and of and for his friend Southampton.

At the time of Southampton's marriage, in 1598, the Poet had known his friend some eight years, and as that is somewhere about the date of these Sonnets, according to the internal and external evidence, I must hold that Sonnet 104 is one of those which have strayed out of place. Southampton was only twenty years old when Shakspeare had known him three years, and at that date there could have been no call for the Poet to fight on his behalf against the "dust and injury" and "necessary wrinkles" of age.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1598.

Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon—their Final Reconciliation: with Shakspeare's Sonnet in allusion to their Marriage.

*Oh, never say that I was false of heart,  
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify!  
As easy might I from myself depart,  
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth  
lie;*

*That is my home of love: if I have ranged,  
Like him that travels, I return again,<sup>1</sup>  
Just to the time, not with the time ex-  
changed—*

*So that myself bring water for my stain:  
Never believe, though in my nature reigned  
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,  
That it could so preposterously be stained,  
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good:  
For nothing this wide universe I call,  
Save thou, my Rose! in it thou art my all.*

(109)

*Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there,  
And made myself a Motley to the view;  
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is  
most dear,*

*Made old offences of affections new:  
Most true it is, that I have looked on truth  
Askance and strangely; but, by all above,  
These blenches gave my heart another youth,  
And worse essays proved thee my best of love:  
Now all is done, have what shall have no end!  
Mine appetite I never more will grind  
On never proof to try an older friend,—  
A God in love to whom I am confined:<sup>2</sup>*

*Then give me welcome, next my heaven the  
best,*

*Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.*

(110)

<sup>1</sup> "Here is my journey's end  
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail."—*Othello*, V. ii.

<sup>2</sup> "A God in love." An expression beyond sex, indicating the strength of feeling that needs the most masculine utterance, akin to that which made Elizabeth a prince and a governor, and hailed Maria Theresa as a king in the Magyar Assembly. So in the Bible, Man is used to

*Oh, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
The guilty Goddess of my harmful deeds,  
That did not better for my life provide,  
Than public means, which public manners  
breeds :*

*Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
And almost thence my nature is subdued  
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand :<sup>1</sup>  
Pity me then, and wish I were renewed ;  
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink  
Potions of Eysel 'gainst my strong infection ;  
No bitterness that I will bitter think,  
Nor double penance, to correct correction :  
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,  
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.*

(111)

*Your love and pity doth the impression fill  
Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow ;  
For what care I who calls me well or ill,  
So you o'ergreen my bad, my good allow ?  
You are my All-the-world, and I must strive  
To know my shames and praises from your  
tongue ;*

*None else to me, nor I to none alive,  
That my steeled sense or changes, right or  
wrong :*

*In so profound abyssm I throw all care  
Of others' voices,<sup>2</sup> that my adder's sense  
To critic and to flatterer stoppèd are :*

*Mark how with my neglect I do dispense :—  
You are so strongly in my purpose bred,  
That all the world besides methinks are dead.*

(112)

*Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,  
And that which governs me to go about  
Doth part his function and is partly blind,  
Seems seeing but effectually is out ;  
For it no form delivers to the heart  
Of bird, of flower, or shape, which it doth  
latch ;*

*Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,  
Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch ;  
For if it see the rude'st or gentlest sight,  
The most sweet favour, or deformed'st creature,  
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,  
The crow or dove, it shapes them to your  
feature :*

*Incapable of more, replete with you,  
My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.*

(113)

*Or whether doth my mind, being crown'd with  
you,*

*Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery,  
Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,  
And that your love taught it this alchymy,  
To make of monsters and things indigest,  
Such Cherubins as your sweet self resemble,  
Creating every bad a perfect best,  
As fast as objects to his beams assemble ?  
Oh, 'tis the first, 'tis flattery in my seeing,  
And my great mind most kingly drinks it up ;  
Mine eye well knows what with his gust is  
'greeing,*

*And to his palate doth prepare the cup :  
If it be poison'd, 'tis the lesser sin  
That mine eye loves it and doth first begin.*

(114)

*Accuse me thus ; that I have scanted all  
Wherein I should your great deserts repay ;  
Forgot upon your dearest love to call,  
Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day ;  
That I have frequent been with Unknown  
minds,  
And given to Time your own dear-purchased  
right ;<sup>3</sup>  
That I have hoisted ail to all the winds  
Which should transport me farthest from your  
sight :*

express the sum total of sex. A "God in love" is really only warranted by its being addressed to a woman. Also a "Goddess in love" would not have suited, because it is the greatness, the divinity of the love, rather than of the person, that is meant to be conveyed.\* The expression, addressed to a woman, is suggestively illustrated in the *Comedy of Errors*. Antipholus of Syracuse replies to Luciana, "Sweet Mistress—what your name is else I know not," and he asks—

"Are you a God? would you create me new?  
Transform me then, and to your power I'll yield."

<sup>1</sup> "My heart's subdued  
Even to the very quality of my Lord."—*Othello*.

<sup>2</sup> Ambrose Willoughby's, for instance, whose "report," according to Rowland White, led to the "unkindness" betwixt Southampton and his mistress.

<sup>3</sup> See the extract from Mr. Chamberlain's letter for a very natural gloss on this line.

What dearly-purchased right to Shakespeare's companionship could the Earl of Southampton have had which the Poet had "given to Time"? The speaker here is the person addressed by Shakespeare himself in Sonnet 70, as "being wooed of Time."

\* Drayton applies the epithet godlike to his Cynthia.

Book both my wilfulness and errors down,  
And on just proof surmise accumulate,  
Bring me within the level of your frown,  
But shoot not at me in your waken'd hate ;  
Since my appeal says, I did strive to prove  
The constancy and virtue of your love.<sup>1</sup>

(117)

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,  
With eager compounds we our palate urge :  
As, to prevent our maladies unscen,  
We sicken to shun sickness, when we purge ;  
Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying sweet-  
ness,  
To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding,  
And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness  
To be diseas'd, ere that there was true needings :  
Thus policy in love, to anticipate  
The ills that were not, grew to faults assur'd,  
And brought to medicine a healthful state,  
Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be  
cured :

But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,  
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

(118)

What potions have I drunk of Syren tears,  
Distill'd from Limbes foul as hell within,  
Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,  
Still losing when I saw myself to win !  
What wretched errors hath my heart committed,  
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never !  
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been  
flitted,<sup>2</sup>

In the distraction of this madding fever !  
Oh, benefit of ill ! now I find true  
That better is by evil still made better ;  
And ruined love, when it is built anew,  
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far  
greater :

So I return rebuked to my content,  
And gain by ill thrice more than I have  
spent. (119)

That you were once unkind, befriends me now,  
And for that sorrow, which I then did feel,  
Needs must I under my transgression bow,  
Unless my nerves were brass or hammer'd steel :  
For if you were by my unkindness shaken,  
As I by yours, you've pass'd a hell of time :  
And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken  
To weigh how once I suffer'd in your crime :  
Oh that our night of woe might have remem-  
ber'd

My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,  
And soon to you, as you to me, then tender'd  
The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits !  
But that your trespass now becomes a fee ;  
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom  
me. (120)

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,  
When not to be receives reproach of being,  
And the just pleasure lost, which is so deem'd  
Not by our feeling, but by others' seeing :  
For why should others' false adulterate eyes  
Give salutation to my sportive blood ?  
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,  
Which in their wills count bad what I think  
good ?

No.—I am that I am ; and they that level  
At my abuses, reckon up their own :  
I may be straight, though they themselves be  
bevel ;  
By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be  
shown ;

Unless this general evil they maintain,—  
All men are bad, and in their badness reign. (121)

<sup>1</sup> "All thy vexations  
Were but my trials of thy love, and thou  
Hast strangely stood the test."—*Tempest*.

<sup>2</sup> "Flitted." The Quarto reads "fitted," but I cannot think that Shakspeare's omnipresent vision and wakeful humour would allow him to say the eyes had been fitted out of their spheres, when, if they had been fitted at all, it would have been in their spheres. It must, I apprehend, be a misprint for "flitted," the word that, above all others, signifies a "moving" or removal to the Scotch mind. Spenser makes use of the word "flit"—

"For on a sandy hill that still did flit,  
And fall away, it mounted was full hie."

Fairfax's *Tasso* (5, 58) has it—

"Alas, that cannot be, for he is flit  
Out of this camp."

In Psalm lvi. we find, "Thou tellest my 'flittings.'" And Puttenham calls the figure *Meta tasis* the "Flitting Figure," or the "Remove." The meaning of the line is, how have my eyes been moved out of their spheres.

"Blessed may you be,  
That after this strange starting from your orbs,  
You may reign in them now."—*Cymbeline*, V. v.

*Thy Gift, thy Tables, are within my brain  
Full charact'ed with lasting memory,  
Which shall above that idle rank remain,  
Beyond all date, even to eternity:  
Or, at the least, so long as brain and heart  
Have faculty by nature to subsist;  
Till each to razed oblivion yield his part  
Of thee, thy Record never can be missed:*

*That poor retention could not so much hold,  
Nor need I Tallies thy dear love to score;  
Therefore, to give them from me was I bold,  
To trust those Tables that receive thee more:  
To keep an adjunct to remember thee,  
Were to import forgetfulness in me.*

(122)

Whatsoever Shakspeare intended to put into the Sonnets may be found in them. Whatsoever character he meant to portray will assuredly be depicted there. Such was the constitution of his mind that his work is sure to be dramatically true, no matter what the subject may be. In the Sonnets that are personal, there will be found nothing opposed to what we know, and have reason to believe, of the Poet's character. Nothing but what is perfectly compatible with that wise prudence, careful forethought, uprightness of dealing, stability of spirit, contentedness with his own lot, proverbial sweetness and loveliness of disposition, which we know, not by conjecture, but because his possession of these virtues is the most amply attested fact of his life. Moreover, the Personal Sonnets always illustrate that modesty of his nature which was great as was his genius. But, in this group of Sonnets, the character delineated is the exact opposite in every respect to that of Shakspeare; separated from his by a difference the most profound. This is a youngster speaking—as in Sonnet 110—whereas Shakspeare continually harps on his riper age, or, as we have read it, his elder brotherhood to the youth who is his friend. And this scapegrace, who is the speaker here, has been headstrong and wilful, imprudent and thoughtless; unstable as wind and wave, and easily made the sport of both; he is choleric and quickly stirred to breaking out and flying off at random. Again and again has he given pain to those that loved him most, who have had to turn from his doings with averted eyes. Again and again has he left the beloved one, and gone away as far as wind and wave would carry him. He has heedlessly done things which have made him the mark of scandal—

“A fixed figure of the time,<sup>1</sup> for Scorn  
To point his slow unmoving finger at;”

made a fool of himself, as we say, and as he also says, publicly, to the view; “gored his own thoughts” and made the heart of others bleed for him. He has been forgetful of that “dearest love” to which “all bonds” draw him closer and tie him tighter day by day; he has been wanting in those grateful offices of affection wherein he ought to have repaid the “great deserts” of the person addressed.

These Sonnets are very dramatic; intensely personal to the speaker; the feeling goes deep enough to carry the writer most near to nature, therefore they are certain to be representatively true. They are pathetic with a passionate pleading; filled with real confessions; self-criminating, and quick with repentance. But they are not true to the nature of our Poet, they have no touch of kinship, no feature of likeness to him. They are in all respects the precise opposite to what we know of Shakspeare, and to all that he says of himself, or

<sup>1</sup> Surely this is the true reading of the above two lines—the “of” and “for” having changed places? Othello cannot mean that he is made into a clock or a dial, but the *laughing-stock* of the time? Beside which, the finger of Time on a dial is always moving!

others say of him. If ever there was a soul of ripe serenity and capacious calm, of sweet and large affections, wise orderliness of life, and an imagination that had the deep stillness of brooding love, it was the soul of Shakspeare. His was not a mind to be troubled and tossed by every breeze that blew, and billow that broke; not a temperament to be ever in restless eddy and ebb and flow; not a nature that was fussy or fretful, but steady and deep. He was a man who could possess his soul in patience, and silently bide his time; who did not babble of his discontents with either tongue or pen.

Then, if Southampton be the friend who is addressed when Shakspeare speaks personally, his character should be to some extent reflected from Shakspeare's words; we should at least see his features, although in miniature, in Shakspeare's eyes. We know *his* character. It can be traced quite distinctly on the historic page. He was a brave and bounteous peer. A noble of nature's own making, munificent, chivalrous, full of warlike and other fire. But he was one of those who have the flash and outbreak of the passionate mind; and when stirred, the fire was apt to leap out into a world of dancing sparks. He was quick and sudden in quarrel; his hand flew as swiftly to his sword-hilt as the hot blood to his face; lacking in prudence and patience, and unstable in most things save his ardent friendships. Even these he must have sorely tried. His mounting valour was of the restless irrepressible kind, which, if it cannot find vent in battles abroad, is likely to break out in broils at home. He was easily swayed, and frequently swerved aside by the continual cross-currents of his wilful blood; one of the chosen friends and kindred spirits of the madcap and feather-triumph Earl of Essex! But he was also one of those generous, self-forgetful souls whose vices are often more amiable than some people's virtues. All this we may read in the records of the time. All this we may gather from the Sonnets which are addressed to him. And all this is figured in the liveliest form and colour in those Sonnets which are spoken by the Earl of Southampton. These paint the past history of the speaker, and they render the Earl's character, actions, quarrels, wanderings, to the life. But this is not the character of the person here *addressed*, independently of whom the speaker may be, therefore the person here addressed cannot be the Earl of Southampton. This person is the quiet centre of the cyclone of emotions, exclamations, pleadings, protestations. This person is the stay-at-home—the "home of love" from which the other has so often ranged. This person sits enthroned God-like in love, "*enskied and sainted*," high over the region of storm and strife, the wild whirl of repentant words, having the prerogative to look down with sad calm eyes; the regal right to forgive! The person here addressed is of such purity and goodness that the speaker feels he needs to be disinfected before he can come near. This cannot be Southampton, as we know, by his character and conduct. And if Southampton be not the person addressed, it follows that Shakspeare is not the speaker; this we know likewise from his character and conduct. He was a man too wise and prudent to have done the foolish things that are here confessed. His  
was

The soul that gathers wealth in still repose,  
Not losing all that floats in overflows,

but resting with a large content in the quiet brimfulness of its force. His mind was too steadfastly anchored in the firm ground of a stable character, for him to be continually going to and fro about the world. He was not a wanderer time

after time from his "home of love" far as fortune would let him range; hoisting sail to every wind that blew; turning and tossing as it were in the distraction of a "madding fever"; listening to the song of the syrens; not bound on board with ears safely stopped, but landing to be flattered and fooled by their treacherous tears. This speaker is a traveller who has often been amongst foreigners ("unknown minds"), which Shakspeare certainly was not—even if he ever went out of England at all—any more than he could have been the man who had so blamefully looked "on truth askance and strangely" to wilfully roam about the world, and make acquaintance with all the error he could meet. And if the supposed facts had been true; if his had been the nature to have these many mournful breakings-out and flyings-off at random; if his errors and wilfulness had been so grievous to his friends; if his light love had been this plaything, this weather-cock of change; if he had so shamefully trampled his acknowledged sacred obligations under-foot, and proved so faithless to his professed friendship; if he had committed these "wretched errors" of the heart; why, then, the arguments would be all fatally false. For it is not possible that Shakspeare should confess all these sins and shames on his part, and afterwards urge that all these "worse essays" were merely made to try the Earl's affection, and prove him to be the "best of love;" that all the "blenches" and ungratefulness and wanton inconstancy were only meant to test the virtue and constancy of the Earl's friendship. He could not plead that he had turned to vicious and immoral courses on purpose to purge his stomach of the Earl's "sweetness," on which he had over-fed, and urge that the true way of growing healthier was to become thus badly diseased! He could not wilfully wander away from this dear friend—leave "for nothing" all his "sum of good"—and then ask him to quarrel with Fortune as the *cause of his roving on account of his being a player or manager of a theatre, whose place and duty were to keep quietly at home and work steadily*; as we know our Shakspeare did. He could not plead that these sad experiences had given his heart another youth, for the one that had been let run to waste; he who was nearly ten years older than the Earl, and always gives him the utmost benefit of the difference in their years and personal appearance. All such excuses from such a man who had been such a sinner would be insultingly absurd. And it is most grossly improbable that Shakspeare should have spoken to his noble friend as in Sonnet 120, and have to regret that he had not been as generous or quick in forgiveness as that friend had been to him on a previous occasion, when we remember the modesty of the man. Still more gross is the idea that Shakspeare should offer to his patron and dear friend the worn-out remnant of his affections, like the broken-down rake in Burns's poem, who, having foundered his horse among harlots, gave "the auld nag to the Lord." Telling him that he would "never more grind his appetite on newer proof, to try an older friend." It is impossible to suppose that our Poet, who was so alive to all natural proprieties, could use such language in addressing a male friend. Equally impossible is it to think of Shakspeare, the man of staid habit and grave masculine morality; the husband of good repute and the father of a family; the shrewd man of the world, conversant with men and affairs; the man who speaks of himself not only as ripe in years, but somewhat aged before his time; who, when he catches a glimpse of his own face, does so with an arch gravity or a jocose remark on the signs of age and the wear and tear of life; who is weather-beaten, chapped and tanned,



in Sonnet 73,—it is impossible that this man, of sober soul and grave wise speech, should afterwards be found pleading with his boy-friend that the cause of his lapses and frailties is that sportive wild blood of his which will have its frisky leaps and lavoltos, and asking, with an almost infantile innocence, “why should false adulterate eyes” give it salutation? This is ineffably foolish to any one who is at all grounded in the qualities of Shakspeare’s character, or acquainted with such of the Sonnets as are explicitly personal. Bad as they have tried to make him, Shakspeare did not think adultery good, nor lust altogether admirable—if we may trust the 129th Sonnet, which is somewhat emphatic on the point and very much to our purpose. Yet such a theory, so blindly misleading and perniciously false, has been accepted, or allowed to pass almost unchallenged, by men who profess to love and believe in Shakspeare!

One of these Sonnets has been held to indicate Shakspeare’s disgust at his player’s life. The image being drawn from the stage gave some countenance to this view. But it is not fitted to the relationship of poet and patron, and it is quite opposed to all that we learn of Shakspeare’s character. It is not true that he had gone here, there, and everywhere to make a fool of himself, when he was quietly working for his company and getting a living for his wife and family in an upright, honest, prudent way. Nor could he with any the least propriety speak of making a fool of himself on the stage, which was the meeting-place of himself and the Earl; the fount of Shakspeare’s honour, the spring of his good fortune; the known delight of Southampton’s leisure, he who often spent his time in doing nothing but *going to plays*. Nor have we ever heard of any “*harmful deeds*,” or doings of Shakspeare, occasioned in consequence of his connection with the stage. Nor do we see how his name could be branded, or “*receivz a brand*,” from his connection with the theatre, or from his acts in consequence of his being a player. What name? He had no name apart from the theatre, and the friendships it had brought him. His name was created there. He had no higher standard of appeal. He had not *stooped* to authorship, or the player’s life. His living depended *on* the theatre; he met and made his friends *at* the theatre; he was making his fortune *by* the theatre; how then should he exclaim *against* the theatre? How could he receive a brand on his name *from* the theatre? How could he have felt dishonoured by the honourable gains which he had acquired so honourably? Even supposing him to have had a great dislike to the life and work, it would have been grossly out of place, unnatural, and inartistic to have thus expressed it point-blank to the generous friend who had exalted the “poor player” and overleaped the Actor’s life and lot, to shake him by the hand, and make him his bosom friend, however much the world might have looked down upon him! But we may altogether doubt that he had any such dislike to his lot. He neither pined in private nor complained in public, but his thrift and prosperity were in great measure the result of his content. John Davies might and did regret that Fortune had not dealt better by Shakspeare than in making him a player and playwright; but even he held that the stage only stained “pure and gentle blood,” of which our Poet was not, although “generous in mind and mood,” and one that “sowed honestly for others to reap.”<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson might kick against the “loathed stage,” and Marston bitterly complain, but Shakspeare’s was a career of triumph; he was borne from the beginning on a full tide of prosperity; the stage gave

<sup>1</sup> *Scourge of Folly*.

him that which he so obviously valued, worldly good fortune. He could not have been querulously decrying that success which his contemporaries were envying so much. Moreover, he was at heart a player, and enjoyed the pastime; this is apparent in his works, and according to evidence in Sonnet 32, he lived a "well-contented day" as a player; and as Sponser sings, "the noblest mind the best contentment has." Therefore he did not despise the art in which he delighted, and which was bringing him name, friends, and fortune. We have no proof whatever that he felt degraded by treading the stage, and we have proof that he did not forget or overlook his old theatre friends after he had left it. He considered himself their "*fellow*" in 1616, when he remembered them in his will. A kindly thought and just like him, but quite opposed to the personal interpretation of the Sonnet. Beside which, if he had looked upon himself as the victim of Fortune, if she were responsible for his being a player, what motive would he have for self-reproach? Wherein had he "played the knave with Fortune"? Why should he cry "Alas!" and ask to be pitied, and call for some moral disinfecting fluid, no matter how bitter, and seek to do "double penance" when he was honestly getting his living according to the lot which had befallen him? He could not be both the helpless victim of Fortune and the headstrong cause of his own misfortune; and that is the mixture of character implied! There is a strong sense of personal wilfulness in doing "harmful deeds." Do you "o'ergreen my bad," and pity me, and "wish I were renewed;" his life, not his means of living!

I have no doubt that Shakspeare had been far more intent on getting his theatre renewed, and if the Earl, as has been suggested, gave our Poet assistance towards the building of the "Globe" on Bankside, the personal interpretation of this Sonnet would afford a singular comment on the Earl's generosity and Shakspeare's gratitude. Our Poet, in all likelihood, was thinking how tolerably well Fortune had so far provided for his life. He had not gone about here and there making a fool, a "proclaimed fool," of himself. He had stuck to the theatre and his work. And we may consider it pretty certain that his name never did "receive a brand" on account of his "public manners" bred in him through being a player. His brow never was branded by *public scandal*. And so evidently *public* are the person, the acts, the scandal of these Sonnets, that we must have heard of them had they been Shakspeare's, just as we hear of the loose doings of Marlowe, Green, and the lesser men. It is no answer to my argument for any one to urge that Shakspeare may have done this or the other privately, and we have not heard of it. These are not private matters. It is no secret confession of hidden frailty. The subject is notorious; the scandal is public; and if Shakspeare were speaking, he would have done something for all the world to see it branded on his brow. If his *manners* had been such as to warrant the tone of these Sonnets, his contemporaries must have seen them, and without doubt we should have heard of them.

There is one expression in this Sonnet which has been identified as positively personal, because the speaker says that Fortune did not better for his life provide than *public means*. But that is the result of a preconceived hypothesis. It does not seem to have been questioned whether a player of Elizabeth's time would speak of living by "public means," when the highest thing aimed at by the players was private patronage! except where they hoped to become the sworn servants of Royalty. If the Lord Chamberlain's servants were accounted

public, it would be in a special sense, not merely because they were players; and certainly scandalous public manners were not likely to be any recommendation for such a position, or necessary result of it!<sup>1</sup> In our time the phrase would apply, but the sense of the words, coupled with the theatre, is a comparatively modern growth. Even if it had applied, it was an impossible comment for our Poet to make on what he had been striving to do, and on what Southampton had in all probability helped him to accomplish. For the truth is, the "Globe" was built in order that the players might reach a wider public, and Shakspeare was one of the first to create what we call the play-going *public*! The "Blackfriars" was a private theatre, chiefly dependent on private patronage; the nobility preferred the private theatres; the "Globe" was meant to appeal to the lower orders—or, as we say, the general public. With what conscience, then, could the successful innovator in search of the "public" complain of having to live by "public means"? Here, however, the meaning, as illustrated in the context, is that the speaker has to live in the public eye in a way that is apt to beget public manners. He lives the public life which attracts public notice. The opposition is between public and private life,<sup>2</sup> rather than between riches and poverty, or modes of payment—the public means of living his life, rather than the public means of getting a living—that he wishes "renewed." His public is the only public of Shakspeare's time; the Court circle and public officers of the State. And the person of whom Shakspeare wrote thus must have been a public character in such sense. He must have moved in that circle, and been of far greater importance than a player could possibly be, either in his own estimation or that of the world at large. Such an one, for example, as is spoken of in Sonnet 9 (p. 70),—should he die single, the "world will be his widow," and bewail him "like a makeless wife," he is so public a man in the Elizabethan sense. In *Love's Labour's Lost* it is said—"He shall endure such public shame as the rest of the Court shall possibly desire." "Our public Court," as the Duke calls it in *As You Like It*. Antony was a public man who sues Cæsar to let him live as a "private man in Athens." So Cranmer was a public man, and when ordered to the Tower is spoken of as being a private man again. "What infinite heart's-ease must kings neglect that private men enjoy!" That is our Poet's view of the "public man." And Sonnet 25 will tell us exactly what Shakspeare did not consider "public," for he therein expressly says that Fortune has debarred him from "*public*" honours, and, as he was a player then, the same fortune must have debarred him from "public" shame, resulting from living a player's life.

The innermost sense in which the Poet spoke of the public man in Sonnet 111 I take to be this. Shakspeare's great anxiety was to get his dear friend married. That is the Alpha and Omega of the Southampton Sonnets. He looked to the wedded life as a means of saving his friend from many sad doings and fretful fooleries. But he was a public person, whom a monarch could and did forbid to marry; who could not wed the wife of his heart without a sort of public permission; who had to get married by public means.<sup>3</sup> Shakspeare

<sup>1</sup> The title of "the King's Servants" was only conferred on Shakspeare's company of players by the Privy Seal of 1603.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter written by the Earl of Southampton to Sir Thomas Roe, December 24th, 1623, he expresses himself to be in love with a country life.

<sup>3</sup> The affair with Willoughby would not have given rise to *public* scandal but for its having occurred at Court.

looked to this fact as the cause of the Earl's public manners; his broils in Court, his breakings-out of temper, his getting into such bad courses and lamentable scrapes, as made Mistress Vernon and other friends of Southampton mourn. The Poet considered that his friend had been irritated and made reckless by the obstinacy of Elizabeth the Queen in opposing his marriage with Elizabeth his love. And he holds Fortune to be in a great measure responsible for the Earl's harmful doings. This view is corroborated in Sonnet 124, where the Earl is made to speak of his love as having been the "Child of State." Shakspeare did not consider himself a public man living by public means, nor fancy himself of public importance. Of this there is the most convincing proof in many personal expressions. In these Personal Sonnets he does not propose to speak of himself as one of the public performers on the stage of life, but like Romeo going to the feast at Capulet's house, he will be a torch-bearer, and shed a light on the many-coloured moving scene rather than join in the dance. He'll be a "candle-holder and look on." He will conceal himself as much as possible under the light which he carries, and hold it so that the lustre shall fall chiefly on the face of his friend who is in public, and whom he seeks to illumine with his love from the place where he stands in his privacy apart. As for Shakspeare's "manners," we know little of them in any *public* sense, but, from all printed report, we learn that his manners were those of a natural gentleman of divine descent, whose moral dignity and brave bearing ennobled a lowly lot, and made a despised profession honourable for ever. It was his manners quite as much as his mental superiority that silenced his envious rivals. It was his "manners" especially that elicited the apology from Chettle, "his demeanour being no less civil than he excellent in that quality he professes"—as a player. It was his manners that inspired Jonson with his full-hearted exclamation, "He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature." And so far as the word public can be applied to Shakspeare and his "manners," so far John Davies, in his *Humour's Heaven on Earth*, speaks of him precisely in that sense, for he speaks of Shakspeare as he saw him before his own public in the theatrical world, and the theatre, says Dekker's *Gull's Horn-Book*, is "*your Poet's Royal Exchange*." Davies compliments him, in the year 1605, as not being one of those who act badly "*by custom of their manners*," not one of those whose *ill-actions in life* make them *ill-actors on the stage*. He speaks of Shakspeare as one who is of *good wit*, of *good courage*, of *good shape*, of *good parts*, and *good altogether*; consequently *his manners, public and private, must have been excellent*.

We may conclude, then, that Shakspeare did not speak of himself as a public man living by public means, nor bewail his public manners; that he did not look on himself as the "fool of Fortune," or the sport of Fate; that he did not draw the image from the stage, and thus mark the platform on which he stood—the place where he was making his fortune—for the purpose of saying how degraded he felt there, and of flinging his defiance at public opinion and private malice; scattering his scorn over critics and flatterers, and insulting his patron in the most reckless way; that he did not lower and abase his brow to receive the brand of vulgar scandal, and then coolly ask his insulted friend to efface the impression—the stamp of scandal and dirt of degradation—with a kiss of loving pity; that a man who felt degraded by his calling, and branded on the brow because of his being a player, could not have occasion to stop his ears and

be deaf as an adder to flattery. Shakspeare was neither a flatterer nor the object of flatteries. And if he had done that which branded his brow with the stamp of common scandal, he could have had no need to stop his adder's sense against flattery. Of course the speaker is one who could be flattered because of his birth and position, in spite of loose public manners, as a peer might be, but not a player. The personal interpretation derived from the expression "public means" is at war with the whole feeling of these Sonnets, and the feeling here, as elsewhere, is the greatest fact of all; in short, it is not Shakspeare who is speaking; and the personal theory puts everything into confusion; it is sufficient warrant for all that Steevens said of the Sonnets; it leads people to think Shakspeare wrote nonsense at times, and exaggerated continually. He did nothing of the kind. I shall prove that he wrote these Sonnets with a perfect adherence to literal facts, and that his art in doing so is exquisite, as in his plays. Also, the personal rendering deepens and darkens the impression of things which, when applied to the Earl and his Mistress, do not mean much, and are merely matter for a Sonnet, not for the saddest of all Shakspearean tragedies.

In this group of Sonnets we read a reply to much that preceded them, from the same speaker who was the absentee in various earlier ones. Those absences are acknowledged. But he pleads against being considered "false of heart," although absence seemed his "flame to qualify." He admits having ranged about the world as a traveller, but like the traveller he returns again to his home of love. Still speaking of these absences which occur in preceding Sonnets, he says, Alas, it is true that he has gone here and there during these, and played the fool or made a fool of himself publicly.

The speaker is one in character and environment with him who had left his Mistress for the journey in the earlier pages, and whom we see far from home on distant shores ("limits far remote"), with "injurious distance" of earth and sea between him and his beloved, to whom his thoughts were sent in tender embassy of love, and came back to him with assurances of her "fair health." The same speaker as him of Sonnet 97 (p. 178), who had again been absent through the spring, summer, and autumn of the year. And here he speaks of those absences; says what a traveller he has been; acknowledges having hoisted sail to every wind that would blow him farthest from her sight; and been frequently with "unknown minds," or in foreign countries, when he ought to have stayed with her at home. It is the same person whom Shakspeare addresses in Sonnet 70 (p. 153) as the mark of slander and envy, one of those who attract the breath of slander and scandal naturally as flames draw air. And in these Sonnets he speaks of having been slandered, and of *vulgar* scandal as branding his brow; he being a noble, this supplies the antithesis. It is the same as him of whom Shakspeare wrote—"Ah, wherefore with *infection* should he live?" (Sonnet 67). Also in Sonnet 94—

"But if that flower with base *infection* meet,  
The basest weed outbraves his dignity."

And here, in pleading with his Mistress, this ranging sinning Lover is willing to drink "potions of Eysel 'gainst his 'strong *infection*!'" It is one with him of Sonnet 69, whose mind the Poet said the world measured by his ill *deeds*, and who had grown common in the mouths of men. Here he bewails those *harmful deeds* of his which have made him grow common, and the subject of

vulgar scandal. This is the same victim of his fate that we have before met, who was in disgrace with Fortune (Sonnet 29) ; made lame by Fortune's dearest spite, in Sonnet 37 (p. 139) ; had suffered the spite of Fortune once more, in Sonnet 90 (p. 174) ; and who now pleads in mitigation of his offences that Fortune is the guilty goddess of his harmful doings, she who has so driven him about the world. He confesses to all that had been mourned in previous Sonnets ; acknowledges that "sensual fault" of his nature which Elizabeth Vernon had before spoken of (p. 112) ; makes what excuses he can, and begs that all errors and failings may be blotted from the book of her remembrance.

It is the plea of a penitent Lover praying his Mistress to forgive his sins against true love ; his full confession of all that he has done, and his reply to what others have said on the subject of his doings. He asks her not to say that he was false at heart. He could just as easily part from himself as from his soul, which dwells in her breast ; so deeply rooted in reality is his love, in despite of surface appearances. Her bosom is his home of love, to which he returns as a traveller ; that is the port of his pleasure and soft rest of all his pain. He comes back, too, true to the time appointed, and not changed with the time. Moreover, he brings water for his stain ; comes back to her in tears. But though he is stained or disfigured by many frailties, she must not believe that he could be so stained, so disfigured from the shape she first knew and loved, as to leave for nothing all that sum of good, the summit of glory which he attains in her, for he counts as nothing the whole wide universe compared with her who is creation's crown, his Rose ! his All ! Alas ! he admits it is quite true what she says of his wanderings, his flyings-off at random, his making a fool of himself in public. He has gone here and there, a motley to the view. It is most true that he has shied at the truth, flinched from it, looked at it coyly, reservedly, as though it were a stranger, and has not made the beloved his wife as he ought to have done ; but these starts and far-flights from the path of right have given his heart another youth, his affection a fresh beginning, and his worst a'tempts have proved her to be his best of love. Now all is done ; his wanderings and voyagings are over ; he begs her to accept what shall have no end, his devoted undivided love, which shall be henceforth lived in her presence. He has come home, as we say, for good and all, and if she will but forgive him this one little last time, he will never do so any more. He will not again sharpen his old appetite for arms and adventure on any newer further proof to try this dear friend, who was his before his war-career and wanderings began—this "God in love" to whom, or this divine love to which, he is so bounden. "Then give me welcome to the best place next heaven, thy pure and most, most loving breast." And "do not think the worst of me ; quarrel a little with Fortune. She is guilty of much that I have done. She placed me in a public position, in the power of a Queen who so long tried to hinder me from making you mine own ; made me live so much in the public eye, and drove me to do things which have been so talked about by the public tongue." Thence it arises that his name has been made the mark of scandal, and his nature has been almost subdued to *what it works in*, like the dyer's hand. And here we come upon a striking example of the way in which the "pith and puissance" of the Sonnets have been unappreciated and unperceived. They have been read as imagery alone, images painted on air and not figured out of facts, without any grasp of the meaning which the images were only intended to convey and

heighten, whereas the value of Shakspeare's images lies in their second self, and this has so often been invisible to the reader. The image of the dyer's hand is well known, and considered to be fine, yet that which it symbols has never been seen. The perfection of its use, the very clasp of the comparison, the touch which makes the image absolutely vital, lie in the fact that the speaker is a man of arms, a soldier, a fighter, apt to carry his public profession into the practice of his private life; and thus he speaks of his nature as being subdued to what it works in, and his hand as wearing the colour of blood—dyed in blood! Therein lies the likeness to the dyer's hand! So in *King John* we have the soldiers'

"Purpled hands  
Dyed in the dyeing slaughter of their foes."

"Dyed even in the lukewarm blood."—3 *King Henry VI.*, I. ii.

"Pity me then on this account, and wish me better—my life renewed. I would willingly drink 'potions of Eysel' for what I have wilfully done. I should think no bitterness bitter that would disinfect me, no penance too hard for my correction. But pity me, dear friend, and your pity will be enough to cure me. Your love and pity suffice to efface the mark which common talk stamped on my brow. What do I care how their tongues wag, or reckon what they say of me, so that your tenderness folds up my faults as the green grass hides the grave, or the ivy's embrace conceals the scars of time. You are my all-the-world, the only voice I listen to. To all others I turn a deaf ear, and in fact all the rest of the world are dead to me."

Then follows a bit of special pleading, only pardonable to one who, in regard to the report of others, feels more sinned against than sinning. Some "carry-tale," some "putter-on," some "please-man," has been busy with his name and his amusements, or some babbling gossip of a woman has falsely interpreted his doings. Against such he can make a better defence. The spics on his frailties are themselves frailer than he is. The Court lady who has spoken of his loose conduct has herself locked on him with wanton wooing eyes. Whoever they are, he scorns to be measured by their rule. They desire to think bad and speak ill of that which he thinks good. Possibly this is an allusion to his fondness for the theatre. Did not Rowland White report to Sir Robert Sidney in his letter of October 11, 1599, that "my Lord of Southampton and Lord Rutland come not to Court, but spend their time in London merely in going to plays every day"? In speaking of him, they do but reckon up their own abuses. He may be straight, though they be crooked—*that* may be why the estimate is wrong, the measurement untrue—and his doings must not be judged by their rules. The summing-up of his reply says that he is not so bad as they would have him seem, and no worse in a general way than others are. He goes on to show her how she can put the case against him more justly: "Accuse me thus: that I have come short in all I owe to your love and worth; forgot to call upon your most active love, in the name of husband, to which all bonds—especially that nearer tie of life-in-life—do bind me closer daily; that I have given to Time your rights, which were purchased by you so dearly at the cost of long-suffering and sore heart-ache and many tears; that I have hoisted sail to every wind that blew, which would waft me the farthest away from you; been abroad frequently, and spent my time amongst foreigners instead of being with

you at home ; book both my wilfulness and errors down, all that you know and can suspect, and bring me within sight of my doom ; take aim, but do not shoot at me in your awakened hatred. My appeal then says these things were done to prove your constancy, and test the virtue of your love, or, to put it another way, such have been the effects of your constant love. As we whet the appetite and urge the palate with 'eager compounds,' and 'sicken to shun sickness' when we purge, so did I turn to bitter things because I was so filled with your sweetness. I was so well that there was a sort of satisfaction in being ill." The lover finds a kind of fitness in "being diseased ere that there was true needing." But this policy of his love, which anticipated by inoculation the ills that were not, grew to "faults assured." There was something wrong in the *virus* that he had not bargained for. And he suffered much in recovering the healthy state, which "rank of goodness" must needs be cured by ill. He lost faith in his vaccine. His experience has taught him that his melical course was not altogether a success ; he finds the drugs poison him who had fallen sick of her. But what deadly doses he has swallowed in his circuitous course in search of health ! He has sailed the seas, and listened to the songs of the sirens, and been flattered and fooled by their tears ; he has drunk potions distilled from lymbecks foul as hell within. He has played the game in which the winner loses most. He has committed the most wretched errors of the heart whilst he was thinking himself never so blessed. What a blind fool he has been ! How his eyes have been flitted out of their proper spheres in the distraction of this maddening fever, engendered of war and wandering. But there is this benefit in evil, that it serves to show the good in a clearer light ; makes the best things better. And love that has been rent asunder may be joined anew, like other fractured articles, the newly-soldered part becoming the strongest, even firmer than at first. So he returns from his evil courses, his erratic wanderings, his visionary pursuit of pleasure, his futile imitation of the boy and butterfly, humbled and sobered, to the home of his heart and the seat of his content, a sadder and a wiser man ; sufficiently so to gain by his experience three-fold more than he has spent in his folly ; having discovered how sweet are the uses of adversity.

The last argument urged for the making up of this love-quarrel contains a reference to an old falling-out, in which the lady had accused her lover wrongfully. "That you were once unkind to me is fortunate for me now ! When I think of what I suffered on that occasion, it makes me feel doubly what I have caused you to bear ; for if you have been as much pained by my unkindness as I was by yours, then you suffered a hell indeed for a time ; and I, a tyrant, did not think how you were suffering, even in remembering how I myself once suffered by the wrong you did to me. I wish now that our dark night of sadness had reminded me how hard true sorrow hits ; what cruel blows the hand of love can give ; and that I had come to you as quickly and tendered to you as frankly the balm that befits a wounded heart, as you then came to me with healing, reconciliation, and peace ! But let your fault of the Past now become a fee ; my wrong ransoms yours ; your wrong must ransom me !"

We shall see by referring to the life of Southampton that he went abroad three years running after meeting with Mistress Vernon. In the year 1596 he hurriedly left England to follow the Earl of Essex, who was gone on the expedition to Cadiz. Being too late for the fighting in that year, I conjecture



that he joined his friend Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland, who was then making a tour of France, Italy, and Switzerland. In the year 1597 he was with Essex on the Island Voyage, in command of the *Garland*. And in the following year he left England to offer his sword to Henry IV. of France, and was again absent for some months. He had thus been in foreign countries, mixed with "unknown minds"—people who do not speak our language. This he had done in a reckless mood, and "given to Time;" he had spent the time away from his Mistress, that which was hers by right, and dearly purchased too.

It will be seen that the speaker of the second of these Sonnets has *made himself* a Motley to the view with "that self-exhibition." His language is identical with Saul's, when he says, "I have sinned; behold, I have played the Fool, and have erred exceedingly." Saul does not mean that he had worn motley. If the speaker had worn the Fool's coat of many colours, he would not have been necessarily making a fool of himself. The image is not used in that sense. If he had been playing the Fool's part on the stage, it would be Fortune that had made him a Motley to the view, not himself. He would have been an "allowed Fool." Here, however, the speaker has made a fool of himself, not by wearing the player's motley. He does not mean that he has *played* the Fool in jest, but that he has *been* a fool in sad earnest, by his wanderings about the world, his absence from the dear bosom on which he yearns to pillow his head at last, his manifold offences to this affection, his starts from rectitude, his looking on truth with a sidelong glance; and, most of all, his quarrels in public, in the camp, in the Court, in the street, whereby he has made himself a Motley in public to the view, and become the subject of public scandal. He has been the fool who had not the privilege of bearing the Clown's bauble and wearing the many-coloured coat. "I wear not Motley in my brain," says the Fool in *Twelfth Night*; this was exactly how the young Earl had worn it. It was the *public* nature of his "ill deeds," his follies, that gives the peculiar appropriateness to the "Motley"; he had *exhibited* his folly, done it "to the view," and *gone about* doing it. All the literalness is in the fact, not in the mere image; it is Southampton to the life, not Shakspeare patiently following his profession.

Then the confession of Sonnet 119 can only have been made to a woman. It would have no meaning from a man to a man. It is a confession to a woman that the speaker has been beguiled by the siren tears of other women, who were false and foul. He is penitent for those wretched errors which he has thus committed, still losing when he fancied he was the winner. He asks forgiveness for this among his other wanderings. He makes a comparison, and appeals from the false love to the true, which he now sees in the truer light, and vows to be eternally true. It is out of nature for Shakspeare to plead in this way, which would have been most extravagantly abject if taken as personal to him. He could not have left the Earl, nor come back to him; could not protest the truth of his love in any such sense as is here implied. Besides which, if the dark story had been well founded instead of false, he would not then have left his friend to follow the sirens. His passionate outpourings on that occasion would be in reproach of the Earl for having left *him*, and for being lured away by the woman. It would be the Earl who was represented as going astray, not the Poet. Position and effects would be quite different from those supposed to have been represented in those earlier Sonnets, and the confession here has no fitting relationship to the past in that way; no meaning as from man to man.

In the life and character of Southampton alone shall we discover the subject of this group of Sonnets, spoken by the Earl to his much-enduring mistress, Elizabeth Vernon. There only will be found the opposition of Fortune, the breaking-out and "blenches" of rebellious blood, the harmful doings that were the cause of common scandal, the absences abroad, and all the trials of that true love here addressed. Also, in the Earl's case only are the excuses on the score of Fortune at all admissible. Shakspeare was really a favourite of Fortune, both in his life and friendship; she smiled on him graciously. Nor is there a single complaint against her in the whole of the personal Sonnets; neither can we see that he had any reason to complain. He does not accredit Fortune with any spite towards him, nor show any himself. But, as we have seen, Fortune was against the Earl, his friend, in the person of the Queen, and her opposition to his marriage; and but for his being a *public* man, and so much in the power of the Court for appointment and preferment, he would not have had so long and trying a fight with Fortune. He could have carried off his love and lived a calmer life; he would have escaped many a scar that he received in the struggle with such an untoward Fortune as at length landed him by the side of Essex at the scaffold foot, although he did not have to mount the steps. He was also a soldier of Fortune, not only fighting under the English Crown, but seeking service and glad of any fighting that could be got. As a soldier so circumstanced, and a man of so fiery a spirit that it led him into brawls, he could fairly say—

"Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
And almost thence my nature is subdued  
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:  
Pity me then and wish *I were renewed.*"

Poor fellow! he was continually "in for it." No doubt there were many things known to Shakspeare and Mistress Vernon that have not come down to us, besides the proposed duels which the Queen had to prohibit, and the hubbub in Court, for which "vulgar scandal" stamped the Earl's brow, and Elizabeth Vernon effaced the impression with her "love and pity"; but we know quite enough. Thus, in Southampton's life, we can identify every circumstance touched upon in this group of Sonnets; veritable facts that quicken every figure and make every line alive.

Rowland White in his letters, and Shakspeare in these lines, chronicle the same occurrences and paint companion pictures of the same character, whilst the Sonnets as clearly and recognizably reflect the image and movement of the young Earl's mind, the impetuous currents of his nature, as Mirevelt's portrait presents to us the features of his face. In all respects the opposite to the character in whose presence we feel ourselves, when Shakspeare personally speaks, and we hear the ground-tone of a weightier intellect, and the feeling has a more sober certainty, the thought a more quiet depth; the music tells of no such jarring string.

The comparative process applied to the Plays will go far in determining the sex of the person addressed in these Sonnets.

Compare the outburst of the returned wanderer Southampton addressing his Mistress, with Othello's greeting to his young wife on landing at Cyprus after his stormy passage—

"O my soul's joy,  
If after every tempest come such calms,  
May the winds blow till they have wakened death."

Sidney also calls Stella his "Soul's joy." The sexual parallel to the "god in love" of Sonnet 110 is to be found in Iago's description of Desdemona's power over Othello. The speaker of the Sonnet says—

"Mine appetite I never more will grind  
On newer proof, to try an older friend,  
A god in love, to whom I am confined."

(He was affianced years before he was married.) And Iago says of Othello and his infatuation for Desdemona—

"His soul is so en fettered to her love,  
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,  
Even as her appetite shall play the god  
With his weak function."

The confessional pleading of the whole group of these Sonnets as spoken by the ranging wanderer Southampton to his much-trying and forgiving Mistress is briefly summarized by Antony to Octavia, when about to marry her on his return from Egypt—

"My Octavia,  
Read not my blemishes in the world's report :  
I have not kept my square ; but that to come  
Shall all be done by the rule."

"Next my heaven, the best," Southampton calls his Mistress in Sonnet 110. Antipholus in the *Comedy of Errors* calls Luciana

"My sole earth's heaven and my heaven's claim."

"Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed," pleads Southampton with his Mistress in Sonnet 111 (p. 184); and in Leonatus' letter to Imogen, he writes—  
"You, O the dearest of creatures, would even renew me with your eyes."

"Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink  
Potions of Eysel,"

says Southampton; and Imogen's husband says to her—

"Thither write, my queen,  
And with mine eyes I'll drink the words you send,  
Tho' ink be made of gall."—*Cymbeline*, I. ii.

Southampton, in absence, spoke of those "swift messengers" returned from his love—

"Who even but now come back again, assured  
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me."

So Imogen, on receiving a letter from her husband, says—

"Let what is here contained relish of love,  
Of my lord's health, of his content."

Southampton, musing over his absent Mistress, had said how careful he was to lock up his treasures on leaving home—

"But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,  
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief!"—*Sonnet* 48.

He doubts whether the "filching age" may not steal his choicest treasure, the jewel of his love. And Iachimo says to Posthumus, speaking of the absent Imogen—

"You may wear her in title yours; but you know, strange fowl light upon neighbouring ponds. Your ring may be stolen too. A cunning thief, or a that-way-accomplished courtier, would hazard the winning."—*Cymbeline*, I. iv.

"But mutual render, only me for thee," is the love of Southampton to his wife, in Sonnet 125 (p. 203), the very language in which Posthumus addresses his wife—

"Sweetest, fairest,  
As I my poor self did exchange for you."

Such is Shakspeare's own testimony to the female nature of the person addressed in this group of Sonnets.

Sonnet 116 is a personal one; the speaker in it is the writer of it. And it is sufficient evidence that the Sonnets which we have called confessional do not, cannot, refer to Shakspeare's doings, portray his character, or express his feelings. If they had, this Sonnet would be an amazing conclusion, and contain his own utter condemnation, spoken with an unconscionable jauntiness of tone. He would have been a sinner in each particular against the law and gospel of true love, which he now expounds so emphatically. "Love's not Time's fool;" yet, on his own confession, he would have cruelly and continually made it the fool of Time and sport of accident. Love is "an ever-fixed mark," he says, and he would have wilfully and wantonly cut himself adrift from its resting-place. "Love alters not;" but he would have been moved lightly as a feather with every breath of change. If he had been the speaker in the foregoing Sonnets, he could not now say, "*Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.*" He could not call himself *true*, if so *false*. He could not have uttered his own condemnation with so airy and joyous a swing, so lusty a sense of freedom. He could not thus exult in the genuine attributes of true love, and say, "If this be error and *upon me proved*, I never writ, nor no man ever loved." It would have been proved only too clearly that he was in error, or else that he was a brave hypocrite—if he were the guilty one who had before confessed! But the line, "I never writ, nor no man ever loved," almost divides the subject into its two parts, and points out the two speakers. It shows Shakspeare to be the writer on a subject extraneous to himself except as writer. And here the poet is commenting upon a matter quite external, the particulars of which do not, and the generalities cannot, apply to him personally. The comment, also, is on the very facts confessed by the scapegrace of the previous Sonnets. Those were the confessions of a love that had not been altogether true; this is the exaltation of the highest, holiest love. It is Shakspeare's own voice heard in conclusion of the quarrelling and unkindness; his summing-up of the whole matter. His own spirit shines through this Sonnet. It is a perfectly apposite discourse on the loves of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon. The confessional Sonnets were written in illustration of the last full reconciliation of this couple, whose love did not run smooth outwardly, which is so apt to beget ripples inwardly. They were married in the year following that in which the hubbub in Court and the consequent scandal had occurred, and this Sonnet is in celebration of the happy event.

## A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Shakspeare on the Marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon.*

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
 Admit impediments : Love is not love  
 Which alters when it alteration finds,  
 Or bends with the remover to remove :  
 Oh, no ; it is an ever-fixèd mark  
 That looks on tempests, and is never shaken !  
 It is the star to every wandering bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken :  
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come ;  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom :<sup>1</sup>  
 If this be error and upon me proved,  
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.—(116)

This is a Marriage Service of the Poet's own—I do not say it is an Epithalamium—with an obvious reference to that of the English Church. He gives his answer, he who knows all the circumstances of the case, and is acquainted with all his friend's failings, to the appeal as to whether any witness knows of sufficient cause or impediment why these two should not be joined together in the holy matrimonial bond. The Poet knows of their quarrels and of the Earl's wild or wanton courses ; but he says firmly, Let me not admit these as impediments to the marriage of true minds. If my friend has done all these sad things which have been confessed, yet is it not the nature of true love to alter and change when it finds change in another ; because one has wandered and removed literally, that is not sufficient reason why the other should waver and fly off in spirit. Appearances themselves are false where hearts are true.

The supreme object of Shakspeare's Sonnets was to aid in getting the Earl, his friend, married, and see him safe in Mistress Vernon's arms, encompassed with content. He woos him towards the door of the sanctuary with the most amorous diligence and coaxing words. He tries by many winning ways to get the youth to enter. He rebukes him when he flinches from it ; and the last effort he makes for the consummation so devoutly wished almost amounts to a visible *push* from behind. He has attacked all the obstacles that stood in the way ; scolded the Earl for his "blenches" from the right path ; no mother ever more anxious about some wild slip of rebellious blood ; and now, when he is safe at last, with the rosy fetters round his neck, and the golden ring is on the finger of the wife, their Poet grows jubilant with delight ; a great weight is off his heart, and he breathes freely on the subject of the Earl's courtship for the first time ; can even speak with a dash of joyful abandon. The writer is in his cheeriest mood, and the Sonnet has a festal style. The *true* love that is apotheosized in this wedding strain, the ever true love here expressly besung and crowned, is not the affection of Shakspeare ; not the love of the Earl, his friend ; but the steadfast, pure, and unestrageable love of Elizabeth Vernon ! This is the love that has not been the fool or slave of Time ; the love that altered not with his brief hours and weeks, though the rosy lips and cheeks might fade and whiten with

<sup>1</sup> "Even to the edge of doom ;" so in *All's Well that Ends Well*, to the "extreme edge of hazard ;" and in *Macbeth*, the "crack of doom," i. e. the breaking up of nature. How perfectly do these lines, with their hint of the sunken cheek, and waning red of the lip, and the burthen of mental suffering, coincide with the words of White !

pain ; but has borne all the trials, been true to the very " edge of doom," and kept her heart firmly fixed even when, as Rowland White hints, her mind threatened to waver and give way. She did not alter when she found an alteration in him ; did not " bend with the *remover* (the traveller and wanderer) to remove." She was " the ever-fixed mark ;" the lighthouse in the storm, that " looked on tempests and was never shaken," but held up its lamp across the gloom. Her true love was the fixed star of his wandering bark, that shone when the sun went down ; this was his glory in disgrace ; his fount of healing when wounded by the world, or his own self-inflicted injuries ; the bright, still blessedness that touched his troubled thoughts ; his resting-place, where the Poet hoped he would at last find peace, and hear in his household love the murmurs of a dearer music than he could make in any sonnetting strain.

There is in this Sonnet one of those instances of Shakspeare's mode of vivifying by means of an image, which are a never-ending surprise to his readers. But it takes all its life from the love-story now unfolded. It is the astronomical allusion to Elizabeth Vernon as the star whose worth was unknown although its height was measured—meaning that there yet remained the unexplored world of wedded love ; the undiscovered riches of the wedded life. Although the distance between them had been taken, the best could not be known until he has made that star his dwelling-place, his home of love, and knows its hidden worth as well as he knew its brightness and its faithfulness as a guiding light in the distance.

The Queen's opposition to the marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon is apparent all through these Sonnets devoted to them. The burden of the whole story is an opposition which has to be borne awhile. This is figured as the spite of Fortune and the tyranny of Time. In Sonnet 36 the spite begins by separating the two lovers, and stealing sweet hours from love's delight : this enforced parting is the first shape taken by Time's tyranny. In his absence the lover speaks of his Mistress as his locked-up treasure kept by Time. In Sonnet 44 he " must attend Time's leisure " with his moan. Sonnet 70 recognizes how much the Earl is tried by this waiting imposed upon him by Time. Moreover, the promises of immortality are expressly made to right this wrong of Time. Against all the powers of Time and " Death and all-oblivious *Enmity* " shall Love " pace forth." And in this Marriage-Sonnet the true love is crowned by Shakspeare because it has not been the fool or slave of Time ; has not given in to the adverse circumstances, or succumbed to the opposition, but " borne it out even to the edge of doom,"—the love of Elizabeth Vernon, who is Lady Southampton at last. The Poet here plays the part of Hymen in *As You Like It*, who enters leading Rosalind by the hand, when he says to the happy pair, " You and you no cross shall part."

" Then is there mirth in Heaven,  
When earthly things made even  
Unite together.  
Good Duke, receive thy Daughter,  
Hymen from heaven hath brought her,  
Yea, brought her hither ;  
That thou might'st join her hand with his,  
Whose heart within her bosom is."

Thus repeating the language of the lover in Sonnet 109—

" As easy might I from myself depart,  
As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie."

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton in the Tower, condemned to death or to a life-long imprisonment.

No; Time, thou shall not boast that I do  
change!

Thy Pyramids, built up with newer might,  
To me are nothing novel—nothing strange—  
They are but dressings of a former sight:  
Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire  
What thou dost foist upon us that is old,  
And rather make them born to our desire  
Than think that we before have heard them  
told:

Thy Registers and thee I both defy,  
Not wondering at the present, nor the past,  
For thy Records and what we see doth lie,  
Made more or less by thy continual haste!  
This I do vow, and this shall ever be,  
I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.  
(123)

If my dear love were but the Child of State,  
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfathered,  
As subject to Time's love, or to Time's hate;  
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers  
gathered:

No, it was builded far from accident!  
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
Under the blow of thrall'd Discontent,  
Whereto the inviting time our Fashion calls:

It fears not Policy—that Heretic  
Which works on leases of short-numbered  
hours—

But all alone stands hugely politic,  
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with  
showers:

To this I witness call the fools of Time  
Which die for goodness who have lived for  
crime.  
(124)

Were it ought to me I bore the Canopy,  
With my extern the outward honouring?  
Or laid great bases for eternity,  
Which prove more short than waste or ruining?  
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour  
Lose all and more by paying too much rent?  
For compound sweet foregoing simple savour;  
Pitiful thrivers in their gazing spent!

No! let me be obsequious in thy heart,  
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,  
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no  
art,

But mutual render, only me for thee!  
Hence, thou Suborned Informer, a true soul  
When most impeached stands least in thy  
control.  
(125)

Before discussing the subject-matter of the present group it will be necessary to glance at Sonnet 107, which is somewhat out of place where it stands.

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come  
Can yet the lease of my true love control,  
Supposed as forfeit to a Confined Doom!  
The mortal Moon hath her Eclipse endured,  
And the sad Augurs mock their own presage;  
Uncertainties now crown themselves assured,  
And Peace proclaims olives of endless age:  
Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,  
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes;  
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
When Tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.—(107.)

My interpretation of this Sonnet, which I find has been generally accepted, is that Shakspeare thus addresses Southampton upon his release from the Tower, at the time of the Queen's death in 1603. And from the secure standpoint of this Personal Sonnet I proceed to show that these three Sonnets are Dramatic ones, spoken by the Earl when he was in prison, where he could congratulate himself on his

bondage being preferable to that of all the flatterers and sycophants at Court who bear the canopy of State outside, and strive to sun them in the royal favour. If in prison, he is assuredly in the Tower. Hence the Pyramids of Time built up with newer might. The name of the Pyramid being employed as a permanent type of time, age, strength, and duration. It is quite certain the old Pyramids had not been either rebuilt or more newly built, or built with "newer might." The Pyramids represent the prison-house of Time; and "Thy Pyramids, built up with newer might," is an obvious allusion to the Earl's fresh imprisonment when it has just occurred. He had been in prison before, two years earlier, when he was committed for contempt of Court because he had married Elizabeth Vernon in defiance of the Queen.

The Earl of Southampton, as is well known, was tried for treason, along with the Earl of Essex, and condemned to die. His share in the wild attempt at rebellion was undoubtedly owing to his kinship, and to his friendship for the Earl. His youth, his friends, pleaded for him, and his life was spared. He was respited during the Queen's pleasure, after having been left for some weeks under sentence of execution. The sentence being at length commuted, he was kept a close prisoner until her Majesty's death. These three Sonnets give us a dramatic representation of the situation. They are spoken by the Earl to his Countess; and they illustrate the facts and circumstances of the time with literal exactness and truth of detail. The Earl is in the Tower, and the shadow of the prison-house creeps darkly over the page as we read. The imprisonment is personified as that of Time. So in *King Richard II.* imprisonment is spoken of in the same way—

"I wasted time, but now doth time waste me,  
For now hath Time made me his numbering clock."

Time has the speaker in his keeping, and plays the part of jailer over him. This is a perfect image of imprisonment in Shakspeare's most subtly allusive manner; and we shall find these Dramatic Sonnets are full of such hints, most delicate and refinedly covert! But, safely as Time holds him, surely as he has got him in his grip, the Earl defies Time still, and says, in spite of this newest, latest, strongest proof of his power, Time shall not boast that he changes. He will still be true to his love. "Thy *Pyramids*, built up with *newer might*, to me are nothing novel, nothing strange!" That is, this latest proof of Time's power—he has had many in the course of his love—shall not impose on him in spite of its towering shape and its arguments drawn from remotest antiquity.

"Thy *Pyramids built-up* anew over my head, with this display of might which has shut me up within them, are only a former sight freshly dressed: I recognize my old foe in a novel mask. You are my old enemy, Time, the tyrant! You have given me many a shrewd fall; you have chafed my spirit sorely; but I still defy you worst. In vain you hold me as in a chamber of torture, and show me the conquests you have made, the ruins you have wrought. In vain you point with lean finger to all these emblems of mortality and proofs of change, and foist upon me these signs of age. I see the place is rich in *Records* of times past, and the *Registers* of bygone events. I know *our* dates are brief compared with these enduring memorials, but your shows and shadows do not intimidate me; they will not make my spirit quail. I shall not waver or change



in my love, however long my imprisonment may last. I defy both yourself and your taunts of triumph. I am not the slave of Time, and it is useless to show me your dates. I wonder neither at the present nor the past. I stand with a firm foot on ground that is eternal, and can look calmly on these dissolving views of time. Whatsoever thou may'st cut down, I shall be true, despite thy scythe and thee!" Thus the Earl meditates, shut up in the Tower of London, the dull, gloomy, and ghostly atmosphere of which may be felt in the first Sonnet. The reader will perceive how perfect is this interior of the prison-house—this garner of Time's gleanings—if it be remembered that the Tower was then the great Depository of the public *Records* and national *Registers*; the Statute Rolls, Patent Rolls, Parliament Rolls, Bulls, Pardons, Ordinances, Grants, Privy Seals, and antique Charters, dating back to the time of William the Norman. In no place could Time look more imposing and venerable, or be dressed with a greater show of authority, than in the old Tower, standing up grey against the sky, with its thousand years of historic life, and two thousand years of legendary fame; full of strange human relics, and guilty secrets, and awful memories, and the dust of some who are noblest, some who were vilest among our England's dead.

The Poet makes only a stroke or two—the "pyramids" or turrets without; the "Registers," "Records," and ancient dates within; but there we have the Tower, and no picture could possess more truth of hoary local colour.

It will give an added force to the speaker's tone of defiance if we remember what a grim reality the Tower was in those days, and what a lively terror to the Elizabethan imagination. A personification of living death! It was the grim abode of Torture, of Little-Ease and the Scavenger's Daughter, the vaulted chambers, the rack and screws and other would-be murderers of the mind and wringers out of life, slow, pang by pang, drop after drop.

We have Shakspeare's description of the Tower in *King Richard III.* (Act III. Scene i.)—

*Prince.* Did Julius Cæsar build that place, my lord?  
*Glo.* He did, my gracious lord, begin that place;  
 Which, since, succeeding ages have re-edified.  
*Prince.* Is it upon record?  
*Buck.* Upon record, my gracious lord.  
*Prince.* But say, my lord, it were not register'd.

And in Sonnet 123 the Tower—that stronghold of Time—the new Pyramids, which are but "dressings of a former sight," that is, comparatively modern representatives of the old ones—is the ancient *Record* and *Register* of Time!

The speaker being identified as Southampton, who had at last married Elizabeth Vernon in spite of the Queen and in defiance of all State Policy, we know how the matter stood historically. The marriage was only effected just in time to make his child legitimate. If he had not done what he has done, and now rejoices over having done it; if he had not defied the Queen and her Policy, his child would have been a bastard born. If the reader can but accept the position here assigned to the speaker, he will get another rare glimpse of Shakspeare's method of working behind the mask. We have already traced an allusion to the same circumstances in previous lines where the Poet describes the

teeming womb of autumn, big with the burden of its rich increase, and says—

“ Yet this abundant issue seemed to me  
But hope of orphans and *unfathered fruit!* ”

Fathers and Mothers! What a pathetic reminder! And now the speaker admits that if he had not been married before this imprisonment occurred; if, he says, he had not effected his purpose in spite of the spite of the Queen, if his “love” had remained merely the “Child of State,” the creature of a Court, subject to its policy or the Queen’s caprice, it would, now he is taken away, have been the veriest bastard of Fortune—a child without a father, or love’s unfathered (illegitimate) fruit. If we bear in mind the condition of Elizabeth Vernon previous to the stolen marriage, we shall see the dual meaning of this illustration!

Such is the inclusive way in which the writer uniquely drew his imagery from the natural facts and reapplied it allusively to further facts in the life of his private friends, leaving his readers as outsiders standing gazing upon the shadows. But now Southampton can rejoice that his wife is no longer one of the tormented maids of honour, his child is not a bastard, as it must otherwise have been had his love continued to be only or but the “Child of State”; and he can defy Time, the jailer in his chief prison-house, because by his marriage he has built beyond the reach of accident, including the terrible one that has lately befallen the friends of Essex. He does not fear Policy—that is Statecraft—but can congratulate himself on his own hugely politic course which he had taken first. His beloved may be out in the world alone, but she wears the name of wife—nay, she is gathered up into his bosom by that grand inclusive way in which the Sonnet personifies the “love” in its oneness. “It was builded far from accident”—the marriage made that sure! and now, as things are, it “suffers not” in the falsely “*smiling pomp*” of Court favour; is not compelled to seek Court preferment, is no more exposed to the changeful weather, the sun and shower of royal whim; nor does it fall under—cannot come within reach of—that “blow of thrall’d Discontent” to which the “inviting time” calls “our Fashion”; the young nobles, England’s chivalry, who at that very moment were being summoned to the aid of Mountjoy in Ireland.

No apter image of Ireland in the year 1601 could be conceived than this of “*thrall’d Discontent.*”

Camden says the affairs of that country were in a “leaning posture,” tending to a “dejection,” and the Spaniard seized the occasion to make one more push, and, if possible, topple over English rule in Ireland. It was proclaimed that Elizabeth was, by several censures of the Bishop of Rome, deprived of her crown. The spirit of rebellion sprang up full-statured at the promise of help from Spain; and “thrall’d Discontent” once more welcomed the deliverer. Rumour came flying in hot haste, babbling with all her tongues. It was an “inviting time” indeed to the young gallants—the Earl’s old comrades—who were fast taking horse and ship once more. The prose parallel to the Sonnet will be found in a letter to Mr. Winwood from Mr. Secretary Cecil, Oct. 4, 1601.<sup>1</sup> He writes, “On the 25th of last month there landed between five and six thousand Spaniards in the province of Munster, commanded by Don Juan d’Aguila, who was general of the Spanish army at Bluett. The Lord Deputy

<sup>1</sup> *Winwood’s Memorials*, vol. i. p. 351.

(Mountjoy) is hastening, with the best power he can make, and her Majesty is sending over six thousand men, with all things thereto belonging, which, being added to eighteen thousand already in that kingdom, you must think do put this realm to a wanton charge." Of course the Sonnet does not make the Earl exult that he cannot follow to join his old friends in the two campaigns which ended in Mountjoy's leading captive the rebel Tyrone to the feet of Elizabeth. That would have been undramatic, unnatural. He only says that, shut up in prison as he is, *his love does not "fall under the blow"* whereto the time calls *so invitingly*. It has no fear of Policy, that heretic in love and love-matters; which, after all—and here is an ominous hint, perhaps of the Queen's age—works on a short lease, or a lease of *short-numbered* hours.

No other word could so suggestively, accurately, or adequately sum up the character of Elizabeth for dissimulation, tortuous insincerity, and consummate hypocrisy as this of "Policy"; she who never went by the straight road if there was a crooked one to be found or a by-way that could be wormed through in the devious fashion of her chosen course.

Policy elsewhere personified is opposed to conscience. In the play of *Timon* Shakspeare writes—

"Men must learn now with pity to dispense,  
For Policy sits above Conscience."

But I am not sure that the heresy is to be limited to love-matters. Elizabeth was the Arch-Heretic of the Catholic world, and Southampton's father had been a follower of the old faith.

Shut up in prison, the speaker sits at the centre of the wild whirl around him—or rather he is just where things stand still—and "hugely politic" it is too! His love "nor grows with heat, nor drowns with showers" of the Court world. But it has an inward life of its own; is firm as the centre; steadfast and true to the end. To the truth of his assertions he calls his witnesses, and weird witnesses they are; for, being where he is, we get a glimpse of Tower Hill through the window bars, and see the solemn procession; the sawdusted stage with its black velvet drapery; the headsman in his mask, the axe in his hand, and all the scenery and circumstance of that grim way they had of going to death. The speaker calls for witnesses, the spirits of those political plotters, whose heads fell from the block, and whose bodies moulder within the old walls. The "fools" who had been the sport of the time, he calls them, who lived to commit crime, but died nobly at last—made a pious end, as we say.

Shakspeare had evidently remarked that, as a rule, those who were condemned to die on the scaffold died "good," no matter what the life had been: it was the custom for them to make an edifying end. Stowe relates how Sir Charles Danvers mounted the scaffold and "put off his gown and doublet in a most cheerful manner, rather like a bridegroom than a prisoner appointed for death, and he then prayed very devoutly." The allusion is no doubt more particularly directed to Essex and his companions, who had died so recently; Essex having been executed within the Tower. The "fools of time" may give us the Poet's estimate of Essex's attempt. He was one of those who had lived to reach the criminal's end, but who "died for goodness" in the sense that he, like Danvers, died devoutly, and took leave of life with a redeeming touch of nobleness. Essex was also popularly designated the "Good Earl." But the manner of the

death is still more obviously aimed at—the dying in public, lifted up for the view of the gaping crowd, and making sport for the time, by giving a bloody zest to a vulgar holiday.

We find a parallel to the “fools of time” when the dying Rebel Hotspur exclaims—

“Thought’s the slave of life, and life, Time’s fool.”

The next Sonnet still carries on the idea of imprisonment, and the external image of bearing the Canopy is in opposition to his present limitation in the Tower. Confined as he is, and limited to so narrow a space for living, he asks, were it anything to him if he bore the Canopy outside, “honouring the outward” with his externals, filled the world with the fame of his doings, made the heavens, as it were, his arch of triumph, or “laid great bases for eternity,” as some do, and prove them to be “more short than waste or ruining.” As a matter of course he speaks of honouring the *outward* because he is a prisoner WITHIN!

That is the external aspect of the imagery, but there is also the inside view. Shakspeare moralizes two meanings in one metaphor in a most allusive manner that is common to no other man. Southampton as a lord-in-waiting had often borne the Canopy or cloth of State when in attendance on the Queen in her progresses. That this is also meant may be gathered from the allusions to the obsequious courtiers, the favourites, the dwellers on form, ceremony, and favour, lords-in-waiting who had borne the Canopy and proved how vain their “WAITING” and looking and longing were; the “pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent;” Essex, the great favourite, for instance, just dead. Queen Katharine calls herself

“A poor, weak woman, fallen from favour.”

Wolsey says—

“O how wretched  
Is that poor man that hangs on princes’ favours.”  
“O place! O form!  
How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,  
Wrench awe from fools, and tie the wiser souls  
To thy false seeming!”—(*Measure for Measure*, II. iv.)  
“Throw away respect,  
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty.”—(*King Richard II.*, III. ii.)

“Poor wretches that depend on Greatness’ favour, dream as I have done; wake and find nothing.” That is a prison-thought of Posthumus’, and most like to Southampton’s. Has he not seen how it went with many who sought Court favour and fickle fortune—the royal *waiters*, the noble footmen, “dwellers on form and favour”—has he not seen how they lost all, and more; foregoing the simple savour of life for “compound sweet.” He is not one among these foolish flatterers. He only wishes to be *obsequious* in the heart of his wife; her favourite alone. There is a parallel passage in *Othello*, where we read of

“Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,  
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,  
Wears out his time. Others there are  
Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves;  
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,  
Do well thrive by them.”—(*Othello*, I. i.)

These Sonnets express the feelings and contain the words of one standing apart, thrust aside, who can watch how the game goes, with its tricks and intrigues, its fervours and failures. He can see how much reality the players miss for the sake of their illusions; see what they trample under-foot in their visionary pursuit, and how they stumble into the ditch, with foolish eyes fixed on their stars! The *pitiful thrivers* in their gazing spent! No. He is ambitious for none of these things. Let his beloved but accept the humble offerings of his love, he cares for no other triumph. His love for her is mixed with no secondary ambition. Cooped up as he is, thrust out of service, he has all if he have her safely folded up in his heart: she is his all-in-all, and he asks for a "mutual render, only me for thee!" The Sonnet ends with a defiance which clenches my conclusion. Camden tells us that amongst the confederates of Essex, one of them, whilst in prison, turned Informer, and revealed what had taken place at the meetings held in the Earl of Southampton's house, though he, the historian, could never learn who it was. In the last two lines of the Sonnet, the Earl flings his disdain at the "*Suborned Informer*," and comparing himself with so base a knave, he feels that he is truer than such a fellow, although the world calls him a traitor; and when most *impeached* (for treason), he is least in *such* a loyalist's control. The difference betwixt their two natures is so vast, not to be bridged in life or death. We have only to remember how recently the Earl of Southampton had been *impeached* as a traitor, and those two lines must speak to us with the power of a living voice! He concludes his prison-thoughts by hurling his defiance at the man whose treachery led to this imprisonment.

We are now able to identify quite confidently the man thus marked by Shakspeare as the "black sheep" of the Essex flock of friends. This hireling spy was undoubtedly Lord Monteagle. He was known to be in the conspiracy: there were damning proofs against him. As shown by the examination of Augustine Phillips, he was one of the three persons who bespoke and paid for the "deposing and killing of King Richard the Second,"<sup>1</sup> on the eve of the insurrection; and yet he was not even put on trial for his life. It is said that when Coke rose with certain evidence in his hand, he dropped the name of Monteagle from the sworn depositions of Phillips the player, and inserted that of Meyrick in its stead. Lord Monteagle was fined; Meyrick was executed. This, coupled with Lord Monteagle's subsequent conduct in the "Gunpowder Plot," shows that he was the secret spy of the Government; the traitor to Essex and his friends; the "*Suborned Informer*" of Shakspeare's Sonnets.

There is also a passage in *King Lear* very like in substance to some of the matter in this group of Sonnets where we have Southampton's prison-thoughts—

"No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:  
 We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:  
                                 So we'll live,  
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
 Talk of Court news; and we'll talk with them too—  
 Who loses, and who wins; who's in, who's out;  
                                 And we'll wear out,  
 In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,  
 That ebb and flow by the moon."

<sup>1</sup> *Domestic State Papers* (Elizabeth), *Mrs. Green's Calendar*, 1598—1601, p. 575.

Much of that is incongruous imagery for Lear to use. What Court, what "great ones," what "gilded butterflies," should the proud, broken, aged king care to hear of? It passes, of course, as the pathetic, wild, and wandering talk of the garrulous old man, but there's more than that in it. If that "moon" be, and I would take my Shakspearean oath it is, the "*mortal moon*" that suffers eclipse in the 107th Sonnet, then Shakspeare is talking to, or for, his friend Southampton, in those lines, whilst poor Lear babbles to Cordelia; and the passage was written before the death of Elizabeth, whatsoever inferences to the contrary may have been drawn from Harsnett's *Discovery of Popish Impostures*. There was no moon that any great ones did or could "ebb and flow" by in the time of Shakspeare save Elizabeth, the "mortal moon."

Now, Shakspeare might have been the speaker in the three foregoing Sonnets without any conflict with *some* of the historic circumstances to which they refer—such as the Earl's imprisonment and the Irish war. But if he had been the speaker in those Sonnets which confess a changing, ranging, false and fickle spirit, that had so often and so sadly tried the person addressed, he could scarcely have been as heroic in asserting his unswerving steadfastness of affection, and hurled at Time his defiant determination to be eternally true. Time might not "boast," but Shakspeare would be boasting with huge swagger at a most sorrowful and unseasonable period. He might fairly enough defy Time, and State policy, to alienate him from his friend. But his "dear love," his friendship, was not the "Child of State" in any shape or way, therefore he could not speak of its being *only* the "Child of State." Shakspeare generally uses State in the most regal sense. Hamlet the Prince was the first hope and foremost flower of the *State*. So, in *King Henry VIII.*, we have "an old man broken by the storms of *State*." Nor was State policy likely to be exerted for any such purpose in his case. He might, as most probably he did, have visited the Earl in the Tower, and there moralized on the doings of Time, and told him, to his face, he was an old impostor, after all, who tried to play tricks with appearances on those who were close prisoners there in his keeping. But his "love" could not be an "unfathered bastard of Fortune" in consequence of being *only* the "Child of State." It could not have been builded far from "accident" when so sad a one had just occurred to his friend. He might have been inwardly glad that Southampton could not get away to the Irish wars, and within range of the impending blow of "thralled Discontent." But he could not have congratulated the Earl on his imprisonment being the cause why the friendship did not come under that blow. Moreover, it will be observed that there is a self-gratulatory tone in these three Sonnets! Nor could *his* love, his friendship have suffered in "smiling pomp"; and if it might, it was not for Shakspeare to say such a thing to his fettered friend, doomed to a life-long imprisonment. Nor could he, by his own showing, have said that his love feared not Policy, the Heretic, for in the 107th Sonnet he tells us how much he *had feared*. He was filled with fears for the Earl in prison, and trembled for the life supposed to be forfeited to a "Confined Doom." Clearly, then, he could not be thus loftily defiant of the worst that had happened, or could happen, on behalf of another, and that other his dear friend who was sitting in the deepening shadow of death! The defiance and the boasts would have been altogether unnatural from Shakspeare's mouth. How could *his* love stand "all alone" and be "hugely politic"? One would have thought, too, that *his* love

would have been ready enough to "drown with showers," had he been speaking to his beloved friend in such perilous circumstances. Also, it would be exceedingly strange for Shakspeare to call the "fools of Time" as his witnesses. What for? save to show what a fool he was in making such a singular declaration of his enduring love. He could have made no such vast and vague a public appeal to prove the truth of his private affection. Then, with the Earl bound hand and foot and in great mental agony, as he must have been, it is not to be supposed that Shakspeare would fix his gaze on himself and his own limiting circumstances. "Were it aught to me I bore the Canopy?" Why, what would it be to his friend, the Earl? Such reference to himself—such a "look at me"—would have been the veriest mockery to his poor friend; such a discourse on the benefits of being without a tail would have been a vulgar insult. If Shakspeare were speaking thus of himself, the reader's concern would be for Southampton! But enough said: it is not Shakspeare who speaks in these Sonnets.

The nature and quality of the speaker are still more marked than his environment, and Southampton alone could belong to "Our Fashion"; that is, young men of rank, courtiers and soldiers; as Hotspur, for example, was "the mark and glass, copy and book that *fashioned* others," or, as is illustrated by Plantagenet in his disdain of the Somerset *faction*—

"I scorn thee and thy *Fashion*, peevish boy."

Only Southampton could speak of his "love" being the "Child of State"—his child a "bastard of Fortune"—subject to Time's love or hate—out of the pale of the law—for a gloss on which hear Faulconbridge—

"He is but a *bastard* to the time,  
That doth not smack of observation,  
And so am I whether I smack or no."

Only Southampton could have suffered in the "smiling pomp" of Court favour, or fallen under the blow of "thrallèd discontent," *i. e.* of the rebels up in arms in Ireland; only he could have defied all State policy on account of some course taken by himself which he considers yet more politic; and only he could have hurled his supreme disdain at the hireling spy who had been suborned to inform against him, and thus *led* to his impeachment for treason.

The speaker is the same as he who has so long sustained the fight with "Time" and "Fortune," which have overthrown him at last, although when prostrate on the ground he will not yield. The speaker who, in Sonnet 29, feels himself to be in "disgrace with Fortune," and men's eyes are turned from him. He who in Sonnet 37 is made lame, is disabled, or shut out of service, by Fortune's "dearest" or most excessive spite. He who in Sonnet 90 is the same person still pursued by the malice of Fortune, which is bent on crossing his deeds.

It is the same speaker, the unlucky scapegrace, the noble "ne'er-do-weel," who, in Sonnet 111, asks his much-suffering, more-loving lady to chide this "Fortune" that has been to so great an extent the guilty goddess, the primary cause of his harmful doings and his "blenches," or starts from rectitude. It is the same person on whose behalf Shakspeare makes such a prolonged fight with Time and evil Fortune, and in some of the Personal Sonnets speaks so

proudly of the power of his verse to give him an immortality that shall right this wrong of time. At first sight a reader might fancy some of those Sonnets to have been written after a visit to the Tavern, when the canary had added a cubit to the Poet's stature, and he talked loftily for so modest a man. But he had a stronger incentive; a wilder wine was awork within him when he made these sounding promises. Not flattery nor the spirit of the grape were his inspiration, but a passionate feeling of injustice and wrong, and a determination to make his friend triumph over time and enmity, and all the opposition of a malevolent fortune.

It is Southampton then, not Shakspeare, who speaks in the foregoing Sonnets, and it will be seen that the personal theory has not the shadow of a chance when compared with the dramatic one. It cannot gauge these Sonnets; does not go to the bottom in any one of the deeper places. The dramatic version, with Southampton for speaker, alone will sound the depths, and make out the sense.

The Personal and Dramatic Sonnets present the obverse and reverse of the same facts; and if we would listen to the words of Shakspeare himself speaking to his friend in prison, we shall hear him in the 115th Sonnet:—

*Shakspeare to the Earl of Southampton in prison.*

Those lines that I before have writ do lie;  
 Even those that said I could not love you dearer!  
 Yet then my judgment knew no reason why  
 My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer!  
 But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents  
 Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,  
 Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,  
 Divert strong minds to the course of altering things;  
 Alas! why, fearing of Time's tyranny,  
 Might I not then say, "Now I love you best"?  
 When I was certain o'er uncertainty,  
 Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?  
 Love is a babe; then might I not say so,  
 To give full growth to that which still doth grow?—(115)

These lines tell us that Shakspeare had before said he loved his friend so much it was impossible for him to love the Earl more dearly. Because, at the time of saying so, he could neither see nor foresee reason why that flame of his love should afterwards burn clearer, or soar up more strongly. He did not know what surprise was yet in store for him. But this new and more perilous position of his friend, one of time's million accidents, serves to make him pour forth his love in a larger measure, and he now sees why he ought not to have said he could not love him more. The shadow has fallen on his friend; the waters of affliction have gone over him, and he loves him more than ever in this his latest calamity. He feels that he ought not to have boasted of his love even when he felt most certain over uncertainty, because the Earl had been so marked a victim of "Time's tyranny." Even when the present was crowned by the Earl's marriage, he ought still to have doubted of the rest, and not made any such assertion. The lines have an appearance of Shakspeare's taking up the pen once more after he had looked upon the expression of his affection in Sonnets as finished when he had rejoiced over the marriage of Southampton. Now he has found a fresh cause for speaking of



that love, to which a stronger appeal has been made. The reason, as here stated, "love is a babe," sounds somewhat puerile, but it is the Poet's way of making light of himself; the Personal Sonnet being sent merely in attendance on the three dramatic ones, which were the messengers of importance, whilst this was only their servant. He does not seek to make the most of this occasion, and give adequate expression to such feelings as he must have had when Southampton was condemned to die. His friend in relation to the Countess, not himself, was his object. Thus, while he makes many of his Personal Sonnets into pretty patterns of ingenious thought, the others are all aglow with dramatic fire and feeling, only to be fully felt when we have learned who the speakers are, and what it is they are speaking about. Here his own warmth of heart is suppressed, to be put into cordial loving words for the forlorn and desolate wife of his dear friend.

It was one of Boaden's arguments, still repeated by the Irresponsible Echoes, that these Sonnets cannot have been addressed to the Earl of Southampton, because the Poet has not written in the direct personal way on the passing events of the Earl's life. He asks, with a taunt, how did the Poet feel upon the rash daring of Essex? Had he no soothing balm to shed upon the agonies of his trial, his sentence, his imprisonment, bitter as death? Could his eulogist find no call upon him for *secure congratulation* when James had restored him to liberty? "We should expect Shakspeare to tell him, in a masterly tone, that calamity was the nurse of great spirits; that his afflictions had been the source of his fame; that mankind never could have known the resources of his mighty mind, if he had not been summoned to endure disgrace, and to gaze undauntedly on death itself." Here, however, the critic has only copied from the example of Daniel. These are that Poet's sentiments expressed in the direct personal way. Shakspeare being a great Dramatic Poet, and a close personal friend of the Earl, wrote in his own way, or according to that friend's wish, expressed years before. It did not suit him, nor the plan of his work, to wail and weep personally. He wrote Dramatic Sonnets on these subjects instead of personal ones, and these contain the very matter that Boaden called for and could not read, because he was on the track of a wrong interpretation.

It suited all the persons concerned that he should use the Earl's name, and try to infuse into the Earl's nature something of his own impassioned majesty of soul, so that the friend might unconsciously feel strengthened in Shakspeare's strength. Thus, the Poet could instruct his friend, and stand over him as an invisible teacher, when the Earl only saw the writer of Sonnets labouring for his amusement; and to us he speaks over the shoulder of his friend. This was Shakspeare's dramatic way with all whom he has taught—all whom he yet teaches.

There are, however, some important allusions in this Sonnet! The reference to Time changing "DECREES OF KINGS" no doubt includes the change in that decree made when Southampton's sentence of death was commuted to a life-long imprisonment. Also, it is plainly apparent that the attempt of Essex to create a revolution, or some great change, is unmistakably meant in the line that speaks of Time diverting "strong minds to the course of altering things!" If so, it also shows something of the amazement with which Shakspeare had witnessed so futile a diversion on the part of a *strong*—probably he thought head-strong—mind to the course of altering things that were found to be firmly fixed. He looks upon the futile, foolish assault as a mental aberration, and one of the

accidents—not to say wonders—of Time! This line is jewelled with one of those personal and precious particulars with which the Sonnets abound, and for which the rest were written. They are too solid to be dissipated into that vapour of vague generalities which some of the subjective and idealizing interpreters so much delight in, but in which thin air the rich poetic life of Shakspeare could not have breathed.

Sonnet 107 will show us that, in spite of the dramatic method adopted by Shakspeare in writing of the Earl, *he did find a call for secure congratulation when James had restored the Earl to his liberty.*

*Shakspeare to Southampton on his release from prison.*

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,  
Can yet the lease of my true love control,  
Supposed as forfeit to a Confined Doom!  
The Mortal Moon hath her Eclipse endured,  
And the sad Augurs mock their own presage;  
Incertainties now crown themselves assured,  
And Peace proclaims Olives of endless age;  
Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,  
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes;  
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
When Tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.—(107)

There need be no mistake, doubt, or misgiving here! This Sonnet contains evidence beyond question—proof positive and unimpeachable—that the man addressed by Shakspeare in his *Personal* Sonnets has been condemned in the first instance to death, and afterwards to imprisonment for life; only escaping his doom through the death of the Queen; and that fact must cast reflections backward on other Sonnets.

It tells us that the Poet had been filled with fears for the fate of his friend, and that his instinct, as well as the presentiment of the world in general, had foreshadowed the worst for the Earl, as it dreamed on things to come. He sadly feared the life of his friend—the Poet's lease of his true love—was forfeited, if not to immediate death, to a confined doom, or a definite, a life-long imprisonment. Like Cleopatra, he, in common with others, had a "prophesying fear."

A triumphal case can be made out for this Sonnet, but it does not differ one whit from fifty others in its allusions to historic facts that are personal to Shakspeare's friends. Facts underlie the other Sonnets as well as this, although they may be indirectly and, so to say, anonymously expressed.

These Sonnets offer a perfect example of the Poet's covertly allusive method in figuring forth facts from life which were only intended to be rendered by suggestive hints for those who had the key. Our difficulty in apprehending his method is doubled where the treatment is dramatic. Those readers who will remain self-committed to imprisonment in a false theory, who WILL insist that Shakspeare must be the speaker all through, find the Sonnets to be full of facts that cannot be made personal to him, and so they seek to read the imagery as

non-literal. It was the Poet's work to render the facts of the secret drama in poetic figures, and it is our work to re-convert the figures into the original facts, otherwise there only remains a shadowy imagery which is but a thin impalpable reflection of the substance that is out of sight.

An eminent critic, who is also a Shakspearean editor, in writing to me on the subject of Sonnet 107, says: "I have always thought that Sonnet one of those from which those who, like yourself, attach high value to identifying the underlying facts, should be able to deduce solid inferences, and your explanation has a very probable air. On the other hand, the line about Peace—

'And Peace proclaims olives of endless age,'

appears to me rather too definite for the accession of James I., and to point to some single political event. A friend of mine kindly consulted the Astronomer Royal as to whether any conspicuous lunar eclipse had occurred about the time" (that is, of Elizabeth's death). This was entirely without success. Besides, the "eclipse" in Shakspeare's Sonnet is "mortal," not lunar:—

"The MORTAL moon hath *her* eclipse endured."

This luminary shone in the human or mortal sphere—was subject to mortality. Just in the same vein, he calls the eyes of Lucrece "*mortal stars*"; Valeria, in *Coriolanus*, is called the "moon of Rome"; and Cleopatra is spoken of by Antony as our "*terrene moon*." The Queen was the earthly or *mortal moon*. And as it was this that was eclipsed in death, there was no need to look for a lunar eclipse. In *Love's Labour's Lost* the King says of the Princess, who is possibly meant for Queen Elizabeth, "My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon;" she—that is Rosalind, whom I claim to be Stella, Lady Rich—"an attending star." In reply to this letter it may be pointed out that King James came to the English throne as the personification of Peace—peace in himself and his policy; peace "white-robed or white-liver'd;" peace at home and abroad; peace anyhow so that he might not be scared with the shadow of his ante-natal terror, a sword.

In his Essays Bacon tells us, "It was generally believed that after the death of Elizabeth England should come to utter confusion."<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth herself prognosticated that her death would be followed by the overthrow of the Protestant religion and ruin of the realm. As Froude says, "Sometimes in mockery she would tell the Council that she would come back after her death and see the Queen of Scots making their heads fly! She advised Hatton to buy no land and build no houses. When she was gone she said there would be no living for him in England."

A curious parallel to this 107th Sonnet on the death of Elizabeth may be found in a passage of contemporary prose. This is the first paragraph of the dedicatory epistle to King James, still to be seen at the beginning of our English Bibles:—

"For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not well to our Sion, that upon the setting of that bright occidental star, Queen Elizabeth, of most happy memory, some thick and palpable clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this land, that men should have been in doubt which way they were to walk, and that it should hardly be known who was to direct the unsettled State; the appearance of your Majesty, as of the sun in its strength, instantly

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, 1856, vol. i. p. 291.

dispelled those supposed and surmised mists, and gave unto all that were well affected exceeding cause of comfort ; especially when we beheld the Government established in your Highness and your hopeful seed by an undoubted Title, and this also accompanied with peace and tranquillity at home and abroad."

We look out of the same window on precisely the same prospect in both Sonnet and Dedication. Let me point a few of the parallels—

## DEDICATION.

" *It was the expectation of many.*"

" *Upon the setting of that bright Occidental Star.*"

" *The appearance of your Majesty, as of the sun in his strength.*"

" *That men should have been in doubt—that it should be hardly known.*"

" *Accompanied with peace and tranquillity at home and abroad.*"

## SONNET.

" *Mine own fears*" and " *the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come.*"

" *The Mortal Moon hath her eclipse endured.*"

" *Now with the drops of this most balmy time*" (*i. e. the dews of this new April dawn*).

" *Incertainties* now crown themselves assured."

" *And Peace proclaims olives of endless age.*"

It is impossible to have any reasonable doubt that the same spirit pervades the two ; that the same death is recorded ; the same fears are alluded to ; the same exultation is expressed ; the same peace identified. The Sonnet tells us in all plainness that our Poet had been filled with a "prophesying fear" for the fate of his friend, whose life was supposed to be forfeited to a "confined doom," or, as we say, "his days were numbered;" that the instinct of the world in general had foreboded the same, but that the Queen is now dead and all uncertainties are over ; those who augured the worst can afford to laugh at their own predictions. The new king smiles on our Poet's friend, and calls him forth from a prison to a palace to richly receive the "drops" or sheddings of his bounty ; and with this new reign and release there opens a new dawn of gladness and promised peace for the nation—

" *Peace proclaims olives of endless age.*"

Also Cranmer, in *Henry VIII.*, points out the *peace* for James I., which is one of the assured blessings of Elizabeth's reign, "Peace, Plenty, Love shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him."

Shakspeare himself gives us a hint, in his dramatic way, that he was present at the trial of the Earl, for he has, in a well-known speech of Othello's, adopted the manner and almost the words with which Bacon opened his address on that memorable occasion—"I speak not to simple men," said Bacon, but to "*prudent, grave, and wise* peers." And this is obviously echoed in Othello's "*Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors.*" And we may be sure that our Poet was one of the first to greet his friend at the open door of his prison with that welcoming smile of pure sunshine, all the sweeter for the sadness past, and press his hand with all his heart in the grasp. We may likewise be sure that Shakspeare had Southampton's good word in securing the patronage of James, and the privilege accorded by Letters Patent to his own theatrical company, directly after the King had reached London. In this Sonnet we have his written gratulation of the Earl on his release. It proves his sympathy with him in misfortune, and it proves also that he had been writing about the Earl. For we cannot suppose

“this poor rhyme” to mean this single Sonnet, but the series which this Sonnet concluded, and upon which it sheds its prison-penetrating light.

Professor Dowden has suggested jauntily that “*the moon is imagined as having endured her eclipse and come out none the less bright.*” But if only a passing illness of the Queen had been figured by an eclipse of the Mortal Moon, that would not account for Shakspeare’s lease of love being renewed, which was supposed to have been forfeited to a “confined doom.” *That would not account for death in the Sonnet*—Death subscribing to Shakspeare—nor for his defiant allusion to “Tyrants’ crests and tombs of brass.”

The lease of his love for Southampton was supposed to have been *forfeited* by a *definite doom*, i. e. by an imprisonment for life or an expected death; instead of which the Poet triumphs over death—“Death to me subscribes”—*because* the “Mortal Moon hath her eclipse endured.” Moreover, the recovery of the Queen from an illness after the rebellion would be bad for Shakspeare’s private friends, as proved by the death of Essex, the imprisonment of Southampton, the banishment of Herbert and Lady Rich.

Bacon, I think, had no doubt of this Sonnet being written at the time of the Queen’s death. Hence his borrowed description in the history of Henry VII. : “*The Queen hath endured a strange Eclipse.*”

The Queen now dead, the Mortal Moon thus eclipsed, had been frequently addressed as such by the name of Cynthia. Cynthia was one of Gloriana’s most popular poetical titles. An image of maiden purity to her Majesty, in which some of the Wits also saw the symbol of changefulness. Change of moon brings change of weather too! His love is refreshed by the drops of this most balmy time, the tears of joy; his lease of love is renewed for life. Those who had prophesied the worst can now laugh at their own fears and mock their unfulfilled predictions. The new King called the Earl from a prison to a seat of honour. As Wilson expresses it, “the Earl of Southampton, covered long with the ashes of great Essex his ruins, was sent for from the Tower, and the King looked upon him with a smiling countenance.” “Peace proclaims olives of endless age.” Our Poet evidently hopes that the Earl’s life will share in this new dawn of gladness and promised peace of the nation. He can exult over death this time. It is his turn to triumph now. And his friend shall find a monument in his verse which shall stand when the crests of tyrants have crumbled and their brass-mounted tombs have mouldered out of sight.

This Sonnet is a pregnant instance of Shakspeare’s twin-bearing thought, his inclusive way of writing, which could not have been appreciated hitherto, because the Sonnets have never been “made flesh” by means of the facts. The Sonnet carries double. It blends the Poet’s private feeling for his friend with the public fear for the death of the Queen. The “Augurs” had contemplated that event with mournful forebodings, and prophesied changes and disasters. The natural fact, of which this mortal “*eclipse*” is the applied figure, is illustrated in *King Lear*. “I am thinking, brother,” says Edmund, “*of a prediction I read the other day what should follow these eclipses.*” The prediction having been made by his father, Gloucester: “These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us,” &c. : (Act I. sc. ii.). As we shall see later on, the natural eclipses here referred to had occurred in the year 1598. The coming eclipse of the “Mortal Moon” was also the cause of presaging fears and possible disasters. But it has passed over happily for the nation as joyfully for the

Poet. Instead of his friend yielding to Death, Death—in the death of the Queen—"subscribes," that is, submits to the speaker.

There can be no doubt that the Sonnet chronicles a death, and hints at burial in a tyrant's tomb. The death refers to the eclipse of the "Mortal Moon," *i. e.* Cynthia, or Queen Elizabeth, and her death is a subject of rejoicing to Shakspeare. It is not necessary to say that he rejoiced personally, but he does so dramatically. Her demise was a cause of exultation on behalf of his late imprisoned friend who was set free in consequence of that death. He may have begun to "find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny" (*Lear*, I. ii.), which gave him hints for the wilful spirit of injustice and self-blinding royal rage dramatically portrayed and pursued to its bitter end in *Lear*. But it is enough for the Sonnet that death submits to the writer in favour of the friend. Had he summed up on the subject in a balance-sheet, as Chatterton did on the death of Lord Mayor Beckford, he would have been glad the Queen was dead, by the gain to and of Southampton. But I do think Shakspeare looked upon the Queen as a tyrant in all marriage matters, and not without cause. Her Majesty appears not only to have made up her mind to remain single herself, when getting on for sixty, but also to prevent her maids from being married. What the Queen's treatment was of her maids that wished to marry, we may gather from the letter of Mr. Fenton to John Harington,<sup>1</sup> in which, speaking of the Lady Mary Howard, he tells us that the Queen will not let her be married, saying, "I have made her my servant, and she will make herself my mistress," which she shall not. Moreover, she "must not entertain" her lover in any conversation, but shun his company, and be careful how she attires her person, not to attract my Lord the Earl. The story runs that the Lady Mary had a gorgeous velvet dress, sprinkled with gold and pearl. The Queen thought it richer than her own. One day she sent privately for the dress, put it on, and appeared wearing it before her ladies-in-waiting. It was too short for her Majesty, and looked exceedingly unsuited to her. She asked the ladies how they liked her new-fangled dress, and they had to get out of their difficulty as best they could. Then she asked Lady Mary if she did not think it was too short and unbecoming. The poor girl agreed with her Majesty that it was. Whereupon the Queen said if it was too short for her, it was too fine for the owner, and the dress was accordingly put out of sight. Sir J. Harington relates how the Queen, when in a pleasant mood, would ask the ladies around her chamber if they loved to think of marriage. The wisely-wary ones would discreetly conceal their liking in the matter. The simple ones would unwittingly rise at the bait, and were caught and cruelly dangling on the hook the moment after, at which her Majesty enjoyed fine sport. We might cite other instances in which the attendants congratulated themselves in the words of Mr. John Stanhope, who, in writing to Lord Talbot<sup>2</sup> on the subject of Essex's marriage, and the Queen's consequent fury, says, "God be thanked, she does not strike all she threatens!" Mr. Fenton tells us that her Majesty "chides in small matters, in such wise as to make these fair maids often cry and bewail in piteous sort." The beautiful Mrs. Bridges, the lady at Court with whom the Earl of Essex was said to be in love, is reported to have felt the weight of her Majesty's displeasure, not only in words of anger, but in double-

<sup>1</sup> Harington's *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Lady's Illustrations*, 1838, ii. 422.

fisted blows. Elizabeth Vernon appears to have been driven nearly to the verge of madness, and a good deal of Southampton's trouble arose from the Queen's persistent opposition to their marriage. Some recent writers seem to think that there ought to have been neither marrying nor giving in marriage, if such was her Majesty's pleasure. Shakspeare did not think so; he looked on life in a more natural light. It was his most cherished wish to get the Earl married, and the Queen had been implacable in thwarting it; this made them take opposite sides. I like to find the Poet standing by the side of his friend, even though he speaks bitterly of the Queen as a "heretic"; does not express one word of sorrow when the "Mortal Moon" suffers the final eclipse of death, and lets fly his last arrow in the air over the old Abbey where the royal tyrants lie low—"Bloody Mary," for instance, was buried there!—with a twang on the bow-string resonantly vengeful and defiant.

We know that the Poet was publicly reproached for his silence on the death of the Queen. In Chettle's *England's Mourning Garment* (1603) he is taken to task under the name of "Melicert."

"Nor doth the silver-tonged Melicert  
Drop from his honied Muse one sable teare  
To mourn her death that graced his desert,  
And to his laies opened her royall eare.  
Shepherd, remember our Elizabeth,  
And sing her rape done by that Tarquin, Death."

But the shepherd had his own private reasons for being deaf and dumb; he remembered another Elizabeth.

The 107th I take to be the last of the Southampton Sonnets, as they have come to us. Shakspeare's warfare with Time and Fortune on his friend's behalf is ended; the victory is won, he has found peace at last. There is a final farewell touch in the concluding iteration of the immortality so often promised. The Earl shall have a monument in the Sonnets now finished, when the Abbey tombs have crumbled into dust. When he wrote these last lines, the Poet could not have contemplated leaving the monument without a name. Hitherto, however, his friend has only found an undistinguishable tomb.

To summarize the whole matter in the briefest manner: there are certain key Sonnets on which the truth of my total interpretation of the Southampton series may be staked, and I am willing to stake that interpretation on the 16th Sonnet being written by Shakspeare's "Pupil Pen"; on the 26th being sent to the "lord of his love," in whose service he wrought privately before he dedicated to him in print; on the 53rd referring to that friend as the living figure from which he painted his Adonis; on the rival poet of Sonnet 86 being Marlowe, the spiritualist or master of the Black Arts, and the author of Dr. Faustus; on Sonnet 83 identifying the Poet's debt to Southampton; on Sonnet 38 showing that the friend supplied his own subjects for Dramatic Sonnets; on the evidence that some of these Sonnets are spoken by a person who cannot be the writer of them; on the proof that in many of them it is a woman who is addressed; that the game of "Barley-break" shows one of the speakers to be a woman; on Sonnets 123, 124, and 125 being spoken in prison by one who was the "Child of State," one who had borne the Canopy of State, one who belonged to the Court circle, a noble of the military fashion ("our Fashion"), who had been made the victim in State matters of a "Suborned Informer"; and lastly on

Shakspeare's personal address (Sonnet 107) to this same Prisoner when he was set free from a "Confined Doom" on the death of Queen Elizabeth.

FRAGMENT OF A PERSONAL SONNET.

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power  
 Doth hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle-hour ;  
 Who hast by waning grown, and therein showest  
 Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self growest !  
 If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,  
 As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,  
 She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill  
 May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill :  
 Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure !  
 She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure :  
 Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,  
 And her quietus is to render thee.—(126<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> This is not a complete Sonnet, but an unfinished fragment belonging to the earlier time, and containing an idea that was worked up elsewhere. Compare Sonnets 11 and 104. It serves, however, to mark off the Southampton series from the latter Sonnets, although at the same time it tends to confuse the "Sweet Boy" of that earlier time with another sweet youth of a later period, and to confound Henry Wriothesley with Master Will. Herbert.



# SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS

WRITTEN VICARIOUSLY FOR

MASTER WILL HERBERT.

1599.



## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Composed for Master Will. Herbert.

*In the old age black was not counted fair,  
Or if it were, it bore not Beauty's name;  
But now is black Beauty's successive heir,  
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:  
For since each hand hath put on Nature's  
power,  
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,  
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace:  
Therefore my Mistress' eyes are raven black,  
Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem  
At such, who, not born fair, no beauty lack,  
Slandering creation with a false esteem:  
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,  
That every tongue says, beauty should look  
so!* (127)

*How oft when thou, my Music, music playest  
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds  
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently  
swayest  
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,  
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap  
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,  
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest  
reap,  
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!  
To be so tickled, they would change their state  
And situation with those dancing chips,  
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,  
Making dead wood more blest than living lips:  
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,  
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.* (128)

*Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;  
Enjoy'd no sooner, but despised straight;  
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,  
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;  
Mad, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
A bliss in proof,—and proved, a very woe;  
Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream:  
All this the world well knows; yet none  
knows well  
To shun the heaven that leads men to this  
hell.* (129)

*My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my Mistress reeks:  
I love to hear her speak,—yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go,—  
My Mistress, when she walks, treads on the  
ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my Love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.* (130)

*Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,  
As those whose beauties proudly make them  
cruel:  
For well thou know'st, to my dear-doting heart  
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel!  
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,  
Thy face hath not the power to make love  
groan;  
To say they err, I dare not be so bold,  
Altho' I swear it to myself alone:  
And, to be sure that is not false I swear,  
A thousand groans—but thinking on thy face—  
On one another's neck, do witness bear  
Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place!  
In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,  
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.* (131)

*Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,  
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,  
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,  
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain:  
And truly not the morning sun of heaven  
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,  
Nor that full Star that ushers in the Even  
Doth half that glory to the sober west,  
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:  
Oh, let it then as well bescem thy heart  
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee  
grace,  
And suit thy pity like in every part!  
Then will I swear Beauty herself is black,  
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.* (132)

*Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will!  
And Will to boot, and Will in overplus:  
More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
To thy sweet Will making addition thus:  
Will thou whose Will is large and spacious,  
Not once vouchsafe to hide my "Will" in  
thine?*

*Shall Will in others seem right gracious,  
And in my "Will" no fair acceptance shine?  
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,  
And in abundance addeth to his store;  
So thou being RICH in Will, add to thy Will  
One "Will" of mine, to make thy large Will  
more:*

*Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;  
Think all but one, and me in that one  
"WILL."<sup>1</sup> (135)*

*If thy soul check thee that I come so near,  
Succar to thy blind soul that I was thy "Will";  
And Will, thy soul knows, is admitted there!  
Thus far, for love, my lovesuit, Sweet, fulfil:  
Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love,  
Ay, fill it full with Wills, and my "Will"  
one:*

*In things of great receipt with ease we prove  
Among a number one is reckoned none:  
Then in the number let me pass untold,  
Though in thy store's account I one must be,  
For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold  
That nothing me, a something, Sweet! to thee:  
Make but my name thy love, and love that  
still,  
And then thou lov'st me, for my name is  
"Will." (136)*

*Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine  
eyes,*

*They that behold, and see not what they see?  
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,  
Yet what the best is, take the worst to be;  
If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,  
Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,  
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,  
Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?  
Why should my heart think that a several plot,  
Which my heart knows the wide world's com-  
mon place?*

*Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,  
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?  
In things right true my heart and eyes have  
erred,  
And to this false plague are they now trans-  
ferred. (137)*

*When my Love swears that she is made of  
truth,*

*I do believe her, though I know she lies;  
That she might think me some untutored youth,  
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties!  
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
Although she knows my days are past the best,  
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;  
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:  
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
And age in love loves not to have years told:  
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flatter be.<sup>2</sup> (138)*

<sup>1</sup> It is incomprehensible to me that any Shakspearean student should suppose there are more than two "Wills" in this antithetical Sonnet—the "Will" as name of the speaker and the Will of the lady addressed. The second line only indicates the abundance and overplus of the lady's capacity of Will (not one or rather two more "Wills" by name), hence the context—

*"More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
To thy sweet will (not Wills) making addition thus."*

Professor Dowden has changed the 13th line, and prints it—

*"Let no unkind 'No' fair beseechers kill!"*

But this is to set up a plea on behalf of any number of rivals, and then to make the speaker ask that they may be mistaken for HIM, if they only bespeak her *fairly*. "Fair" is Shakspearean for to "make fair," which shows the antithesis to "unkind" or unnatural. I read the last two lines as meaning, "let neither of this class of beseechers conquer or kill, but think the whole of your suitors one, and that one me." He pleads for himself alone, and not on behalf of her lovers in general.

<sup>2</sup> "When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
I do believe her though I know she lies,  
That she might think me some untutored youth,  
Unskilful in the world's false forgeries:  
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
Although I know my years be past the best,  
I smilingly credit her false-speaking tongue,  
Out-facing faults in love with love's ill rest:"

Oh, call me not to justify the wrong,  
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;  
Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy  
tongue;

Use power with power, and slay me not by art :  
Trill me thou lov'st elsewhere ; but in my sight,  
Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside !  
What need'st thou wound with cunning, when  
thy might

Is more than my o'erexpressed defence can 'bid : ?  
Let me excuse thee : ah ! my Love will know  
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,  
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,  
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries ;  
Yet do not so ; but since I am near slain,  
Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.  
(139)

Be wise as thou art cruel ! do not press  
My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain ;  
Lest Sorrow lend me words, and words express  
The manner of my pity-wanting pain :  
If I might teach thee wit, better it were,  
Though not to love, yet, Love, to tell me so ;  
As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,  
No news but health from their Physicians know ;  
For if I should despair, I should grow mad,  
And in my madness might speak ill of thee :  
Now this ill-vestresting world is grown so bad,  
Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be :

That I may not be so, nor thou belied,  
Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud  
heart go wide.  
(140)

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,  
For they in thee a thousand errors note ;  
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,  
Who in despite of view is pleased to dote :  
Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune  
delighted ;

Nor tender feeling, to base touches prone,  
Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited  
To any sensual feast with thee alone :  
But my five wits, nor my five senses can  
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,  
Who leaves unsway'd the likeness of a man,  
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be :  
Only my plague thus far I count my gain,  
That she that makes me sin, awards me pain.  
(141)

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,  
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving :  
Oh, but with mine compare thou thine own state,  
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving ;

Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,  
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments,  
And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine ;  
Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents :  
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those  
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee :<sup>1</sup>  
Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows,  
Thy pity may deserve to pitied be :  
If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,  
By self-example may'st thou be denied. (142)

Lo ! as a careful housewife runs to catch  
One of her feathered creatures broke away,  
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift despatch  
In pursuit of the thing she would have slay,  
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chace,  
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent  
To follow that which flies before her face,  
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent ;  
So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,  
Whilst I, thy babe, chase thee afar behind :  
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,  
And play the Mother's part, kiss me, be kind !  
So will I pray that thou may'st have thy  
"WILL,"  
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still.  
(143)

Bring your slave, what should I do but tend  
Upon the hours and times of your desire ?  
I have no precious time at all to spend,  
Nor services to do, till you require !  
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,  
Whilst I, my Sovereign, watch the clock for  
you,  
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour  
When you have bid your Servant once adieu :  
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought  
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,  
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought  
Save, where you are how happy you make those :  
So true a fool is love that, in your "WILL,"  
Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.  
(144)

That god forbid that made me first your slave,  
I should in thought control your times of plea-  
sure ;  
Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,  
Being your vassal bound to slay your leisure !  
O let me suffer, being at your beck,  
The imprisoned absence of your liberty :  
And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each  
check  
Without accusing you of injury !

But wherefore says my Love that she is young ?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old ?  
Oh, love's best habit is a soothing tongue,  
And age in love loves not to have years told :  
Therefore I'll lie with love, and love with me,  
Since that our faults in love thus smothered be."

<sup>1</sup> "Be it lawful, I take up what's cast away."—*Lear*, I. i.

*Be where you list, your charter is so strong  
That you yourself may privilege your time;  
Do what you will; to you it doth belong  
Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime!*

*I am to wait, though waiting so be hell;  
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.*

(58)

*Those lips that Love's own hand did make,  
Breathed forth the sound that said "I hate,"  
To me that languished for her sake:  
But when she saw my woful state,  
Straight in her heart did mercy come,  
Chiding that tongue, that ever sweet  
Was used in giving gentle doom;  
And taught it thus anew to greet;  
"I hate" she altered with an end,  
That followed it as gentle day  
Doth follow night, who like a fiend  
From heaven to hell is flown away.—*

*"I hate" from hate away she threw,  
And saved my life, saying—"not you!"*

(145)

*Poor Soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
Foiled<sup>1</sup> by these rebel powers that thee array,  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?  
Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
Within be fed, without be rich no more:  
So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on  
men,  
And, Death once dead, there's no more dying  
then.*

(146)

<sup>1</sup> The following note by Dr. C. M. Ingleby, in *Shakspeare: the Man and the Book*, may serve to explain the earlier reading of this line proposed by me—

"Mr. Gerald Massey, in his big book on Shakspeare's Sonnets, made one step in the right direction, but unhappily made another in a wrong direction. He saw far more than Mr. Dyce. It was plain to him that the first *array* was not the verb used in that Sonnet. But having reached this conclusion, he spoiled all by attempting to impose the second *array* on the corrupt line. This he did by retaining the three first words, which every critic had discarded as a reduplicative misprint, and the following is the text adopted by him—

'Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,—  
My sinful earth these rebel powers array.'

Thus making the second line an impertinent parenthesis, and stultifying the demonstrative pronoun (these) by rejecting the only words which show who the rebel powers are. What rebel powers? asks the reader; and here no answer is given in the text or by the critic. Besides this objection, every reader of taste must feel that the speaker, having addressed his (or her) soul in the first line, preparatory to asking her why she pines and starves within her fading mansion, would not have arrested the course of his (or her) thought by an interpolation having no connection, grammatical or substantive, with the rest of the Sonnet. For my part, had the Sonnet thus appeared in Thorpe's 4to, I should have marked it with an *obelus*; still less can I allow such writing to be imposed upon Shakspeare, when his publisher has not given it the sanction of print. While thus condemning Mr. Massey's reconstruction, I honour him for having had one true insight. He saw that the maintenance and adornment of the soul's 'fading mansion' is not the direct work of the 'rebel powers,' but of the soul herself. At the same time, I must add, that his original insight seems to have suffered from his not perceiving that the verb *array* in that place cannot be an equivocate."

Dr. Ingleby did not quite apprehend my meaning, but there is no need now for further defence or explanation, as I give up the emendation—whilst retaining my sense of the word "*array*," which was endorsed by him.

Sidney's eighth Sonnet in *Sidera*, first printed in 1598, determines the true lection. Sidney wrote—

"If I could think how these my thoughts to leave,  
Or thinking still, my thoughts might have good end;  
If *rebel sense* would Reason's law receive,  
Or *reason foyled* would not in vain contend."

Here the "*rebel sense*" presents the original of the "*rebel powers*," and "*reason foyled*" suggests the right word at last. I trust that this interpretation may make the second "step in the right direction"? Shakspeare's Sonnets, especially these latter ones, could neither have been written nor read without the aid of Sidney's.

*My love is as a fever longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease;  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please :  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I, desperate now, approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except :  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
At random from the truth vainly express'd :  
For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee  
bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.* (147)

*Oh me ! what eyes hath love put in my head,  
Which have no correspondance with true sight !  
Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,  
That censures falsely what they see aright !  
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,  
What means the world to say it is not so !  
If it be not, then love doth well denote  
Love's eye is not so true as all men's : no,  
How can it ! Oh, how can Love's eye be true,  
That is so vex'd with watching and with tears !  
No marvel then though I mistake my view ;  
The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears :  
Oh, cunning Love ! with tears thou keep'st me  
blind,  
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should  
find.* (148)

*Cans't thou, O cruel ! say I love thee not,  
When I against myself with thee partake ?  
Do I not think on thee when I forgot  
Am of myself, all tyrant for thy sake ?  
Who hatcheth thee that I do call thy friend ?  
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon ?  
Nay, if thou lovest on me, do I not spend  
Revenge upon myself with present moan ?  
What merit do I in myself respect,  
That is so proud thy service to despise,  
When all my best doth worship thy defect,  
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes ?  
But Love, hate on, for now I know thy  
mind ;  
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am  
blind.* (149)

*Oh, from what power hast thou this powerful  
might,  
With insufficiency my heart to sway ?  
To make me give the lie to my true sight,  
And swear that brightness doth not grace the  
day ?  
Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,  
That in the very refuse of thy deeds  
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,  
That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds ?*

*Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,  
The more I hear and see just cause of hate ?  
Oh, though I love what others do abhor,  
With others thou should'st not abhor my state ;  
If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
More worthy I to be beloved of thee.* (150)

*Love is too young to know what conscience is ;  
Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love ?  
Then, gentle cheat-er, urge not my amiss,  
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove :  
For thou betraying me, I do betray  
My noblest part to my gross body's treason ;  
My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love ; flesh stays no further reason ;  
But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee  
As his triumphant prize : Proud of this pride,  
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,  
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side,  
No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her—love, for whose dear love I rise and  
fall.* (151)

*In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,  
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love  
swearing,  
In act thy bed-vow broke and new faith torn  
In vowing new hate after new love bearing :  
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,  
When I break twenty ? I am perjured most ;  
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,  
And all my honest faith in thee is lost :  
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kind-  
ness,  
Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy ;  
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,  
Or made them swear against the thing they see ;  
For I have sworn thee fair ; more perjured I,  
To swear, against the truth, so foul a lie.* (152)

*Cupid laid by his brand, and fell asleep :  
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,  
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep  
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground ;  
Which borrowed from his holy fire of love  
A dawless lively heat, still to endure,  
And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove  
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure :  
But at my Mistress' eye Love's brand new-fired,  
The boy for trials needs would touch my breast ;  
I, sick withal, the help of bath desired,  
And thither hid, a sad distemper'd guest,  
But found no cur : the bath for my help lies  
Where Cupid got new fire,—my mistress'  
eyes.* (153)

*The little love-god, lying once asleep,  
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,  
Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to  
keep  
Came tripping by ; but in her maiden hand*

*The fairest votary took up that fire,  
Which many leasions of true hearts had warmed,  
And so the General of hot desire  
Was, sleeping, by a virgin hand disarmed;  
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,  
Which from love's fire took heat perpetual,*

*Growing a bath and healthful remedy  
For men diseased; but I, my Mistress' thrall,  
Came there for cure, and this by that I  
prove,  
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.*  
(154)

According to the testimony of Francis Meres, the "Sugred Sonnets" of Shakspeare were already extant, and known to be circulating amongst certain of the Poet's "Private Friends" in the year 1598. These were also known to be love-sonnets; they are pointed to by Meres in proof of the author's excellence in this particular kind of poetry.

Up to that time the one public patron and sole private friend to whom the Poet dedicated his poetry and his "love without end" had been Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. It was to him that Shakspeare offered his affection, and acknowledged his indebtedness, when he proclaimed that he had work in hand devoted and pre-dedicated to his service. The Sonnets are termed the "barren tender of a poet's debt"; which debt had been publicly contracted or acknowledged in his dedication to *Lucrece*. The debt was paid, and Shakspeare's promise fulfilled in those Sonnets that were written for the man, the patron, the private friend, who had first made the "dumb to sing aloud," or publicly aloft, and thus elevated his "rude ignorance" on a level with contemporary learning. That was the Earl of Southampton, and consequently the Sonnets renowned by Meres in 1598 are the Sonnets written for and devoted to Henry Wriothesley. Roughly reckoned, then, the first one hundred and twenty-six are *Shakspeare's Southampton Sonnets*.

The series was begun with the Argument for Marriage. It was continued in the "Sugred Sonnets," devoted to Southampton's love. For these the friend furnished his own "Sweet Arguments," which the Poet set forth in a dramatic guise that afterwards became a disguise. Hence the force of his plea,

"Yet be most proud of that which I compile,  
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee"!—Sonnet 78.

When his friend was married at last in the autumn of 1598, and the tiffs and troubles of that long and trying courting-time were all over, Shakspeare had attained the primary purpose and ultimate object in writing his Sonnets for Southampton. Then his heart could be at ease on the subject that had been a source of sore anxiety to him for many years. Consequently the Southampton Sonnets ceased for the time being, and very nearly altogether.

In that same year (1598) young Master Will Herbert first came to live in London. He had been in town on a visit to the Sidneys in the previous year, as we learn from Rowland White's letter, dated April 3, 1597, in which he mentions "my Lord Herbert's coming into the garden" of the Sidneys' house, but it was not until the next year<sup>1</sup> that he came to live in London. We likewise learn from the same letters, that Herbert first went to Court in the year 1599, when the kindly old gossip hopes that he will play his cards well and prove himself to be a great man there. White reports that Lord Herbert is greatly beloved by every one. He is highly favoured by the Queen, who is very gracious to the young lord. He was of sufficient mark and likelihood in 1599

<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 35.



for White to wish that Sir Robert Sidney might be lucky enough to find in him "a ladder to go up to that honour" White holds his master to be so worthy of. Still the young lord is indifferent to the courtier's glory, much to White's regret. He is not sufficiently obsequious; does not care to climb the steep and slippery ascent up which so many crawl, or become the petted lap-dog of Majesty, and is inclined to make way for others who pursue the matter with more persistency; he does not follow the business with the necessary care and caution. We find that "My Lord Herbert is much blamed for his cold and weak manner of pursuing *her Majesty's favour, having so good steps to lead him unto it.*" Evidently his heart as a courtier is elsewhere than with her Majesty. August 18, 1599, White says, "My Lord Herbert hath been from Court these seven days in London, swaggering it amongst the men of war, and viewing the matter of the musters." There had been a sudden bruit of the Spaniards coming; orders were given for a camp to be raised and ships got ready in all haste. A ruse probably of Cecil's, who was already on the pounce, alertly waiting for Essex to take his last false and fatal step.

On the 8th of September in the same year, White says—"My Lord Herbert is a continual courtier, but *doth not follow his business with that care as is fit; he is too cold a courtier in a matter of such greatness.*" He is charged with a want of spirit and courage, and is said to be a "*melancholy young man.*" Also, "it is muttered that young *Sir Henry Carey stands to be a Favourite,*" and White appears to be jealous of "young Carey" who *follows it—the prize of favourites—*"with more care and boldness." White does not account for the young lord's listlessness as a courtier, his indifference to the Royal caresses, nor for his melancholy as a man. It is not that he wants a wife, for, when the subject of his marriage is mooted, White says, "I don't find any disposition in this gallant young lord to marry." He has a continual pain in the head, for which he finds no relief except in smoking tobacco. And White tells his correspondent that a more acceptable present than tobacco could not be made to the young lord.

More than once White hints that the young lord is *greatly in want of advice.* He is a very gallant gentleman, but he needs such a friend as Sir Robert Sidney to be near him. My immediate object, however, is to show from White's Letters, that in the year 1599 William Herbert was received at Court by her Majesty in the most friendly manner, and might have been *favourite* "an he would." Next, to point out that during the two years following a great change took place in the Queen's personal regards toward him. I doubt not there is more evidence extant than I have been able to collect, but some lines by John Davies will suffice for my purpose. In his ode of rejoicing upon the accession of James to the English throne, Davies congratulates the Earl of Pembroke, amongst others, upon the change that had then taken place, and his prospect of a more inviting future at Court. He says—

"Pembroke to Court, to which thou wert made strange,  
Go! do thine homage to thy Sovereign:  
Weep and rejoice for this sad-joyful change,  
Then weep for joy: thou needst not tears to feign,  
Sith late thine eyes did nought else entertain."

We see by this that the Earl had, before the death of Elizabeth, been looked on coldly at Court; that he had kept or been kept from it, and suffered some bitterness of feeling which had filled his eyes with tears. My explanation is,

that the estrangement arose from his being the personal friend of Essex and Southampton, and the banished Lady Rich. We may learn how suspiciously the Queen had eyed any friend of theirs after the trial of Essex, by a letter of Cecil's to Winwood,<sup>1</sup> wherein he speaks of Sir Henry Danvers, whom Lord Mountjoy had employed to bring the report of his success in Ireland as a good opportunity to help him to kiss her Majesty's hands: "*in whose good opinion he hath been a good while suspended, being known to be more devoted to the late Earl than became him!*" We may also see, by a letter from the Earl of Nottingham to Lord Mountjoy, to be quoted later, how closely and jealously the Queen was accustomed to watch the bearing of those for whom the Lady Rich had superior charms, and to whom her eyes were lodestars. Late in the year 1599 Lady Rich had left the Court, as is reported, on account of her character, never to recover her lost place in the Queen's favour whilst Elizabeth lived; and in the September of this year "My Lord Mountjoy, with the Lord Herbert and Sir Charles Danvers, have been at Wanstead these four days." Again, in the May of the next year we find that Herbert was paying a visit of three days' length to Lady Rich and Lady Southampton, in company with the same trusty friend of Southampton, who laid down his life for him and Essex on Tower hill. In a letter dated May 26th, 1600, White says—

"This morning (Monday) my Lord Herbert and Sir Charles Danvers have taken water and gone to see my Lady Rich and Lady Southampton, almost as far as Gravesend; it will be Thursday ere they return." This plainly enough strikes the trail of my subject: it shows the intimacy of the persons with whom my theory is concerned, and it gives a possible clue to the meaning which Rowland White's letters only hint at darkly. Herbert was "greatly in need of advice," questionless because of the friendships he cultivated and the company he kept—these being most displeasing in her Majesty's sight, for the Earl of Essex and his sister, Lady Rich, were now both out of favour; the Essex fortunes were falling, their star was fading, and the dark end was coming fast. We may judge how her Majesty would resent this wandering away of Lord Herbert in such a pursuit by another letter of Rowland White's, dated December 28th, 1602, in which he speaks of something that concerns the fortunes of the Sidney family, and says—"The storm continues now and then; but *all depends upon my Lady Rich's being or not being amongst you.*" Evidently hers was at that time a perilous acquaintanceship. The Earl of Southampton and his Countess were also in the deepest shadow of her Majesty's displeasure.

The historical evidence here cited will serve to prove that Herbert was one of the Essex group of Shakspeare's "Private Friends" amongst whom the Sonnets circulated in 1599—1600.

It will not be necessary for me to enter much into detail to prove that this young nobleman became a personal friend of Shakspeare. The advocates of the theory that Herbert was the "Only Begetter" of the Sonnets, have laboured utterly in vain if they failed to show thus much! Whilst those who hold that Herbert was the sole begetter of the Sonnets cannot, for the time being, become my opponents, whilst I show how he was *one of the begetters*. Their great mistake was made through supposing that Thorpe's dedication to "Master W. H." covered the whole ground, whereas it was only the tail-piece which they

<sup>1</sup> *Winwood's Memorials*, vol. i. p. 370.

laid hold of first, and so got the matter hind-before. It is a fact of considerable significance, that the first play presented to King James in England was performed by Shakspeare's company in Herbert's house at Wilton. Also the emphasis of the players' words bears far more on a private friendship than upon any facts that have been made public; they carry us behind the scenes. In their dedication to the first folio they tell their readers that the Earl of Pembroke had *prosecuted the Poet with so much favour that they venture to hope for the same indulgence towards the works as was shown to the parent of them.* This personal familiarity has had no identification for us in fact, and the players' meaning has never been recognizably localized.

We might fairly enough assume that these Latter Sonnets were in some way an issue of the earlier ones; or that the same friends and acquaintances are bound up by a personal link of connection in the Book as they were in life and in their relation to the Poet. However diverse in subject they may be, we cannot but infer that there is some meeting-place of the same persons from the fact that the Sonnets come to us as Shakspeare's, undoubtedly gathered up by one of the friends who was himself the connecting link. Then the way in which they are mixed most curiously illustrates the intimacy of the persons, and the interchange of the Sonnets. Thus we find three of Elizabeth Vernon's in company with those addressed to the other lady, and three of the "*dark*" lady's mixed up with Elizabeth Vernon's. Also the two Sonnets which were printed in the *L'assionate Pilgrim* were single Sonnets belonging to two separate stories, and yet they come into print together, which has a look of their having met in the hands of one and the same person.

The testimony of character, too, is very conclusive. Even with the personal interpretation, it has been taken for granted that the lady whom Shakspeare is imagined to have loved so madly in these Latter Sonnets was one with the Mistress of whom the friend was supposed to have robbed the Poet in the earlier ones, and the probability that the lady is the same is vastly increased by the present reading. The lady of whom Elizabeth Vernon is jealous and afraid possesses the closest natural affinity to the Circe of the Latter Sonnets. We have only to allow for the deeper hues into which such a character rapidly darkens for the likeness to be dramatically perfect. In Sonnets 40 and 41 she is the wanton wooer of another woman's lover, the "*Lascivious Grace*," with such power in transforming evil into an appearance of good that *all ill shows well* in her; and in Sonnet 150 there is the same "*becoming of things ill*." In the Jealousy Sonnets her "*foul pride*," her "*steel bosom*," and her "*cruel eye*" are dwelt upon by one victim of her iron rule and imperious will. The same character, the precise characteristics, are reproduced here; there is the same commanding motion of the peculiar eyes, the same cruel pride in their power to enthral, the same authoritative Warrant of skill; the same subject for that public gossip which has grown bolder with her name, as her reputation has become worse. Matters are now more serious, and the language has grown more emphatic, but the lady is one with the "*woman coloured ill*," in Sonnet 144, and still like that "*lascivious Grace*," who was known as Lady Rich.

As we have seen, the Southampton Sonnets almost ceased with the Earl's marriage in 1598—their chief end and aim being then accomplished. In the year 1598, William Herbert had come to live in London, and, possibly through his intimacy with Lord Southampton, had met with Shakspeare, and soon

acquired some personal influence over our Poet. The time was most opportune. The young Lord could not take the warm place in his heart which had been consecrated to Southampton; he did not call forth any such fragrance of affection as breathes through the Sonnets devoted to the earlier, dearer friend of Shakspeare. But he had winning ways, was a lover of poets, and something of a poet himself. As a friend of Southampton and of Lady Rich, he would be early acquainted with the "Sugred Sonnets" of the Southampton series, and very naturally desirous of having verses written by so great a poet for himself. The conclusion of the whole matter now sought to be established is that this last series of the Sonnets was written for William Herbert in the year 1599.

All the evidence points to that year as the date of production. Two of the Sonnets were printed in 1599, and I doubt whether Shakspeare ever wrote another Sonnet of the latter series after that printing of his two Sonnets in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, which implies a violation of trust. We learn from Heywood's *Apology for Actors*, that Shakspeare was much offended with the publisher, who, "altogether unknown to him, presumed to make bold with his name." He would likewise be annoyed with the person who had played into the pirate's hands, and "cared not what he put into the press."

"Youth, you have done me much ungentleness to show the letter that I writ to you!" So says Phœbe in *As You Like It*. And when that play was written the two Sonnets had just been put into print, without Shakspeare's permission, but not without any sign of his resentment.

The motive or conceit of Sonnet 128 was borrowed from Ben Jonson's play, *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was not produced until the year 1599.

"Fast. You see the subject of her sweet fingers there (*a riol de gamba*). Oh, she tickles it so, that she makes it laugh most divinely. I'll tell you a good jest now, and yourself shall say it's a good one; I have wished myself to be that instrument, I think, a thousand times."—Act III. scene iii.

The Sonnet is addressed to the lady playing on the virginal. She is called "my Music" by the speaker, who says how he envies the "jacks" that leap to kiss her hand.

"Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,

(a RICH harvest!)

At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!  
To be so tickled, they would change their state  
And situation with those dancing chips,  
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,  
Making dead wood more blest than living lips."

We may safely conclude, from internal evidence and external data, that the present group was written after those Sonnets which are devoted to the courtship of Southampton; and all the dates coincide in pointing to the year 1599. The comparative test will also show that others belong to the time of, or preceded, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado*, and *As You Like It*.

My earlier argument was, that these latter Sonnets were composed by Shakspeare at the suggestion of young Will Herbert upon his infatuation for the siren Lady Rich. Such things have been as that of a youth falling fanatically in love with a woman far older than himself, and it was no answer to tell me that history had kept no record of William Herbert's passion for Lady Rich. Neither does history furnish any account of Shakspeare's keeping a mistress,

whether to himself or in common with Lord Herbert. In either case, the data have to be derived from the Sonnets. It was said that the lady was old enough to be Herbert's mother. But that was only what I had pointed out as being the theme of Sonnet 143. It is true that the glosses of her youth were gone; the flower had shed its freshest perfume; those that once "kneeled to the rose-bud" might "stop their noses" against the rose over-blown. But, her magic in working on the heart, and flinging a glamour over the eyes of a youth, must have attained its supremest subtlety. She had a keen wit; was sprightly in conversation, and could say things full of salt and sparkle as a wave of the sea. The eyes, of course, have their charm; they are the windows from whence looks a spirit wonderful in wit and wantonness, and in its ripest age of power; the potent spirit that by word or beck could bind a youngster fast in strong, invisible toils. Her natural simplicities of the early time were now craftily turned into conscious art. Practice had made her perfect in the use of those conquering eyes when they took aim with their deadly level in the dark. She was mistress of a combination of forces most fatal to a young and fervent admirer; would know well how to feed his flame, and turn her own years into a maturer sexual charm for his youth.

But it has now to be confessed that in my earlier delineation Stella was unwarrantably made the OBJECT of the Latter Sonnets and of their Speaker. It is enough for me to show *that* she was, *how* she was, and *why* she was the *subject* of them, and their allusiveness to her character, complexion, and name.

In describing his poem as a Passion in Sonnet 20 Shakspeare is careful to make the distinction betwixt Object and Subject, which the personal theorists are most anxious to obliterate. The Dark Lady of dark character and dark deeds is the subject of the Latter Sonnets, but I now see that she need not be considered the Object of them. It is impossible that any such wooing should have availed any man for either love or lust. It could not have served a lover's purpose for serious use.

The passion is capable of any extravagance of speech to gain its ends, and yet the very opposite language is made use of; such as could not have furthered the speaker's supposed aims. Persons who serenade a lady under the circumstances implied do not approach her windows with a band of vulgar "rough music." They do not remind her that she has broken her marriage vows, decry her charms, laugh at her age and her lies to conceal it, tell her that her face is foul, and on the whole she is as dark as night and as black as hell, with the view or expectation of gaining admission.

The Sonnets are written on a false love, but they are not even true to that! If we call the false love lust, it contains no reality when truly interpreted. The burning passion surmised to smoulder in certain expressions is only employed to heat the branding-iron with which the lady is stamped with the scars of degradation! And that was not the way to woo any woman, fair or foul.

When most intense in his flame of words, the speaker is most utterly false, and says so in a mocking mood—

*"When my Love swears that she is made of truth,  
I do believe her, though I know she lies."*—Sonnet 138.

*"In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds."*—Sonnet 131.

"*In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes.*"—Sonnet 141.

"*For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.*"—Sonnet 147.

In common with the autobiographists, I was long misled by the apparent sincerity of expression. Shakspeare had nearly reached the maturity and culmination of his poetic faculty when he wrote the later Sonnets, and his giant powers even at play imposed upon me. Then we are certain to be deceived by satire if we do not suspect the intention to deceive or to jest. If the lady's deeds were so black and her character had been so bad ; if she were so common that she could be called "the bay where all men ride," and the "wide world's common place," then nothing evil said of her could be considered slanderous ; therefore such lines as these—

"For if I should despair I should grow mad,  
And in my madness might speak ill of thee ;  
Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,  
Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be,"

—must be satirical when the woman described is past the possibility of being slandered. Such wooing could have neither wooed nor won any woman, and therefore had no such aim. The protestations are confessedly false, and therefore can furnish no proof that the lady thus blackened could have been the speaker's guilty paramour. He tells her that he neither loves her nor lusts after her.

"*All my vows are oaths but to misuse thee.*"

He only makes use of her subjectively where others are his object ! (Sonnet 151.) The character of the lady indicated by the most profoundly natural of all the dramatists is one that would not be wooed without flattery, and could not be won by being blackguarded with the maddest abuse. Shakspeare did not suppose it would promote the suit, whether he pleaded for himself or another, to tell the lady that black as she was in her beauty, that was fair in comparison with the foulness of her black deeds ; that she was as black as hell and dark as night ; that her breasts were dun-coloured (or, as in Suffolk, *dunduckitymur*) ; that her breath was smoky or sooty in its reekiness ; that she was a traitor to her marriage vows, a proclaimed prostitute, and that it was not her person that he sought.

"In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,  
For they in thee a thousand errors note ;  
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,  
Who in despite of view is pleased to dote :  
Nor are my ears with thy tongue's tune delighted ;  
Nor tender feeling to base touches prone ;  
Nor taste, nor smell desire to be invited  
To any sensual feast with thee alone.—*Sonnet 141.*

It is perfectly impossible, then, that these Sonnets could have won or wooed the person so addressed. They could not have promoted any love-suit nor pandered to any passion of lust. Therefore it is senseless to suppose that Shakspeare ever thought they would, or ever wrote them for that purpose. No matter whether the speaker be "Will" Herbert or Will Shakspeare, this fact is sufficient to show that the lady so darkly described was not the Object, and

can only be considered as a sonneteering subject of the Sonnets that were suggested and written for some indirect but special purpose other than that which has been commonly assumed. In trying to fathom this perplexing purpose, it will be necessary to show that in writing his Latest Sonnets Shakspeare was working on Sidney's lines as he had done in the earliest ones; possibly (I think assuredly) at the request of Herbert, who was Sidney's nephew. It happens that *there had been a new edition of the 'Arcadia' published in 1598, which contained certain Sonnets and Songs that were never before printed.* Two of these new Sonnets are here paralleled with two of Shakspeare's.

LUST.

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;  
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,  
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had  
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
Mad in pursuit and in possession so:  
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;  
Before, a joy proposed! behind, a dream!

All this the world well knows, yet none  
knows well

To shun the heaven that leads men to this  
hell.

(129)  
*Shakspeare, 1599*

ASPIRE TO HIGHER THINGS.

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
Foiled by these Rebel Powers that thee array,  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly-gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?  
Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servants' loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross:  
Within be fed, without be rich no more!

So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on  
Men,

And Death once dead there's no more dying  
then.

(146)

"DESIRE."

Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen  
snare,  
Fond fancy's scum, and dregs of scattered  
thought:

Band of all evils; cradle of causeless care;  
Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought:  
Desire! Desire! I have too dearly bought,  
With prize of mangled mind, thy worthless  
ware;

Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me  
brought,

Who shouldst my mind to higher things pre-  
pare:

But yet in vain thou hast my ruin sought;  
In vain thou madest me to vain things aspire;  
In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire;  
For virtue hath this better lesson taught,—

Within myself to seek my only hire  
Desiring nought but how to kill desire.

*Sidney, 1598.*

"ASPIRE TO HIGHER THINGS."<sup>1</sup>

Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust;  
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;  
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;  
Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings:  
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might  
To that sweet yoke where lasting Freedoms be;  
Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the  
light

That doth both shine, and give us sight to see:  
O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide  
In this small course which birth draws out to  
death,

And think how ill becometh him to slide,  
Who seeketh Heaven, and comes of heavenly  
breath:

Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see:  
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me!

*Sidney, 1598.*

The theme of both Poets is identical in each instance, and both themes were Sidney's first. Those who follow me will have little difficulty in perceiving that Shakspeare took his cue from Sidney for a differentiated treatment of the same

<sup>1</sup> These titles are taken from Sidney's two Sonnets, and applied as headings by Mr. Grosart in the *Poems of Sidney* edited by him for the *Fuller's Worthies' Library*.

subjects ; and a theme thus adopted and developed from Sidney may be looked upon as abstract or dramatic, but it can no longer be considered as a passion personal to the writer when it is evidently not suggested by his own experience, but where the source itself can be traced to Sidney's theme.

In his *Philosophy of Shakspeare's Sonnets* (p. 73), Mr. Richard Simpson takes it for granted that the "Vulgar Love" of the Latter Sonnets is personal to the writer, and says piously enough, "It is to be noticed that the two most directly religious Sonnets (129 and 146) occur in the second series. For remorse of conscience holds the same place in the lower love as criminal passions in the higher. As such passions are obstacles to the progress of a pure love, so sorrow for them, and purposes of amendment, are obstacles to the progress of a guilty love." But when the *motif* is patently adopted for the purpose of sonnetteering, neither "guilty love" nor "remorse of conscience" can be attributed to Shakspeare. And if Will Herbert did nurse any such passion for the lady, then the Poet plays the part of religious mentor to him, not to himself. Even then the Sonnet ends with a wicked allusion to the heaven that leads men to this hell in the Poet's most covert manner! Thus the imitation of Sidney, the denunciation of lust, the lightness of this last allusion to the sexual illusion, and the false philosophy (if seriously taken) are all opposed to a personal application of the Sonnet.

Sonnet 129 is written for a purpose, but not for the purpose of self-admonishment. The subject is the nature of lust, which is denounced as being perjured, murderous, bloody, savage, cruel, mad in pursuit and mad in possession. All the world knows this well enough, and yet *no one* knows *how* to shun the heaven that leads men to this hell. Does the reader think that Shakspeare borrowed from Sidney in this way for the purpose of painting his own case and excusing himself by making that case common to all men?

That is neither Shakspeare's own morality nor his personal excuse for a criminal relationship. These two Sonnets contain matter enough, properly moralized, to convince all who have ever approached the real soul of Shakspeare, that the Latter Sonnets were not written on an amour of his own. They ought to be sufficient to set us right on the subject, even if we had for awhile done him the injustice of thinking he could have been so blindly infatuated, and babbled about it so foolishly. On the score of personal character alone, we should be entitled to assume that the subject of these Sonnets was not of Shakspeare's own choosing, but imposed on him by one of the "Private Friends" for whom he wrote. It has no touch of his quality. In his dramas he abets no intrigues of the kind ; encourages no treacheries to the marriage bed ; is no dealer in adulteries ; has no sensual lubricity. His wholesomeness in this respect is unimpeachable, and it is unparalleled amongst the dramatists of his or the following age. Moreover, the root of the matter here can be traced in two of Sidney's Sonnets, which came into print for the first time in 1598. It will be well to bear in mind that this note of warning against false inferences is sounded early in the Latter Sonnets, No. 129 being the third of the series.

Sidney had called upon the Elizabethan Poets to celebrate his Lady, Stella.

"But if both for your love and skill your name  
You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of fame,  
Stella behold, and then begin to endite."

*Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet 15.



He likewise set them the example in punning on her married name of Lady Rich.

“NO MISFORTUNE BUT THAT  
RICH SHE IS.”

My mouth doth water, and my breast doth  
swell,  
My tongue doth itch, my thoughts in labour  
be:  
Listen then, Lordings, with good ear to me,  
For of my life I must a riddle tell:  
Toward Aurora's Court a nymph doth dwell,  
Rich in all beauties which man's eye can see;  
Beauties so far from reach of words that we  
Abase her praise saying she doth excell:  
Rich in the treasure of deserved renown,  
Rich in the riches of a royal heart,  
Rich in those gifts which give th' eternal  
crown;  
Who though most rich in those and every  
part  
Which make the patents of true worldly  
bliss,  
Hath no misfortune but that Rich she is.  
*A. and S. 37.*

“RICH, MORE WRETCHED.”

Rich fools there be whose base and filthy heart  
Lies hatching still the goods wherein they  
flow,  
And damning their own selves to Tantal's  
smart,  
Wealth breeding want—more rich more  
wretched grow:  
Yet to thos: fools Heaven doth such wit  
impart,  
As what their hands do hold, their heads do  
know,  
And knowing love and loving lay apart  
As sacred things, far from all danger's show:  
But that rich fool, who, by blind Fortune's lot,  
The richest gem of love and life enjoys,  
And can with foul abuse such beauties blot;  
Let him, deprived of sweet but unfelt joys,  
Exiled for aye from those high treasures  
which  
He knows not, grow in only folly rich!  
*A. and S. 24.*

Sidney had said that “long-needy fame doth even grow Rich—*meaning my Stella's name*” (*A. & S. 35*). And that she who was Rich in all joys did rob his joys from him (*A. & S. Song v. 8*).

Various poets and versifiers, imitating him, also punned upon the name of Lady Rich. Constable does so in Sonnets written for the express purpose, and inscribed to the Lady Rich, in which he celebrates the lady's three perfections as “most fair, most RICH, most glittering,” and of the riches of her name, and says that no treasure is RICH but she.

Barnaby Barnes, whose Sonnets have many resemblances to Shakspeare's, addressed the following Sonnet to Lady Rich—

“Thou bright, beame-spreading, Love's thrise-happy Starre,  
The Arcadian Shepheard Astrophill's cleare guide:  
Thou that on swift-wing'd Pegasus doest ride,  
Aurora's harbenger, surpassing farre  
Aurora caried in her rosie carre;  
Bright Planet, teller of cleare evening-tide,  
Starre of all starres, fayre-favor'd nighte's cheefe pride,  
Which day from night, and night from day doest barre:  
Thou that hast worldes of harts with thine eye's glaunce  
To thy love's pleasing bondage taken thrall;  
Behold where graces in love's circles daunce,  
Of two cleare starres, out-sparkling Planettes all:  
For starres her bewtic's arrow-bearers bee;  
Then be the subjectes, and superiour shee.”

*Parthenophil, Sonnet 95.*

This Sonnet should be compared with Shakspeare's 132nd.  
John Davies followel suit, and punned upon her name by using the antithesis

of poverty or of *indigence*; he says of Stella, she played her hapless part "*richly* well," and "to be *rich* was to be fortunate."

This punning on the name of Lady Rich is as palpable in Shakspeare's Sonnets, if not so frequent, as it is in Sidney's. In the Sonnet on aspiring to higher things, which has been quoted, Sidney bids his soul to rise from the love of Stella or earthly love, and "Grow *Rich* in that which never taketh rust." Shakspeare repeats this when the speaker tells his soul to be fed within, "without be *Rich* no more." The two go together, like substance and shadow.

In Sonnet 151 the speaker says, that in thinking of her who is addressed,

"My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason;  
But rising *at thy name*, doth point out thee  
As his triumphant prize; proud of this pride  
He is contented thy poor *drudge* to be."

Here the *poor drudge* is the Shakspearean antithesis to the name of *Rich*, just as Davies opposes indigence to her riches, or as Sidney juxtaposes her *poor* lord with his Lady Rich. This allusiveness to her name is yet more audaciously indicated in Sonnet 135, where the lady is saluted in the spirit of Biron when he says to Rosaline (or Lady Rich) in the play of *Love's Labour's Lost*,

"Your capacity  
Is of that nature, that to your huge store  
Wise things seem foolish, and *rich* things seem *poor*."

In the Sonnet the lady is celebrated as being most wilful, or, as it is put for the purpose of punning, "full of Will," and the innuendo which conveyed the complete sense of Sonnets 135, 136, and furnished their real *raison d'être*, is that the Lady being so Rich in Will (the Wilful Lady Rich), it would be natural or *à propos* for him to be Will in Rich. The true Shakspearean antithesis is Rich in Will and Will in Rich—the Will being that youngster in Sonnet 143 portrayed in pursuit of a woman who is old enough to be his mother. The name of "Rich," then, is as surely punned upon by Shakspeare as it is by Sidney; and as the subjects are identical, this is sufficient to at least suggest that Lady Rich is the subject of both. In Sidney's Sonnets she was the object also; in Shakspeare's she is the subject merely; the passion as subject in the Elizabethan sense; the Sonnets being *turned* for the private delectation of Master Will Herbert, who poses like "mine uncle" for the purpose, or who has induced another poet to write anew on Sidney's old subject, Stella.

Again, the curious complexion of Lady Rich was unique enough to present a passport for poetic immortality. She was a fair woman with two black stars for eyes. Her hair was tawny; her poets called it golden, or the colour of amber; her eyes were black as night and brilliant as its stars. Sidney says they were as black as touch, and that they darted death with their "dark beams." When King James called her a "fair woman with a black soul," he did but re-apply Sidney's antithesis of the fair woman in her peculiar beauty of blackness; Shakspeare's "light condition in a beauty dark," or his "tawny Tartar." Because there was the background of a different complexion it was said that her eyes were *in mourning*, they, or she, *had put on mourning*; had taken the veil of mourning. The conceit originated with Sidney, and it was derived from the

peculiar combination of features that were Stella's only. As Sidney sings of her—

“ When Nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes,  
 In colour black why wrapt she beams so bright ?  
 Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,  
 Frame daintiest lustre, mixed of shades and light ?  
 Or did she, else, that sober hue devise,  
 In object best to knit and strength our sight,  
 Lest, if no veil those brave gleams did disguise,  
 They, sunlike, should more dazzle than delight ?  
 Or, would she *her miraculous power show,*  
*That whereas black seems Beauty's contrary,*  
*She even in black doth make all beauty flow ?*  
 Both so, and thus, she, minding Love should be  
 Placed ever there, gave him his *mourning weed,*  
 To honour all their deaths who for him bleed.”

These same *mourning* eyes are those of “ Philoclea,” and the Poet has the very thought in prose (*Arcadia*, p. 95), “ Her black eyes (are) black indeed, whether Nature so made them that we might be the more able to behold and bear their wonderful shining, or that she, goddess-like, would work this miracle with herself, in giving blackness the price above all beauty ! ” The “ only Philoclea ” was Stella, Lady Rich. And these are the eyes of Penelope Rich, the “ only Philoclea ! ” The eyes that constituted the feature on which her singers always settled as they ranged over her beauties with the honeyed murmurs of bees all busy in a world of flowers ! And in their dark depths lies the unfathomed secret of these Latter Sonnets. Here are the *mourning* eyes, and the very miracle which Nature wrought in one particular person to set blackness above all beauty. Shakspeare adopts and expands the ingenious idea often used by Sidney ; he adds other reasons for the eyes appearing in mourning, but the elfin-bright black eyes are the same ! Not only does blackness take the shape of beauty in Stella, the same thought that Shakspeare reproduced in Sonnet 127 had been applied by Sidney to whiteness when she was sick, to virtue and to love—

“ Stella is sick ; and in that sick-bed lies  
 Sweetness, which breathes and pants as oft as she ;  
 And Grace, sick too, such fine conclusion tries,  
 That Sickness brags itself best graced to be.  
 Beauty is sick, but sick in so fair guise  
 That in that paleness Beauty's white we see.”—*A. and S.* 101.

“ Who will in fairest book of Nature know  
 How Virtue may best lodged in beauty be,  
 Let him but learn of Love to read in thee  
 Stella ! ”—*Sonnet* 71.

“ Love of herself took Stella's shape, that she  
 To mortal eyes might sweetly shine in her.”

Here we shall find the very matter of the two first Sonnets of the latter series. But the likeness can be best shown by the comparative process—

MOURNING EYES.

In the old age black was not counted fair,  
 Or if it were, it bore not Beauty's name ;  
 But now is black Beauty's successive heir,  
 And Beauty slandered with a bastard shame :  
 For since each hand hath put on Nature's  
 power,

“ STELLA'S EYES IN MOURNING.”

When Nature made her chief work, Stella's  
 eyes,  
 In colour black why wrapt she beams so bright ?  
 Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,  
 Frame daintiest lustre, mixed of shade and  
 light ?

Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,  
Sweet Beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace :  
Therefore my Mistress' eyes<sup>1</sup> are raven black,  
Her eyes<sup>1</sup> so suited ; and they mourners seem  
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,  
Slandering creation with a false esteem :

Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,  
That every tongue says, "Beauty should  
look so !"  
(127)

*Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,  
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,  
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,  
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain :  
And truly not the morning sun of heaven  
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,  
Nor that full star that ushers in the even  
Doth half that glory to the sober west,  
As those two mourning eyes become thy face :  
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart  
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee  
grace,*

And suit thy pity like in every part :  
Then will I swear Beauty herself is black,  
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.  
(132)

Or did she else that sober hue devise,  
In object best to knit and strength our sight ;  
Lest, if no veil these brave gleams did disguise,  
They, sunlike, should more dazzle than de-  
light ?

Or would she her miraculous power show,  
That, *whereas black seems Beauty's contrary,  
She even in black doth make all beauties flow ?*  
Both so, and thus—she minding Love should  
be

Placed ever there, gave him this mourning  
wood,

To honour all their deaths who for her  
bleed.  
(7)

*Stella.*

"Soul's joy ! bend not those morning stars  
from me."

*Stella.*

"Who where she went bare morning on her  
brow."

Now at the risk of being charged by shallow observers with trying to make black white, the present writer is prepared to maintain, that after all we have heard of the Dark Lady, the Black Beauty, and the Swarthy Syren, the Woman of the Latter Sonnets is no more black-haired than she was black-skinned. If she had been, the black eyes would not have *put on* mourning. The black veil would have been thrown over her head and not limited to the eyes, or to eyes and eyebrows. In Shakspeare's Sonnet both the hair and brows are not only avoided in the description of the lady's blackness, that is beyond all beauty, the eyes are *repeated* instead. Her "eyes are raven black—her eyes thus suited, and they mourners seem."

The lady of Sidney's description was not a person of the ordinary dark and swarthy complexion, with hair of blue-black lustre, although he speaks of Nature setting *blackness above all beauty* ; nor is the lady of Shakspeare's Sonnets ; the blackness which he also celebrates as the only beauty is of the eyes, not of the face and hair. But the blackness of the eyes and the blackness of her character have blended to *dye* these Sonnets and make the lady look dark indeed.

The opening Sonnet is of necessity founded on such a contrast as was only to be met in the complexion of Lady Rich. The argument is that since the painting of faces and dyeing of hair have become so common, here, in this peculiar

<sup>1</sup> "My mistress' eyes." These eyes are so dwelt upon, and the lady's hair is so obviously omitted, as to suggest a something quite unaccountable. Walker fancied the "eyes" of this line might have been a misprint for "hairs." The editors of the "Globe" and "Gem" editions, acting on this hint, have taken a leap in the dark, and printed "brows." By "her eyes so suited," Shakspeare did not mean *also*, but her eyes *thus* dressed in black. A repetition which lays a double stress upon the eyes, and proves that neither the hair nor the brows was intended.

combination of black and fair, this triumph of Nature's most cunning workmanship, is Beauty's only place of worship.

The fashion at Elizabeth's Court was to imitate the hair of the Queen. If the painter of an early portrait of Her Majesty is to be trusted, her hair must have been of a ruddy gold, somewhat like the bark of the Scotch fir seen in the glow of sunset. This natural hue was afterwards maintained by artifice. The practice of dyeing hair became as prevalent as it is to-day. The dead were robbed of their tresses, and, as we are told by Stubbes, ladies were accustomed to allure children into private places to snatch a grace from Nature by stealing their fair locks. Therefore, because of this, "my Mistress' eyes are raven black," says the speaker, they have gone into mourning on this account, and so well does this black become them in spite of the implied contrast, that every tongue says "Beauty should look so!"—should appear in this pattern which owes nothing to Art and cannot be imitated.

Lady Rich did appear in one of the Court masques, called the "*Masque of Blackness*," as an Ethiop beauty, with her hands, arms, and face blackened to the required tint, whilst her naked white feet dazzled the eyes as they dallied with a running stream; but this cannot be the complexion celebrated. Nor did it need Shakspeare to tell us that the negro complexion was not wont to be admired in the antique time. The subject touches in a most particular way the old poetic quarrel respecting the rival charms of black eyes and blue. In the old time the frank eye of bonny English blue, or good honest gray, bore away the palm as the favourite of our Poets. Black eyes were alien to the Northern ideal of beauty. But here is such a triumph of this colour that black is Beauty's only wear. Black eyes and black eyebrows, not a black face nor a dark complexion! It is the eyes alone that have *put on mourning*, and become such "pretty mourners." Now, the eyes would not have *put on mourning* if the face had been very swarthy; the hair black; and it is the eyes alone that are "*so suited*" in mourning hue. There are two distinct excuses why the eyes should have assumed this mourning and *put on* this black; neither of which would have had a starting-point if the lady had been altogether dark; then it would have been her beauty that was dressed in the mourning robe, not her eyes alone.

It will be seen that there is something very special about these black eyes—in opposition to which something fair is required and implied, for this dwelling upon a special feature is thoroughly opposed to Shakspeare's usual way of working. Except for a humorous purpose, as in the case of Bardolph's fire-brand of a nose, and Falstaff's mountain of a belly, it is not his habit to make *featurely* remarks, or to map out his characters by any of their particular physical signs. We do not remember Shakspeare's men and women, as a rule, by their personal features. Not that the poet generalizes them into vagueness, but the instinct of the Actor was alive to the fact that any stereotyped set of features would have interfered with the perfect portrayal in action. The girth of Falstaff is always a difficulty, because the idea which has been given to the spectators must be acted up to! And Shakspeare wisely abstained from giving his own set of faces and features, which must have left but little or no latitude in playing. He gives us the spirit of the character minutely finished, but leaves the physical face a good deal to the actor, and thus allows scope to the imagination, and a great possible variety of "filling in"; this he does with

so careless an air, but such cunning of hand, that he is gone before we have noted it! So that *à priori* there must be some very uncommon cause for these repetitions of the "mourning eyes," and this frequent looking into their unfathomable darkness. For these eyes haunted the imagination of Shakspeare as much as they did that of any other Elizabethan poet. There is nothing like it in the Southampton Sonnets; no such dwelling on a particular feature. Therefore the explanation must be sought in the nature of the object, and there is sufficient internal evidence to show that in the present instance Shakspeare and Sidney both drew from one original, and that the one poet repeated the other's description because he was applying it to the same lady; and when we have lifted the veil of mystery through which they have glittered, and behind which the face has been so long concealed, we shall find that the supposed *dark* lady of Shakspeare's Sonnets is the famous golden-haired and black-eyed beauty, Penelope Rich, the first love of Philip Sidney, the cousin of Elizabeth Vernon, the sister of Essex, the Helen of the Elizabethan poets, personified as that "Lascivious Grace" by Shakspeare.

She was "a most triumphant lady, if report be square to her." As wonderful a piece of work as ever Nature cunningly compounded, and her beauty was of the rarest kind known in the North. Sidney, who proclaimed his love for her and his joy therein, "tho' nations might count it shame," has left vivid Venetian paintings of her as the "Stella" of his Sonnets, the "Philoclea" of his Arcadia—whereby the lady glows in the mind, warm with life once more. She had hair of tawny gold. Sidney described her tresses as beams of gold caught in a net. In complexion of face she was nearly a brunette. Her Poet has exactly marked the colour of her cheek as a "*kindly claret*," which is definite as the tint described by Dante as being "less than that of the rose, but more than that of the violets";

"Of all complexions the culled sovereignty  
Did meet as at a fair in her fair cheek."

So black were her eyes, that those who have attempted to depict them seem to have felt, as they say of their very dark women in Angoulême, they were "*born when coal was in blossom*." This opposition of *blonde* and *brunette* was striking as is the rich gold and the gorgeous black of the humble-bee. Thus her beauty had the utmost contrast and chiaroscuro with which Nature paints the human face. Day, with its golden lustres, may be said to have dwelt in her hair: night and starlight, in her eyes. The light above and the dark below—the fair hair with its Northern frankness of smile and the black burning eyes of the South glittering deadly-brilliant under black velvet eyebrows, with what Keats might have called their *ebon diamonding*, gave that piquancy of character to her appearance on which the poets loved to dwell and doat.

An angel of light at the first glance; a "precious visitant," looking as though just stepped down from heaven, but with Proserpine-like eyes of such mystery you could not tell whether the indwelling divinity might not be an angel of darkness; could not get at the spirit in the black mask! And so she walked as a wonder among men, gathering hearts by impressment under the banner of her voluptuous beauty, and winning such worship as falls to but few. One of those women on whom "Heaven hath set strange marks"; one of those "earth-treading stars," as Shakspeare calls them, that come and light up our old world

awhile, it may be, on their downward way from that pure heaven in which they will shine no more; one of the women who just seem to be angels falling!

But, it may be asked, if these be the jetty eyes of Lady Rich, where then are the tresses of the Siren's own colour, the Mermaid's yellow, which the Poets so harped upon? Sonnet 130 says, "If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head"; but evidence enough will be adduced to indicate that these Sonnets are not to be fathomed by the careless, casual glance with which they have as yet been read. They have many covert meanings that have hitherto lurked privily. We must learn to read between the lines. They tell a secret history in cipher of which we have never before possessed the key. The element of irony enters into their composition. In Sonnet 138 it is irony in a smiling mood; and this Sonnet 130 is full of irony of the subtlest kind—that which makes its mock in smooth words of smiling dissimulation. This is what Puttenham calls giving the "privy nippe," the sly pinch of disparagement under the pretended fondling of praise; it is serving up the honey with a sting in it. "There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown," says the Princess in *Love's Labour's Lost*; and this is the sort of sport which the speaker here makes. He is showing that he can "gleek upon occasion." The intention of the Sonnet is to decry and depreciate under an assumed guise of praise. No one can suppose, for example, if the lady's breasts were dun-coloured, that the fact was mentioned for the sake of flattery, or that the description of the breath *reeking* from her indicates any niceness of feeling! The apparent frankness of statement in this Sonnet is not meant to please, nor to say sooth, and it is a bit of malicious subtlety to call the lady's hair "black wires," which was so often be-sung as golden hair; and she had been so vain of its mellow splendour—so proud of its repute! The use of the word "wires" points to this ironic reading, for the primary comparison of hair with "wire" is when it is golden—the golden wire which was made when Apollo's lute was strung with his sunny hair. It is always golden wires that hair is likened to in our poetry. It is not the quality of the hair, not the *wiriness*, as we say, but the colour that is *meant to be decried*, and the expression is "*black wires*," which, by implication, points to a far different colour.

In the same mocking vein Biron calls Dumain's "divine Kate" an "*Amber-coloured Raven*." "Her *Amber hair* for *foul*" is darkly "quoted." If it were necessary we might parry this expression with another which was made equally at random, and not meant to be a statement of fact—

*"In nothing art thou black, save in thy deeds."*

Benedick asks a question very appropriate to the present subject when he says to Claudio, "Speak you this with a sad brow, or do you play the flouting jack? Come, in what key shall a man take you?"

It is the unique complexion of Stella and of Rosaline, whose beauty in black did not include black hair. When the speaker says, "If hair be wires, black wires grow on her head," he is using "Ethiope words" on purpose to decry her. He is making her black all over.

The sentiment in these Sonnets of the eyes in mourning, and of *black* being the sole beauty, together with the argument for the eyes and brows being black, when, according to the other parts, *they ought not to be so*, is only a repetition, curiously complete, from the play of *Love's Labour's Lost*. It is there applied

to "Rosaline" by Lord Biron, though not quite so carefully manipulated. Again the same mistake has occurred; Rosaline is *not* a dark lady in the ordinary sense. It is the remarkable complexion of Lady Rich once more. It is the peerless eyes of "Stella" that have burned on Lord Biron, and made his temperament all tinder to their sparks—"Oh, but her eye! by this light, but for her eye, I would not love her; yes, but for her two eyes"—the startling strangeness of her black eyes and eyebrows, under the tawny yellow hair, that excites the jesting comment of the merry mocking lords. The peculiarity of which they make fun is something beyond a dark skin; that would not explain the pleasant conceit which moves their mirth. Lord Biron only defends the lady's eyes and brows, on account of blackness, and Shakspeare would not have written in this manner had the case been simply as supposed.

"O, who can give an oath? where is a book?  
That I may swear Beauty doth beauty lack,  
If that she learn not of her eye to look:  
No face is fair that is not full so black.  
O, if in black my lady's brows be decked,  
It mourns that painting and usurping hair  
Should ravish doters with a false aspect,  
And therefore is she born to make black fair.  
Her favour turns the fashion of these days,  
For native blood is counted painting now;  
And therefore red that would avoid dispraise  
Paints itself black to imitate her brow."

It is the eyes and brows that are black, not the hair of the lady's head, ruddy hair being the fashion in Elizabeth's day. According to Lingard,<sup>1</sup> the Queen wore "false hair of a red colour surmounted by a crown of gold." It is the red eyebrow that was blackened to avoid dispraise, not the red head of hair. Now, as ruddy golden hair was the fashion, if Rosaline's hair had been black, the others ought to have dyed their hair as well as their eyebrows. The statement carefully confines the comparison to the lady's eyes and brow. Evidently her hair was more in fashion. The eyes and the brow alone *mourned* over the falsehood of other complexions, with which tricks were played artificially. The perfect contrast of her complexion was a trick of Nature's own; not to be approached by any cunningnesses of Art. Elsewhere Biron calls the lady

"A wightly wanton with a velvet brow,  
With two *pitch-balls* stuck in her face for eyes."<sup>2</sup>

The eyes are "stuck in," not as naturally belonging. The description is the same as that of the Sonnets: "Those two mourning eyes!" it is also one with

<sup>1</sup> Vol. vi. p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Previously I argued against "Whitely," and pointed out that "Whitely Wanton" certainly could not be intended in the sense of a sallow face or "cheek of cream," because Biron says:

"Of all complexions the culled sovereignty  
Do meet as at a fair in her fair cheek,  
Where several worthies make one dignity,  
Where nothing wants that Want itself doth seek."

I now see that as Wight or White is a name for a Witch, the epithet means a witching or bewitching wanton like that "lascivious Grace."



Sidney's, and the sole meeting-place of all three is the person and complexion of Lady Rich.

Sidney tells us that when he first began to write of Stella he did it to show his love in verse,

*"That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain."*

Here the theme and motive of several of Shakspeare's Sonnets is to be found in four lines of Sidney's second Sonnet, in which he describes himself as a vassal who is like a "slave-born Muscovite" in his abjectness. He says,

*"I call it praise to suffer tyranny;  
And now employ the remnant of my wit  
To make myself believe that all is well,  
While with a fading skill I paint my hell."*

Such a mood of unmanly self-prostration is taken advantage of by Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the "attendant star" of the Queen, whom I hold to be Stella, when she says of Biron,

*"How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,  
And wait the season, and observe the times,  
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes,  
And shape his service wholly to my hests,  
And make him proud to make me proud, that jests!  
So potent-like would I o'ersway his state  
That he should be my fool, and I his fate."—Act V. sc. ii.*

And this abjectness in love, this self-surrender, is continued and extended in Shakspeare's latter Sonnets, where the lady aimed at is the same, but the character is so changed that any liberty may be taken in speaking of her and her ill fame,—that is in the Sonnets only intended for a private friend.

Biron's indication of Rosaline's character is also full of likeness. There is, moreover, the same personification of that *WILL* to which Elizabeth Vernon was "*mortgaged*"; the *Will* that is so punned upon.

*"Biron. Is she wedded or no?  
Boyet. To her will, sir, or so!"*

In this personification of *will* or wilfulness, we again meet the rival lady to whose high imperious "*will*" the speaker in Sonnet 133 is a prisoner, to the will of her who is personified as "*Will*" in Sonnet 135, and it likewise features the wilful Lady Rich, the breakings-out of whose will were perpetual, and dashed with Cleopatra-like audacity.

When once we have discovered a speaker for these Sonnets who is in every way a more befitting person than the Poet himself, and we couple with them the name of Lady Rich, a whole host of suggestions and illustrations start up to enforce the conjecture that she is the lady addressed. Her coarser character in later life could not have been more exactly rendered than it is in these Sonnets. They read like the plainest comments on the well-known facts of her career. In the year 1600 she had lost the Queen's favour, says the historian Camden, because she was more than suspected of being false to her husband's bed. And Sonnets 142 and 152, written in 1599, contain the bluntest statement of this precise charge.

King James told Mountjoy that he had "*purloined a fair woman with a black*

*soul.*" So the lover in these Sonnets denounces the lady as having a heart black enough to be the devil's looking-glass, but full of fatal witchery herself.

The black eyes of Lady Rich were a subject of constant comment in her time, and frequently was their colour associated with another kind of blackness. It was divined that her startling combination of fair and dark was in some degree the outward symbol of her curious moral mixture. There is a hint of this in a letter of the Earl of Nottingham, who, in writing to Lord Mountjoy, twits him respecting these same black eyes. He says, "I think her Majesty would be most glad to see and look upon *your black eyes* here, so *she were sure you would not look with too much respect of other black eyes.*" "But for that," says the old gallant past sixty, "if the Admiral (himself) were but thirty years old, I think he would not differ in opinion from the Lord Mountjoy." The lady of these Sonnets is one in pride of spirit with her to whose power Essex paid unconscious tribute when he spoke of his sister's strength of mind and force of character, and proved his own miserable weakness: "She must be looked to, for she has a *proud spirit.*" This was cowardly on the part of a brother, but he spoke the bitter truth of her who had been the master spirit of his intrigues with James of Scotland, and who helped to hurry on his own weakness until his folly met its fate.

But to return to our clue in Sidney's Sonnets.

Sidney's 34th Sonnet supplies the text for several of Shakspeare's. He will write to ease his heart by seeing his pain portrayed in words—see it externalized, if only in a mirror; for "*Cruel fights well-pictured forth do please.*" But will not the wise think his words "*fond ware*" if these are published? Then *let them be kept secret!* He is in a quandary with his wits at war. It is difficult for him to explain, but perhaps others may feel and find the powers of Stella that *so confuse his mind.* As Shakspeare most assuredly did, and turned it to sonneteering account. Following the safe track already found, this Sonnet will afford a further clue. Stella's great magical powers that so confused the mind of her lovers—especially confusing eyesight and insight—is the subject of 137, 141, 148, and 150 of Shakspeare's Sonnets.

"O, from what *power* hast thou this *powerful might*  
With insufficiency my heart to sway?  
To make me give the lie to my true sight!  
O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,  
Which have no correspondence with true sight!"

"Stella's great powers" *have* so "confused" his mind.

Sidney's 52nd is upon the strife between Love and Virtue—

"A strife is grown between Virtue and Love,  
Whilo each pretends that Stella must be his."

Shakspeare's 142nd opens thus—

"Love is my sin, and thy dear Virtue hate,  
Hate of my sin grounded on sinful loving."

The Sidneian situation could not be more perfectly portrayed than in those two lines, although the thought is turned with a different intent.

Another contention described by Sidney is betwixt the "Will and Wit." Virtue, he says, doth set "a bait between my Will and Wit." This would

afford a sufficient suggestion for the two Sonnets (135 and 136), in which the name of "Will" occurs eighteen times; the contention between "Will and Wit" being most ingeniously, wittily, and wilfully sonnetted by Shakespeare.

In addition to this, it could be shown that, where the likeness is less, Sonnet after Sonnet might have been composed on text after text selected from Sidney's for the purpose of a re-application to the same person. Here is one example. Stella had confessed (Sonnet 62) that

"Love, she did, but loved a love not blind;"

and Shakspeare's 149th commences—

"Canst thou, O cruel! say I love thee not?"

and concludes with—

"But, Love, hate on, for now I know thy mind:  
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I AM blind!"

The echo answers perfectly.

Sonnet 151, compared with Sidney's 91st, will present us with a comparative test case. Sidney's Sonnet is headed by Mr. Grosart, "*You in them I love*," with words quoted from the Sonnet itself.

"YOU IN THEM I LOVE."

"Stella, while now, by Honour's cruel might  
I am from you, light of my life, misled,  
And whiles,—fair you, my sun, thus overspread  
With Absence' veil,—I live in Sorrow's night;  
If this dark place yet show like candle-light,  
Some Beauty's piece, as amber-coloured head,  
Milk hands, rose cheeks, or lips more sweet, more red;  
Or seeings jet-black but in blackness bright;  
They please,—I do confess they please—mine eyes;  
But why? *because of you they models be*;  
Models, such be wood-globes of glistening skies:  
Dear, therefore be not jealous over me,  
If you hear that they seem my heart to move;  
Not them, O no! but *you in them I love*."

Sidney's plea is that if he appears to love others it is not so in reality; they are but lay-figures by which he pictures her. It is *her* personally that he *loves in them*. This same song is sung in the bass clef by the quizzer or mocker of "mine uncle." Here the "love in you" becomes lust in strict accordance with the change in the characters of the Lascivious Grace, and the speaker who now addresses her or who covertly aims at her. It is not with her but with others that "flesh" rises at the mention of her name. Her magic has such power over his mind that the "gentle cheater" betrays it to the betrayal of his body. The marriage with her is imaginary, whilst it is carnal with others. Something analogous to this is applied to one of the wives in Goëthe's *Elective Affinities*. The fight is for her, not with her. Hence—

"No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her—Love! for whose dear love I rise and fall."

Not with her, but with others! There is no more a personal marriage with the lady addressed in this Sonnet than there was a wooing with intent to

win her in the others. She is subject rather than object. As such her wanton charm betrays his soul, and that betrays his body. Hence he says,

*"Poor Soul! within be fed, without be Rich no more;"*

or, be no more misled with the deluding shadow of Lady Rich!

No more conclusive illustration could be given of Shakspeare's method in adopting his hint from Sidney's Sonnet, and re-applying it to the same lady in accordance with the change of conditions. But it will be more satisfactory to print a few of Sidney's Sonnets in full, for the purpose of comparing them with Shakspeare's.

#### YOU IN THEM I LOVE.

Love is too young to know what conscience is!  
Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love!  
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,  
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:  
For thou betraying me, I do betray  
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;  
My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther  
reason;  
But rising at thy name, doth point out thee  
As his triumphant prize: proud of this pride  
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,  
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side:  
No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her—Love! for whose dear love I rise and  
fall. (151)

#### THE TRANSFORMATION.

O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,  
Which hath no correspondence with true  
sight?  
Or if they have, where is my judgment fled,  
That censures falsely what they see aright?  
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,  
What means the world to say it is not so?  
If it be not, then love doth well denote,  
Love's eye is not so true as all men's! no,  
How can it? O, how can love's eye be true,  
That is so vext with watching and with tears?  
No marvel then, though I mistake my view;  
The sun itself sees not till heaven clears:  
O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st  
me blind,  
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should  
find! (148)

O, from what power hast thou this powerful  
might  
With insufficiency my heart to sway?  
To make me give the lie to my true sight,  
And swear that brightness doth not grace the  
day?

#### "YOU IN THEM I LOVE."

Stella, while now, by Honour's cruel might  
I am from you, light of my life, misled,  
And whiles,—fair you, my sun, thus overspread  
With absence' veil,—I live in Sorrow's night;  
If this dark place yet show like candle-light,  
Some Beauty's piece, as amber-coloured head,  
Milk hands, rose cheeks, or lips more sweet,  
more red;  
Or seeings jet-black but in blackness bright;  
They please,—I do confess they please,—mine  
eyes:  
But why? *because of you they models be;*  
Models, such be wood-globes of glistening  
skies:  
Dear, therefore be not jealous over me,  
If you hear that they seem my heart to move;  
Not them, O no! but *you in them I love.*  
(91)

#### THE TRANSFORMATION.

Transformed in show, but more transformed in  
mind,  
I cease to strive, with double conquest foiled;  
For (woe is me!) my powers all I find  
With outward force and inward treason spoiled:  
For from without came to mine eyes the blow,  
Whereto mine inward thoughts did faintly  
yield;  
Both these conspired poor Reason's overthrow:  
False in myself, thus have I lost the field;  
Thus are my eyes still captive to one sight;  
Thus all my thoughts are slaves to one thought  
still;  
Thus Reason to his servants yields his right;  
Thus is my power transformed to your will:  
What marvel then I take a woman's hue,  
Since what I see, think, know, is all but you!

Perhaps some find  
Stella's great powers that so confuse my mind.

O me, that eye  
Doth make my heart to give my tongue the  
lie!

Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,  
That in the very refuse of thy deeds  
There is such strength and warrantise of skill  
That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds ?  
Who taught thee how to make me love thee  
more

The more I hear and see just cause of hate ?  
O, though I love what others do abhor,  
With others thou should'st not abhor my  
state !

If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
More worthy I to be beloved of thee. (150)

REBEL SENSE AND REASON.

My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease ;  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please :  
My Reason, the Physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
Desire is death, which Physic did except :  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic-mad with evermore urest ;  
My thoughts and my discourse, as madmen's,  
are

At random from the truth vainly expressed ;  
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee  
bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.  
(147)

VIRTUE AND LOVE.

Love is my sin and thy dear Virtue hate !  
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving :  
O, but with mine compare thou thine own  
state,

And thou shalt find it merits not reproving ;  
Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,  
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments,  
And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine ;  
Robbed others' beds' revenues of their rents :  
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those  
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee :  
Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows  
Thy pity may deserve to pitied be :

If thou dost seek to have what thou dost  
hide,

By self-example mayest thou be denied !  
(142)

Since so mine eyes are subject to your sight,  
That in your sight they fix'd have my brain ;  
Since so my heart is fill'd with that light,  
That only light doth all my life maintain ;  
Since in sweet you all goods so richly reign,  
That where you are, no wish'd good can want ;  
Since so your living image lives in me,  
That in my self your self true love doth  
plant :

How can you him unworthy then decree,  
In whose chief part your worths implanted  
be ? (A. 102-3)

"REBEL SENSE" AND REASON.

If I could think how these my thoughts to  
leave,  
Or thinking still, my thoughts might have  
good end ;  
If rebel sense would reason's law receive,  
Or reason foiled would not in vain contend ;  
Then might I think what thoughts were best  
to think ;

Then might I wisely swim, or gladly sink :  
If either you would change your cruel heart,  
Or, cruel still, time did your beauty stain ;  
If from my soul this love would once depart,  
Or for my love I might some love obtain ;  
Then might I hope a change, or ease of mind,  
By your good help or in myself to find ;  
But since my thoughts in thinking still are  
spent,

With reason's strife by senses overthrown ;  
You fairer still and still more cruel bent,  
I loving still a love that loveth none ;  
I yield and strive, I kiss and curse the pain—  
Thought, reason, sense, time, you, and I  
maintain. (Sidera, 8)

VIRTUE AND LOVE.

A strife is grown between Virtue and Love,  
While each pretends that Stella must be his :  
Her eyes, her lips, her all, saith Love, do this,  
Since they do wear his badge, most firmly  
prove :

But Virtue thus that title doth disprove,  
That Stella,—O dear name !—that Stella is  
That virtuous soul, sure heir of heavenly bliss,  
Not this fair outside which our heart doth  
move :

And therefore, though her beauty and her grace  
Be Love's indeed, in Stella's self he may  
By no pretence claim any manner (of) place :  
Well, Love, since this demur our suit doth  
stay,

Let Virtue have that Stella's self ; yet thus,  
That Virtue but that body grant to us !  
(52)

## TRUE BEAUTY AND FALSE SEEING.

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine  
 eyes,  
 That they behold, and see not what they see ?  
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,  
 Yet what the best is take the worst to be :  
 If eyes, *corrupt by over-partial looks,*  
 Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,  
 Why of eyes' *falsehood hast thou forged hooks,*  
 Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied ?  
*Why should my heart think that a several plot,*  
*Which my heart knows the wide world's com-*  
*mon place ?*  
 Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,  
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face ?  
 In things right true my heart and eyes have  
 erred,  
 And to this false plague are they now trans-  
 ferred.  
 (137)

## TRUE BEAUTY AND FALSE SEEING.

It is most true that eyes are formed to serve  
 The inward light, and that the heavenly part  
 Ought to be king, from whose rules who do  
 swerve,  
 Rebels to nature, strive for their own smart :  
 It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart  
 An image is, which for ourselves we carve,  
 And, fools, adore in temple of our heart,  
 Till that good God make church and church-  
 man starve :  
 True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,  
 Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,  
 Which elements with mortal mixture breed :  
 True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,  
 And should in soul up to our country move :  
 True, and yet true—that I must Stella love.  
 (5)

One dominant conceit of Sidney's was in the identification of himself or his love with Cupid, and Stella with Venus. The Boy appears in a number of Sonnets. In Sonnet 40 he is the blind fool Love. He is the childish representative of Sidney, who played the fool with Penelope Devereux.

"In truth, O Love, with what a boyish mind  
 Thou didst proceed in thy most serious ways."

Like a child, looking babies in the eyes of Stella ; like a fool, playing bo-peep with her instead of playing the husband and marrying her. This conceit grew ticklesome when applied to Lady Rich at a later period. Shakspeare's 137th begins—

"Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes ?"

And here, as in the 149th Sonnet, the speaker adopts this character of the blind Cupid and turns it to quite another account. He takes the leading thought, but is not limited to Sidney's leading-strings. The lady has so greatly changed, and the feeling now expressed or simulated is no longer the true love of Sidney, but the pretended passion of Will Herbert as the subject of Shakspeare's Sonnets. It is in Sonnet 143 that we can most palpably see the divergence in the mode of treatment. Instead of the classical Venus and child we have the commonplace housewife and her babe, whom she sets down as she runs to catch her chickens.

"Love still a boy and oft a wanton is,"

as first line of Sidney's 73rd Sonnet, is the original of Shakspeare's 151st, which opens with—

"Love is too young to know what conscience is."

And Falstaff in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* exclaims, "Why, now is Cupid a child of conscience."

This infatuation, whether felt or feigned, real or assumed, is thus shown to be that of a youth who can be and is represented as a boy or a babe following after and crying for its mother. A position seriously impossible to the mature man

Shakespeare, but humorously possible when occupied by Herbert, who was so much younger than Lady Rich.

The subject of Sonnet 138 is "*Age in Love*." But there are two versions of this Sonnet, the original one having been printed in the year 1599 by Jaggard in the *Passionate Pilgrim*.

<p>When my Love swears that she is made of truth, I do believe her, though I know she lies ; That she might think me some untutored youth, Unlearned in the world's false subtleties ! Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young, Although she knows my days are past the best, Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue ; On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed ; But wherefore says she not she is unjust ? And wherefore say not I that I am old ? O, love's best habit is in seeming trust, And Age in love loves not to have years told : Therefore I lie with her and she with me, And in our faults by lies we flattered be.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Thorpé, 138.)</p>	<p>When my Love swears that she is made of truth, I do believe her, though I know she lies, That she might think me some untutored youth, Unskilful in the world's false forgeries : Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young, Although I know my years be past the best, I smiling credit her false-speaking tongue, Out-facing faults in love with love's ill rest : But wherefore says my Love that she is young ? And wherefore say not I that I am old ? O, love's best habit is a soothing tongue, And Age in love loves not to have years told : Therefore I'll lie with love, and love with me, Since that our faults in love thus smothered me.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Passionate Pilgrim.)</p>
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But if these two versions are carefully compared, it will be seen that the subject involves more than "Age in love," and that the second version was modified of set purpose to conceal a fact which was manifest in the first one. As amended it is made to look as though the "Age in love" was applicable to both lovers, and that both were telling lies on the same ground of fact. But if both were old there would be no inequality and no need of falsehood or disguise. That the Lady *was* old, or the elder, is certain. This is proved by the suppressed lines—

"But wherefore says my Love that *she is young* ?"  
Because

"Age in love loves not to have years told."

Elsewhere we find evidence of the speaker's youth in direct contrast with the lady's age. She is portrayed as the mother compared with him, the child who asks her to "PLAY the mother's part" in kissing him and being kind to him, who runs after her like a child crying, calling himself "*thy babe*." Therefore, the treatment of this same youth as "Age in love" must be an intentional blind, a mode of enhancing the jest for those who understood the allusion. The lady's age is the original reality aimed at ; hence the concealment of this, the subject of her lying, in the later version, by leaving out the allusion to her age—

"But wherefore says my Love that she is young ?"

When she tells lies about her truth (which turns on her age in line 9) he pretends to believe her, that she might think him young and *green*, although she knows his days are past the best. I take it that the allusion to his own years being past the best is an intended falsification of fact for the sake of the *lying* together. The first version says of the lying, *which is the lady's only* —

"I smiling credit her false-speaking tongue,  
Out-facing faults in love with love's ill rest."

And this last line was altered to—

*“ On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.”*

This suppression points to an intentional disguise for one of the persons concerned; and the other alteration, whereby the jest is made to appear more serious still, looks like an intended masking of the other person. By these changes the irony of the youth in love with age is made less probable, and the suppression of the “simple truth” on both sides leads to the conclusion that both of them represented “Age in love” who did not wish to have the truth confessed.

*“ Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,”*

only involved the speaker's youthfulness, his greenness, his implicit credence when the lady told lies respecting her own age.

*“ Although I know my years be past the best,”*

is one half of the double joke at which he smiles.

*“ But wherefore says my love that she is young ?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old ?”*

Why indeed? As if elderly people would woo a woman by saying so. The earlier copy shows the lies to have been on the score of the lady's age only; and why should that have been suppressed? Why should the Sonnet have been carefully corrected, and for the worse? In making the change the Poet loses the antithesis between *young* and *old*—the grain of salt that he liked to see sparkle in his lines; and the real subject of the lady's lies disappears altogether. There must have been private and particular reasons for generalizing thus vaguely.

It must have been apprehended that the line—

*“ But wherefore says my Love that she is young ?”*

might excite suspicion and the story be got at; another touch was needed to perfect the disguise. And so we catch the Poet, unless the change was made by Herbert himself, doing a bit of work analogous to that which has to be performed by the stealers of marked linen, viz. picking out the proof of ownership.

The speaker then is so young that his years, in contrast with the lady's age, can be treated as matter for a laugh in the sleeve; he is unmarried, and his Christian name is “Will.” All the testimony on the score of character unites with the other evidence in proof that this is young William Herbert, not William Shakspeare; he was a spirit of a different complexion, a man of another mould, and at the time *neither young enough to be the speaker with the humorous reading, nor old enough for the serious interpretation* hitherto accepted, he being just thirty-six, exactly “midway in this our mortal life.” At which period of perfect manhood and ripened power, his days could not possibly have been “past the best.” If he were the speaker the Sonnet would have no meaning. For he would not be lying in saying that he was not old, and the “*simple truth*” could not have been suppressed by his not admitting that he was old.

Critics have wasted time in pointing out that I make “Will” Herbert speak of himself as being old and the lady as being young, when Herbert himself was nineteen years of age, and Lady Rich was getting on for forty—“*the exact reverse*”



*of the actual positions imagined in the Sonnets.*" It is difficult to resist laughing in the face of such simplicity. All the irony intended turns on this reversal of the actual facts, as is the wont and nature of irony. There was no meaning apart from the antithesis, and there is no antithesis except in the speaker being young and the lady not young. The alteration proves the double intention.

By recovering the real relationship, we find the true position portrayed or assumed, for the purpose is that of the youth in love with a lady who is far older than himself, the same position and characters as in Sonnet 143. The two go together and corroborate each other.

"Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flattered be."

Such is the jest. For a jest it is, and little more. Nothing more to swear by. The only lying together is in telling the lies—she about her age and he about his pretended passion. There is no approach to making love here in any mood of criminal earnest, nor to the dignity of genuine lust, which is so often too terribly in earnest for any such elaborate jesting. In the first copy we read

"Therefore I'll lie with love and love with me,"

but this was altered to

"Therefore I lie with her and she with me."

A pun is introduced, and the sense is changed, the meaning being made grosser. The lying together on the subject of age is perverted and made personal. This alteration must have been made by the same hand that suppressed the evidence of the lady's age in changing the line, "But wherefore says my Love that she is young," when she was not, as an intentional disguise. This particular change is made in and by the grosser spirit of two. To my thinking, Sonnet 152 contains indubitable proof that the speaker is not a married man. It brings the question to an issue. He distinctly charges the lady with being married and untrue to her wedding bed and bond. Then he admits that he, too, is forsworn, and that she knows him to be so. But he says she is twice forsworn, in being false to her husband and false to him. And having said the worst of her, hurled at her the most damning charges, he turns on himself with a revulsion of feeling, determined to show himself as the most perjured oath-breaker of the two. Now, surely, we shall have it! He is about to prove, in bitterness of heart, that he is more perjured than she, and that his sins are of a deeper dye than hers. Therefore, one would have thought that, if a married man, and anxious for self-condemnation, desirous of showing himself in a still lower gulf of guilt, the first thing he would have done would be, to point out that he was *as bad as her in kind*, or that they were fitly matched. Instead of this—instead of a manly voice heavy with passion or dogged with determination to say the worst—we hear the treble of a youth, asking, "But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee, when I break twenty?" And what are the twenty oaths sworn and vows broken by him? Why, he has sworn that she was kind, loving, truthful, and fifty other pretty things, which are all lovers' lies; his perjury consisting of oaths in her praise. And this has been imagined to be Shakspeare speaking of himself, under the most self-culpatory circumstances. The married man who has

cruelly charged her with her crime, which would appear to have been committed for his sake, and then tried to turn the reproach from his cowardly self by a playful handling of the subject!

So is it with Sonnet 143, of which Steevens has remarked, "the beginning is at once pleasing and natural, but the conclusion of it is lame and impotent indeed. We attend to the cries of the infant, but we laugh at the loud blubbering of the great boy, Will." And well we might, if Shakspeare, who, in an earlier Sonnet, has painted the leaf of his life in autumnal tint, and appeared to have felt the evening of his day folding about him, and seen its shadows lengthening in the sunset, had here represented himself in love with, and stark mad for, a bold bad woman—by the image of a poor little infant, a tender child, toddling after its mammy, and crying for her apron-corner to hold by, and her kiss to still its whimpering discontent. This would be laughable, if not too lamentable. But Shakspeare did not write to be laughed at, nor did he in his riper years put forth what would, if he were the speaker, be pure maudlin, and the very degradation of pathos. The blunder of the imagery would have been almost worse than the criminal infatuation. This is not the personal wooing of the man who carried within him the furnace of passion, in which the swart lineaments and orient gorgeousness of Cleopatra glow superbly,—the lightnings that leap from out the huge cloudy sorrows of stormy old Lear,—the awful power that in Lady Macbeth can darken the moral atmosphere, past seeing the colour of blood,—the flashes of nether flame which play like serpent tongues about Othello's love, till they have licked up its life-springs.

The YOUTH of the speaker is demonstrable, and his name is "Will." Now, as the old Scotch servant informed his master when he flung away his wig, "*There is no a vale o' wigs on Kirrie Muir;*" so we have no great choice in the matter of "Wills." There are but two possible candidates, and they are "Will Herbert" and "Will Shakspeare." Will Herbert, the nephew of Philip Sidney, was a youth of nineteen when Sonnet 138 was printed in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, at which time Shakspeare was thirty-six years old. The inevitable conclusion is, that the speaker of these Latter Sonnets, whose name is "Will," was William Herbert, who was Master W. H. until he became the Earl of Pembroke on the death of his father in 1601.

The curious in such matters may find in Herbert's own Poems<sup>1</sup> proof that the writer of them is one in nature, age, and taste with the speaker of these Sonnets. There is proof in his own handwriting, so to say, that he was personally, or pretended to be, a sufferer from exactly such a passion as is here painted, and that he addressed a lady, the very same in character and kind of charm, as is here imaged by Shakspeare—not as an object of worship, but for the purpose of disparagement and depreciation. This was not the lady who afterwards became the celebrated Countess of Devonshire. That lady, we are told, was the object of Herbert's "chaste idolatry"; this lady of whom we speak was just the reverse. He has presented her picture in some lines replying to a friend who had flatly given his opinion of the lady, and wondered what the young Earl could see in her to admire—

<sup>1</sup> Poems, written by William, Earl of Pembroke, many of which are answered by Sir William Rudyard; with other poems written by them, occasionally and apart. 1650. Of these poems Mr. Hallam observes—"Some are grossly indecent, but they throw no light whatever on the Sonnets of Shakspeare."

“ One with admiration <sup>1</sup> told me,  
 He did wonder much and marvel,  
 (As, by chance, he did behold ye)  
 How I could become so servile  
 To thy beauty, which he swears  
 Every alehouse lattice wears.

Then he frames a second motion,  
 From thy revolting eyes,  
 Saying—such a wanton motion  
 From their lustre did arise,  
 That of force thou couldst not be  
 From the shame of women free ! ”

This is the lady of the Latter Sonnets, feature by feature ; her whole character summed up briefly with a perfect tally. Sonnet 131 says—

“ *Some say that thee behold,  
 Thy face hath not the power to make love groan.* ”

Here is the same *servility* to the beauty that is quite incommensurate in appearance to the effects which it produces—the beauty so accosting that it is merely a sign like that of an alehouse, which aptly expresses the “ wide world’s commonplace ” of Sonnet 137—the *SERVILITY* felt by the “ proud heart’s slave and vassal wretch ” of Sonnet 141. Then there is the very motion of those eyes so often dwelt on in the Sonnets, and, looking in at their windows, we see the same interior, the same fire aglow, the same picture of Paphos. Also he treats the lady after the same ironical fashion. In one Sonnet he asserts that he only loves her for her false adornments. One of Herbert’s poems, commencing “ Oh, do not tax me with a brutish love,” is alike in argument with Sonnet 141 ; and all through there is the same inexplicable infatuation, though this is rendered so much more powerfully by the hand of Shakspeare.

One of my critics, speaking of these Latter Sonnets, has said, “ We do not believe that Shakspeare played the pimp to his own dishonour, but we are afraid that he did *conceive* the dramatic situation.” This, of course, grants the dramatic rendering, but would leave it baseless, historically or otherwise, whereas the present reading supplies a foundation in identifiable fact without saddling the Poet with wantonly conceiving the situation for the sake of writing about an unreality.

As the matter was left, the youth of the speaker was more completely concealed, and there was far less chance of identifying him as “ Will ” Herbert, who was but nineteen years old when the Sonnet first appeared in print. And, as I read the matter, the elder “ Will ” got left in the lurch by his friend “ Will ” the younger, because the name of the speaker of these Sonnets is “ Will.” It is probable that there are reflections of this subject to be made out in the dramatic mirror of the time.

Shakspeare’s play of *As You Like It* belongs to the period, and in this we find a bit of by-play on the name of William in relation to two different persons.

*Touchstone.* How old are you, friend ?  
*Will.* Five-and-twenty, Sir.

<sup>1</sup> *I. e.* surprise.

*Touch.* A ripe age : is thy name William ?

*Will.* William, sir.

*Touch.* A fair name. Now you are not *ipse*, for I am he.

*Will.* Which he, sir ?

This is possibly an allusion to the two Wills concerned in the *Letter Sonnets*, and the difficulty of determining which was *Ipse*, as must have been foreseen by the "Will" who put the *Sonnets* into the press.

Then comes the question, "Art Rich?" Put to a poor country lout, it has not much meaning; poked at Herbert, the joke is enriched. This is a way Shakspeare had of making by-play for his Private Friends. The *Letter Sonnets* written for Herbert were begun when he was "Master Will" in 1599, and that was as near as need be for the date of the play. Several likenesses crop up, more particularly where Silvius, the disdained lover of Phœbe, brings a love-letter from her to Rosalind, and Rosalind charges Silvius with writing the letter. There is not the least reason for supposing that Silvius does not speak the simple truth when he says he has "never heard it yet." But Rosalind, in spite of his protestations, still assumes that he devised and wrote it, and says, "What, to make thee an instrument and play false strains upon thee!" Eh, Master Will? But that is a palpable hit! Again, the nature of some of the *Letter Sonnets* could not be more aptly described than by Rosalind's characterization of the letter as containing "*Ethiophe words, blacker in their effect than in their countenance*," just as we find them in the *Sonnets* of "Will." Rosaline and Hermia are both denounced as Ethiops; and it is said that the use of such "*Ethiophe words*" was a "giant rude invention" that could not have been born of woman's brain. It is curious, too, to notice in connection with the "*black wires*" of *Sonnet 130*, that Phœbe complains of Rosalind in disguise—

"He said mine eyes were black, and MY HAIR BLACK !

And now I do remember, scorned at me :

I marvel why I answered not again !"

As if, like Lady Rich's, her hair was NOT black, but only called so to spite her !  
The lines—

"If the scorn of your bright eyne  
Have power to raise such love in mine,"

contain an echo to the sentiment and sound of those in *Sonnet 150*—

"If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
More worthy I to be beloved of thee."

There is a passage or two in *Much Ado About Nothing* which may cast a side-light upon the name and the person of "Will" in the *Sonnets*. It was first conjectured by Mr. Hunter that the character of Benedick was drawn for William Herbert. We find there is a reference made to the initial letter of a name that is not in the play, and therefore to a person out of sight. "Hey ho!" sighs Beatrice, and Margaret asks if that is for a hawk, a horse, or a husband? Beatrice replies, "For the letter that begins them all—H." Now she is in love with Benedick, whose name does not begin with "H." If for Benedick we read Herbert, we make out the meaning of it, not otherwise. Those who have watched Shakspeare secretly working from real life will have no difficulty in taking this initial H to mean Herbert.

I also think there may be a *double entendre* on the name of Lady Rich. Speaking of HIS wife, in case HE should ever marry, Benedick says—" *Rich she shall be, that's certain ; an excellent musician ; and her hair shall be of what colour it please God.*" Be this as it may, we must glance at the character of Benedick-Herbert, who is pre-eminently a jester. "He is the prince's jester." He has the fancy for assuming strange disguises. Claudio says of him, "*Nay, but his jesting spirit which is now crept into a lutestring!*" "The man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him, by *some large jests he will make.*" Such, for instance, as his suggestion of the parody of Sidney's Sonnets, and the jesting at Stella's own self-caricature! Now, as the name of Herbert was Will, and as he is the youthful "Will" of the Sonnets, it is obvious that the name of Will is also punned on in the play.

" *But what's your Will?*  
Your answer, sir, is *enigmatical* :  
*But, for my Will, my Will is, your good Will*  
*May stand with ours, this day to be conjoined,*" &c.—Act V. sc. iv.

With a further likeness to line 12, Sonnet 151, which contains a pun that is reproduced in the play. If Benedick be Herbert, then the original model for Beatrice is Lady Rich. She who had no living likeness for brilliant wit and waywardness, and dare-devilry, and will. Beatrice is a repetition of Rosaline, Sidney's Stella with her eyes and "brow of Egypt." She who was the "Attending Star" on Cynthia in the earlier play is here born under a merry star. "My mother cried ; but then *there was a star danced*, and under that I was born." The star that danced was Stella's. Benedick says, "Till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come into my grace. *Rich she shall be, that's certain ; an excellent musician (the lady in Sonnet 128 is called 'My Music')* ; and her hair shall be of what colour it please God." "Fame," says Sidney, "doth even grow rich, meaning my Stella's name." And it was so famed both as Rich and Stella that it could not be used without significance.

Now if we take the date of 1599 for the year in which these Sonnets were written for Herbert, that was also about the time of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, a play unmentioned by Meres, which was certainly not earlier than 1599. And here, again, we may see reflections of the Latter Sonnets in the dramatic mirror. The title of this play might be "Lust in Love." The main motive of the huge comedy is to show Falstaff in love, or rather to make a merry mockery of his lustful humour when fattened for public exhibition. "*I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease*" (II. i.). The subject is that "Lust in action" which is portrayed in the Sonnets, whether laughed at in jest or summed up seriously in two of them. And this is Shakspeare's moral of the play as proclaimed in the Song of the Fairies—

LUST.

" *Fie on sinful Fantasy,*  
*Fie on Lust and Luxury!*  
*Lust is but a bloody fire,*  
*Kindled with unchaste desire,*  
*Fed in heart ; whose flames aspire,*  
*As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.*

*Pinch him, fairies, mutually;  
Pinch him for his villainy;  
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,  
Till candles, and star-light, and moon-shine be out."*

It is credibly enough reported that the great jest of Falstaff's false love was concocted by request of the Queen. In the same way my suggestion is that the same subject of lust or false love was treated by request of Herbert in the Latter Sonnets as a continuation of Sidney's wooing of Lady Rich. We see how the writer had Sidney in mind. When Falstaff exclaims at sight of Mrs. Ford, "*Have I caught (thee), heavenly jewel?*" he is quoting the first line of Sidney's second Sonnet—

*"Have I caught my heavenly jewel?"*

The Sonnet says :—

*"Love is too blind to know what conscience is :  
Yet who knows not conscience is born of love."*

And Falstaff in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* exclaims, "Why, now is Cupid a child of conscience; he makes restitution! Speak I like Herne the Hunter?" Not in the least, one would say, but very like the Sonnet.

The love without cause or reason, and the portrait of Age in love, are both reproduced in Falstaff's letter to Mrs. Page—"Ask me no reason why I love you; for though love use reason for his precision, he admits him not for his councillor. You are not young, no more am I; go to then, there's sympathy. You are merry, so am I; ha! ha! then there's more sympathy."

Two of the Sonnets got into print in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, and if the cause of that were the laxity of Herbert, as one may justly suspect, this is possibly aimed at in the play, where there is an allusion to Falstaff's love-letters being printed. "*He will print them, out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press.*" This passage is underlined with a meaning beyond an application to Falstaff's letters. The joke is doubled out of the play. Two of the Sonnets amongst the Private Friends had been put into print, and the likeliest person to have allowed this was Master Will Herbert.

Now, as before said, it is one of the fantastic follies of Mr. Furnivall, derived solely from misreading the Sonnets, that Shakspeare personally suffered a "Hell of time" as the result of his "sins of blood" and "slips in sensual mire," with his dark doxy of the Latter Sonnets. He further maintains, that Shakspeare's fall into the dirt of degradation led to his sounding the profoundest depths of tragedy, and that the furnace-fire of Othello's jealousy and Lear's raging inferno of fierce passion were his own personal "Hell of time" turned inside out! This personal experience and expiatory suffering are assumed to have preceded and to account for the "*Unhappy* third period" in Shakspeare's life, in which his greatest work was done, and he produced his *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. In checking this insane conceit that Shakspeare's genius culminated in the depth of his moral degradation, Mr. Spedding administered a grave rebuke in a smiling manner when he said, "*I should like to have a period of unhappiness like that!*" The same writer tells Mr. Furnivall, that the succession of Shakspeare's Plays and Periods is very much like what we might have naturally expected, "*Without inventing any extraordinary spiritual trials in his private life*

to account for the changes." We are now able to demonstrate Mr. Furnivall's fallacy and completely demolish his inference. The comparative process proves the relation of the Latter Sonnets to the play of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*; the subject of false love or lust in love is the same in both, and the moral is identical in each. Two of the Sonnets supposed to tell the dark story against the Poet's character came into print in 1599, offering good evidence that the group to which they belonged was then extant. Thus in 1599 the sin had been committed, the private tragedy was performed, and the consequent unhappy period had commenced with all its torments of remorse. Now, no Shakspearean who has any insight into our Poet's workmanship, supported by other adequate knowledge, would venture to date this drama earlier than 1599. Delius says 1600. The comparative process tends to show that it belongs to or follows the year of those Herbert Sonnets which were extant in 1599. And the *Merry Wives* contains the comedy of Shakspeare's unmitigated mirth. In this the fullest ripeness of his humour is to be found for the first time, and the comedy is unchastened by a tear of sorrow, and untempered by a single sigh of sadness. The play is wholly an uproarious creation of mirth, the loudest laugh that Shakspeare ever had. It reeks with jollity as Falstaff did with fatness, and is as huge in its hilarity. And this drama, which is the one that is entirely free from sadness, free from any sign of conscious guilt, remorse, or melancholy memories, would be the first product of the previous "Hell of time," supposed to have been suffered by the Poet in his Sonnets! Indeed, the *Merry Wives*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*—four perfect, cordial-hearted comedies—are the blithe plays that followed the Sonnets of 1599; and these come between them and the period of Shakspeare's mightiest workmanship, attained at last in his supremest tragedies, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. So much for another foolish application to Shakspeare and his Plays of a false inference derived from the autobiographical misinterpretation of the Sonnets!

According to the actual facts, not fancies nor fabrications, Shakspeare's Sonnets were first commenced on the model of Sidney's. His arguments for marriage were taken bodily from the *Arcadia*, and reproduced in verse with an application to the circumstances of Southampton. This fact is indisputable, and established for ever. The same thing occurs with a difference in the Latter Sonnets. Here we find the like imitation of Sidney; the same borrowing of his argument; the same eyes in mourning, and the same blackness above all other beauty which had been celebrated by him. The lady aimed at is the one, the incomparable Stella, who had no living likeness; whose complexion was so rare that it set a new fashion in beauty; unique enough to be inimitable.

The Sonnets were written in an emulative continuation of Sidney's, and that which differentiates them from Sidney's is mainly to be found in the later character and characteristics of the same Lady Rich who was besung by both with twenty years between. In the Latter as in the earlier Sonnets, those on lust equally with those on love, we are enabled to set foot on the ground of fact with the aid of Sidney's Sonnets. Stella is further identified as Lady Rich by name; again in imitation of Sidney in his punning on the name of Rich. Moreover, the black beauty of Stella is doubly identified by means of her moral blackness conventionally considered and publicly proclaimed. She is trebly identified by her age (which was suppressed and smuggled out of sight in the second

version of Sonnet 138) in relation or in opposition to the youth of the speaker, who is characterized as the child in love, and whose name is Will. Lady Rich is identifiably portrayed as the woman of "proud heart" so curiously betrayed by her brother as one who needed to be looked after; she who was so "becoming of things ill," that in the "very refuse" of her deeds her *worst* exceeded "all *best*." Such was the strength and warrant of her skill and glamourie.

My explanation of the Latter Sonnets, then, is, that they were written for Will Herbert in 1599, just after the appearance of certain Sonnets and Songs of Sidney's, which were printed for the first time in the 1598 edition of his *Arcadia*; that they were written on the same person as subject who had been the object of Sidney's Sonnets, at the suggestion of Master Will Herbert, the nephew of Sidney; that Herbert is the speaker whose name is "Will," and who is portrayed as the youth in love with Age in Sonnets 138—143. That Sidney's "Stella" is to be identified as the lady with the mourning eyes in Sonnets 127 and 132, compared with Sidney's; that she is not only one with Stella in her likeness to nature and the unique unlikeness of both to anybody else, but can also be identified by the puns upon her name of Rich which culminate in Sonnet 135, where the speaker describes her as being Rich in Will, and desires that she will complete the antithesis by making him Will in Rich.

My further explanation is, that the Sonnets thus suggested were written in a capping imitation of Sidney's; that the assumed infatuation of "Will" (Herbert) is a capping imitation of Sidney's passion; and that so far as the passion is unreal, the Sonnets assume the character of a burlesque on Sidney's founded on the changes in the character of Stella.

Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother, had already characterized her brother's "Love-lays" addressed to Stella as "Merry Riddles"; and here we have another "merry riddle" on the same subject of bewitched affection suggested by her son, in which the likenesses are close enough to Sidney's Sonnets to determine the nature of Shakspeare's. I would not call Shakspeare's Sonnets merely an intentional caricature of Sidney's Sonnets. It was the lady herself who had caricatured the likeness drawn of her in early life by Sidney. They are not simply an imitation of Sidney's, nor a plagiarism, nor a parody, but a mixture of all three, only to be understood when we know that Stella, the same person with the changed character, is the lady aimed at, at least as the subject if not the object of these Sonnets. For example, in Sidney's lines from *Sidera*, on p. 249, which were first printed in 1598, there is an allusion to a future possibility that is ineffably pathetic, a note as piercing as the sudden cry in the nightingale's song—

' If either you would change your cruel heart,  
Or *cruel still*, *Time did your beauty stain* ;  
If from my soul this love would once depart,  
Or for my love some love I might attain,  
Then might I hope a change, or ease of mind  
By your good help, or in myself to find."

And when Shakspeare wrote Time *had* stained the brilliant beauty, but she was "cruel still," and as tyrannous in the waning lustre of her fading charms, her "inefficiency," as any of the younger ones, "whose beauties proudly make them cruel."

It has now been demonstrated that the Latter Sonnets are not merely what



Professor Minto (who followed in the footprints of Henry Brown) has called "exercises of skill undertaken in a spirit of wanton defiance and derision of COMMONPLACE"! At the same time, the identification of their real *motif* in relation to Sidney's proves that they contain no personal revelation of the Poet's life or love.

A few last words on Mary Fytton as the Dark Lady of these Latter Sonnets. The odds are a thousand to one against her in favour of Penelope Rich. But I have no personal bias in the matter. If Mr. Tyler could show that there were two women of the same character within and complexion without as Lady Rich; if he could prove that Mary Fytton was an infamous married woman in 1599, my interpretation of the Sonnets on the dramatic theory would still hold the field, even if Lady Rich were proved to be the unfit 'un. The speaker would still be "Will" by name, and I should still contend that he was "Will" Herbert for whom these Latter Sonnets were written. But this has yet to be done.

Mr. Tyler's contention is, that Mary Fytton was Shakspeare's paramour in 1599; that she was then the known breaker of her marriage vows, the "bay where all men ride," the "wide world's common place;" a harlot whose philtre of her physical charms had been drunken by her lovers to the dregs; a false, a foul, and fallen woman, abhorred by others, who was in the "very refuse" of her evil "deeds"; that she was then, in 1599, as the Sonnet shows, old enough to be laughed at as "Age in love." And Mr. Tyler is guileless enough to suppose that two years later William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke, could be charged with seducing her, and that he was put into prison for begetting her with child! He does not explain how the child could be sworn to Herbert! Why not to Shakspeare, or even to her own husband?

Mr. Tyler has failed to show the same caution that was exercised by the negro who, on being asked the conundrum, "Who was the father of Eve's first child?" replied, "Who did Adam suspect?" He has no doubt that the child was Herbert's; that the mother was Shakspeare's Mistress; that she was the married wife of somebody else; that she was still a maid of honour, a great favourite of the Queen's, and still known at Court in 1600 by her maiden name of Fytton. But if Mary Fytton had been one in character with the Dark Lady in 1599, when two of these Sonnets were printed, it is for ever impossible that she could have fathered a child upon Lord Pembroke in 1601. *Credat Julius!* And Mr. Tyler adduces no evidence whatever to suggest that Mary Fytton was a married woman of immoral character in the refuse of her deeds; no evidence of her having been either married or divorced in 1600, when she figured at Court under her own maiden name, and was in high favour with the Queen; no allusions to her being black-eyed or swarthy of complexion. Moreover, if Mrs. Fytton had been the "Cause" of Herbert's disgrace and imprisonment, if she did bear a child to him in 1601, Herbert's passion must have been real and fruitful; but that would not then be the passion portrayed in the Latter Sonnets.

The letter from Sir Edward Fytton, Mrs. Fytton's father, written January 29, 1599, compared with another letter of August 5, 1600, as quoted by Mr. Tyler,<sup>1</sup> appears to tell directly against his interpretation. A sum of £1200

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare's Sonnets*. Fac-simile photographed from the First Quarto, and published by C. Praetorius, 14 Clareville Grove, Hereford Square, London.

seems to have been due to Sir Edward Fytton for service in Ireland. This being left standing over, was assigned by him to his daughter as a marriage-portion ("her porçon")—obviously *when she should be married!* The money remained in the hands of the Irish treasurer, Sir Henry Wallop, an objection having been made to paying it over to Mrs. Fytton on the ground that "a good discharge" could not be obtained. Sir Edward protested that a *sufficient discharge* had already been given in accordance with the terms prescribed by Sir Henry Wallop. Here the difficulty about paying the money intended for a marriage portion evidently arose from the lady's not being married, and consequently from the absence of the proper person to give the legal receipt and quittance. And so as an unmarried woman she could father a child on Herbert a year later, and he could be expected to marry her.

The Earl of Pembroke on being examined, "confesseth to the fact" that he is the guilty one, but he "*utterly renounceth all marriage.*" This suffices to show there was some suggestion of marriage, and to prove that Mary was marriageable, therefore not married at the time. All the evidence points to her not being married, and to her being *marriageable* in 1601, when Herbert made his double declaration, and therefore to the impossibility of her being the faithless married woman of the Sonnets. Besides which, if it could be demonstrated that she had been married, and was Herbert's mistress in 1600, that would not prove her to have been Shakspeare's trull the year or several years previously.

Mary Fytton, born in 1578, was but twenty-one in the year that Sonnet 138 appeared in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, when no whisper had been breathed against her, and no warrant given for an unmanly attempt to fly-blow her maiden fame and taint her character before the time with any such mental maggots as these. Mr. Tyler's unfounded charge against Mary Fytton and Shakspeare is more indecent than anything in Brown's indictment. Yet the parrots of the press will hail this as the solution of a problem, and are already crying "Pretty Polly"! At present, however, any link between Shakspeare and Mary Fytton has to be forged by means of a false inference, in defiance of facts the most fatal to the theory.

It would have been far less grossly improbable if Mr. Tyler had maintained the hypothesis that Shakspeare wrote the Latter Sonnets on William Herbert's amour with Mary Fytton, instead of making them personal to the Poet himself, and thus becoming responsible for the puerile suggestion that such a worthless wanton as is portrayed by Shakspeare in 1599 could be seduced by Herbert in 1600, and become the cause of his being sent to prison in 1601 as the father of her child. But the Brownites will clutch at any delusion in the blind belief that the Sonnets must be autobiographical.

Whatever the *object* of the Sonnets, the starry lady with the mourning eyes, whose blackness was above all beauty, the Lascivious Grace, the "fair woman with a black soul," the lady whose name of Rich is punned upon by "Will" in Sonnets 135-6, remains the subject of Shakspeare's Latter Sonnet, Mary Fytton and all other sirens, swarthy or otherwise, notwithstanding. It is not the name of Fytton but Rich that "flesh" rises at, when it is content to be her "poor" drudge (Sonnet 151). It is "Rich in Will" and Will in Rich, not Fytton (Sonnets 135-6). And in the true Shakspearean antithesis, to the "poor soul" of Sonnet 146 the name is "Rich," not Fytton. It was Lady Rich that

Sidney loved and wrote about, not Mary Fytton; and Shakspeare's Sonnets follow his.

Further, the lady of the Latter Sonnets is the same, feature for feature, as Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*; identical in character and complexion, her "light condition in a beauty dark," her sumptuous sexual grace, her wayward wanton wilfulness, and imperious tyranny; therefore *the original of both was known to Shakspeare as early as 1591*. This could not have been Mary Fytton, who was *then a girl of thirteen*. But Rosaline is Stella by nature and by name as the moon's "attending star,"—like Lady Rich at the Court of Cynthia,—to whom Biron says—

" We number nothing that we spend for you,  
Our duty is so *rich*, so infinite,  
That we may do it still without accompt."

And again—

" Your capacity  
Is of t' at nature, that to your huge store,  
Wise things seem foolish, and *rich* things seem poor."

And such is the lady addressed in Sonnets 135-6,—which should be closely compared with the play,—who is "rich in will," "large and spacious" in Will, and of limitless capacity; "one that will do the deed though Argus were her eunuch and her guard" (III. i.).

There is yet that last trump-card to play which, as in the case of the Sonnet on "Barley-Break," suffices to win the game.

The argument all through these Latter Sonnets is more or less Sidney's, though not always drawn from his Sonnets nor his prose. In the fifth song of *Astrophel and Stella* her poet threatens to turn round on Lady Rich, and put out the glory of her picture that he has painted—"stain her white with vagabonding shame," unsay all that he has sworn of her lovable beauty, and proclaim to all the world that in loving such a woman so blindly, so madly, he himself must have been insane! He tells her "*the same key can open which can lock up a treasure*." He will strip her of the false feathers in which she has soared sky-high on the wings of his earlier verse. Feature by feature he will disfigure and defame her, he who had spent himself so fruitlessly in her praise. He calls her a thief. "Rich in all joys," she robs him of his joy. He denounces her as a rebel and a murderer. He charges her with being a tyrant and a traitor. She is a witch, and worse. She is a devil. But it is necessary to reprint the entire song, which is dark with "Ethiophe words."

" While favour fed my hope, delight with hope was brought;  
Thought waited on delight, and speech did follow thought;  
Then grew my tongue and pen records unto thy glory,  
I thought all words were lost that were not spent of thee;  
I thought each place was dark but where thy lights would be,  
And all ears worse than deaf that heard not out thy story.

I said thou wert most fair, and so indeed thou art;  
I said thou wert most sweet, sweet poison to my heart;  
I said my soul was thine, O that I then had lied;  
I said thine eyes were stars, thy breast the milky way,  
Thy fingers Cupid's shafts, thy voice the angel's lay:  
And all I said so well, as no man it denied.

But now that hope is lost, unkindness kills delight ;  
 Yet thought and speech do live, though metamorphosed quite,  
 For rage now rules the reins which guided were by pleasure ;  
 I think now of thy faults, who late thought of thy praise ;  
 That speech falls now to blame, which did thy honour raise :  
 The same key open can, which can lock up a treasure !

Then thou, whom partial heavens conspired in one to frame  
 The proof of Beauty's worth, th'inheritrix of fame,  
 The mansion state of bliss, and just excuse of lovers ;  
 See now those feathers pluckt, wherewith thou flewest most high :  
 See what clouds of reproach shall dark thy honour's sky :  
 Whose own fault cast him down hardly high state recovers.

And, O my Muse, though oft you lulled her in your lap,  
 And then, a heavenly child, gave her ambrosian pap,  
 And to that brain of hers your kindest gifts infused ;  
 Since she, disdainning me, doth you in me disdain,  
 Suffer not her to laugh, while both we suffer pain :  
 Princes in subjects' wrong must deem themselves abused !

Your client poor myself, shall Stella handle so :  
 Revenge ! Revenge ! my Muse ! defiance' trumpet blow ;  
 Threaten ! what may be done, yet do more than you threaten !  
 Ah, my suit granted is, I feel my breast doth swell ;  
 Now, child, a lesson new you shall begin to spell ;  
 Sweet babes must babies have, but shrewed girls must be beaten.

Think now no more to hear of warm fine-odoured snow,  
 Nor blushing lilies, nor pearls' ruby-hidden row,  
 Nor of that golden sea, whose waves in curls are broken ;  
 But of thy soul, so fraught with such ungratefulness,  
 As where thou soon might'st help, most faith dost most oppress ;  
 Ungrateful, who is called, the worst of evils is spoken.

Yet worse than worst, I say thou art a Thief—a Thief,  
 Now God forbid ! a Thief ! and of worst thieves the chief :  
 Thieves steal for need, and steal but goods which pain recovers,  
 But thou, Rich in all joys, dost rob my joys from me,  
 Which cannot be restored by time or industry :  
 Of foes the spoil is evil, far worse of constant lovers.

Yet—gentle English thieves do rob, but will not slay,  
 Thou English-murdering Thief, wilt have hearts for thy prey :  
 The name of Murderer now on thy fair forehead sitteth,  
 And even while I do speak, my death-wounds bleeding be,  
 Which, I protest, proceed from only cruel thee :  
 Who may, and will not save, murder in truth committeth.

But murder, private fault, seems but a toy to thee :  
 I lay then to thy charge unjustest tyranny,  
 If rule, by force, without all claim, a Tyrant showeth ;  
 For thou dost lord my heart, who am not born thy slave,  
 And, which is worse, makes me most guiltless torments have :  
 A rightful prince by unright deeds a tyrant groweth.

Lo, you grow proud with this, for tyrants make folk bow :  
 Of foul rebellion then I do appeach thee now,  
 Rebel by Nature's law, Rebel by law of Reason :  
 Thou, sweetest subject wert, born in the realm of love,  
 And yet against thy prince thy force dost daily prove :  
 No virtue merits praise, once touched with blot of treason.

But valiant rebels oft in fools' mouths purchase fame :  
 I now then stain thy white with vagabonding shame,  
 Both rebel to the son and vagrant from the mother ;  
 For wearing Venus' badge in every part of thee,  
 Unto Diana's train thou, runaway, didst flee :  
 Who faileth one is false, though trusty to another.

What, is not this enough ? nay, far worse cometh here ;  
 A Witch, I say, thou art, though thou so fair appear ;  
 For, I protest, my sight never thy face enjoyeth,  
 But I in me am changed, I am alive and dead ;  
 My feet are turned to roots, my heart becometh lead :  
 No witchcraft is so evil as which man's mind destroyeth !

Yet Witches may repent ; thou art far worse than they :  
 Alas that I am forced such evil of thee to say !  
 I say thou art a Devil, though clothed in angel's shining ;  
 For thy face tempts my soul to leave the heaven for thee,  
 And thy *words of refuse* do pour even hell on me :  
 Who tempt, and tempting plague, are devils in true defining.

You, then, ungrateful Thief, you murdering Tyrant, you,  
 You Rebel runaway, to lord and lady untrue,  
 You Witch, you Devil,—alas ! you still of me beloved,  
 You see what I can say ; mend yet your froward mind,  
 And such skill in my Muse, you, recouiled, shall find,  
 That all these cruel words your praises shall be proved."

*Astrophel and Stella, Song V.*

Thus we see that the blackening of Stella's character by abuse was first performed by Sidney's own pen. And *this was one of the poems that were printed for the first time in the edition of 1598.* Here, then, we at last attain the starting-point of the Herbert Sonnets for following them on the track of Sidney's.

When Shakespeare wrote Stella had fulfilled in real earnest all that her poet and lover has here charged her with in his mad unmeaning or unmeasuring mood. The fact was notorious at the time, that Stella had become the blackened beauty in real life, as painted in the Latter Sonnets. Sidney's "*words of refuse*" had been realized by her in the "*refuse of her deeds*,"—the very language of Sidney being thus intensified by Shakespeare in his 150th Sonnet.

Of course if Penelope Rich be the lady of these Sonnets, she is not the Lady Rich of Sidney's love. Time and the turn of things have had their way. She is now getting on for forty, although one of those who never do feel forty. The lustres of youth, including her hair, have somewhat dimmed ; the splendour of her beauty has been doubly tarnished. Besides, it was not the writer's cue to praise, the description was not intended to flatter. He never meant to laud the golden garniture of her sunshiny head—the "yellow locks that shone so bright and long" in Spenser's verse, and glowed so in Sidney's eyes. He does not bring forward that "glistering foil" of her hair in contrast with the blackness of her eyes ; that is only, though very markedly, implied. Her cheeks also are compared to the "grey cheeks of the east," and the "sober west" in their faded paleness, having lost the young red that used to flush up when the smile took its rosy rise from the cupid-cornered mouth, and suffused them in a soft auroral bloom, "as of rose-leaves a little stirred" with the warm breath of Sidney's love. This is Lady Rich with the spring-freshness gone, the blushing graces withdrawn. Lady Rich in the remnant of her Loveliucess and refuse of her

deeds, not merely the refuse of Sidney's wild and whirling words, the deepening shadows of her character made it impossible, had he been so minded, for Shakspeare to laud her like Sidney had done, as "*that virtuous soul, sure heir of heavenly bliss*" / and "*rich in those gifts which give the eternal crown.*" Nor did he look on her through Sidney's eyes. He had seen and heard of her later gifts and graces. Yet, in spite of the touch of time, and the waste of a passionate life in her intense face—in spite of the descriptions which so tend to defeat the image set up by Sidney—we cannot but recognize the lady of the *mourning* eyes, the complexion beyond the reach of Art, and know her by the original likeness that passes all likeness of imitation. Changed and changing as she is, there is all the old fire, and in her plainness she is proudly cruel as those who are in the first blush of their budding-time. And the black eyes remain imperial as of old in their infatuating charm ; cunning as ever in their black art—full of the old spells, with a power to haunt through life—like the weird eyes of a dream.

It must be confessed that Shakspeare betrays great boyishness in thus entering into the other boy's jesting mood, as if this were one aspect of that Elizabethan boyishness which characterizes some of the men whom we picture mentally each with an arm around the other's neck. Sidney in his love was just a beautiful boy ; as such he failed to marry and man his Stella. In his life and death he was a boy-like hero. In his poetry he remains an immortal boy. But boyish humour is apt to degenerate into coarseness and horse-play.

Shakspeare certainly did play the boy for Herbert,—he being thirty-six years of age himself,—and may have thought afterwards that he had played the fool for his amusement. But at the same time he also plays the man. He nowhere plays the pimp or pander to the passion, whether we look upon it as real or only assumed for the purpose of Sonnetting.

I have now presented the evidence and demonstrated the fact beyond all question or cavilling for those who are free to face it and are capable of forming an accurate opinion, that Shakspeare's Latter Sonnets, like his first, were founded on Sidney's. I have shown that he has adopted Sidney's themes, his moods, his hints, and at times his thoughts and expressions, and turned them to ulterior account in giving another version of the same subject—as if Herbert had pitted the one Poet against the other, who was to write of the same lady under the changed circumstances. These themes begin with the lady who made blackness beautiful with her eyes in mourning, the extension of the theme by Shakspeare being shown by continuing that blackness into the moral domain, and sonnetting her as beautiful in the blackness of her character and the "refuse of her deeds." It has been shown that the lady is the same by the nature of her complex charm—her starry eyes, her potency of sexual power, her boundless capacity of will, and the puns upon her name of "Rich," as well as by the allusions to "Ste'la" in her later years ; Stella as the proudly cruel tyrant, the fatal temptress, the murderous thief, the manhood-melting witch, the devil in angel-guise. Theme after theme, including that of desire or lust, and the solemn address to the soul, have been identified as Sidney's. And we must sink down to the nethermost depth of nincompoopery to suppose that Shakspeare in the plenitude of his powers, at the time when his original faculty was in its full consummate flower, when his art was supreme, and his genius had come to the perfect orb of its never-waning glory, would *turn back again to imitate or mimic,*

*burlesque and satirize, Sidney, in what would look like a set of school boy exercises written in an old copybook if he were the speaker in these Latter Sonnets, making most incredible confessions on an amour of his own; confiding them to his private Diary or his "private friends," and at the same time obviously drawing the subject-matter from the Sonnets of Sidney, and exaggerating his exaggeration, feature by feature, line by line, in Sonnet after Sonnet! That is simply inconceivable, and, as the metaphysicians say, totally incapable of being positively imaged. In thus trying to think of our Poet sitting in sackcloth, self-dishonoured, self-dethroned, in the place where he had dug the grave of his own good repute for honesty, manliness, common sense, and the shrewdest sagacity, and deliberately buried it with his own hands, we should be simply and unnecessarily damning ourselves, not Shakspeare.*

But he HAS gone back to outdo Sidney. He HAS taken his cues from Sidney. He has adopted arguments, imagery, and puns from Sidney. He has reproduced the beauty in black, the raven eyes that mourned in black, the black stars that were the eyes of Sidney's Stella; he has painted her as black all over, as "black as hell, as dark as night," after she had somewhat realized the extravagant declarations of Sidney. He has likewise punned upon the lady's married name of Rich, in obviously intentional imitation of Sidney. In short, he has responded to an *encore* and a recall made for Sidney. All this would be rigorously impossible without some other purpose than that of wooing a wanton for himself with Sonnets that could not have served his turn. Sidney's Sonnets had been published, and were better known than his own. They were well known to the "private friends" for whom Shakspeare's were written. The satire of allusions to personal character could not be recognized nor the hints taken except by those who were familiar with Sidney's, with Stella herself, her complexion, age, and character, when she had become the black star, the breaker of marriage vows, and the skilful political plotter in later life. Therefore my final conclusion is, that the Latter Sonnets were composed at William Herbert's request on the same subject as Sidney's, with the variations introduced by Lady Rich's later life and character. Such is the riddle read at last.

It is a matter of indifference to my present argument whether there was any liaison or not betwixt Herbert and Lady Rich; the view that there was could not be successfully combated on the score of reputation, as he was a libertine and she a Light-o'-Love. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Lady Rich had five children after leaving her first husband's bed, whereas Lord Mountjoy only acknowledged and provided for three of them.

But it is enough for my purpose to show that Stella is the person covertly aimed at by "Will" Herbert as speaker of the Latter Sonnets, which show the *reverse* to the *obverse* of the same poetic coinage. If there was any real infatuation, then Shakspeare has laughed at and made fun of the passion professed by Herbert, as in Sonnets 138 and 143; he has fought against it in Sonnets 131, 137, 148, and he has seriously rebuked it in Sonnets 129 and 146.

In reply to one of Languet's letters Sidney wrote—

"Alas, have I not pain enough, my friend,  
Upon whose breast a fiercer gripe<sup>1</sup> doth tire  
Than did on him who first stole down the fire,  
While Love on me doth all his quiver spend,—

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<sup>1</sup> "Gripe doth tire" = Harpy doth flesh it-self.

But with your RHUBARB-WORDS ye must contend,  
 To grieve me worse,—in saying that desire  
 Doth plunge my well-formed soul even in the mire  
 Of sinful thoughts, which do in ruin end!"

And in Sonnets 129, 146, and others, Shakspeare writes as if he were administering HIS medicine in the character of Languet.

But it is not necessary to assume one, and it is certain that the Sonnets could not have promoted any love-suit with the lady; enough that the themes are based upon Sidney's.

Whatsoever the confusion outside of the Sonnets, Shakspeare has left us a summing-up by the best of all judges—himself—within. He tells us that the long early series was written on love in truth, and on truth in love. He is just as emphatic in showing that the subject of the Latter Sonnets is lust or Falsehood in Love. I regret having to show that Shakspeare should have been induced to parody Sidney's Sonnets in this way. But there is the fact, and no help for it. That, at least, is no moot question henceforth. The thing was done indubitably and indelibly. This remains the truth independently of the question as to what the purpose was, or who the persons were. The conditions under which the Latter Sonnets were written further show that the Herbert Series could not have been composed by the Poet with any thought of publication, consequently the sin against Sidney, the profanity of parody, and the cruelty to Lady Rich, were limited to the writer and instigator so long as the Sonnets were preserved in their privacy. Nor were they printed until after the death of Stella, and then, as already shown, with the evident intention of not unveiling the dark lady's face and age in open court.

The sum of Shakspeare's offence now is, that he lent his pen to "fashion this false sport" for young Will Herbert, and extended the jest to a burlesque of some of Sidney's Sonnets, but most certainly with no thought of the thing going beyond the privacy of a privileged friendship. All was changed by the Sonnets being put into print. Thus, at the risk of making the personal theorists look confounded and foolish, we have now reduced the greatest of all Shakspearean tragedies to the proportions of a comedy or a farce. Indeed, the Latter Sonnets contain the farce or afterpiece that followed the serious and even tragical realities of the Southampton Series.



SHAKSPEARE'S  
SOUTHAMPTON SONNETS.



PERSONAL AND DRAMATIC.



## PERSONAL SONNETS.

*The earliest Sonnets personal to Shakspeare commending marriage to his young friend the Earl of Southampton.*

From fairest creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby Beauty's rose might never die,  
But as the riper should by time decease,  
His tender Heir might bear his memory :  
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,  
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial  
fuel,

Making a famine where abundance lies,  
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel :  
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,  
And only herald to the gaudy spring,  
Within thine own bud buriest thy content  
And, tender churl ! mak'st waste in niggarding :  
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,  
To eat the world's due, by the grave and  
thee. (1)

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,  
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,  
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,  
Will be a tattered weed, of small worth held :  
Then being asked where all thy beauty lies,  
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,  
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,  
Were an all-eating shame, and thriftless praise :  
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's  
use,

If thou could'st answer, "*this fair child of  
mine  
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse,*"  
Proving his beauty by succession thine !  
This were to be new-made when thou art  
old,  
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it  
cold. (2)

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou  
viewest,  
Now is the time that face should form another,  
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,  
Thou dost beguile the world—unless some  
mother :  
For where is she so fair, whose unearned womb  
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry ?  
Or who is he so fond, will be the tomb  
Of his self-love to stop posterity ?

Thou art thy Mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime :  
So thou, through windows of thine age, shalt  
<sup>see,</sup>  
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time :  
But if thou live—remembered not to be—  
Die single, and thine image dies with thee. (3)

Unthrifty loveliness ! why dost thou spend  
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy ?  
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,  
And, being frank, she lends to those are free :  
Then, beauteous niggard ! why dost thou abuse  
The bounteous largess given thee to give ?  
Profitless usurer ! why dost thou use  
So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live ?  
For, having traffic with thyself alone,  
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive :  
Then how, when Nature calls thee to be gone,  
What acceptable audit canst thou leave ?  
Thy unused beauty must be tombed with  
thee,  
Which, used, lives thy executor to be. (4)

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame  
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,  
Will play the tyrants to the very same,  
And that unfair, which fairly doth excel :  
For never-resting Time leads summer on  
To hideous winter, and confounds him there :  
Sap checked with frost, and lusty leaves quite  
gone,  
Beauty o'er-snowed, and bareness everywhere :  
Then, were not Summer's distillation left,  
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,  
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,  
Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was !  
But flowers distilled, though they with winter  
meet,  
Leese but their show ; their substance still  
lives sweet. (5)

Then let not Winter's rugged hand deface  
In thee thy summer, ere thou be distilled :

Make sweet some phial ; treasure thou some  
 place  
 With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-killed :  
 That use is not forbidden luxury,  
 Which happies those that pay the willing  
 loan :  
 That's for thyself to breed another thee,  
 Or ten times happier ! be it ten for one :  
 Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,  
 If ten of thine ten times refigured thee :  
 Then what could Death do if thou shouldst  
 depart,  
 Leaving thee living in posterity ?  
 Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair  
 To be Death's conquest, and make worms  
 thine heir. (6)

Lo, in the Orient when the gracious light  
 Lifts up his burning head, each under-eye  
 Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,  
 Serving with looks his sacred majesty :  
 And having climbed the steep-up heavenly  
 hill,  
 Resembling strong Youth in his middle age,  
 Yet mortal looks adore his beauty, still  
 Attending on his golden pilgrimage :  
 But when from highmost pitch, with weary  
 car,  
 Like feeble Age, he reeleth from the day,  
 The eyes—fore duteous—now converted are  
 From his low tract, and look another way :  
 So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,  
 Unlooked on diest, unless thou get a son. (7)

Music to hear ! why hear'st thou music sadly ?  
 Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in  
 joy :  
 Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not  
 gladly,  
 Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy ?  
 If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,  
 By unions married, do offend thine ear,  
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds  
 In singleness the parts that thou shouldst  
 bear :  
 Mark how one string, sweet husband to  
 another,  
 Strikes each in each by mutual ordering ;  
 Resembling Sire, and Child, and happy Mother,  
 Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing :  
 Whose speechless song being many, seeming  
 one,  
 Sings this to thee—" *Thou single wilt prove  
 none.*" (8)

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye,  
 That thou consum'st thyself in single life ?  
 Ah ! if thou issueless shalt hap to die,  
 The world will wail thee like a makeless wife :

The world will be thy widow ! and still keep  
 That thou no form of thee hast left behind,  
 When every private widow well may keep,  
 By children's eyes, her husband's shape in  
 mind :  
 Look, what an unthrift in the world doth  
 spend  
 Shifts but its place, for still the world enjoys  
 it ;  
 But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,  
 And kept unused, the user so destroys it :  
 No love towards others in that bosom sits  
 That on himself such murderous shame  
 commits. (9)

For shame ! deny that thou bear'st love to any,  
 Who for thyself art so unprovident :  
 Grant, if thou wilt, thou art beloved of many,  
 But that thou none lov'st is most evident ;  
 For thou art so possessed with murderous hate  
 That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to con-  
 spire ;  
 Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate  
 Which to repair should be thy chief desire :  
 O, change thy thought, that I may change my  
 mind !  
 Shall Hate be freer lodged than gentle Love ?  
 Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind,  
 Or to thyself, at least, kind-hearted prove ;  
 Make thee another self, for love of me,  
 That beauty still may live in thine or thee. (10)

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou growest  
 In one of thine, from that which thou depart-  
 est ;  
 And that fresh blood which youngly thou  
 beatest  
 Thou may'st call thine, when thou from youth  
 convertest :  
 Herein lives wisdom, beauty and increase ;  
 Without this, folly, age, and cold decay :  
 If all were minded so, the times should cease,  
 And threescore years would make the world  
 away :  
 Let those whom Nature hath not made for  
 store,  
 Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish :  
 Look, whom she best endowed, she gave thee  
 more ;  
 Which bounteous gift thou should'st in bounty  
 cherish ;  
 She carved thee for her seal, and meant  
 thereby  
 Thou should'st print more, nor let that copy  
 die. (11)

When I do count the clock that tells the time,  
 And see the brave day sunk in hideous night ;  
 When I behold the violet past prime,  
 And sable curls are silvered o'er with white ;

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,  
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,  
And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,  
Borne on the bier with white and bristly  
beard ;—

Then of thy beauty do I question make,  
That thou amongst the wastos of time must go,  
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake  
And die as fast as they see others grow ;

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make  
defence,  
Save breed, to brave him when he takes  
thee hence. (12)

O, that you were yourself ! but, Love, you are  
No longer yours, than you yourself here live :

Against this coming end you should prepare,  
And your sweet semblance to some other give:  
So should that beauty which you hold in  
lease,

Find no determination ; then you were  
Yourself again after yourself's decease,  
When your sweet issue your sweet form should  
bear :

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,  
Which husbandry in honour might uphold  
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day,  
And barren rage of Death's eternal cold ?

O none but unthrifths ! Dear, my Love, you  
know

You had a Father ; let your Son say so. (13)

*The argument for marriage continued, with the introduction of a new theme ;  
that of the writer's power to immortalize his friend.*

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck ;  
And yet methinks I have astronomy,  
But not to tell of good or evil luck,  
Of plagues, of dearths, or season's quality ;  
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,  
'Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind ;  
Or say with Princes if it shall go well,  
By oft predict that I in Heaven find :  
But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,  
And,—constant stars,—in them I read such  
art,

As truth and beauty shall together thrive,  
If from thyself to store thou would'st convert ;  
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,  
Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and  
date. (14)

When I consider everything that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment ;  
That this huge stage presenteth nought but  
shows

Whereon the stars in secret influence comment ;  
When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
Cheerèd and check'd even by the self-same sky ;  
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
And wear their brave state out of memory ;  
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay  
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,  
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,  
To change your day of youth to sullied night ;  
And all in war with Time for love of you,  
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

(15)

But wherefore do not you a mightier way  
Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time ?  
And fortify yourself in your decay  
With means more blessed than my barren  
rhyme ?

Now stand you on the top of happy hours !  
And many maiden gardens, yet unset,

With virtuous wish would bear your living  
flowers ;

Much liker than your painted counterfeit :  
So should the lines of life that life repair,  
Which this time's Pencil, or my pupil Pen,  
Neither in inward worth, nor outward fair,  
Can make you live yourself in eyes of men :

To give away yourself keeps yourself still,  
And you must live, drawn by your own sweet  
skill. (16)

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
If it were filled with your most high deserts ?  
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a  
tomb

Which hides your life, and shows not half your  
parts !

If I could write the beauty of your eyes,  
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,  
The age to come would say " *this Poet lies,  
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly  
faces.* "

So should my papers, yellowed with their  
age,

Be scornèd, like old men of less truth than  
tongue :

And your true rights be termed a Poet's rage,  
And stretchèd metre of an antique song :

But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice ; in it, and in my  
rhyme. (17)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day ?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate :  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date :  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed ;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or Nature's changing course un-  
trimmed ;

T

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest ;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his  
shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou growest :  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.  
(18)

Devouring Time, blunt thou the Lion's paws,  
And make the Earth devour her own sweet  
brood ;

Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce Tiger's  
jaws,

And burn the long-lived Phœnix in her blood ;  
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleets,  
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,  
To the wide world, and all her fading sweets ;  
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime :  
O, carve not with thy hours my Love's fair brow,  
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen ;  
Him in thy course untainted do allow,  
For Beauty's pattern to succeeding men !

Yet, do thy worst, old Time ; despite thy  
wrong,

My Love shall in my verse live ever young.  
(19)

A Woman's face, with Nature's own hand  
painted,

Hast thou the master-mistress of my Passion ;  
A Woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
With shifting change, as is false women's  
fashion ;

An eye more bright than theirs, less false in  
rolling,

Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth ;  
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,  
Which steal Men's eyes and Women's souls  
amazeth :

And for a Woman wert thou first created,  
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,  
And by addition me of thee defeated,  
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing :

But since she pricked thee out for women's  
pleasure,

Mine be thy love and thy love's use their  
treasure.  
(20)

So is it not with me as with that Muse  
Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,  
Who heaven itself for ornament doth use,  
And every fair with his fair doth rehearse ;  
Making a couplement of proud compare  
With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich  
gems,

With April's first-born flowers, and all things  
rare

That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems :  
O, let me, true in love, but truly write,  
And then believe me, my Love is as fair  
As any mother's child, though not so bright  
As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air :

Let them say more that like of hearsay well ;  
I will not praise that purpose not to sell.  
(21)

My glass shall not persuade me I am old,  
So long as youth and thou are of one date :  
But when in thee Time's furrows I behold,  
Then look I death my days should expiate :  
For all that beauty that doth cover thee,  
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,  
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me ;  
How can I then be elder than thou art ?  
O, therefore, Love, be of thyself so wary,  
As I, not for myself, but for thee will ;  
Bearing thy heart which I will keep so chary  
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill :

Presume not on thy heart when mine is  
slain,

Thou gav'st me thine not to give back again.  
(22)

As an unperfect Actor on the stage  
Who with his fear is put beside his part,  
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,  
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own  
heart ;

So I, for fear of trust, forget to say  
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,  
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,  
O'ercharged with burthen of mine own love's  
might :

O, let my Books be then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast ;  
Who plead for love and look for recompense,  
More than that tongue that more hath more  
expressed :

O learn to read what silent love hath writ ;  
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.  
(23)

Mine eye hath played the painter, and hath  
stelled

Thy beauty's form in table of my heart ;  
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,  
And perspective it is best painter's art :  
For through the painter must you see his skill,  
To find where your true image pictured lies,  
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,  
That hath his windows glazed with thine  
eyes :

Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have  
done !

Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine  
for me

Are windows to my breast, where-thro' the sun  
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee ;

Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their  
art—

They draw but what they see, know not the  
heart.  
(24)

Let those who are in favour with their stars  
Of public honour and proud titles boast,  
Whilst I, whom Fortune of such triumph bars,  
Unlooked-for joy in that I honour most :  
Great Princes' favourites their fair leaves  
spread,

But as the marygold at the sun's eye ;  
And in themselves their pride lies buried,  
For at a frown they in their glory die :  
The painful warrior famoused for worth  
After a thousand victories once foiled,  
Is from the book of honour rasèd forth,  
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled :  
Then happy I, that love and am beloved  
Where I may not remove, nor be removed.

(25)

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage  
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,  
To thee I send this written embassy,  
To witness duty, not to show my wit :  
Duty so great which wit so poor as mine  
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show  
it ;

But that I hope some good conceit of thine  
In thy soul's thought, all naked will bestow it :  
Till whatsoever star that guides my moving  
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,  
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,  
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect :

Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee :  
Till then, not show my head where thou  
mayst prove me. (26)

## A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Which affords a clue to the dramatic treatment of subjects suggested by  
Southampton, who is to supply his "own sweet argument," and  
"give invention light."*

How can my Muse want subject to invent,  
Whilst thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse  
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent  
For every vulgar paper to rehearse !  
O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me  
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight ;  
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,  
When thou thyself dost give invention light ?  
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth  
Than those old Nine which rhymers invoke,  
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth  
Eternal numbers to outlive long date :  
If my slight Muse do please these curious days,  
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise. (38)

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton when in "disgrace with Fortune" solaces himself with thoughts  
of his new love, Elizabeth Vernon.

*When in disgrace with Fortune, and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends pos-  
sessed,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least ;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on Thee,—and then my state,  
Like to the Lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at Heaven's  
gate ;*

*For thy sweet love remembered such wealth  
brings,  
That then I scorn to change my state with  
Kings. (29)*

*When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past ;  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new-wail my dear time's  
waste :  
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
And weep afresh love's long-since cancelled woe,  
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight :*

T 2

*Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
The sad account of fore-bemoan'd moan,  
Which I now pay as if not paid before :*  
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

(30)

*Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,  
Which I, by lacking, have supposed dead ;  
And there reigns love, and all love's loving  
parts,*

*And all those friends which I thought buried :  
How many a holy and obsequious tear  
Hath dear-religious love stolen from mine eye  
As interest of the dead, which now appear  
But things removed, that hidden in thee lie !  
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,  
Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone,  
Who all their parts of me to thee did give ;  
That due of many now is thine alone :  
Their images I loved I view in thee,  
And thou, all they, hast all the all of me.*

(31)

## A PERSONAL SONNET.

If thou survive my well-contented day,  
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,  
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey  
These poor rude lines of thy deceased Lover,  
Compare them with the bettering of the time,  
And though they be out-stripped by every pen,  
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme  
Exceeded by the height of happier men ;  
Oh then vouchsafe me but this loving thought,  
Had my friend's Muse grown with this growing age,  
A dearer birth than this his love had brought  
To march in ranks of better equipage :  
But since he died and Poets better prove,  
Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love. (32)

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Elizabeth Vernon to her Lover the Earl of Southampton.

The Dark Story : or Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of her cousin Lady Rich.

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

(33)

*Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,  
And make me travel forth without my cloak,  
To let base clouds o'ertake me on my way,  
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke !  
'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou  
break  
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,  
For no man well of such a salve can speak  
That heals the wound, and cures not the dis-  
grace :  
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief ;  
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss ;  
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
To him that bears the strong offence's cross :  
Ah ! but those tears are pearl which thy love  
sheds,  
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.*

(34)



No more be grieved at that which thou hast done :  
 Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud ;  
 Clouds and eclipses stain both Moon and Sun,  
 And loathsome cankers live in sweetest bud :  
 All men make faults, and even I in this,  
 Authorising thy trespass with compare,  
 Myself corrupting, salving thy amias ;  
 Excusing their sins more than their sins are ;  
 For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,—  
 Thy adverse party is thy Advocate,—  
 And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence ;  
 Such civil war is in my love and hate,  
 That I an accessory needs must be  
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me. (35)

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits  
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart,  
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,  
 For still temptation follows where thou art :  
 Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,  
 Beaucous thou art, therefore to be assailed ;  
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son  
 Will sourly leave her till she have prevailed ?

Behrewo that heart that makes my heart to groan  
 For that deep wound it gives my Friend and me !  
 Is it not enough to torture me alone,  
 But slave to slavery my sweet'st Friend must be ?  
 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,  
 And my next self thou, harder, hast engrossed ;  
 Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken ;  
 A torment thrice three-fold thus to be crossed !  
 Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,  
 But then my Friend's heart let my poor heart bail ;  
 Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard ;  
 Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail :  
 And yet thou wilt ; for I, being pent in thee,  
 Perforce am thine, and all that is in me. (133)

So, now I have confessed that he is thine,  
 And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,  
 Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine  
 Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still ;  
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,  
 For thou art covetous and he is kind ;  
 He learned but surely-like to write for me  
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind :

Ah me ! but yet thou might'st my Seat forbear,  
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,  
 Who lead thee in their riot even there  
 Where thou art forced to break a two-fold  
 truth,—  
 Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee ;  
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me ! (41)

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief ;  
 And yet it may be said I loved her dearly ;  
 That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,  
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly :  
 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye !  
 Thou dost love her, because thou know'st I love  
 her ;  
 And for my sake even so do's she abuse me,  
 Suffering my Friend for my sake to approve her ;  
 If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,  
 And losing her, my Friend hath found that  
 loss ;  
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,  
 And both, for my sake, lay on me this cross ;  
 But here's the joy ; my Friend and I are one,  
 Sweet flattery ! then she loves but me alone. (42)

ELIZABETH VERNON TO HER COUSIN LADY RICH.

The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,  
 Thou usurer that putt'st forth all to use,  
 And sue a friend 'came debtor for my sake ;  
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse !  
 Him have I lost ; thou hast both him and  
 me ;  
 He pays the whole, and yet I am not free. (134)

Take all my loves, my Love, yea, take them all ;  
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst  
 before ?  
 No Love ! my Love, that thou may'st true love  
 call,  
 All mine was thine, before thou hadst this  
 more :  
 Then if for my love thou my Love receivest,  
 I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest ;  
 But, yet, be blanced, if thou thyself dearest  
 By wilful taste of what thyself refus'est :  
 I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,  
 Although thou steal thee all my poverty !  
 And yet, love knows, it is a greater grief  
 To bear love's wrong, than hate's known in-  
 jury :  
 Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
 Kill me with spies ! yet we must not be foes. (40)

## ELIZABETH VERNON'S SOLILOQUY.

*Two Loves I have of comfort and despair,  
Which like two Spirits do suggest me still ;  
The better Angel is a man right fair ;  
The worse Spirit a woman coloured ill :  
To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Templeth my better Angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil ;  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride :  
And whether that my angel be turned fiend,  
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell ;  
But being both from me, both to each friend,  
I guess one angel in another's hell !  
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,  
Till my bad angel fire my good one out. (144)*

## A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Shakspeare to the Earl, who is leaving England.*

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,  
When thou art all the better part of me ?  
What can mine own praise to mine own self bring ?  
And what is't but mine own when I praise thee ?  
Even for this let us divided live,  
And our dear love lose name of single one,  
That by this separation I may give  
That due to thee, which thou deserv'st alone !  
Oh, Absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,  
Were it not thy sour image gave sweet leave  
To entertain the time with thoughts of love,  
Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive,  
And that thou teachest how to make one twain,  
By praising him here, who doth hence remain. (39)

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon—at parting, in absence abroad, and on the return home.

*Let me confess that we two must be twain,  
Although our undivided loves are one :  
So shall those blots that do with me remain,  
Without thy help by me be borne alone :  
In our two loves there is but one respect,  
Though in our lives a separable spite,  
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,  
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's  
delight :  
I may not evermore acknowledge thee,  
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame,  
Nor thou with public kindness honour me,  
Unless thou take that honour from thy name :  
But do not so, I love thee in such sort,  
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.*

(36)

*As a decrepit father takes delight  
To see his active child do deeds of youth,  
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,  
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth ;  
For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,  
Or any of these all, or all, or more,  
Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,  
I make my love engrafted to this store :  
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,  
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance  
give,  
That I in thy abundance am sufficed,  
And by a part of all thy glory live :  
Look what is best, that best I wish in thee ;  
This wish I have ; then ten times happy me.*

(37)

*Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,  
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;  
But then begins a journey in my head  
To work my mind when body's work's expired:  
For then my thoughts (from far, where I  
abide)*

*Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,  
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,  
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:  
Save that my soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beautiful, and her old face  
new:*

*Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my  
mind,  
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.*

(27)

*How can I then return in happy plight,  
That am debarred the benefit of rest?  
When Day's oppression is not eased by Night,  
But Day by Night and Night by Day  
oppressed;*

*And each, though enemies to either's reign,  
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,  
The one by toil, the other to complain  
How far I toil; still farther off from thee:  
I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright,  
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the  
heaven:*

*So flatter I the swart-complextion'd Night,  
When sparkling stars twine not, thou gild'st  
the Even:*

*But Day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,  
And Night doth nightly make grief's length  
seem stronger.*

(28)

*When most I wink then do mine eyes best see,  
For all the day they view things unrespected:  
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,  
And, darkly bright, are bright in dark  
directed!*

*Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make  
bright,*

*How would thy shadow's form form happy  
show*

*To the clear day with thy much clearer light,  
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?  
How would—I say—mine eyes be blessed made  
By looking on thee in the living day,  
When in dead night thy fair, imperfect shade  
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?  
All days are nights to see till I see thee:  
And nights bright days when dreams do show  
thee me.*

(43)

*In it thy will thy image should keep open  
My heavy eyelids to the weary night?  
Lost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,  
While shadows, like to thee, do mock my sight?*

*Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee  
So far from home, into my deeds to pry;  
To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?  
Oh no! thy love, though much, is not so great;  
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake;  
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,  
To play the watchman ever for thy sake:*

*For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake else-  
where,*

*From me far off, with others all-too-near.*

(31)

*If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,  
Injurious distance should not stop my way,  
For then, despite of space, I would be brought  
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay,  
No matter then altho' my foot did stand  
Upon the farthest earth removed from thee,  
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,  
As soon as think the place where he would be:  
I ut, ah! thought kills me that I am not thought  
To leap large lengths of miles when thou art  
gone,*

*But that so much of earth and water wrought  
I must attend Time's leisure with my mourn;  
Receiving nought by elements so slow  
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.*

(44)

*The other two, slight Air and purging Fire,  
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;  
The first my thought, the other my desire,  
These present, absent with swift motion slide:  
For when these quicker elements are gone  
In tender embassy of love to thee,  
My life being made of four, with two alone  
Sinks down to death oppressed with melancholy,  
Until life's composition be recured  
By those swift messengers returned from thee,  
Who even but now come back again, assured  
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me!*

*This told I joy, but then no longer glad,  
I send them back again, and straight grow  
sad.*

(45)

*Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,  
How to decide the conquest of thy sight;  
Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would  
bar,*

*My heart mine eye the freedom of that right:  
My heart doth plead that thou in him doth lie,  
(A closet never pierced with crystal eyes)  
But the defendant doth that plea deny,  
And says, in him thy fair appearance lies;  
To 'cide this title is impanelled  
A 'quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart,  
And by their verdict is determined*

*The clear eye's moiety, and the dear heart's part:  
As thus,—mine eye's due is thine outward  
part:*

*And my heart's right thine inward love of  
heart.*

(46)

*Belov'xt mine eye and heart a league is took,  
And each doth good turns now unto the other :  
When that mine eye is famished for a look,  
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,  
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,  
And to the painted banquet bids my heart ;  
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,  
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part :  
So, either by thy Picture or my love,  
Thyself away art present still with me ;  
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst  
move,  
And I am still with them, and they with thee ;  
Or if they sleep, thy Picture in my sight  
Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.* (47)

*How careful was I, when I took my way,  
Each trifle under trust bars to thrust,  
That to my use it might unused stay  
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of  
trust :  
But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,  
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,  
Thou best of dearest, and mine only care,  
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief ;  
Thee have I not locked up in any chest,  
Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,  
Within the gentle closure of my breast,  
From whence at pleasure thou may'st come and  
part ;  
And even thence thou wilt be stolen, I fear,  
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.* (48)

*Against that time, if ever that time come  
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,  
When as thy love hath cast his utmost sum,  
Called to that audit by advised respects ;  
Against that time, when thou shalt strangely  
pass,  
And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,  
When love, converted from the thing it was,  
Shall reasons find of settled gravity ;  
Against that time do I enconce me here  
Within the knowledge of mine own de-crt,  
And this my hand against myself uprear,  
To guard the lawful reasons on thy part :  
To leave poor me thou hast the strength of  
laws,  
Since, why to love, I can allege no cause.* (49)

*How heavy do I journey on the way,  
When what I seek—my weary travel's end—  
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,  
" Thus far the miles are measured from thy  
friend !"  
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,  
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,  
As if by some instinct the wretch did know  
His rider loved not speed being mule from thee :*

*The bloody spur cannot provoke him on  
That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide  
Which heavily he answers with a groan  
More sharp to me than spurring to his side  
For that same groan doth put this in my  
mind ;  
My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.* (50)

*Thus can my love excuse the slow offence  
Of my dull bearer, when from thee I sped ;  
From where thou art why should I haste me  
thence ?  
Till I return, of posting is no need :  
O, what excuse will my poor-beast then find,  
When swift extremity can seem but slow ?  
Then should I spur though mounted on the  
wind ;  
In winged speed no motion shall I know :  
Then can no horse with my desire keep  
pace ;  
Therefore Desire, of perfect'st love being made,  
Shall neigh no dull flesh in his fiery race,  
But love, for love, shall thus excuse my jade—  
Since from thee going he went wilful  
slow,  
Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave  
to go.* (51)

*So am I as the rich whose blessed key  
Can bring him to his sweet, unlocked treasure,  
The which he will not every hour survey,  
For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure :  
Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare :  
Since, seldom coming, in the long year set  
Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,  
Or captain jewels in the carcanet :  
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,  
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,  
To make some special instant special blest,  
By new unfolding his imprisoned pride :  
Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,  
Being had—to triumph ; being lacked—to  
hope !* (52)

*Sweet love, renew thy force ; be it not said,  
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,  
Which but to-day by feeding is allayed,  
To-morrow sharpened in his former might :  
So love be thou ; although to-day thou fill  
Thy hungry eyes e'en till they wink with  
fulness,  
To-morrow see again, and do not kill  
The spirit of love with a perpetual dullness :  
Let this sad interim, like the ocean be  
Which parts the shore, where two contracted  
new  
Come daily to the banks, that, when they see  
Return of love, more bless'd may be the view :  
Or call it winter, which, being full of care,  
Makes summer's welcome thrice more wished,  
more rare.* (56)

## PERSONAL SONNETS.

What is your substance? whereof are you  
made,  
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?  
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,  
And you, but one, can every shadow lend:  
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit  
Is poorly imitated after you;  
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,  
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:  
Speak of the spring and foison of the year:  
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,  
The other as your bounty doth appear,  
And you in every blessed shape we know:  
In all external grace you have some part,  
But you like none, none you, for constant  
heart. (53)

O how much more doth beauty beauteous  
seem,  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth  
give!  
The Rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem  
For that sweet odour which doth in it live:  
The Canker-blooms have full as deep a dye,  
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly  
When Summer's breath their mask'd buds  
discloses:  
But for their virtue only is their show,  
They live unwooded, and unrespected fade;  
Die to themselves: Sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours  
made:  
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,  
When that shall fade, my verse distils your  
truth. (54)

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of Princes, shall out-live this powerful rhyme;  
But you shall shine more bright in these con-  
tents  
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish  
time:  
When wasteful Wars shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall  
burn  
The living record of your memory;  
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still  
find room,  
Even in the eyes of all posterity,  
That wear this world out to the ending doom:  
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.  
(55)

If there be nothing new, but that which is  
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,  
Which labouring for invention bear amiss  
The second burden of a former child!  
Oh, that record could with a backward look,  
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,  
Show me your image in some antique book,  
Since mind at first in character was done!  
That I might see what the old world could say  
To this composèd wonder of your frame;  
Whether we are mended, or where better  
they,  
Or whether revolution be the same;  
Oh! sure I am, the wits of former days  
To subjects worse have given admiring  
praise. (59)

Like as the waves make towards the pobbled  
shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end,  
Each changing place with that which goes  
before  
In sequent toil all forwards to contend:  
Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift con-  
found:  
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,  
And delves the parallels on Beauty's brow;  
Feeds on the rarities of Nature's truth,  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:  
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall  
stand,  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.  
(60)

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye  
And all my soul and all my every part;  
And for this sin there is no remedy,  
It is so grounded inward in my heart:  
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,  
No shape so true, no truth of such account;  
And for myself mine own worth do define,  
As I all others in all worths surmount:  
But when my glass shows me myself indecd,  
Beaten and chopped with tanned antiquity,  
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;  
Self so self-loving were iniquity:  
'Tis thee—myself—that for myself I praise,  
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.  
(62)

Against my Love shall be, as I am now,  
With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'er-  
worn;

When hours have drained his blood and filled  
his brow  
With lines and wrinkles ; when his youthful  
morn  
Hath travelled on to Age's steepy night,  
And all those beauties whereof now he's  
king,  
Are vanishing or vanished out of sight,  
Stealing away the treasure of his Spring ;  
For such a time do I now fortify  
Against confounding Age's cruel knife,  
That he shall never cut from memory  
My sweet Love's beauty, though my Lover's  
life :

His beauty shall in these black lines be  
seen,  
And they shall live, and he in them still  
green. (63)

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced  
The rich, proud coat of outworn buried age :  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage ;  
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the watery main,  
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store :

When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded to decay ;  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,  
That time will come, and take my Love away :  
This thought is as a death, which cannot  
choose

But weep to have that which it fears to lose.  
(64)

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor bound-  
less sea,

But sad mortality o'ersways their power,  
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
Whose action is no stronger than a flower !  
O, how shall Summer's honey breath hold out  
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,  
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays !  
Oh fearful meditation ! where, alack !

Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie  
hid ?

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot  
back ?

Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid ?  
Oh none, unless this miracle have might,  
That in black ink my love may still shine  
bright. (65)

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Elizabeth Vernon's sadness for her lover's reckless course of life.

*Tired with all these, for restless death I cry,—  
As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
And strength by limping sway disabled,  
And Art made tongue-tied by Authority,  
And Folly, doctor-like, controlling Skill,  
And simple truth, miscalled simplicity,  
And captive Good attending captain Ill :*

*Tired with all these, from these I would be  
gone,*

*Save that to die, I leave my Love alone !*

(66)

*Ah ! wherefore with infection should he live,  
And with his presence grace impiety,  
That Sin by him advantage should achieve,  
And lace itself with his society ?  
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,  
And steal dead seeming of his living hue ?  
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek  
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true ?  
Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,  
Beggared of blood to blush through lively veins ?  
For she hath no exchequer now but his,  
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains :*

*O ! him she stores, to show what wealth she  
had*

*In days long since, before these last so bad.*

(67)

*This is his cheek the map of days out-worn,  
When Beauty lived and died as flowers do now,  
Before these bastard signs of fair were born,  
Or durst inhabit on a living brow ;  
Before the golden tresses of the dead,  
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away  
To live a second life on second head,  
E'er Beauty's dead fleece made another gay :  
In him those holy antique hours are seen,  
Without all ornament, itself and true,  
Making no summer of another's green,  
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new ;*

*And him as for a map doth Nature store,  
To show false Art what beauty was of yore.*

(68)

*Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth  
view*

*Want nothing that the thought of hearts can  
mend :*

*All tongues—the voice of souls—give thee that  
due,*

*Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend :*

*Thine outward thus with outward praise is  
crown'd ;  
But those same tongues that give thee so thine  
own,  
In other accents do this praise confound,  
By seeing farther than the eye hath shown :  
They look into the beauty of thy mind,*

*And that in guess they measure by thy deeds ;  
Then (churls) their thoughts, although their eyes  
were kind,  
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds !  
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,  
The solve is this—that thou dost common  
grow. (69)*

## A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Shakspeare in defence of his friend.*

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,  
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair ;  
The ornament of beauty is suspect,  
A Crow that flies in Heaven's sweetest air !  
So thou be good, slander doth but approve  
Thy worth the greater, being wooed of Time ;  
For canker Vice the sweetest buds doth love,  
And thou present'st a pure unstained prime :  
Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,  
Either not assailed, or victor being charged ;  
Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,  
To tie up Envy evermore enlarged :  
If some suspect of ill masked not thy show,  
Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts should'st owe. (70)

## PERSONAL SONNETS.

No longer mourn for me, when I am dead,  
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
Give warning to the world that I am fled  
From this vile world with vilest worms to  
dwell :  
Nay, if you read this line, remember not  
The hand that writ it ; for I love you so  
That I in your sweet thoughts would be  
forgot,  
If thinking on me then should make you woe :  
O if—I say—you look upon this verse  
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,  
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,  
But let your love even with my life decay :  
Lest the wise world should look into your  
moan,  
And mock you with me after I am gone. (71)

O, lest the World should task you to recite  
What merit lived in me, that you should  
love  
After my death, dear Love, forget me quite,  
For you in me can nothing worthy prove ;  
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,  
To do more for me than mine own desert,  
And hang more praise upon deceased I  
Than niggard truth would willingly impart :

O lest your true love may seem false in this,  
That you for love speak well of me untrue,  
My name be buried where my body is,  
And live no more to shame nor me nor you !  
For I am shamed by that which I bring  
forth,  
And so should you, to love things nothing  
worth. (72)

That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the  
cold  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds  
sang !  
In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest :  
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished  
by :  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love  
more strong  
To love that well which thou must lose ere  
long. (73)

But be contented ! when that fell arrest  
Without all bail shall carry me away,  
My life hath in this line some interest,  
Which for memorial still with thee shall  
stay :

When thou reviewest this, thou dost review  
The very part was consecrate to thee :  
The Earth can have but earth, which is his  
due ;

My spirit is thine, the better part of me !  
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,  
The prey of worms—my body being dead—  
The coward-conquest of a wretch's knife,  
Too base of thee to be remembered :

The worth of that is that which it contains,  
And that is this, and this with thee remains.  
(74)

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,  
So far from variation, or quick change ?  
Why, with the time, do I not glance aside  
To new-found methods and to compounds  
strange ?

Why write I still all one, ever the same,  
And keep invention in a noted weed,  
That every word doth almost tell my name,  
Showing their birth, and where they did pro-  
ceed ?

O know, sweet Love, I always write of you,  
And you and love are still my argument ;  
So all my best is dressing old words new,  
Spending again what is already spent :  
For as the sun is daily new and old,  
So is my love still telling what is told.  
(76)

Thy Glass will show thee how thy beauties  
wear,  
Thy Dial how the precious minutes waste ;  
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will  
bear,  
And of this Book this learning may'st thou  
taste !

The wrinkles which thy Glass will truly show,  
Of mouthed graves will give thee memory ;  
Thou by thy Dial's shady stealth may'st know  
Time's thievish progress to eternity :  
Look, what thy memory cannot contain  
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt  
find

Those children nursed—delivered from thy  
brain—

To take a new acquaintance of thy mind :  
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,  
Shall profit thee, and much enrich thy Book.  
(77)

### PERSONAL SONNETS : Shakspeare and Marlowe.

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,  
And found such fair assistance in my verse,  
As every alien pen hath got my use,  
And under thee their poesy disperse !  
Thine eyes, that taught the Dumb on high to  
sing,

And heavy Ignorance aloft to flee,  
Have added feathers to the Learned's wing,  
And given Grace a double majesty :  
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,  
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee :  
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,  
And Arts with thy sweet graces gracèd be :  
But thou art all my Art, and dost advance  
As high as Learning my rude ignorance.  
(78)

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,  
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace ;  
But now my gracious numbers are decayed,  
And my sick Muse doth give another place !  
I grant, sweet Love, thy lovely argument  
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen ;  
Yet what of thee thy Poet doth invent,  
He robs thee of, and pays it thee again :  
He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word  
From thy behaviour ; beauty doth he give,  
And found it in thy cheek ; he can afford  
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live :

Then thank him not for that which he doth  
say,  
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost  
pay.  
(79)

O, how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame !  
But since your worth—wide as the ocean is—  
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,  
My saucy Bark, inferior far to his,  
On your broad main doth wilfully appear :  
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,  
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride ;  
Or, being wrecked, I am a worthless boat,  
He of tall building, and of goodly pride :  
Then if he thrive, and I be cast away,  
The worst was this ; my love was my decay.  
(80)

Or I shall live your Epitaph to make,  
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten ;  
From hence your memory Death cannot take,  
Although in me each part will be forgotten :  
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,  
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die :  
The earth can yield me but a common grave,  
When you entombèd in men's eyes shall lie :



Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read ;  
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,  
When all the breathers of this world are dead ;  
You still shall live—such virtue hath my  
Pen—

Where breath most breathes—even in the  
mouths of men. (81)

I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,  
And therefore may'st without attain't o'erlook  
The dedicated words which writers use  
Of their fair subject, blessing every Book :  
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,  
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise,  
And therefore art enforced to seek anew  
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days !  
And do so, Love ! yet when they have devised  
What strained touches rhetoric can lend,  
Thou, truly fair, wert truly sympathised  
In true-plain words, by thy true-telling friend ;  
And their gross painting might be better used  
Where cheeks need blood ; in thee it is  
abused. (82)

I never saw that you did painting need,  
And therefore to your fair no painting set !  
I found, or thought I found, you did exceed  
The barren tender of a Poet's debt !  
And therefore have I slept in your report,  
That you yourself, being extant, well might  
show

How far a modern quill doth come too short,  
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth  
grow :

This silence for my sin you did impute,  
Which shall be most my glory, being dumb :  
For I impair not beauty being mute,  
When others would give life and bring a tomb :  
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes  
Than both your Poets can in praise devise. (83)

Who is it that says most ? which can say more  
Than this rich praise—that you alone are you ?  
In whose confine immur'd is the store  
Which should example where your equal grew !

Lean penury within that Pen doth dwell,  
That to his subject lends not some small glory ;  
But he that writes of you, if he can tell  
That you are you, so dignifies his story ;  
Let him but copy what in you is writ,  
Not making worse what Nature made so clear,  
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,  
Making his style admired everywhere !

You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,  
Being fond on praise, which makes your  
praises worse. (84)

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still,  
While comments of your praise, richly com-  
piled,

Reserve their character with golden quill,  
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed !  
I think good thoughts, while others write good  
words,

And, like unlettered clerk, still cry " Amen "  
To every hymn that able spirit affords  
In polished form of well-refined pen :  
Hearing you praised I say, " 'Tis so, 'tis true, "  
And to the most of praise add something more ;  
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,  
Though words come hindmost, holds his rank  
before :

Then others for the breath of words respect,  
Me for my dumb thoughts speaking in effect. (85)

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,  
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,  
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain in-  
hearse,

Making their tomb the womb wherein they  
grew !

Was it his spirit by Spirits taught to write  
Above a mortal pitch that struck me dead ?  
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night  
Giving him aid, my verse astonished !  
He nor that affable familiar ghost  
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,  
As victors of my silence cannot boast ;  
I was not sick of any fear from thence.

But when your countenance filled up his line,  
Then lacked I matter ; that enfeebled mine. (86)

## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

### Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon.

*Farewell ! thou art too dear for my possessing,  
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate ;  
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing ;  
My bonds in thee are all determinate :  
For how do I hold thee, but by thy granting ?  
And for that riches where is my deserving ?  
The cause of this fair gift to me is wanting,  
And so my patent back again is swerving.*

*Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not  
knowing,  
Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking ;  
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,  
Comes home again, on better judgment making :  
Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter ;  
In sleep a king, but waking, no such matter.* (87)

So are you to my thoughts, as food to life,  
Or as sweet-seasoned showers are to the ground ;  
And for the peace of you I hold such strife  
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found ;  
Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon  
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure ;  
Now counting best to be with you alone,  
Then bettered that the world may see my pleasure ;  
Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,  
And by and by clean starved for a look ;  
Possessing or pursuing no delight,  
Save what is had or must from you be took :  
Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,  
Or gluttoning on all, or all away. (75)

When thou shalt feel disposed to set me light,  
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,  
Upon thy side against myself I'll fight,  
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art for-  
sworn :

With mine own weakness being best acquainted,  
Upon my part I can set down a story  
Of faults concealed wherein I am attained,  
That thou in losing me shalt win much glory :  
And I by this will be a gainer too :  
For binding all my loving thoughts on thee,  
The injuries that to myself I do,  
Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me—  
Such is my love, to thee I so belong  
That for thy right myself will bear all  
wrong. (88)

Say that thou did'st forsake me for some fault,  
And I will comment upon that offence :  
Speak of my lameness and I straight will halt,  
Against thy reasons making no defence :  
Thou canst not, Love, disgrace me half so ill,  
To set a form upon desired change,  
As I'll myself disgrace ; knowing thy will,  
I will acquaintance strangle and look strange ;  
Be absent from thy walks, and in my tongue,  
Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell,  
Least I, too much profane, should do it wrong,  
And haply of our old acquaintance tell :  
For thee against myself I'll vow debate,  
For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost  
hate. (89)

Then hate me when thou wilt ; if ever, now ;  
Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,  
Join with the spite of Fortune, make me bow,  
And do not drop in for an after-loss :  
Ah ! do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this  
sorrow,  
Come in the rearward of a conquered woe :  
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,  
To linger out a purposed overthrow !  
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,  
When other petty griefs have done their spite,  
But in the onset come ; so shall I taste  
At first the very worst of Fortune's might ;

And other strains of woe which now seem wor-  
Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.  
(90)

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their body's  
force,  
Some in their garments, though new-fangled  
ill,  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their  
horse :  
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure  
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest,  
But these particulars are not my measure,  
All these I better in one general best :  
Thy love is better than high birth to me,  
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments'  
cost ;  
Of more delight than hawks or horses be ;  
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast ;  
Wretched in this alone, that thou may'st take  
All this away, and me most wretched make.  
(91)

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,  
For term of life thou art assured mine ;  
And life no longer than thy love will stay,  
For it depends upon that love of thine !  
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,  
When in the least of them my life hath end ;  
I see a better state to me belongs  
Than that which on thy humour doth depend ;  
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,  
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie ;  
O, what a happy till do I find,  
Happy to have thy love, happy to die !  
But what's so blessed fair that fears no  
blot !—  
Thou may'st be false, and yet I know it not !  
(92)

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,  
Like a deceived husband : so love's face  
May still seem love to me, though altered  
new ;  
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place :  
For there can live no hatred in thine eye,  
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change :  
In many's looks the false heart's history  
Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles  
strange ;  
But Heaven in thy creation did decree  
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell ;  
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings  
be,  
Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness  
tell :  
How like Eve's Apple doth thy beauty grow,  
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show !  
(93)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Elizabeth Vernon to Southampton on his ill deeds.

*They that have power to hurt and will do none,  
That do not do the thing they most do show,  
Who moving others are themselves as stone,  
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow;  
They rightly do inherit Heaven's graces,  
And husband Nature's riches from expense;  
They are the lords and owners of their faces,  
Others but stewards of their excellence:  
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,  
Thought to itself it only live and die;  
But if that flower with base infection meet,  
The basest weed outbraves his dignity!  
For sweetest things turn sourest by their  
deeds;*

*Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.*  
(94)

*How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame  
Which, like a canker in the fragrant Rose,  
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name;  
O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!  
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,  
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,  
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise:  
Naming thy name blesses an ill report:*

*O, what a mansion have those vices got,  
Which for their habitation chose out thee!  
Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,  
And all things turn to fair that eyes can see!  
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege;  
The hardest knife ill-used doth lose his edge.*  
(95)

*Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness,  
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;  
Both grace and faults are loved of more or less;  
Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort!  
As on the finger of a throned Queen  
The basest jewel will be well-esteemed,  
So are those errors that in thee are seen  
To truths translated and for true things deemed:  
How many lambs might the stern Wolf betray,  
If like a lamb he could his looks translate:  
How many gazers might'st thou lead away,  
If thou would'st use the strength of all thy  
state!*

*"But do not so: I love thee in such sort,  
As thou being mine, mine is thy good  
report."*  
(96)

Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon.

"Vernon Semper Viret."

*How like a Winter hath my absence been  
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!  
What freezings have I felt, what dark days  
seen!*

*What old December's bareness everywhere!  
And yet this time removed was summer's time;  
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,  
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,  
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease:  
Yet this abundant issue seemed to me  
But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit:  
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,  
And, thou away, the very birds are mute—  
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer  
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's  
near.*  
(97)

*From you I have been absent in the spring,  
When proud pied April, dressed in all his  
trim,  
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,  
That heavy Saturn laught and leapt with him:  
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell  
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,  
Could make me any summer's story tell,  
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they  
grew:*

*Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,  
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;  
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,  
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those!  
Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,  
As with your Shadow I with these did play.*  
(98)

*The forward Violet thus did I chide —  
"Sweet thief! whence didst thou steal thy  
sweet that smells,  
If not from my Love's breath? the purple pride  
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,  
In my Love's veins thou hast too grossly  
dyed!"*

*The lily I condemned for thy hand,  
And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair;  
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,  
One blushing shame, another white despair;  
A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both,  
And to his robbery had annexed thy breath;  
But, for his theft, in pride of all his growth,  
A vengeful canker ate him up to death!  
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,  
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.*  
(99)

## PERSONAL SONNETS.

*Shakespeare to Southampton after some time of silence.*

Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so  
long  
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might ?  
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,  
Darkening thy power to lend base subjects  
light ?

Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem  
In gentle numbers time so idly spent ;  
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,  
And gives thy pen both skill and argument :  
Rise, restive Muse, my Love's sweet face  
survey,

If Time have any wrinkle graven there :  
If any, be a satire to decay,  
And make Time's spoils despised everywhere !  
Give my Love fame faster than Time wastes  
life ;

So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked  
knife. (100)

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends  
For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed ?  
Both truth and beauty on my Love depends ;  
So dost thou too, and therein dignified :  
Make answer, Muse ! wilt thou not haply say,  
" *Truth needs no colour with his colour fixed ;  
Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay :*  
*But best is best if never intermixed* " ?  
Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb ?  
Excuse not silence so ; for it lies in thee  
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,  
And to be praised of ages yet to be !

Then do thy office, Muse ; I teach thee how  
To make him seem long hence as he is now. (101)

My love is strengthened, tho' more weak in  
seeming ;  
I love not less, though less the show appear ;  
That love is merchandised whose rich es-  
teeming

The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere !  
Our love was new and then but in the spring  
When I was wont to greet it with my lays,  
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,  
And stops her pipe in growth of ripper days :  
Not that the summer is less pleasant now  
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the  
night,

But that wild music burthens every bough,  
And sweets grown common lose their dear  
delight !

Therefore, like her, I sometimes hold my  
tongue,  
Because I would not dull you with my song. (102)

Alack ! what poverty my Muse brings forth,  
That having such a scope to show her pride,  
The argument, all bare, is of more worth  
Than when it hath my added praise beside :  
O blame me not if I no more can write !

Look in your glass, and there appears a face  
That over-goes my blunt invention quite,  
Dulling my lines and doing me disgrace !  
Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,  
To mar the subject that before was well ?  
For to no other pass my verses tend

Than of your graces and your gifts to tell ;  
And more, much more, than in my verse  
can sit,

Your own glass shows you when you look  
in it. (103)

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,  
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,  
Such seems your beauty still ; three winters'   
cold

Have from the forests shook three summers'   
pride ;  
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn   
turned

In process of the seasons have I seen,  
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes  
burned

Since first I saw you fresh which yet are green :  
Ah ! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,  
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived ;  
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth  
stand,

Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived ;  
For fear of which, hear this, thou age  
unbred ;

Ere you were born was Beauty's summer  
dead. (104)

Let not my love be called Idolatry,  
Nor my beloved as an Idol show,  
Since all alike my songs and praises be,  
To one, of one, still such and ever so :  
Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
Still constant in a wondrous excellence,  
Therefore my verse to constancy confined,  
One thing expressing, leaves out difference :  
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,  
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words ;  
And in this change is my invention spent,  
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope  
affords :

Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,  
Which three, till now, never kept seat in  
one. (105)

When in the chronicle of wasted time,  
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,  
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,  
 In praise of Ladies dead, and lovely Knights,  
 Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,  
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,  
 I see their antique Pen would have expressed  
 Even such a beauty as you master now :  
 So all their praises are but prophecies  
 Of this our time, all you prefiguring,  
 And for they looked but with divining eyes,  
 They had not skill enough your worth to sing :  
 For we, which now behold these present  
 days,  
 Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to  
 praise. (106)

What's in the brain that ink may character  
 Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit ?  
 What's new to speak, what now to register  
 That may express my love, or thy dear merit ?  
 Nothing, sweet boy ! but yet like prayers  
 divine  
 I must each day say o'er the very same ;  
 Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,  
 Even as when first I hallowed thy fair name !  
 So that eternal love in love's fresh case  
 Weighs not the dust and injury of age,  
 Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,  
 But makes antiquity for aye his page,  
 Finding the first conceit of love there bred,  
 Where time and outward form would show  
 it dead. (108)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1598.

Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon—their Final Reconciliation : with Shak-  
 speare's Sonnet in allusion to their Marriage.

*Oh, never say that I was false of heart,  
 Though absence scind my flame to qualify !  
 As easy might I from myself depart,  
 As from my soul, which in thy breast doth  
 lie ;  
 That is my home of love : if I have ranged,  
 Like him that travels, I return again,  
 Just to the time, not with the time ex-  
 changed—  
 So that myself bring water for my stain :  
 Never believe, though in my nature rained  
 All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,  
 That it could so preposterously be stained,  
 To leave for nothing all thy sum of good :  
 For nothing this wide universe I call,  
 Save thou, my Rose ! in it thou art my all.*  
 (109)

*Oh, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
 The guilty Goddess of my harmful deeds,  
 That did not better for my life provide,  
 Than public means, which public manners  
 breeds :  
 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
 And almost thence my nature is subdued  
 To what it works in, like the Dyer's hand :  
 Pity me then, and wish I were renewed ;  
 Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink  
 Potions of Eysel 'gainst my strong infection ;  
 No bitterness that I will bitter think,  
 Nor double penance, to correct correction :  
 Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure yr,  
 Even that your pity is enough to cure me.*  
 (111)

*Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there,  
 And made myself a Motley to the view ;  
 Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is  
 most dear,  
 Made old offences of affections new :  
 Most true it is, that I have look'd on truth  
 Askance and strangely ; but, by all above,  
 These blenches gave my heart another youth,  
 And worse essays proved thee my best of love :  
 Now all is done, have what shall have no end !  
 Mine appetite I never more will grind  
 On newer proof to try an older friend,—  
 A God in love to whom I am confined :  
 Then give me welcome, next my heaven the  
 best,  
 Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.*  
 (110)

*Your love and pity doth the impression fill  
 Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow ;  
 For what care I who calls me well or ill,  
 So you o'ergreen my bad, my good allow ?  
 You are my All-the-world, and I must strive  
 To know my shames and praises from your  
 tongue ;  
 None else to me, nor I to none alive,  
 That my steeld sense or changes, right or  
 wrong :  
 In so profound abyss I throw all care  
 Of others' voices, that my adder's sense  
 To critic and to flatterer stopped are :  
 Mark how with my neglect I do dispense : -  
 You are so strongly in my purpose bred,  
 That all the world besides methinks are dead.*  
 (112)

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,  
 And that which governs me to go about  
 Doth part his function and is partly blind,  
 Seems seeing but effectually is out ;  
 For it no form delivers to the heart  
 Of bird, of flower, or shape, which it doth latch ;  
 Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,  
 Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch ;  
 For if it see the rudest or gentlest sight,  
 The most sweet favour, or deformed creature,  
 The mountain or the sea, the day or night,  
 The crow or dove, it shapes them to your  
 feature :

Incapable of more, replete with you,  
 My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.  
 (113)

Or whether doth my mind, being crown'd with  
 you,  
 Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery,  
 Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,  
 And that your love taught it this alchymy,  
 To make of monsters and things indigest,  
 Such Cherubins as your sweet self resemble,  
 Creating every bad a perfect best,  
 As fast as objects to his beams assemble ?  
 Oh, 'tis the first, 'tis flattery in my seeing,  
 And my great mind most kingly drinks it up ;  
 Mine eye well knows what with his gust is  
 'growing,

And to his palate doth prepare the cup :  
 If it be poisoned, 'tis the lesser sin  
 That mine eye loves it and doth first begin.  
 (114)

Accuse me thus ; that I have scanted all  
 Wherein I should your great deserts repay ;  
 Forgot upon your dearest love to call,  
 Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day ;  
 That I have frequent been with Unknown minds,  
 And given to Time your own dear-purchased  
 right ;  
 That I have hoisted sail to all the winds  
 Which should transport me farthest from your  
 sight :

Book both my wilfulness and errors down,  
 And on just proof surmise accumulate,  
 Bring me within the level of your frown,  
 But shoot not at me in your waken'd hate ;  
 Since my appeal says, I did strive to prove  
 The constancy and virtue of your love.  
 (117)

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,  
 With eager compounds we our palate urge :  
 As, to prevent our maladies unsound,  
 We sicken to shun sickness, when we purge ;  
 Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying sweet-  
 ness,

To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding,  
 And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness  
 To be diseas'd, ere that there was true needings :

Thus policy in love, to anticipate  
 The ills that were not, grew to faults assur'd,  
 And brought to medicine a healthful state,  
 Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be  
 cured :

But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,  
 Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.  
 (118)

What potions have I drunk of Syren tears,  
 Distilled from Limbees foul as hell within,  
 Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,  
 Still losing when I saw myself to win !  
 What wretched errors hath my heart committed,  
 Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never !  
 How have mine eyes out of their spheres been  
 fitted,

In the distraction of this madding fever !  
 Oh, benefit of ill ! now I find true  
 That better is by evil still made better ;  
 And ruined love, when it is built anew,  
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far  
 greater :

So I return rebuked to my content,  
 And gain by ill thrice more than I have  
 spent.  
 (119)

That you were once unkind, befriends me now,  
 And for that sorrow, which I then did feel,  
 Needs must I under my transgression bow,  
 Unless my nerves were brass or hammer'd steel :  
 For if you were by my unkindness shaken,  
 As I by yours, you've pass'd a hell of time :  
 And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken  
 To weigh how once I suffer'd in your crime :  
 Oh that our night of woe might have remem-  
 ber'd

My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,  
 And soon to you, as you to me, then tender'd  
 The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits !  
 But that your trespass now becomes a fee ;  
 Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom  
 me.  
 (120)

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,  
 When not to be receives reproach of being,  
 And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed  
 Not by our feeling, but by others' seeing :  
 For why should others' false adulterate eyes  
 Give salutation to my sportive blood ?  
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,  
 Which in their will: count bad what I think  
 good ?

No.—I am that I am ; and they that level  
 At my abuses, reckon up their own :  
 I may be straight, though they themselves be  
 bent ;

By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be  
 shown ;

Unless this general evil they maintain,—  
 All men are bad, and in their badness reign.  
 (121)

*Thy Gift, thy Tables, are within my brain  
Full charactered with lasting memory,  
Which shall above that idle rank remain,  
Beyond all date, even to eternity:  
Or, at the least, so long as brain and heart  
Have faculty by nature to subsist;  
Till each to razed oblivion yield his part  
Of thee, thy Record never can be missed:*

*That poor retention could not so much hold,  
Nor need I Tallies thy dear love to score;  
Therefore, to give them from me was I bold,  
To trust those Tables that receive thee more:  
To keep an adjunct to remember thee,  
Were to import forgetfulness in me.* (122)

A PERSONAL SONNET.

*Shakspeare on the Marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon.*

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments: Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
Oh, no; it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken!  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken:  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom:  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (116)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Southampton in the Tower, condemned to death or to a life-long imprisonment.

*No; Time, thou shall not boast that I do  
change!*

*Thy Pyramids, built up with never might,  
To me are nothing novel—nothing strange—  
They are but dressings of a former sight:  
Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire  
What thou dost foist upon us that is old,  
And rather make them born to our desire  
Than think that we before have heard them  
told:*

*Thy Registers and thee I both defy,  
Not wondering at the present, nor the past,  
For thy Records and what we see doth lie,  
Made more or less by thy continual haste!*

*This I do vow, and this shall ever be,  
I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.* (123)

*If my dear love were but the Child of State,  
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfathered,  
As subject to Time's love, or to Time's hate;  
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers  
gathered:*

*No, it was builded far from accident!  
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
Under the blow of thrulled Discontent,  
Whereto the inviting time our Fashion calls:*

*It fears not Policy—that Heretic  
Which works on leases of short-numbered  
hours—*

*But all alone stands hugely politic,  
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with  
showers:*

*To this I witness call the fools of Time  
Which die for goodness who have lived for  
crime.* (124)

*Were it ought to me I bore the Canopy,  
With my extern the outward honouring!  
Or laid great bases for eternity,  
Which prove more short than waste or ruining!  
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour  
Lose all and more by paying too much rent!  
For compound sweet foregoing simple savour;  
Pitiful thrivers in their gazing spent!*

*No! let me be obsequious in thy heart,  
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,  
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no  
art,*

*But mutual render, only me for thee!  
Hence, thou Suborned Informer, a true soul  
When most impeached stands least in thy  
control.* (125)

*Shakspeare to the Earl of Southampton in prison.*

Those lines that I before have writ do lie ;  
 Even those that said I could not love you dearer !  
 Yet then my judgment knew no reason why  
 My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer !  
 But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents  
 Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,  
 Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,  
 Divert strong minds to the course of altering things ;  
 Alas ! why, fearing of Time's tyranny,  
 Might I not then say, " Now I love you best " ?  
 When I was certain o'er incertainty,  
 Crowning the present, doubting of the rest ?  
 Love is a babe ; then might I not say so,  
 To give full growth to that which still doth grow ? (115)

*Shakspeare to Southampton on his release from prison.*

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
 Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,  
 Can yet the lease of my true love control,  
 Supposed as forfeit to a Confined Doom !  
 The Mortal Moon hath her eclipse endured,  
 And the sad Augurs mock their own presage ;  
 Incertainties now crown themselves assured,  
 And Peace proclaims Olives of endless age ;  
 Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
 My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,  
 Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes ;  
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
 When Tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent. (107)

## FRAGMENT OF A PERSONAL SONNET.

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power  
 Doth hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle-hour ;  
 Who hast by waning grown, and therein showest  
 Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self growest !  
 If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,  
 As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,  
 She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill  
 May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill :  
 Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure !  
 She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure :  
 Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,  
 And her quietus is to render thee. (126)



SHAKSPEARE'S  
HERBERT SONNETS.



DRAMATIC.



## DRAMATIC SONNETS.

Composed for Master Will. Herbert.

1599.

*In the old age black was not counted fair,  
Or if it were, it bore not Beauty's name;  
But now is black Beauty's successive heir,  
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:  
For since each hand hath put on Nature's*

*power,  
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,  
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace:  
Therefore my Mistress' eyes are raven black,  
Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem  
At such, who, not born fair, no beauty lack,  
Slandering creation with a false esteem:*

*Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,  
That every tongue says, beauty should look  
so!*

(127)

*How oft when thou, my Music, music playest  
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds  
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently  
swayest*

*The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,  
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap  
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,  
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest  
reap,*

*At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!  
To be so tickled, they would change their state  
And situation with those dancing chips,  
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,  
Making dead wood more blest than living lips:*

*Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,  
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.*

(128)

*Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;  
Enjoy'd no sooner, but despised straight;  
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,  
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;  
Mad, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
A bliss in proof,—and proved, a very woe;  
Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream;*

*All this the world well knows; yet none  
knows well*

*To shun the heaven that leads men to this  
hell.*

(129)

*My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun:  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my Mistress' reeks:  
I love to hear her speak,—yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go,—  
My Mistress, when she walks, treads on the*

*ground:*

*And yet, by heaven, I think my Love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.*

(130)

*Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,  
As those whose beauties proudly make them  
cruel:*

*For well thou know'st, to my dear-doting heart  
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel!  
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,  
Thy face hath not the power to make love  
groan;*

*To say they err, I dare not be so bold,  
Although I swear it to myself alone:  
And, to be sure that is not false I swear,  
A thousand groans—but thinking on thy face—  
On one another's neck, do witness bear  
Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place!*

*In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,  
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.*

(131)

*Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,  
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,  
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,  
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain:  
And truly not the morning sun of heaven  
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,  
Nor that full Star that washes in the Even  
Doth half that glory to the sober west,  
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:  
Oh, let it then as well become thy heart  
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee  
grace,*

*And suit thy pity like in every part!*

*Then will I swear Beauty hers if is black,  
And all thy fault that thy complexion lack.*

(132)

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will!  
 And Will to boot, and Will in overplus:  
 More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
 To thy sweet Will making addition thus:  
 Will thou whose Will is large and spacious,  
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my "Will" in thine?  
 Shall Will in others seem right gracious,  
 And in my "Will" no fair acceptance shine?  
 The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,  
 And in abundance addeth to his store;  
 So thou being RICH in Will, add to thy Will  
 One "Will" of mine, to make thy large Will  
 more:

Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;  
 Think all but one, and me in that one  
 "WILL."  
 (135)

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,  
 Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy "Will";  
 And Will, thy soul knows, is admitted there!  
 Thus far, for love, my lovesuit, Sweet, fulfil:  
 Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love,  
 Ay, fill it full with Wills, and my "Will"  
 one:

In things of great receipt with ease we prove  
 Among a number one is reckoned none:  
 Then in the number let me pass untold,  
 Though in thy store's account I one must be,  
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold  
 That nothing me, a something, Sweet! to thee:  
 Make but my name thy love, and love that  
 still,  
 And then thou lov'st me, for my name is  
 "WILL."  
 (136)

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine  
 eyes,  
 They that behold, and see not what they see?  
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,  
 Yet what the best is, take the worst to be;  
 If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,  
 Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,  
 Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,  
 Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?  
 Why should my heart think that a several plot,  
 Which my heart knows the wide world's com-  
 mon place?

Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,  
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face?  
 In things right true my heart and eyes have  
 erred,  
 And to this false plague are they now trans-  
 ferred.  
 (137)

When my Love swears that she is made of  
 truth,  
 I do believe her, though I know she lies;  
 That she might think me some untutored youth,  
 Unlearned in the world's false subtleties!  
 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
 Although she knows my days are past the best,  
 Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;  
 On both sides thus is simple truth suppresed:

But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
 And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
 O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
 And age in love loves not to have years told:  
 Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
 And in our faults by lies we flattered be.  
 (138)

Oh, call me not to justify the wrong,  
 That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;  
 Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy  
 tongue;  
 Use power with power, and slay me not by art:  
 Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight  
 Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside!  
 What need'st thou wound with cunning, when  
 thy might  
 Is more than my o'expressed defence can 'bide?  
 Let me excuse thee: ah! my Love well knows  
 Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,  
 And therefore from my face she turns my foes,  
 That they elsewhere might dart their injuries;  
 Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,  
 Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.  
 (139)

Be wise as thou art cruel! do not press  
 My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain;  
 Lest Sorrows lend me words, and words express  
 The manner of my pity-wanting pain:  
 If I might teach thee wit, better it were,  
 Though not to love, yet, Love, to tell me so;  
 As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,  
 No news but health from their Physicians know;  
 For if I should despair, I should grow mad,  
 And in my madness might speak ill of thee:  
 Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,  
 Mut slanderers by mad ears believed be:  
 That I may not be so, nor thou believ'd,  
 Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud  
 heart go wide.  
 (140)

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,  
 For they in thee a thousand errors note;  
 But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,  
 Who in despite of view is pleased to dote:  
 Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune  
 delighted;  
 Nor tender feeling, to base touches prone,  
 Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited  
 To any sensual feast with thee alone:  
 But my five wits, nor my five senses can  
 Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,  
 Who leaves unswayed the likeness of a man,  
 Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be:  
 Only my plague thus far I count my gain,  
 That she that makes me sin, awards me pain.  
 (141)

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,  
 Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:  
 Oh, but with mine compare thou thine own state  
 And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;

*Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,  
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments,  
And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine;  
Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents :  
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those  
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee :  
Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows,  
Thy pity may deserve to pilied be :  
If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,  
By self-example may'st thou be denied.* (142)

*Lo! as a careful housewife runs to catch  
One of her feathered creatures broke away,  
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift despatch  
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay,  
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,  
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent  
To follow that which flies before her face,  
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent ;  
So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,  
Whilst I, thy babe, chase thee afar behind :  
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,  
And play the Mother's part, kiss me, be kind !  
So will I pray that thou may'st have thy  
"WILL,"*

*If thou turn back, and my loud crying still.* (143)

*Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
Upon the hours and times of your desire ?  
I have no precious time at all to spend,  
Nor services to do, till you require !  
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,  
Whilst I, my Sovereign, watch the clock for  
you,  
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour  
When you have bid your Servant once adieu :  
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought  
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,  
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought  
Save, where you are how happy you make those :  
So true a fool is love that, in your "WILL,"  
Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.* (57)

*That god forbid that made me first your slave,  
I should in thought control your times of pleasure ;*

*Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,  
Being your vassal bound to stay your leisure !  
O let me suffer, being at your beck,  
The imprisoned absence of your liberty ;  
And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each  
check*

*Without accusing you of injury !  
Be where you list, your charter is so strong  
That you yourself may privilege your time ;  
Do what you will; to you it doth belong  
Yourselves to pardon of self-doing crime !*

*I am to wait, though waiting so be hell ;  
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.* (58)

*Those lips that Love's own hand did make,  
Breathed forth the sound that said "I hate,"  
To me that languished for her sake :  
But when she saw my woeful state,  
Straight in her heart did merray come,  
Chiding that tongue, that ever sweet  
Was used in giving gentle doom ;  
And taught it thus anew to greet ;  
"I hate" she altered with an end,  
That followed it as gentle day  
Doth follow night, who like a fiend  
From heaven to hell is flown away.—  
"I hate" from hate away she threw,  
And saved my life, saying—"not you !" (145)*

*Poor Soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
Foiled by these rebel powers that thee array,  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay ?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend ?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge ? Is this thy body's end ?  
Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store ;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross ;  
Within be fed, without be Rich no more :  
So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on  
men,  
And, Death once dead, there's no more dying  
then.* (146)

*My love is as a fever longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease ;  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please :  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I, desperate now, approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except :  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest ;  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
At random from the truth vainly expressed :*

*For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee  
bright,*

*Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.* (147)

*Oh me ! what eyes hath love put in my head,  
Which have no correspondence with true sight !  
Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,  
That censures falsely what they see aright ?  
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,  
What means the world to say it is not so ?  
If it be not, then love doth well denote  
Love's eye is not so true as all men's : no,  
How can it ? Oh, how can Love's eye be true,  
That is so vex'd with watching and with tears  
No marvel then though I mistake my view ;  
The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears :*

*Oh, cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me  
blind,  
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should  
find.* (148)

*Cans't thou, O cruel! say I love thee not,  
When I against myself with thee partake?  
Do I not think on thee when I forget  
Am of myself, all tyrant for thy sake?  
Who hateth thee that I do call thy friend?  
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?  
Nay, if thou lower'st on me, do I not spend  
Revenge upon myself with present moan?  
What merit do I in myself respect,  
That is so proud thy service to despise,  
When all my best doth worship thy defect,  
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?  
But, Love, hate on, for now I know thy  
mind;*

*Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am  
blind.* (149)

*Oh, from what power hast thou this powerful  
might,  
With insufficiency my heart to sway?  
To make me give the lie to my true sight,  
And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?  
Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,  
That in the vory refuse of thy deeds  
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,  
That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?  
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,  
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?  
Oh, though I love what others do abhor,  
With others thou should'st not abhor my state;  
If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
More worthy I to be beloved of thee.* (150)

*Love is too young to know what conscience is;  
Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love?  
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,  
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:  
For thou betraying me, I do betray  
My noblest part to my gross body's treason;  
My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love; flesh stays no further reason;  
But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee  
As his triumphant prize: Proud of this pride,  
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,  
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side,  
No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her—love, for whose dear love I rise and  
fall.* (151)

*In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,  
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love  
swearing,*

*In act thy bed-vow broke and new faith torn,  
In vowing new hate after new love bearing:  
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,  
When I break twenty? I am perjured most;  
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,  
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:  
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kind-  
ness,*

*Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy;  
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,  
Or made them swear against the thing they  
see;*

*For I have sworn thee fair; more perjured I,  
To swear, against the truth, so foul a lie.* (152)

*Cupid laid by his brand, and fell asleep:  
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,  
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep  
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground;  
Which borrowed from his holy fire of love  
A dateless lively heat, still to endure,  
And grew a scething bath, which yet men prove  
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure:  
But at my Mistress' eye Love's brand new-fired,  
The boy for trials needs would touch my breast;  
I, sick withal, the help of bath desired,  
And thither hied, a sad distemper'd guest,  
But found no cure; the bath for my help lies  
Where Cupid got new fire,—my mistress'  
eyes.* (153)

*The little love-god, lying once asleep,  
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,  
Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to  
keep*

*Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand  
The fairest votary took up that fire,  
Which many legions of true hearts had warmed,  
And so the General of hot desire  
Was, sleeping, by a virgin hand disarmed;  
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,  
Which from love's fire took heat perpetual,  
Growing a bath and healthful remedy  
For men diseased; but I, my Mistress' thrall,  
Came there for cure, and this by that I  
prove,*

*Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.* (154)

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS.

It has now to be claimed for the present interpretation of Shakspeare's Sonnets that it corrects the errors of superficial research, and enables us to clear up the mystery of Thorpe's inscription; that it recovers for us the long-lost key wherewith Shakspeare unlocked his heart to his "private friends"; fathoms and unfolds the secret histories which have been a sealed book for two centuries and a half, and solves one of the most piquant if not important of literary problems; makes the life-spirit that once breathed in these fragments stir and knit them together again to become a living body of facts, shaped objectively in some near likeness to the form originally worn in Shakspeare's mind—a veritable presence before which all the phantom falsehoods must fade, and all such "exsufflicate and blown surmises" as have attained the Sonnets and wronged their writer must ultimately pass away.

It is no longer necessary to assume that the patchwork of Shakspeare's Sonnets is the variegated vesture of his own perplexing personality. The present pleading is really an appeal to English common sense on behalf of our greatest Englishman, who was common sense personified at its loftiest. This reading enables us to see how it is that Shakspeare can be at the same time the Friend who loves and is blessed, and the Lover who dotes and is disconsolate; how the great calm man of the sweetest blood, the smoothest temper, and most cheery soul can be quite contented with his lot, and yet appear to be the anxious, jealous, fretful wooer who has been pursued by the "slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune," and driven from his heart's home to drift about the world as a wanderer, who, in his weakness, has said and done things for which he prays forgiveness, and which in him are not hard to forgive, because he is a lover who has been much tried, and amidst all the shiftings of life and backslidings of fortune has been true at heart and steadfast in his love. Here we can see how the Poet has been the Player still, in his "idle hours," and how he could personate a passion to the life, disguise his face past our recognition, and change the dramatic mask at will for the amusement of his "*private friends*": at one moment rendering the pretty petulance and tender reproaches of a jealous lady who grows desperate because she does not know the worst, but is fully inclined to think it; at another breathing all his heart into the protestations of a ranging lover who has been here and there, and whose love has appeared to be the slave of Time and the sport of wind and wave, and yet no distance could sever it from its true resting-place. Then he can lay aside the mask and show his own face calm and noble, wearing a look of smiling cheer for his friend; or, if there be a shadow on it, this does not darken from within—comes from no selfish pang—no personal compunction of conscience—but only reflects that cloud which is passing over the fortunes of his "*dear Boy*." Thus we may understand how he can be modest for himself and shrinking out of all notice, yet grow defiant and dazzling as a "mailed angel on a battle-day" when he is fighting for this friend, and the sword glitters, the shield glows, the valour mounts, and the trumpet rings. These sounding promises and lofty boasts of immortality being only the echoes and reverberations in the upper air of the battle with Time and Fortune, and "all-oblivious Enmity," which is going on below. Thus we may comprehend

how Shakspeare can rejoice in this friend who is all the world to him, and, directly after, depict the feeling of forlorn friendlessness of that friend who is "in disgrace with Fortune and Men's eyes," and who looks on himself as an outcast, and wishes he were as those who have friends and sit within the warm and rosy inner circle of happiness; how the spirit, that in motion was at rest, can appear full of all unrest and disquietude; how the love that is such a still blessedness to the one can be to the other like the fabled thorn in the breast of the Nightingale which she presses and sings "sweet! sweet! sweet!" bleeding all the while she turns her sorrow into song; how one Sonnet can tell of the speaker's "*well-contented day*," and show that he has the richest of all possessions in his own self-possession, whilst its neighbouring plaint embodies a spirit that is perturbed and full of discontent; changeful as the spirit of April. How he can write playfully on one side of the same theme, and be deeply, painfully in earnest on the other. How he can assert his own steadfastness of unwavering affection, and with an almost monotonous iteration protest its unchangeableness now and for ever, whilst, at the same time, he continues the story: the quarrels, the flirtations, partings and greetings of a pair of lovers the course of whose love did not run smooth, but was full of ups and downs, tests and trials, leave-takings and makings-up. And when he has done ample justice poetically to the character of the Earl, and "confessed" him with all his unfolded faults and penitent tears, he can, in his own person, give him absolution and, with the lustiest sense of his own liberty to do so, celebrate that "marriage of true minds" in Sonnet 116—assert emphatically the truth of the whole matter, and challenge all the world with the airest, cheeriest defiance to *prove any error on him*. He writes playful, punning Sonnets for William Herbert, some big with burlesque, and some that paint a passion in fiery hues, but showing that he presides over his own work; gives his own summing-up and last word, we hear his real self, speaking out finally in characterization of the subject, with a judicial solemnity of tone which goes farthest, sinks deepest, and tells us plainly enough when his own spirit touches us to call our attention so that we may look and see his own thought and understand his words.

This reading alone permits us to see how the speaker in the Latter Sonnets can be represented as a youth in pursuit of a woman old enough to play the part of mother; how the lady can be described as Age in love, and why her age, about which she told her lies, should have been afterwards suppressed; why her "amber hair for foul" was "darkly quoted," and why Sidney's Sonnets are echoed or *replied* to point by point, and feature by feature, because the lady is the same through every change of character.

When once we grasp the fact that many of the Sonnets are composed upon *given* subjects, we can see *how* Sidney's Sonnet on Age in love would become suggestive and be utilized.

" Let not Old Age disgrace my high desire,  
 O heavenly soul, in human shape contained;  
 Old wood inflamed doth yield the bravest fire,  
 When younger doth in smoke his virtue spend:  
 Nor let white hairs, which on my face do grow,  
 Seem to your eyes of a disgraceful hue,  
 Since whiteness doth present the sweetest show,  
 Which makes all eyes do homage unto you:



Old age is wise, and full of constant truth ;  
 Old age well stayed from ranging humour lives ;  
 Old age hath known whatever was in youth ;  
 Old age o'ercome, the greater honour gives :  
 And to old age since you yourself aspire,  
 Let not old age disgrace my high desire."

Age in love being the theme, we can see how the matter would assume a humorous aspect as the subject of Sonnet 138, with Herbert for speaker in place of Basilius, where the lady aimed at was so much the elder. Of the one lady be-sonnetted we may say with Lear, "Her eyes are fierce;" but the eyes of Elizabeth Vernon "do comfort and not burn;" of the one series of Sonnets that they have an unhallowed glow, of the other that it wears the white halo of purity.

All the secret from beginning to end lies in the simple fact that the "sweet swan of Avon," like Wordsworth's swan upon St. Mary's Lake—

"Floats DOUBLE, swan and shadow,"

in writing those Sonnets that are dramatic. No other theory can pretend to reconcile the conflicting differences and prickly points of opposition with which the Sonnets have so bristled all over that many persons, seeing the host of difficulties, have shut their eyes and closed the book. This alone takes the Sonnets almost as they stand; tells their various stories, identifies the different characters; matches these with their expression; calls them by the name to which they answer; proves many of the inner facts by events, and dates, and illustrations from the outer life of the persons and the historic surroundings of the period. It shows that many of these Sonnets are shaped by the spirit of the age; how they wear its "form and pressure," and have its circumstances figured in their imagery. It tells us how the things here written were once lived by Shakspeare and his friends. It shows us the concealed half of the Man, the other side of the luminary, and does more than anything hitherto accomplished to connect him with the life of his time; makes him touch earth again; brings him back to us in his habit and affection as he lived. It is the most authentic revelation ever given of his own inner life, for some twelve years of his sojourn on this earth; affords the most private peep into the sanctuary of his soul that was kept so closely curtained to the gaze of his contemporaries, and tells us more about his own self than all that has been gathered of him since the day of his death. By its help we may enter the early garden of his dramatic mind—the very site whereof seemed lost—and trace certain roots of his nature; see how they first put forth their feelers to take hold of that human world which they were to ramify through and through, and embrace all round. Also the present reading of the Sonnets throws the only light upon Shakspeare's words to Southampton, "What I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours," and gives the only *localization* to the fact of Herbert's personal familiarity with Shakspeare recorded by the players in the dedication of the first folio.

Hitherto half the matter and all the most precious part of the meaning have been lost sight of. We have missed the points that touch life the nearest, and the traits that bring us the closest to Shakspeare. The light of nature has been put out, and the Sonnets have lacked the living glow. We have been cheated by impoverishing impositions. The images that are figured facts coloured from

the life, have hitherto been mere phantoms, making a dumb show of poetry. But once we can see and believe that our Poet is dealing with realities, the rekindled light illumines everything. The Sonnets are all astir with a more-vital existence. The wayside common-places flower again; the world of fancy grows fruitful; a new soul has come into the Sonnets! They gain immensely in beauty, gravity, and fitness to subject, when we have reached their underlying realities, and are wondrously enriched when ranged in contrast and set jewel-like, "each other's beams to share," wearing the diverse colours of their various characteristics. All their poetic qualities are enhanced by our getting at the right relationship of persons. Truth is ever the eternal basis of the highest beauty, and as we reach the truth here the meaning deepens indefinitely, the poetry brightens in a loftier light. The solemn thought is more sagely fine, the tenderness more pathetic, the feeling more significant, the fancy more felicitous, the strength more potent, the sweetness more virginal, the illustration more appropriate. We are no longer hindered in our enjoyment of the divinely dainty love-poetry, that could only have been offered to a woman, by the feeling that makes Englishmen "scunner" to see two men kiss each other, or hear them woo one another in amorous words.

We can now see that these Sonnets transcend all others as much as his plays are above those of his contemporaries. "Shakspeare's divine Sonnets," they were nobly named by Elizabeth Barrett Browning; but how intensely human they are, how exquisitely natural, could not be known till now, when, for the first time, the real heart-beat of them may be felt. And by as much as they grow in meaning, in vivid life, in morality, does their writer gain in manliness. Hitherto they have been read in sad uncertainty of Shakspeare's drift, or with sadder certainty of his moral delinquency. For the first time we can read them without fear or trembling lest some apparition of the Poet's guilt should rise up vast and shadowy, and as we might try to stammer excusingly, much larger than life. We can now sit down to their banquet of beauty without being nervously apprehensive about the ghost rising. We may see that the most passionate of the Sonnets are not necessarily the travail of his own soul and sweat-drops of his own agony; all the more perplexing to us, because he had apparently put himself and us to the torture when there was no need. We can breathe more freely, feel a little calmer, when we do comprehend that he did not crucify himself for the whole world to see his shame; did not make all the poetic capital possible out of his friend; and, having handed him over to his enemies, hang himself publicly, Judas-like, in a fit of repentance. And we shall soon feel that it is not so very marvellous a thing that the most dramatic of poets should have at times employed the dramatic method in his Sonnets. Especially when his subject was real life—the life and the loves of those who were so dear to him—in singing of which some disguise was demanded by the nature of the case, the marked position of his friends.

The Sonnets have had many readers who felt there was much more in them than had yet been found, and who would have been only too glad if they could have got to the root of the matter by means of such a theory as is now propounded. Charles Lamb, for instance. He was a reader of the Sonnets. One who would have brooded over them till his heart ran over in the quaintest babblement of loving words, if he might only have grasped the revelation that flashed out of them by evanescent gleams, and left the darkness more bewildered.

ing than ever. But to catch the Protean spirit, and hold it, and compel it to declare itself in a recognizable shape, was as tantalizing and provoking a task as trying to arrest the reflection of a face in water all in motion, with the sunbeams dancing on it, and the eyes completely dazzled. This will explain why the Sonnets have had so few commentators, when the other works of Shakspeare have collected such a host. The wisest readers have been content to rest with Mr. Dyce in his declaration, that after repeated perusals, he was convinced that the greater number of them were composed in an assumed character, on different subjects, and at different times, for the amusement, and probably at the suggestion of the author's intimate associates. And having cracked the nut we find this to be the very kernel of it; only my theory unmasks the characters assumed, unfolds the nature of the various subjects, traces the different times at which they were composed, and identifies those intimate associates of Shakspeare who supplied both suggestion and subjects for his Sonnets. It brings us, like the Prince in search of his Sleeping Beauty, to the inmost nook of Shakspeare's poetry; the magic hermitage to which the invention of Southampton "gave light," and which was locked up and the key given to Herbert or pocketed by him, nearly three centuries ago. We shall find everything as the Poet left it, for the place is sacred from the touch of Time. The friends and lovers are here pictured as in life, wearing the dresses they wore of old, and looking for us as they looked in the eyes of each other. As we break the stillness the life seems to begin again, the colour comes back to the faces, and the sound of breathing is heard in the charmed chamber of imagery which has been sealed in silence for so long. We have come secretly into the presence of Shakspeare himself. Does he resent this intrusion? Do the smiling brows darken at our coming? I trust not, I think not. If I have rightly interpreted the feeling of our Poet for his friend Southampton, he would willingly reach a hand from his high place to put this wreath upon the rightful brow. So fully did he once mean to set a crown of immortal flowers where Fortune had bound her thorns, only he was hindered by one of those complications of life that perplex human nature, with circumstances absurdly insufficient, and so often foil intention, and drag down the lifted hand.

In reviewing my early work, some of the critics professed their readiness to throw up the Personal Theory, and to admit that the reason why certain of the Sonnets—those filled with particular facts which cannot be made personal to the life and character of Shakspeare—were the most real might be because such Sonnets were dramatic, and not to be understood unless we could get them once more related to the characters intended by Shakspeare. They professed to sympathize seriously with my indignation against the Personal Interpretation. They willingly admitted that I had for ever destroyed the Autobiographic hypothesis of the Sonnets by demonstrating their dramatic nature in many instances; and yet they could wantonly cast discredit on my particular dramatic interpretation whilst admitting the necessity of it, and having nothing to put in the place of this historical identification. They preferred the drama that was a poetized Ideal to this which is human and real, and can be once more related to the lives of Shakspeare's friends, and circumstantially verified by the records of his time. There is a current literary tendency in favour of preferring the shadow to the substance, the phantom to the fact, cloud-land to solid earth. This, however, is unfortunate when we have to do, not with a Shelley, let us say, but with Shakspeare.

I have previously suggested that in personally vouching for the purity of his Sonnets as attested by Benson, their second editor, Shakspeare was virtually repudiating the Autobiographical Interpretation. If we had the details of his defence and explanation, we should doubtless learn directly from him that certain of the Sonnets were written dramatically, as now demonstrated, for the "Private Friends," Southampton and Herbert, but that all was changed in appearance by the unwarranted way in which they were smuggled into print. The loss of the dramatic clue made them look entirely personal to the writer, and that which had been only accounted poetic play appeared to be passion in real earnest. This was what Shakspeare HAD to deny—as proved from what he derived from Sidney—and therefore this was what he did deny, as known and testified to by Benson.

The facts in favour of my rendering of the Southampton Sonnets are these. In the first instance, Shakspeare was, of all poets, the least autobiographic, the most dramatic. Next, when he has addressed a number of Personal Sonnets to his friend, he, in allusion to the monotony of his method, says (Sonnet 38) that he cannot be *wanting in freshness of matter and novelty of subject* whilst the Earl lives to *pour into his verse his "own sweet argument."* Then, in the dedication to *Lucrece*, the Poet tells his patron that what he has done and *what he has yet to do* is the Earl's, for he is a part in all that Shakspeare has devoted to him. And if Shakspeare was then speaking of the Sonnets as devoted to Southampton, he could not have meant mere fugitive Sonnets, or Sonnets in any way devoted to himself, but such as were devoted to Southampton's affairs. Only in Sonnets written dramatically or vicariously can we possibly find the meeting-place of Sonnet 38 and the words of the dedication. Starting from this point—Shakspeare's own statement of two facts that blend in one meaning—I proceed to identify the various "arguments" supplied by Southampton, his private courtship and public career, possibly also by Elizabeth Vernon, for Shakspeare to shape into Sonnets, and I find the Sonnets to be full of obvious facts that fit perfectly into my theory, and no other; facts quite as palpable as the identification of Marlowe or the release of Southampton from the Tower in 1603. By the door opened in Sonnet 38, we can enter the interior of the Sonnets, where alone the imagery on the windows can be traced, and we do literally identify fact after fact of the Southampton series, and prove them from the life of Southampton, who is the man that Sonnet 38 says is to supply his own subject-matter and give light to the Poet's invention. This is not a subjective theory so intangible as not to be grasped; it is based on plain objective facts, with which the Sonnets abound—such facts as Southampton's travels abroad, his quarrels at Court, his courting of Mistress Vernon with "too much familiarity," and his marriage. In Sonnets 123-4-5 the Earl as surely speaks to his wife from the Tower as he is greeted in Sonnet 107 upon his release. All through the Southampton series my reading is illustrated and enforced in a treble manner, because the personal and impersonal Sonnets deal with the same set of facts, and both are corroborated by the facts of his life and character.

The present demonstration that the "Latter Sonnets" are also dramatic may perhaps be left to speak for itself. And yet much more might have been said in making out the comparison; for Shakspeare's antithetical treatment involved very cunning ways of working in consequence of the change in Stella after

Sidney's death. Here, for instance, is an illustration which should have been emphasized—

O, from what power hast thou this powerful  
 might,  
 With insufficiency my heart to sway ?  
 To make me give the lie to my true sight,  
 And swear that brightness doth not grace the  
 day ?  
 Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,  
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds  
 There is such strength and warrantise of skill,  
 That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds ?  
 Who taught thee how to make me love thee  
 more,

The more I hear and see just cause of hate ?  
 O, though I love what others do abhor,  
 With others thou should'st not abhor my  
 state !

If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
 More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

(*Sonnet 150*)

In each the theme is that of "reasons for being loved." In the one case it is on account of the lover's reflecting or enshrining all her "worths," all her worthiness; in the other the plea is exactly reversed. Her magic power over the sight is the same in both, but here the effect is produced by the woman's unworthiness! The last two lines of each set will prove my point—

If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
 More worthy I to be beloved of Thee !

How can you him unworthy then decree,  
 In whose chief part your worths implanted be ?

The plea in Shakspeare's Sonnet is so unbearably pitiful that one is glad to show its relation to a given subject *versus* the unworthy Object of supposed personal passion. Also, with the lady of the Latter Sonnets considered as subject rather than object, we may see how the speaker can confess that he is betrayed by her image into sinning with others, and tell her that in straying elsewhere he does it in pursuit of her. Subject *versus* object makes all the difference in reading the Latter Sonnets! Thus the address to the soul and other themes, like that of lust, come in as "subjects" of Sonnets.

When Shakspeare published his poem of *Venus and Adonis*, he called it the first Heir of his invention. In Sonnet 38 he shows us what he did not consider to be the Heir of his own invention—

"How can my Muse want subject to invent,  
 While Thou dost breathe, that *pour'st into my verse*  
*Thine own sweet argument*, too excellent  
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse ?  
 O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me  
 Worthy perusal stand against thy sight ;  
 For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,  
 When thou thyself dost give Invention light ?  
 BE THOU the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth  
 Than those old Nine which rhymers invoke ;  
 And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth  
 Eternal numbers to outlive long date !  
 If my slight Muse do please these curious days  
 The pain be mine, but *thine shall be the praise.*"

X

In this Sonnet Shakspeare tells us that certain of his Sonnets were suggested by the friend who pours into the Poet's verse his "own sweet argument." This might also apply to the earliest Sonnets, but with the 38th there is a marked change in the mode of writing. The Friend has now become the Tenth Muse. As such he "gives Invention light." He supplies the subject-matter instead of the Poet's own imagination, which had hitherto sufficed. Southampton is addressed as the inventor and real author of Sonnets now to be written.

"O give thyself the thanks, if aught in me  
Worthy perusal *stand against thy sight* ;  
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,  
When thou Thyself dost give invention light ?"

This Sonnet, as previously argued and evidenced, marks the moment of change from the Personal to the Dramatic Sonnets.

Not only is there a new departure in Southampton's supplying his own argument for the entertainment of his mistress, Elizabeth Vernon, there is to be a change in the mode of writing down the Sonnets devoted to Southampton's courtship. Common paper is not good enough for them ! The new argument is too secret and precious for "every vulgar paper to rehearse." The Poet was writing on paper in Sonnet 17, where he speaks of the papers becoming "yellowed with their age." But now the friend not only supplies his own sweet argument for the Poet to turn into Sonnets, he also furnishes the table-book or album in which they are to be written, where they will stand against his sight, and serve for the delight of the "Private Friends." Hence the Poet says—

"If my slight Muse do please these curious days,  
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise."

Now, if we study Sonnet 77 we may see how a large number of the Sonnets were written for Southampton.

"Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,  
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste ;  
*The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,*  
*And of this book this learning mayst thou taste :*  
The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show,  
Of mouth'd graves will give thee memory ;  
Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know  
Time's thievish progress to eternity :  
*Look, what thy memory cannot contain,*  
*Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find*  
*Those children nursed, deliver'd from thy brain,*  
*To take a new acquaintance of thy mind :*  
*These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,*  
*Shall profit thee, and much enrich thy book."*

Hitherto the commentators have assumed that Shakspeare's friend had presented him with a Table-book ! But the Sonnet is not composed either on receiving or making a gift ; no such *motive* or stand-point can possibly be found in it. The subject is the old one of warring against Time, and the writer is at the moment writing in a book from which he draws one of a series of reflections in illustration of his thought. The mirror, he says, will tell the Earl how his "beauties wear" ; and the dial will show him Time's stealthy progress to eternity. "*This book*" will also teach its lesson. Its vacant leaves will take

the wind's imprint; and he advises his friend to write down his own thoughts in these "*waste blanks*," that they may be a living memory of the past, one day—just as the mirror is a reflector to-day. If he will do this, the habit—"these offices"—will profit him mentally, and much enrich his book.

Evidently this is a book for writing in, and as evidently Shakspeare is *then* writing in it; also it belongs to the friend addressed. Moreover, it has "vacant leaves"—"waste blanks"; therefore it has pages that have been filled. And to the contents of these written pages the Poet alludes—"Of *this* book this learning may'st thou taste;" that is, the Earl will find in it other illustrations of the writer's present theme, which is youth's transiency and life's fleetness. This book, then, has been enriched by the Poet's writing; but if Southampton will take the pen in hand, and also write in the book, it will become much richer than it is now. "*This* book" shows that it is in Shakspeare's hand, but it does not belong to him. "*Thy* book" proves that it is the Earl's. In this book, I doubt not, many of the Southampton Sonnets were written, just as contributions may be made to an album, and in this particular Sonnet we find the Poet actually writing in it. Two Sonnets earlier in the same group (p. 155) the Poet speaks of the lines he is then writing—

"Which for memorial still with thee shall stay."

He means them to remain with his friend as the "better part" of himself, the "*very part was consecrate* to thee." When he is dead and gone they are to represent him spiritually. Sonnet 77 identifies this Book of the Sonnets then as Southampton's own property.

Now in Sonnet 122 there is a grievance on account of the speaker's having parted with a book, and here he makes his most complimentary excuse and defence for having done so.

Thy gift, Thy tables, are within my brain,  
Full character'd with lasting memory,  
Which shall above that idle rank remain,  
Beyond all date even to eternity:  
Or at the least, so long as brain and heart  
Have faculty by nature to subsist;  
Till each to razed oblivion yield his part  
Of thee, thy record never can be miss'd.  
That poor Retention could not so much hold,  
Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score;  
Therefore to give them from me was I bold,  
To trust those tables that receive thee more:  
To keep an adjunct to remember thee,  
Were to import forgetfulness in me. (122)

Malone, who has been servilely followed by the Echoes, says—"That poor retention is the table-book given to him by his friend." But the book spoken of in Sonnet 77 is not Shakspeare's. It belongs to the person addressed. The speaker is writing in it, and he asks the Earl to commit his own thoughts to the waste blanks, the vacant leaves, of this book, which he calls "*thy book*," just as he says "*thy glass*," and "*thy dial*." So that it is impossible for the Earl's book of Sonnet 77 to be given away by Shakspeare in Sonnet 122. Here we need the dramatic interpretation. Here the speaker is the man who has given away the book that belonged to him—the book in which Shakspeare was

previously writing the Sonnets for which Southampton had supplied the subject-matter of his own sweet argument. According to the present reading, the Earl of Southampton addresses his lady, Elizabeth Vernon, in Sonnet 122; he is the culprit who has given away the book, and he now replies to an expostulation on the subject. In the first place, the book was given to him by his mistress—"Thy Gift"; and in the second place, it has been used as a record of her, for the purpose of scoring and keeping count as it were of his love for her, hence the comparison with the "tallies" which were used for scoring accounts.

This book, the lady's gift, her tablets, given to the speaker by the person addressed, and used as the record of his love, the retainer of her image, has been parted with, and perhaps the lady thought this had been done foolishly. Anyway it is one of the grievances acknowledged by the erring but penitent lover, who defends himself as best he can with the aid of Shakspeare's pen. He confesses that he has given away her book of the Sonnets, but insists that her true Tables are in his brain! Her real and permanent record remains there eternally, a writing never to be effaced, a gift that cannot be parted from. Ah, no! The gift of gifts was herself, not her gift-book, and the true tables are not that dead letter of his love, but his living brain. That "poor retention" could not hold his love for her, nor does he need "tallies," her "dear love to score," therefore he made bold to give away the book, the tallies which contained his love-reckonings, the memorandum-book which retained her, as is cunningly suggested, on purpose to trust his memory and mental record all the more. If he had kept such a thing to remind him of her, it would have been a kind of reproach to himself, as it would charge him with being forgetful, so he has just dispensed with this artificial memory, and henceforth will depend on h's natural one alone! Besides, it was utterly incapable of holding his large love for her!

This book must have been something very special for a Sonnet to be written on the subject of its having been given away. The purpose to which it had been devoted was likewise as choice and particular. Shakspeare was not in the least likely to fill a book with Sonnets *about* the Earl and then give it away, when they had been written *for* the Earl, nor did he keep "tallies" to score the Earl's dear love on his own account. Southampton had the book in his keeping, for what the Poet wrote in it, says Sonnet 38, was to *stand in the sight* of his friend, and remain with him. Thus in Sonnet 38 we see that Shakspeare is beginning to write in the book, which in Sonnet 77 he is positively writing in; and that in Sonnet 122 this same book has been given away by the Earl of Southampton. In Sonnet 38 it was to be devoted to the Earl's love, and in Sonnet 122 it has been devoted to the celebration of his love for Elizabeth Vernon.

This book, then, in which Shakspeare wrote Sonnet 77, and which has been given away by the Earl in Sonnet 122, must, Southampton being the speaker, have been the record of his love written, the tally that was kept by Shakspeare, the "poor retention" of Elizabeth Vernon's beauty and goodness and truth in love which the Poet had held up so steadily in view of his friend, by means of the dramatic Sonnets written in it! The lady had felt exceedingly annoyed that he should have held her gift and its contents so lightly, and this Sonnet was written to soothe her all it could.

It may have been a table-book, such as were then in use, elegantly bound for a dainty hand. Aubrey, speaking of Sir Philip Sidney, says, "My great uncle,



Mr. T. Browne, remembered him; and said that he was wont to take his table-book out of his pocket and write down his notions as they came into his head, when he was writing his *Arcadia*, as he was hunting on our pleasant plains." <sup>1</sup> "Thy gift—thy tables," however, does not necessarily mean thy table-book, and it also implies more than that. What the gift was has to be inferred from its use and by comparison. "Thy Tables" signifies the most sensitive receiver of her true impression. Shakspeare is writing in his inclusive and, we may add, *infusive* way; he speaks of two things, and the larger contains the lesser; he means the gift-book which contained the lady's tables. Table being the ancient term for a picture, Shakspeare uses it in the pictorial, rather than in the note-book sense. This book, which was the lady's gift, contained pictures of her, characterized by the Pen. The Earl has parted with the book, but he says *her* tables, *not* her book, are within his brain, her truest picture-place, not to be parted with and never to be effaced.

Still, there was a book in which the dramatic Sonnets were to be written (Sonnet 38). Shakspeare is writing in it, and invites the Earl likewise to write in it (Sonnet 77); it was presented by his mistress to the Earl, who has parted with it, and got into trouble over the transaction (Sonnet 122).

Now, the first cause why Shakspeare's Sonnets came into the world in so mysterious a manner may be legitimately assumed to have originated in this fact, that the Earl had given them away, as shown by the complaint denoted and the excuses made in Sonnet 122. I have further to suggest that the likeliest person to "obtain" the Southampton Sonnets was William Herbert, whom we know to have been a personal friend of the Earl's soon after he came to London in 1598, and that this was one cause why the whole collection was dedicated to him by Thorpe as the "*only Begetter*."

It is no longer possible to stand outside the Sonnets and discuss the inscription by Thorpe on the condition that the Sonnets themselves are never to be understood. No making out of the "Mr. W. H." could be satisfactory which left all the rest of the difficulties in outer darkness. My reading of the Sonnets and interpretation of the dedication go together. They throw light on each other; and this we have a right to demand from any *græ, ple* with the subject. There is no warrant whatever in the nature of the whole case—other than the initials of his name—for introducing "William Hathaway" either as "getter" or "begetter." Shakspeare could not have delegated to him the dedication of his own warm love for Southampton and the fulfilment of his promise made in

#### <sup>1</sup> A TABLE-BOOK OF SHAKSPEARE'S TIME.

"I happen to possess a Table-book of Shakspeare's time. It is a little book, nearly square, being three inches wide, and something less than four in length, bound stoutly in calf, and fastened with four strings of broad, strong, brown tape. The title as follows—'*Writing Tables, with a Calendar for XXIIII yeeres, with sundrie necessarie rules. The Tables made by Robert Triplett. London. Imprinted for the Company of Stationers.*' The Tables are inserted immediately after the almanack.

"At first sight they appear like what we call Asses-skin, the colour being precisely the same, but the leaves are thicker; whatever smell they may have had is lost, and there is no gloss upon them. It might be supposed that the gloss had been worn off, but this is not the case, for most of the Tables have never been written on. Some of the edges being worn show that the middle of the leaf consists of paper; the composition is laid on with great nicety. A silver style was used, which is sheathed in one of the Covers, and which produces an impression as distinct and as easily obliterated as that of a black-lead pencil.

"The Tables are interleaved with common paper."—Southey's *Omniana*, vol. i. p. 133.

1594. And how should Southampton give up his secret-telling sybilline leaves to such a double nobody as William Hathaway? William Herbert was a *somebody*; the only man of sufficient importance to take Shakspeare's place. And there is proof extant that Thorpe had dedicatory dealings with Herbert in the fact that the folio translation of Augustine's *De Civitatis Dei*, published in 1610, is inscribed to the "Honourable Patron of Muses and Good Minds, Lord William, Earl of Pembroke." Here, as with the Sonnets, it is another man's work that Thorpe inscribes to the Earl, and in doing so uses the cipher "Th. Th." instead of his full name.

Herbert was a friend of the Poet's, who felt and had sufficient interest to collect the Sonnets; sufficient motive to have his title concealed in the inscription; sufficient power to protect Thorpe in carrying out publicly the plan that he was privy to. Thorpe would not have dared to print another man's work without some warrant. So early as 1592 Shakspeare was of sufficient account to make Chettle apologize very courteously for words that had been uttered by another man for whom he had published a posthumous tract. Also we learn from Heywood that Shakspeare was much offended with Jaggard, who in 1599 pirated some pieces, including two of these Sonnets, and took liberties with the Poet's name—in fact, made it look as though the Poet had violated the secrecy of his private friends, and given the two Sonnets to the press. Shakspeare's annoyance was so marked and manifested so strongly on that occasion that Jaggard took care to cancel his original title-page in a subsequent edition.

If I had gone no deeper than the inscription, the merest surface of this subject, I might have suggested as "getter" of the Sonnets for Thorpe a more likely candidate for the ownership of the "W. H." than "William Hathaway," viz. Sir "William Hervey," third husband of Southampton's mother. But the problem was not to be solved so. That Thorpe had no warrant from Shakspeare through Hathaway or any other way, is certain, or he would have said so. It was Herbert who warranted Thorpe, and this Thorpe lets us know, and so we hear no word of the Poet's anger with the publisher this time.

We are able to deal with the inscription written by Thomas Thorpe, and bring it within the domain of positive facts, instead of leaving its meaning to remain any longer a matter of opinion. It is not without a touch of satisfaction that I place Thorpe *after the Sonnets* for the first time! Whilst standing full in front of them, darkening the doorway, and almost shutting Shakspeare out of sight, he has given me a great deal of trouble. So completely has this inscription on the outside been interposed betwixt us and the Poet's own writing, that the only aim of the efforts hitherto made to decipher the secret history of the Sonnets does but amount to an attempt at discovering a man who should be young in years, handsome in person, loose in character; the initials of whose name must be "W. H." The discoverers being quite ignorant at the outset of their enterprise as to what Thorpe himself knew of the Sonnets, what he really meant by his "*onlie begetter*," and liable, after all, to be met with the fatal fact that he used the word "begetter" in its more remote, its original sense, and thus inscribed the Sonnets, with his best wishes, to the person who might be legitimately called the "*only obtainer*" of them for him to print.

Thus the misinterpreters of Thorpe's Inscription have got into a similar predicament, and been the victims of a like delusion to that of Matilda in Spenser's *Faery Queen* (B. VI. c. iv. 32). There was a prophecy that a son should be

gotten to her lord. The lady naturally thought the oracle meant she should bear a child, whereas it was only intended to signify that she was to *obtain* one and adopt it as her own. It said, there should to him a son *be gotten*, not BEGOTTEN, precisely as the Sonnets were *got* for Thorpe by Mr. W. H., not begotten by him as "Sole Inspirer" of Shakspeare; but she mistook the sense of the word *gotten*, and was greatly disappointed.

If Shakspeare had inscribed the Sonnets to their Only Begetter the word could have had but one meaning, viz. the only Inspirer. But they are dedicated to Thorpe's only Begetter, not Shakspeare's, the one man who had the power to get or obtain them for the publisher.

Some of the earlier commentators, as Chalmers and Boswell, suggested that by his "only begetter," Thorpe might have meant the "only *obtainer*," the only person who, so far as Thorpe was concerned, had power to procure the Sonnets for him to publish. And this is the original signification of the word. "Beget" is derived by Skinner from the Anglo-Saxon *begettan* or *begyten*—"obtinere." The Glossary to Thorpe's *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* renders "*begyten*" to beget—*obtain*. Johnson derives "beget" from the Anglo-Saxon "*begettan*," to obtain. An Anglo-Saxon Glossary of Latin words, apparently of the ninth century,<sup>1</sup> renders "Adquiri," *beon be-gyten*. In the Proverbs of King Alfred, we find the word "beget" used for obtain. "Thus quoth Alfred: If thou a friend bi-gete," i. e. if you be-get or get a friend. In Chaucer we have "getten" for obtained with the "y" as prefix, "y-getten." Thus the original sense of the word *beget* was possessive, not creative! It is so used by Dekkar in his *Satiromastix*, which was printed seven years before the Sonnets. He writes—"I have some cousin-germans at court shall *beget* you (that is, obtain for you) the reversion of the Master of the King's Revels."

And now it becomes apparent that this was the sense in which Thorpe inscribed the Sonnets to his "Onlie Begetter." Still, in whichever sense we take the words "Only Begetter," the Sonnets were falsely inscribed. If we read the "Only Inspirer," the dedication is false on the face of it. If we read the "Only Obtainer" of the Sonnets for printing, then the *suggestion* that W. H. was the one man whom the Poet meant to make immortal is false on the back of it. There is no promise of immortality nor syllable of love for any male friend in the Latter or Herbert Series of the Sonnets. And I am forced to conclude that the Southampton Sonnets were not come by honestly for publication, but that they were *sneaked* into print by "Mr. W. H." along with his own series; that they were virtually filched from their privacy; and in being printed with an inscription which gave a seeming unity and oneness to both series, the Sonnets of Shakspeare were made to look like the Sonnets of Master Will Herbert, who had then become Earl of Pembroke. Shakspeare has not personally authorized the printing of his Sonnets, therefore we may conclude that he did not do so, else he would have said so; or Thorpe would have spoken for him. It is certain that the author did not superintend the printing; and again, the absence of Shakspeare as corrector of the press implies the absence of his sanction to the publication; he who had been so careful in correcting his two poems. Yet Thorpe would not have dared to print the Sonnets belonging to Shakspeare's "Private Friends" without some safe warrant for himself as "Adventurer."

It was somebody's concern that the Sonnets should *not* be dedicated in full to

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Reliquæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 11.

the Earl of Pembroke. That was not Thorpe's. His interest lay in having them so dedicated, if it had not been prohibited, because that would have promoted the sale. The dedication saddles the responsibility on the right person. It was Mr. W. H. who had power to obtain the Sonnets, and who was the only obtainer. He was the only person who had need of the cipher, or who had anything to conceal; the only person who could warrant or safeguard Thorpe in an underhand mode of publication. They were published surreptitiously without the author's sanction or approval, because Herbert was only the "Obtainer" for Thorpe. And we now see that all the mystery of the enigma depends upon Herbert's *not* being the Only Inspirer of the Sonnets.

Thus Thorpe inscribed them to "Mr. W. H." as the *only getter*, or, as he chose affectedly to say, "*only be-getter*" of them for publishing purposes. In doing this he tries to add something complimentary, and likes to show that he has read the Sonnets, so he wishes "Mr. W. H." all happiness and eternal life, connecting the latter idea with Shakspeare's promises of immortality, which has made the dedication look as if it meant that W. H. was the sole inspirer of Shakspeare's Sonnets, and is consequently read in that sense by the Herbertists. I have suggested that there may be an allusion in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* to the surreptitious printing of the two Sonnets in the *Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), and I think the writer uttered a true prophecy regarding Herbert when he said—"He will print them out of doubt, for he cares not what he puts in the press;" and this unconscious prophecy I take to have been consciously fulfilled by Herbert when he put the Sonnets into print in 1609.

Doubtless he was ambitious for these poetic exercises of Shakspeare to be looked upon as the "Earl of Pembroke's Sonnets," just as Sidney's work was known by name as "The Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*." The Latter Sonnets had been written for him at his own request, and upon subjects suggested by himself. Whether his passion for the Dark Lady be looked upon as real or pretended, whether for Lady Rich or Mary Fytton, we have found a motive and a literary initiative in Sidney's own treatment of Stella. We have seen the Latter Sonnets continuing on the earlier track with Shakspeare following Sidney in both series. In giving the whole of them the look of unity the parallel would be perfected, and with an "Only Begetter" who was "Mr. W. H." they would become the Sonnets of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, for all who might identify the initials, but could not penetrate below the surface or read the riddle of Thorpe's Inscription. It must be clear to every one that Ben Jonson, for example, *did* identify the Earl of Pembroke as the "Mr. W. H." to whom the book of Sonnets was inscribed! And Herbert must have known that it *would* mislead; therefore in permitting it to appear he intended it to mislead, or took no precaution and made no protest against its misleading. If it caused the reader to conclude that Master William Herbert was the Only Inspirer of the Sonnets, the one dear and only friend of the Poet from first to last, which has ensued, and inevitably so, *that* was the falsification of facts intended or allowed, and for that Master W. H. must be held responsible—unless he did not see the Inscription before the Sonnets were printed, which is more than doubtful. Shakspeare's already famous Sonnets could not have appeared in print, unauthorized by himself, with so enigmatical an Inscription by Thorpe, without attracting particular attention from the literary men of the

time. They were probably in the mind's eye of Drayton when he wrote these lines—

“ For such whose poems be they *ne'er so rare*,  
 In *private chambers*-that *enclioistered* are,  
 And by *transcription divinity* must go  
 As though *the world unworthy* were to know  
*Their rich composures*, let those men who keep  
 These *wondrous relics*, in their judgement deep,  
 And *cry them up so*, let such pieces be  
 Spoke of by those that shall come after me.”

Therefore we may look for some allusions to be made when they came into the world, and were publicly named as Shakspeare's, with only Thorpe to stand sponsor, and Master W. H. standing by in the concealing shade. The transaction must have been considerably talked about; and if my account of the way in which the Sonnets were given to the press be correct, there ought surely to be some sort of contemporary evidence in corroboration of the fact. Easy-going as Shakspeare may have appeared, he could hardly help being annoyed, I think, at the liberties taken with his poetry and his name, even though this were done or permitted by an Earl who “prosecuted” him with so much favour. It must have happened that he spoke out on the subject pretty freely to some poet-friend or other. Ben Jonson, one may infer, would hear something of it. To be sure, Shakspeare in 1609 was living at Stratford, almost withdrawn from the old London haunts, thus leaving the way clear for Herbert and Thorpe.

Now, about that time, or a little earlier, George Wither had come to London to try and push his fortunes at Court. Not succeeding in a hurry, i.e. resolved to turn satirist. He was very young, and just in his eager first love of literature, with ears hungry for any poetic gossip going, and may have got at the facts as nearly as an outsider could; especially as he printed two dedicatory sonnets, one to the Earl of Southampton, the other to the Earl of Pembroke. Anyway, his volume of satirical poems is satirically inscribed to himself thus: “*G. W. wisheth himself all happiness*,” which is obviously a parody of Thorpe's fantastic inscription. But is there no more intended than a parody of form? Does not the satire lurk in the “*wisheth himself all happiness*”? Thorpe did not wish himself all happiness, but “Mr. W. H.” May not Wither have had an inkling that the Sonnets were given to the world by Herbert, who in accepting Thorpe's dedication was as good as wishing himself all happiness and that “eternity promised by our everliving Poet,” though not promised to him? Herbert knew that he was not the man to whom Shakspeare had promised immortality, but he coyly permitted Thorpe's soft impeachment. The imitation by Wither is obvious; and nothing could have been more to the point if he had known the exact state of the case as now presented by me. In procuring the Sonnets for Thorpe, and permitting or accepting the dedication to himself, Herbert was to all intent and purpose “*wishing himself all happiness*,” and “that eternity promised by our everliving Poet” to the Earl of Southampton. There would be the satire of it, and there the satirist's arrow sticks right in the centre! Ben Jonson likewise ostensibly alludes to Thorpe's inscription, and at the same time points out *William Herbert* as the object of it. He dedicates his Epigrams to the Earl of Pembroke, and says—“While you cannot change your merit, *I dare not chunge*

*your title*:—under which name I here offer to your lordship the ripest of my studies, my Epigrams; which, though they carry danger in the sound, do not therefore SEEK YOUR SHELTER; for *when I made them I had nothing in my conscience, to expressing of which I DID NEED A CIPHER.*"

This tells us plainly enough that the Earl's title had been changed in some previous dedication in which a writer had taken the disguise of using a cipher instead of his full name. He says—"I dare not change your title,"—as had been done in 1609, and in no other instance known! He does not seek the Earl's shelter because he has anything on his conscience that needs the covert of a cipher, as he assumes Thorpe to have had when he changed the Earl's title and dedicated under cover of "Mr. W. H." Here is an answer once for all to those who have urged against my reading, that the "Mr. W. H." could not be William Herbert, *because* he was the Earl of Pembroke, and *because* it was not the custom of the time to address Earls as "Masters!" Well, then, if my interpretation of Wither's dedication to himself be right, this of Ben Jonson's looks like a reply to it, as though it were an endeavour to saddle Thorpe with the responsibility of publishing Shakspeare's Sonnets and dedicating them to the Earl. Shakspeare was dead and out of the question here. It was Thorpe who had changed the Earl's title, and used a cipher both for his own name and Pembroke's. And it is implied that this was done because he had something on his conscience: all was not straightforward in the affair, and so he sought the Earl's shelter under a cipher covertly. But I do not believe Jonson to be so innocent or ignorant as he looks. I hold him to be using "gag," as actors term it. I am afraid he knew better—even in the act of dealing Thorpe this back-hander on the mouth—knew he was offering up a scapegoat, in his dedication to the man who was really and solely responsible for putting the Sonnets into print in a bastardly sort of way.

So far as I have had any communion with the spirit of Shakspeare, I feel that his annoyance at this surreptitious publication of the Sonnets must have been intense. He never meant those Sonnets in which Sidney's were imitated, replied to or travestied, to be damned to immortality along with all the darlings of his love that were sacred to Southampton (Sonnet 74). He must have been nobly angered. Did he give "Mr. W. H." no reminder that the transaction was not fair and above-board—that the Sonnets were published—

"Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly  
That no dishonesty shall appear in you" †

I think he did.

His way of reply in such a case would be to put it into his next play. In all probability *Anthony and Cleopatra* was composed about the time the Sonnets were printed. The play was not published, so far as we know, previous to its appearance in the folio of 1623, but a play with this title was entered at Stationers' Hall, May 20, 1608, in all likelihood the same. Of course the date of entry is no criterion as to the time when the play was finished. Enough if the writer was working upon it at the time the Sonnets were printed.

Now, it has been suggested, I think by Mr. Cartwright, that the characters of Enobarbus and Menas stand for Southampton and Thorpe. But for the nonce, or the nonsense, let them stand for Herbert and Thorpe while we read the following scene—

*Eno.* You have done well by water.

*Men.* And you by land.

*Eno.* I will praise any man that will praise me ; though it cannot be denied what I have done by land.

*Men.* Nor what I have done by water.

*Eno.* Yes, something you can deny *for your own safety* : you have been a great thief by sea.

*Men.* And you by land.

*Eno.* There I deny my land-service. But give me your hand, Menas ; if our eyes had authority here, they might take two thieves kissing.

As sense we shall make but little of that ! Nor will Plutarch help us to unriddle the nonsense of it. But it is so like the smiling way our Poet has of covertly alluding to real facts drawn from the life. It looks exactly as though Shakspeare held Herbert and Thorpe to be thieves both ; Herbert by land in pirating, and Thorpe by sea in publishing the Sonnets. That "something you can deny for your own safety," sounds like a hit at Thorpe's dedication, and his wriggling politeness in trying to cast the responsibility on "W. H." and whatsoever "land-service" Herbert might deny, according to Shakspeare, the meeting-point was two thieves kissing. A Judas-like reminder that he had been betrayed by both ! As I have no doubt he was. In this case we have the humorous aspect only. In *Cymbeline* we probably have a reflection of the madder mood that he got into when he first heard what the two thieves had done.

In this play we meet with a British lord "*who*," as the author might say, "*shall be nameless*." This nameless lord is only introduced in one scene, and then solely for the sake of a cuffing that he gets from Posthumus. When the two first meet, the Lord, who has run away from the thick of the battle, is greeted with "*No blame be to you, Sir ; for all was lost, but that the heavens fought*." But later on in the scene Posthumus turns on his Lordship and assails him in rhymes—

*Post.* Nay, do not wonder at it : You are made  
Rather to wonder at the things you hear,  
Than to work any. *Will you rhyme upon 't,*  
*And vent it for a mockery !* Here is one :  
'Two boys, an old man twice a boy, a lane,  
Preserved the Britons, was the Romans' bane.'

*Lord.* Nay, be not angry, Sir.

*Post.* 'Lack, to what end ?

Who dares not stand his foe, I'll be his friend :  
*For if he'll do, as he is made to do,*  
*I know he'll quickly fly my friendship too.*  
*You have put me into rhyme.*

*Lord.* Farewell ; you're angry."

Now, as Posthumus had already frankly justified the Lord's retreat, there was no cause for this outburst of anger afterwards. And why should he ask—

*" Will you rhyme upon 't,*  
*And vent it for a mockery !"*

The Lord was not going to do, nor does he do, anything of the kind. This he does himself, and then charges the Lord with having put HIM into rhyme.

There is by-play in earnest here. The Lord out of the Play had not only put the Poet into rhyme for his pleasure and amusement, but he had put him into print and vented or vended it for a mockery. In doing this without Shakspeare's permission, and without giving him a chance of supervising the Sonnets,

he had played false to their friendship, and Shakspeare was very wroth. But, alack! to what end after the thing was done? And by a Lord! "This is a Lord. O noble misery!"

I cannot dissociate the printing of the Sonnets from the publication of *Troilus and Cressida*, which appeared in the same year (1609), by permission of *certain grand possessors* or owners of it, "by the grand possessors' wills." These are obviously not Shakspeare and his fellow-actors, but some of the "Private Friends," such as Southampton and Herbert, or still likelier at the time, Herbert and his brother Philip, who prosecuted the Poet with so much favour. The "grand possessors" are private patrons treated in opposition to the players and their public in an address to the "Eternal reader" *versus* the temporary spectator.<sup>1</sup>

The escape that the Play had was not an escape from some powerful possessors, as Charles Knight misread the meaning, but an escape from "being sullied by the smoky breath of the multitude" through its *not* being played. The address points to the play having been bespoken for a private purpose, and to its remaining the property of Shakspeare's patrons who had paid for it. And this working to order may account for the Poet's heart being the least in it of all his dramas!

My thesis that Shakspeare's Sonnets are partly personal and partly dramatic is now presented in an amended form, and enforced by further evidence in its favour. This is the second attempt I have made to climb and conquer, not a very lofty, but an outlying peak of literature. Some persons may be inclined to blame me for making such a *piece of work* about a subject so remote from ordinary interests. But

The subject *chose me*, and I could not rest  
Until the book was written at my best.

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<sup>1</sup> A NEVER WRITER TO AN EVER READER.—*News*.

"Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never Staled with the Stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the pain comical; for it is a birth of your (that) brain, that never undertook anything comical vainly: and were but the vain names of Comedies changed for the titles of Commodities, or of Plays for Pleas; you should see all those grand Censors, that now style them such vanities, flock to them for the main grace of their gravities; especially this author's Comedies, that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common Commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit, that the most displeas'd with the Plays are pleas'd with his Comedies. And all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings, as were never capable of the wit of a Comedy, coming by report of them to his representations, have found that wit there, that they never found in themselves, and have parted better-witted than they came; feeling an edge of wit set upon them, more than ever they dreamed they had brain to grind it on! So much and such flavoured salt of wit is in his Comedies, that they seem (for their height of pleasure) to be *borne in the sea that brought forth Venus*. Amongst all there is none more witty than this; and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs it not (for so much as will make you think your testern (8d.) well bestowed), but for so much worth, as even poor I know to be stuffed in it. It deserves such a labour, as well as the best comedy in Terence or Plautus, and believe this, that *when he is gone, and his Comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition*. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasures loss, and judgments, refuse not, nor like this the less, for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude; but thank fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you. Since by the *grand possessors' wills*, I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave all such to be prayed for (for the states of their wits' healths) that will not p'ais: it."—*Vale. Shakspeare's Centurie of Prayse*. C. M. Ingleby, LL.D., p. 87.



A few readers will be sure to take an interest in my prolonged effort—that of a sleuth-hound on the track of truth—if only for the labour devoted to attain the end. Some few will follow me for Shakspeare's sake. I also claim for my Theory that it is proved by the utmost evidence the nature of the case admits; that the probabilities alone are such as to inspire a feeling of confidence—that these clothe themselves in a mail of poetic proof, a panoply of circumstantial evidence and confirmatory facts. Attempting so much, it must be very assailable if wrong, only those who think me wrong must be able to set me right. Mere professions of unbelief or non-belief will be valueless; their expression idle. My facts must be satisfactorily refuted, my Theory disproved simply and entirely, or, in the end, both will be established. It is no argument for opponents to tell me they do not see what I see. That may depend somewhat on the vision! Probably those who come to the present work with the pre-conceived hypothesis to support, the personal "Axe to grind," never will see as I do. Only those who are free to stand face to face and level-footed with the facts ever will see—the rest can only grope on blindly with their make-believe. The truth must be determined by the whole of the data when rightly interpreted.

I am prepared to hear from the younger generation of reviewers that what is true in my work is not altogether new, having been amused at times to find how much has been adopted from my previous version and passed on silently by others as if original. Those who have been the most indebted to my work have been the loudest in repudiating my dramatic interpretation. A well-known trick in disguising the trail and of denying indebtedness. Personally I do not mind. Truth may think herself fortunate to be considered worth the stealing! But I may just mention that the first cast of the present work was made in the year 1866, the germ of it having previously appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1864. A book that is all explanation ought not to need a preface, and this book has none; but I may also add here, that unless some fully-qualified and duly-equipped opponent,—not one who is armed with a bow-and-arrow,—having something new and destructively-effective to say, should be drawn or driven to reply at length and adequately to my evidence and arguments, the present work will in all likelihood contain my last word on Shakspeare's Sonnets.

I cannot expect the result of my many years' labour to be mastered at once, for I myself best appreciate all the intricacies of the process, and the many surprises of the discovery. Some readers will find it hard to believe that a thing like this has been left for me to accomplish. Nevertheless, this thing is done; and I can trust a certain spirit in the Sonnets, that will go on pleading when my words cease; and, as Shakspeare has written, the "silence of pure Innocence persuades when speaking fails." Even so will his own innocence prevail, and with a perfect trust in the soundness of my conclusions, I shall leave the matter for the judgment of that great soul of the world which is ultimately just.

# BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA.

## SHAKSPEARE'S SOUTHAMPTON.

THE name of Southampton was once well known on a past page of our rough island story; his swaling plume was looked to in the battle's front, and recognized as worn by a natural leader of fighting men. He was of the flower of England's chivalry, and a close follower of Sir Philip Sidney in heading the onset and breaking hardily on the enemy with a noble few, without pausing to count numbers or weigh odds.

With a natural aptitude for war, he never had sufficient scope: one of the jewels of Elizabeth's realm did not meet with a fit setting at her hand; a bright particular star of her constellation was dimmed and diminished through a baleful conjunction. But he has a rich reprisal in being the friend of Shakspeare, beloved by him in life, embalmed by him in memory; once a sharer in his own personal affection, and for ever the partaker of his immortality on earth.

Henry Wriothesley was the second of the two sons of Henry, the second earl of the name. His mother was the daughter of Anthony Brown, first Viscount Montague. The founder of the family was Thomas Wriothesley, our earl's grandfather, a favourite servant of Henry VIII., who granted to him the Promonstratensian Abbey of Tichfield, Hants, endowed with about £280 per year in 1538, creating him Baron Tichfield about the same time, and Earl of Southampton in 1546. He died July 30, 1550. A rare work entitled *Honour in his Perfection*,<sup>1</sup> by G. M., 4to, 1624, contains the following notice of our Southampton's ancestors—"Next (O Britain!) read unto thy softer nobility the story of the noble house of Southampton; that shall bring new fire to their bloods, and make of the little sparks of honour great flames of excellency. Show them the life of Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who was both an excellent soldier and an admirable scholar; who not only served the great king, his master, Henry VIII., in his wars, but in his council chamber;<sup>2</sup> not only in the field but on the bench, within his courts of civil justice. This man, for his excellent parts, was made Lord Chancellor of England, where he governed with that integrity of heart, and true mixture of conscience and justice, that he won the hearts of both king and people.

"After this noble prince succeeded his son, Henry, Earl of Southampton, a man of no less virtue, prowess, and wisdom, ever beloved and favoured of his

<sup>1</sup> *Honour in his Perfection*, supposed by Malone to have been written by Gervase Markham. But Gervase was accustomed to write his name Jarvis or Iarvis. He signs his Sonnets dedicatory to his tragedy of Sir Richard Grenville, his dedication to the *Poem of Poems, or Sion's Muse*, and his contributions to *England's Helicon* with the initials J. M., not G. M. I rather think that *Honour in his Perfection* was written by Griffith or Griffin Markham, the brother of Gervase. He served under the Earl of Southampton in Ireland as Colonel of Horse, and was an intimate personal friend.

<sup>2</sup> As Secretary of State.

prince, highly revered and favoured of all that were in his own rank, and bravely attended and served by the best gentlemen of those countries wherein he lived. His muster-roll never consisted of four lacqueys and a coachman, but of a whole troop of at least a hundred well-mounted gentlemen and yeomen. He was not known in the streets by guarded liveries but by gold chains; not by painted butterflies, ever running as if some monster pursued them, but by tall goodly fellows that kept a constant pace both to guard his person and to admit any man to their lord which had serious business. This prince could not steal or drop into an ignoble place, neither might he do anything unworthy of his great calling; for he ever had a world of testimonies about him." This Earl was attached to Popery, and a zealous adherent to the cause of Mary, Queen of Scots; which led to his imprisonment in the Tower in 1572. He died October 4, 1581, at the early age of thirty-five, bequeathing his body to be buried in the chapel of Tichfield Church, where his mother had been interred, his father having been buried in the choir of St. Andrew's Church, Holborn; and appointing that £200 should be distributed amongst the poor within his several lordships, to pray for his soul and the souls of his ancestors.

"When it pleased the Divine goodness to take to his mercy this great Earl, he left behind to succeed him Henry, Earl of Southampton, his son (now living), being then a child. But here methinks, *Cynthia aurem vellet*, something pulls me by the elbow and bids me forbear, for flattery is a deadly sin, and will damn reputation. But, shall I that ever loved and admired this Earl, that lived many years where I daily saw this Earl, that knew him before the wars, in the wars, and since the wars—shall I that have seen him endure the worst malice or vengeance that sea, tempests, or thunder could utter, that have seen him undergo all the extremities of war; that have seen him serve in person on the enemy—shall I that have seen him receive the reward of a soldier (before the face of an enemy) for the best act of a soldier (done upon the enemy)—shall I be scared with shadows? No; truth is my mistress, and though I can write nothing which can equal the least spark of fire within him, yet for her sake will I speak something which may inflame those that are heavy and dull, and of mine own temper. This Earl (as I said before) came to his father's dignity in childhood, spending that and his other younger times in the study of good letters (to which the University of Cambridge is a witness), and after confirmed that study with travel and foreign observation." He was born October 6, 1573. His father and elder brother both died before he had reached the age of twelve years. On December 11, 1585, he was admitted of St. John's College, Cambridge, with the denomination of Henry, Earl of Southampton, as appears by the books of that house; on June 6, 1589, he took his degree of Master of Arts, and after a residence of nearly five years, he finally left the University for London. He is said to have won the high eulogies of his contemporaries for his uncommon proficiency, and to have been admitted about three years later to the same degree, by incorporation, at Oxford.

The Inns of Court, according to *Aulicus Coquinariæ*, were always the place of esteem with the Queen, who considered that they fitted youth for the future, and were the best antechambers to her Court. A character in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* also says, "He that will now hit the mark *must shoot through the law; we have no other planet reigns.*" And it was customary for the nobility, as well as the most considerable gentry of England, to spend some time in one of

the Inns of Court, on purpose to complete their course of studies. Soon after leaving the University, the young Earl entered himself a member of Gray's Inn, and on the authority of a roll preserved in the library of Lord Hardwick, he is said to have been a member so late as the year 1611. Malone was inclined to believe that he was admitted a member of Lincoln's Inn, to the chapel of which society the Earl gave one of the admirably painted windows, in which his arms may be yet seen.

One of the earliest notices of the Earl in the calendar of State Papers,<sup>1</sup> gives us the note of preparation for the memorable year of the "Armada," in which the encroaching tide of Spanish power was dashed back broken, from the wooden walls of England. "June 14th," we read, "the Earl of Southampton's armour is to be scoured and dressed up by his executors!" In consequence of his father's death, the young Earl became the ward of Lord Burghley. He was, as he said on his trial, brought up under the Queen. Sir Thomas Heneage, his stepfather, had been a favourite servant of the Queen from his youth; made by her Treasurer of her Chamber, and then Vice-Chamberlain; appointed in 1588 to be Treasurer at War of the armies to be levied to withstand any foreign invasion of the realm of England; and successor to Walsingham in the office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in 1590.

October 14th, 1590, Mary, Countess of Southampton, writes to Burghley, and thanks him for the long time he had intrusted her son with her. She now returns the Earl, and hopes that Burghley will so dispose of him, that his exercises be such as may and must grace persons of his quality. He only is able to work her son's future happiness.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that Burghley had contemplated the marriage of the Earl with his granddaughter, for on the 15th July, 1590, Sir Thomas Stanhope writes to Lord Burghley, and assures him that he had never sought to procure the young Earl of Southampton in marriage for his own daughter, as he knew Burghley intended a marriage between him and the Lady Vere. And on the 19th September, same year, Anthony Viscount Montague writes to Lord Burghley to the effect that he has had a conversation with the Earl of Southampton as to his engagement of marriage with Burghley's granddaughter. The Countess of Southampton, the Earl's mother, and Montague's daughter, is not aware of any alteration in her son's mind.<sup>3</sup> The son's mind was changed, however; the lady was destined only to play the part of Rosaline until Juliet appeared; the impression in wax was doomed to be melted when once the real fire of love was kindled.

About this time the frankness of the Earl's nature and the ardour of his friendship flashed out in a characteristic act of reckless generosity. Two of his young friends had got into trouble; the provocation is not known, but they had broken into the house of one Henry Long, at Draycot in Wiltshire, and, in a struggle, Long was killed. These were the two brothers, Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers. They informed the Earl that a life had been unfortunately lost in an affray, and threw themselves under his protection. He concealed them for some time in his house at Tichfield, and afterwards conveyed them to France, where Sir Charles Danvers became highly distinguished as a soldier under Henry IV. He returned to England in 1598, having with great difficulty obtained the Queen's pardon, and his personal attachment to the Earl of

<sup>1</sup> *Domestic Series of the Reign of Elizabeth*, 1581—1590, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of State Papers*, 1b. p. 693.

<sup>3</sup> *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 688.

Southampton caused him to lose his head on Tower Hill, in March, 1601. Sir Henry lived for many years after his brother's death; he was created Baron Danvers by King James I., in the first year of his reign, and by King Charles I., Earl of Derby.

The young Earl of Southampton became so great a favourite at Court, and was noticed so graciously by Her Majesty, as to *excite the displeasure and jealousy of the Earl of Essex and Ewe*.<sup>1</sup> As in the case of Sir Charles Blount, Essex appears to have personally resented the favour shown by the Queen to Southampton, and we are told that *emulations and differences* arose betwixt the two Earls, who were rivals for Her Majesty's affection. Of this we get a glimpse in the story told by Wotton. Also the favours, the rivalry, and the consequent personal differences, are implied in the following note of Rowland White's in the *Sydney Memoirs*,<sup>2</sup> dated Oct. 1st, 1595:—"My Lord of Essex kept his bed all yesterday; his Favour continues *quam diu se bene gesserit*. Yet, my Lord of Southampton is a careful waiter here, and sede vacante, doth receive favours at her Majesty's hands; all this without breach of amity between them"—*i. e.* the two Earls.

But a new influence was now at work to make the rivals friends. The Earl of Southampton had met the "faire Mistress Vernon," and fallen deeply in love with her. This affection for the Earl of Essex's cousin joined the hands of the two Earls in the closest grasp of friendship, only to be relaxed by death. Love for the cousin was the incentive for Southampton to cast in his lot with the fortunes of Essex, and become the other self of his friend. There were reasons why there should be no further breach of amity between the two Earls. Eight days before the date of White's letter just quoted, he had written thus,—“My Lord of Southampton doth with *too much familiarity* court the fair Mistress Vernon, while his friends, observing the Queen's humours towards my Lord of Essex, do what they can to bring her to favour him, but it is yet in vain.”<sup>3</sup> This lady, who afterwards became Countess of Southampton, was a maid of honour, and a beauty of Elizabeth's Court; she was cousin to the Earl of Essex, and daughter of Sir John Vernon of Hodnet, by Elizabeth Devereux, Essex's aunt. Shakspeare's acquaintance with Lord and Lady Southampton, and consequent knowledge of her family belonging to Shropshire, may have led him to introduce a Sir John Vernon in *The First Part of Henry IV.* Hodnet is thirteen miles from Shrewsbury, and the high road leading to the latter place passes over the plain where the battle was fought in which Falstaff performed his prodigies of valour for “a long hour by Shrewsbury clock.”

Rowland White's statement contains matter of great moment to our subject. The Earl of Southampton's love for Elizabeth Vernon cost him the favour of the Queen. Her Majesty was not to be wrought on, even through “her humours towards my Lord of Essex,” to restore the fallen favourite to his lost place in her regards. As the breach of amity betwixt the two Earls had closed, that between her Majesty and Southampton continually widened. She forbade his marriage, and opposed it in a most implacable spirit. Whatsoever may have been the Queen's motive, she certainly did not forgive, first the falling in love, and next the marriage of the Earl of Southampton with Elizabeth Vernon.

Birch quotes a letter of Antonio Perez, written in Latin, dated May 20th, 1595, which contains a reference to the Earl of Essex and his ill situation at

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 53-4.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii. p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 248.

Court, and he suggests that the cause probably arose from the Queen's displeasure at the share taken by Essex in the marriage of his cousin to the Earl of Southampton without her Majesty's permission or knowledge.

But as the marriage did not take place until late in 1598, we must look a little further for the meaning of Mr. Standen's letter to Mr. Bacon, same date, in which he relates what he had learned the night before among the court ladies, to the effect that the Lady Rich, Elizabeth Vernon's cousin, having visited the lady of Sir Robert Cecil at her house, understood that Elizabeth Vernon and her *ill good man* had waited on Sunday two hours to have spoken with the Queen, but could not. At last Mistress Vernon sent in word that she desired her Majesty's resolution. To which the Queen replied that she was sufficiently resolved, but that the next day she would talk with her farther.<sup>1</sup> Whatsoever the precise occurrence may have been, it is doubtless the one referred to by Rowland White. The Earl had been courting Mistress Vernon too warmly for the cloistral coolness of Elizabeth's Court; this had reached her Majesty's ears. I surmise that the affair was similar in kind to that of Raleigh and Mrs. Throckmorton two or three years before, and that the Earl and Mistress Vernon were most anxious to get married, as their prototypes had done. But Elizabeth, either for reasons or motives of her own, "*resolved*" they should not. We may consider this to have been one of the various occasions on which Southampton was ordered to absent himself from Court. We have heard much of the subject from the Sonnets. Nearly two years later the familiarity became still more apparent, in spite of the Queen's attempt to keep the persecuted pair apart. The Earl was again ordered to keep away from the Court. The gossips, who had seen the coming events casting their shadows before, were at length justified. But I am anticipating.

The exact period of "travel and foreign observation," alluded to by the author of *Honour in his Perfection*, is unidentifiable, but I conjecture that "leave of absence" and a journey followed the explosion of 1595, when the Earl had been courting the fair Mistress Vernon "with too much familiarity." Her Majesty's "resolve," expressed in reply to the message of Elizabeth Vernon, is sufficiently ominous, although not put into words for us.

It has been stated that the Earl was with Essex, as an unattached volunteer, at the attack on Cadiz, in the summer of 1596. This, Malone asserted on grounds apparently strong. In the Catalogue of the MSS. in the library of the Earl of Denbigh—*Catalogi Librarum Manuscriptorum Angliæ, &c.*, vol. ii. p. 36, the following notice is found: "Diana of Montemayor (the first part), done out of Spanish by Thomas Wilson, Esq., in the year 1596, and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, *who was then upon the Spanish voyage with my Lord of Essex.*"<sup>2</sup> He could not, however, have left England in company with Essex, as on the 1st of July, 1596, the Earl executed at London a power of attorney to Richard Rouching to receive a thousand pounds of George, Earl of Cumberland, and John Taylor his servant. Also it may be calculated that if he had

<sup>1</sup> *Birch's Elizabeth*, vol. i. p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> It has been a subject of wonder how Shakspeare got at the Diana of Montemayor, to take so much of his *Two Gentlemen of Verona* from it. But as both he and Wilson were under the patronage of Southampton, Shakspeare might have had a look at Wilson's translation long before it was printed. Attention had been drawn to the drama by Sidney's translations from it made for Lady Rich.

been in action on that occasion, we should have heard of his part in the fight. But it is quite probable that he followed in the wake of the expedition, and the legal transaction has the look of an arrangement or agreement such as might have been made on leaving England in haste. Being too late to share in the storming of Cadiz, which was taken before Southampton could have left London, he may have joined his friend Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland, who was then making a tour of France, Italy, and Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> From the time that the Queen forbade his marriage with Elizabeth Vernon, and ordered him to absent himself from the Court, up to the death of Essex, it was a period of great trial and vexation for a proud impetuous spirit like his. Thwarted in his dearest wish to wed the woman he loved, and constantly checked in his public career, he became more and more impatient when struck by the stings and arrows of his cruel and outrageous fortune, that so pitilessly pursued him. Outbreaks of his fiery blood, and "tiffs" with his mistress were frequent. He appears to have got away from London as often as he could; though most anxious to do England service he "hoisted sail to every wind" that would blow him the farthest from her. He was most unlike his stepfather, Sir Thomas Heneage, who had been for so many years a docile creature of the Court, and who, as Camden tells us, was of so spruce and polite address, that he seemed purely calculated for a court. Southampton had not the spirit that bows as the wind blows. He was more at home in mail than in silken suit. Like the "brave Lord Willoughby," he could not belong to the the *Reptilia* of court life. He had a will of his own, a spirit that stood erect and panted for free air, and that trick of the frank tongue so often attending the full heart of youthful honesty. The words of Mr. Robert Markham, written to John Harington, Esq., somewhat apply to the Earl of Southampton: "I doubt not your valour, nor your labour, but that damnable uncovered Honesty will mar your fortunes." And the Queen's persistent opposition to his love, her determination to punish him for disobedience and wilfulness, kept him on the continual fret, and tended to turn his restlessness into recklessness, his hardihood into fool-hardihood, his daring into dare-devilry, the honey of his love into the very gall of bitterness.

Rowland White, writing to Sir Robert Sidney at Flushing, March 2, 1597, says,<sup>2</sup> "My Lord of Southampton hath leave for one year to travel, and purposes to be with you before Easter. He told my lady that he would see you before she should." The Earl was for leaving England again in his discontent and weariness. But the famous Island Voyage was now talked of, and Southampton was not the man to lose a chance if there were any fighting to be done. He had some difficulty in obtaining a command, but was at length appointed to the *Garland*. Rowland White, in his letter of April 9, says, "My Lord of Southampton, by 200 means, hath gotten leave to go with them" (Essex and Raleigh). The influence here exerted in favour of the Earl was Cecil's. Whatever the feeling of Cecil toward Essex, he proved himself on various occasions to have been the true good friend of the Earl of Southampton. "The Earl was made commander of the *Garland*," to quote once more from *Honour in his Perfection*, and was "Vice-admiral of the first squadron. In his first putting out to sea (July, 1597) he saw all the terrors and evils which the sea had power

<sup>1</sup> It was on the occasion of the Earl of Rutland's journey in 1595 that Essex addressed to him the long letter of advice which may be found in the Harleian MSS. (4888. 16).

<sup>2</sup> *Sidney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 24.

to show to mortality, insomuch that the general and the whole fleet (except some few ships of which this Earl's was one) were driven back into Plymouth, but this Earl, in spite of storms, held out his course, made the coast of Spain, and after, upon an adviso, returned. The fleet, new reinforced, made forth to sea again with better prosperity, came to the islands of the Azores, and there first took the island of Fiall, sacked and burnt the great town, took the high fort which was held impregnable, and made the rest of the islands, as Pike, Saint George's, and Gratiiosa, obedient to the general's service. Then the fleet returning from Fiall, it pleased the general to divide it, and he went himself on the one side of Gratiiosa, and the Earl of Southampton, with some three more of the Queen's ships and a few small merchant ships, sailed on the other; when early on a morning by spring of day, this brave Southampton lit upon the King of Spain's Indian fleet, laden with treasure, being about four or five and thirty sail, and most of them great warlike galleons. They had all the advantage that sea, wind, number of ships, or strength of men could give them; yet, like a fearful herd, they fled from the fury of our Earl, who, notwithstanding, gave them chase with all his canvas. One he took, and sunk her; divers he dispersed, which were taken after, and the rest he drove into the island of Tercera, which was then unassailable." Camden continues the story. "When the enemy's ships had got off safely to Tercera, Southampton and Vere attempted to crowd into the haven with great boats at midnight, and to cut the cables of the nearest ships, that they might be forced to sea by the gusts which blew from shore." But the Spaniards kept too strict a watch, and the project miscarried.<sup>1</sup> After the English had taken and "looted" the town of Villa Franca, the Spaniards, finding that most of them had returned to their ships, made an attack in great force upon the remaining few. The Earls of Southampton and Essex stood almost alone, with a few friends, but these received the attack with such spirit that many of the Spaniards were slain, and the rest forced to retreat. On this occasion Southampton fought with such gallantry, that Essex in a burst of enthusiasm knighted his friend on the field, "ere he could dry the sweat from his brows, or put his sword up in his scabbard."

Sir William Monson, one of the admirals of the expedition, the martinet who so disparaged Sir Richard Grenville's great fight, took a different view from that of Essex of what Southampton had done on this voyage. He considered that time had been lost in the chase, which might have been better employed. On his return to England Southampton found the Queen had adopted the opinion of Monson rather than of Essex, and he had the mortification of being met with a frown of displeasure for having presumed to pursue and sink a ship without direct orders from his commander, instead of being welcomed with a smile for having done the only bit of warm work that was performed on the "Island Voyage." This was just like the Earl's luck all through, after his refusal to marry the Lady Vere and his fatal falling in love with Elizabeth Vernon. His intimacy with Essex was a secondary cause of his misfortunes.

The Queen often acted toward Essex in the spirit of that partial mother instanced by Fuller, who when her neglected son complained that his brother, her favourite, had hit and hurt him with a stone, whipped him for standing in the way of the stone which the brother had cast!

On this occasion the quarrels of Essex and Raleigh were visited on the head

<sup>1</sup> *Camden's Elizabeth*, p. 598.



of Southampton. Fortune appeared to have an unappeasable spite against him ; the world seemed bent upon thwarting his desires and crossing his deeds. Do what he might it was impossible for him to be in the right. There is little marvel that he grew of a turbulent spirit, or that his hot temper broke out in frequent quarrels ; that he should wax more and more unsteady, much to the sorrow and chagrin of his mistress, who wept over the ill reports that she heard of his doings, and waited, hoping for the better days to come when he should pluck his rose<sup>1</sup> from the midst of the thorns, and wear it on his breast in peaceful joy.

In January, 1598, a disgraceful affair occurred in Court which became the subject of common scandal. On the 19th of that month Rowland White writes :—"I hard of some unkindness should be between 3000 (the No. in his chipher for Southampton) and his Mistress, occasioned by some report of Mr. Ambrose Willoughby. 3000 called hym to an account for yt, but the matter was made knowen to my Lord of Essex, and my Lord Chamberlain, who had them in Examination ; what the cause is I could not learne, for yt was but new ; but I see 3000 full of discontentments." <sup>2</sup> And on the 21st of January he says :—"The quarrel of my Lord Southampton to Ambrose Willoughby grew upon this : that he with Sir Walter Raleigh and Mr. Parker being at primero <sup>3</sup> (a game of cards), in the Presence Chamber ; the Queen was gone to bed, and he being there as Squire for the Body, desired them to give over. Soon after he spoke to them again, that if they would not leave he would call in the guard to pull down the board, which, Sir Walter Raleigh seeing, put up his money and went his ways. But my Lord Southampton took exceptions at him, and told him he would remember it ; and so finding him between the Tennis Court wall and the garden shook him, and Willoughby pulled out some of his locks. The Queen gave Willoughby thanks for what he did in his Presence, and told him he had done better if he had sent him to the Porter's Lodge to see who durst have fetched him out." <sup>4</sup>

The Earl also had a quarrel with Percy, Earl of Northumberland, which produced a challenge, and nearly ended in a duel. Percy sent copies of the papers to Mr. Bacon with a letter, in which he gives an account of the affair. The sole point of interest in this quarrel lies in the likelihood that Touchstone, in *As You Like It*, is aiming at it when he says :—"O, Sir ; we quarrel in print by the book ; as you have books for good manners. I will name you the degrees : the first, the retort courteous ; the second, the quip modest ; the third, the reply churlish ; the fourth, the reproof valiant ; the fifth, the counterbeck quarrelsome ; the sixth, the lie with circumstance ; the seventh, the lie direct. All these you may avoid but the lie direct ; and you may avoid that too with an 'If.' I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel ; but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an 'If,' as 'If' you said so, then I said so ; and they shook hands and swore brothers. Your *if* is the only peacemaker ; much virtue in *if*."

<sup>1</sup> For nothing this wide universe I call,  
Save Thou, my Rose, in it thou art my all.—*Sonnet* 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 82-3.

<sup>3</sup> If we are to believe Falstaff, it was *primero* that was fatal to him. "I never prospered since I foreswore myself at *primero*."—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. v.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 82-3.

We may find an illustration of "the Percy's" temper in a letter of Mr. Chamberlain's to Mr. Winwood in 1613, which relates that Percy has, while in the Tower, beaten Ruthven, the Earl of Gowrie's brother, for *daring to cross his path in the garden*. So that when we read of Southampton's quarrels, it will only be fair to remember who are his fellows in fieriness. The Percy appears to have had his match, however, in his own wife, Dorothy Devereux, the sister of Lady Rich and Robert Earl of Essex. In one of their domestic quarrels the Earl of Northumberland had said he would rather the King of Scots were buried than crowned, and that both he and all his friends would end their lives before her brother's great God should reign in his element. To which the lady spiritedly replied, that rather than any other save James should reign king of England she would eat their hearts in salt, though she were brought to the gallows immediately.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of his quarrels, the scuffle with Willoughby and the consequent scandals, the Earl attended to his duty as a senator from October 24, 1597, till the end of the session, February 8, 1598. He also entered upon an engagement to accompany Mr. Secretary Cecil on an embassy to Paris. A few extracts from Rowland White's letters will continue the story.

January 14, 1598.—"I hear my Lord Southampton goes with Mr. Secretary to France, and so onward on his travels, which course of his doth extremely grieve his mistress, that passes her time in weeping and lamenting."

January 28, 1598.—"My Lord Southampton is now at Court, who, for a while, by her Majesty's command, did absent himself."

January 30.—"My Lord Compton, my Lord Cobham, Sir Walter Raleigh, my Lord Southampton, do severally feast Mr. Secretary before he depart, and have plays and banquets."

February 1.—"My Lord of Southampton is much troubled at her Majesty's strangest usage of him. Somebody hath played unfriendly parts with him. Mr. Secretary hath procured him licence to travel. *His fair mistress doth wash her fairest face with too many tears. I pray God his going away bring her to no such infirmity which is as it were hereditary to her name.*"

February 2, 1598.—"It is secretly said that my Lord Southampton shall be married to his fair mistress."

February 12.—"My Lord of Southampton is gone, and hath left behind him a very desolate gentlewoman that hath almost wept out her fairest eyes. He was at Essex House with 1000 (Earl of Essex), and there had much private talk with him for two hours in the court below."

On March 17, Cecil introduced his friend, at Angers, to Henry IV., telling the king that Lord Southampton "was come with deliberation to do him service." His Majesty received the Earl with warm expressions of regard. Here again Southampton met with the customary frustration of his hopes; he had come for the express purpose of serving under so famous a commander, and was eager for the campaign, which was suddenly stopped by the peace of Vervins. There was nothing to be done except to have a look at Paris, and there he stayed some months.

July 15, 1598, Thomas Edmondes to Sir Robert Sidney writes:—"I send

<sup>1</sup> *Birch's Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 514. Perhaps Shakspeare had heard of this when he made Beatrice exclaim, "O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place."

your lordship certain songs,<sup>1</sup> which were delivered me by my Lord Southampton to convey to your lordship from Cavelas. His lordship commendeth himself most kindly to you, and would have written to you if it had not been for a little slothfulness."

The same writer fixes the time of the Earl's return. He writes, November 2, 1598 :—"My Lord of Southampton that now goeth over can inform your lordship at large of the state of all things here."<sup>2</sup>

But, according to Mr. Chamberlain's letter of August 30, 1598, the Earl of Southampton must have made a special journey from Paris for the purpose of effecting his marriage, and been on his way back when accompanied to Margate by Sir Thomas Germaine. Elizabeth Vernon had been compelled to retire from the Court. Chamberlain writes :—"Mistress Vernon is from the Court, and lies at Essex House (where the Earl of Essex was the fair Elizabeth's companion in disfavour). Some say she hath taken a *venue* under her girdle, and swells upon it; yet she complains not of *foul play*, but says my Lord of Southampton will justify it, and it is bruited underhand that he was lately here four days in great secret of purpose to marry her, and effected it accordingly." A week later the same writer says :—"Yesterday the Queen was informed of the new Lady of Southampton and her adventures, whereat her patience was so much moved that she came not to chapel. She threateneth them all to the Tower, not only the parties, but all that are partakers of the practice. It is confessed the Earl was here, and solemnized the act himself, and Sir Thomas Germaine accompanied him on his return to Margate." In his next letter Mr. Chamberlain says :—"I now understand that the Queen hath commanded the *novizia* countess the sweetest and best appointed lodging in the Fleet; her lord is by commandment to return upon his allegiance with all speed. These are but the beginnings of evil; well may he hope for that merry day on his deathbed, which I think he shall not find on his wedding couch."<sup>3</sup> The stolen marriage could only have been just in time for the child to be born in wedlock. November 8, Chamberlain writes :—"The new Countess of Southampton is brought to bed of a daughter; and, to mend *her* portion, the Earl, her father, hath lately lost 1800 crowns at tennis in Paris." On the 22nd of this month the same writer says :—"The Earl of Southampton is come home, and for his welcome is committed to the Fleet." That the Earl was thrust into prison on his return we might have inferred from the words of Essex in his letter of July 11, 1599 :—"Was it treason in my Lord of Southampton to marry my poor kinswoman, that neither long imprisonment nor any punishment besides that hath been usual in like cases can satisfy or appease? Or, will no kind of punishment be fit for him but that which punisheth not him but me, this army, and this poor country Ireland?" When a young man marries, says an Arab adage, the demon utters a fearful cry. And Elizabeth seems to have been almost as profoundly affected on such occasions.

This fact of Southampton's love for Elizabeth Vernon, and the Queen's opposition to their marriage, is the chief point of interest in the Earl's life, because

<sup>1</sup> Very possibly some of the Sonnets sent by Shakspeare to the Earl in Paris. There were two familiar visitors at Sir Robert Sidney's house who were much interested in the Sonnets of Shakspeare, viz., William Herbert and Lady Rich; and this was the year in which the Sonnets among the "Private Friends" were mentioned by Meres.

<sup>2</sup> *Spina y Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 102-4.

<sup>3</sup> *S. P. O.*

it is one of the main facts in relation to the Sonnets of Shakspeare. It is my conclusion that this pair of ill-starred lovers was badly treated by her Majesty. She not only rejected everything proposed by Essex for the advancement of his friend, but continued, as we shall see, the same spiteful policy when Lord Mountjoy wished to advance the fortunes of the Earl in a wider sphere of action.

Southampton, Elizabeth Vernon, and their common friends, tried long and hard to obtain the Queen's consent to the marriage, but as she would not give it, and showed no signs of relenting, they waited long, and at last did the very natural thing of getting married without it. This being done, what more is there to be said? It is unfair to talk of the Earl being licentiously in love with Mistress Vernon when the Queen would not grant them the licence. The marriage certainly took place in one of the later months of 1598, and the bitterness of the Queen towards Southampton was thereby much increased. The Queen was jealous and enraged to find any of her favourites loving elsewhere, or sufficiently unloyal to her personal beauty to get married. It was so when Hatton, Leicester, and Essex married; but no one of them all was so virulently pursued as the Earl of Southampton. Towards no one else was the fire of anger kept so long aglow. It makes one fancy there must have been some feeling of animosity betwixt the two Elizabeths, which has not come to the surface.

In 1599 Essex was appointed Lord-Deputy of Ireland, and Southampton accompanied him thither. On their arrival Essex made his friend General of Horse. By her Majesty's letter to Essex, July 19,<sup>1</sup> we learn that this was "expressly forbidden" by the Queen, who said, "It is therefore strange to us that you will dare thus to value your own pleasing, and think by your own private arguments to carry for your own glory a matter wherein *our pleasure to the contrary is made notorious.*" The Queen did not intend Southampton to be employed, and after some defensive pleadings Essex had to give him up. Before resigning his command he had done some little service. Sir J. Harington<sup>2</sup> gives us a glimpse of the Earl's daring and dash in action. June 30, about three miles from Arklow, the army had to pass a ford. The enemy was ready to dispute or trouble the army in its passage. The Earl of Essex ordered Southampton to charge, the enemy having retired himself into his strength, a part of them casting away their arms for lightness. "Then the Earl of Southampton tried to draw them on to firm ground, out of the bog and woodland, and at length he gathered up his troop, and seeing it lost time to endeavour to draw the vermin from their strength, resolved to charge them at all disadvantage, which was performed with that suddenness and resolution that the enemy which was before dispersed in skirmish had not time to put himself in order; so that by the opportunity of occasion taken by the Earl, and virtue of them that were with him (which were almost all noble), there was made a notable slaughter of the rebels." Here, too, we find fighting by Southampton's side a brother of Elizabeth Vernon, who managed to kill his man previous to his own horse going down in the bog and rolling a-top of him. The Earl of Southampton was such a leader of horse as could inspire the foe with a salutary respect, and cause them to watch warily all his motions. It was in one of these skirmishes that the Lord Grey pursued a small body of the enemy in opposition to Southampton's orders. He was punished with a night's imprisonment, or rather, as Mr. Scree-

<sup>1</sup> S. P. O.

<sup>2</sup> *Naxæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 237.

tary Cecil explained in a letter to Sir H. Neville, "the confinement was merely for order sake, Grey being a colonel, and Southampton a general." But my Lord Grey took it as a personal affront, and brooded over it bitterly, seeking to make it a cause of quarrel.

The Earl remained by the side of Essex some time after his command had been taken from him. He was present at a council of war held at the Castle of Dublin, August 21, and was one of the chief men that accompanied Essex at his conference with Tyrone early in September, 1599, when a truce was concluded. We next hear of him in London by White's letter of October 11—"My Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland came not to Court; the one doth but very seldom; they pass away the time in London *merely in going to plays* every day."<sup>1</sup> Southampton's sword had been struck from his hand, the Earl of Rutland had been recalled, the policy at Court being to lame Essex through his personal friends. Lord Grey, too, we find, is observed to be much discontented. His ill-feeling towards Southampton is smouldering, soon to break out in a desperate attack upon Southampton with drawn sword in open day and public street. He also challenged Southampton. Rowland White, January 24, 1600, tells his correspondent that Lord Grey had sent the Earl of Southampton a challenge, which "I hear he answered thus—that he accepted it; but for the weapons and the place being by the laws of honour to be chosen by him, he would not prefer the combat in England, knowing the danger of the laws, and the little grace and mercy he was to expect if he ran into the danger of them. He therefore would let him know, ere it were long, what time, what weapon, and what place he would choose for it." The violent temper and quarrelsome disposition of Southampton have been much dwelt upon. I repeat, it is only just that we should note the spirit of his personal opponents; and here we may recall the last words of Sir Charles Danvers on the scaffold. Amongst others present was the Lord Grey. Sir Charles asked pardon of him, and acknowledged he had been "ill affected to him purely on the Earl of Southampton's account, *towards whom the Lord Grey professed absolute enmity.*"

In 1600 the Queen had neither forgotten nor forgiven the marriage of Southampton. Mountjoy was now made Lord-Deputy of Ireland, and Southampton hoped to accompany him on his first campaign. Again we have recourse to that agreeable Court gossip, Rowland White:—

Jan. 24, 1600.—"My Lord of Southampton goes over to Ireland, having only the charge of 200 foot and 100 horse." He was not permitted to accompany the Lord-Deputy to Ireland, and on February 9, we find that, "My Lord of Southampton's going is uncertain, for it is thought that her Majesty allows it not." Lord Mountjoy landed in Ireland February 26, and on March 15, White says—"My Lord of Southampton is in very good hope to kiss the Queen's hand before his going to Ireland. Mr. Secretary is his good friend, and he attends it; his horses and stuff are gone before." March 22—"My Lord of Southampton hath not yet kissed the Queen's hands, but attends it still." March 29—"My Lord of Southampton attends to morrow to kiss the Queen's hands; if he miss it, it is not like he shall obtain it in any reasonable time. I hear he will go to Ireland, and hopes by doing of some notable service to merit it at his return." April 19—"My Lord of Southampton deferred his departure for one week longer, hoping to have access to her Majesty's presence, but it cannot be

<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 132.

obtained; yet she very graciously wished him a safe going and returning." April 26—"My Lord of Southampton went away on Monday last, Sir Charles Danvers brought him as far as Coventry. He is a very fine gentleman, and loves you well." May 3—"My Lord Southampton upon his going away sent my Lord Grey word that what in his first letter he promised, he was now ready in Ireland to perform."

On June 8, the Lord-Deputy wrote to Master Secretary concerning the state of Connaught, wherein nothing was surely the Queen's but Athlone by a provident guard, and Galway by their own good disposition, wishing that the government of that province might be conferred on the Earl of Southampton (to whom the Lord of Dunkellin would more willingly resign, and might do it with greater reputation to himself, in respect of the Earl's greatness) rather than upon Sir Arthur Savage (who, notwithstanding, upon the Queen's pleasure again signified, was shortly after made governor of that province). His lordship protested that it was such a place as he knew the Earl would not seek, but only himself desired this, because he knew the Earl's aptness and willingness to do the Queen service, if he might receive such a token of her favour; justly commending his valour and wisdom, as well in general as in the late particular service in the Moyry, when the rear being left naked, he by a resolute charge with six horse upon Tyrone at the head of 220 horse, drove him back a musket shot, and so assuring the rear, saved the honour of the Queen's army.<sup>1</sup> It was as useless, however, for Mountjoy to plead on behalf of Southampton as it had been for Essex in the previous year. Her Majesty was unrelenting. And in August, about the 25th, Southampton left the Irish war and sailed for England. There was some rumour of his going into the Low Countries in search of my Lord Grey; if so, nothing came of it. He is said to have been summoned home by Essex.

White tells us, September 26, 1600—"The Earl of Southampton arrived upon Monday night, and upon Wednesday went to his lady who lies at Lees, my Lord Riches; he hath been extreme sick but is now recovered."

Such treatment as Southampton had received from the Queen was naturally calculated to drive him closer to the side of his friend Essex, who was then under the Queen's sore displeasure, brooding over his discontent. So far had her Majesty's petty tyranny been carried, that in the March of this year Lord and Lady Southampton, together with others of Essex's friends, had been all removed from Essex House; whilst great offence had been taken at Southampton and others having entered a house that overlooked York Garden, on purpose to salute Essex from the window.

The two Earls were drawn together by many ties, by some likeness of nature, by strong bonds of personal friendship, and links of household love. Southampton was the nearest and dearest personal friend that Essex had; first in all matters of vital import and secret service. When Essex was consigned to the custody of the Lord Keeper in the autumn of 1599, his two most intimate and trusted friends were Southampton and Mountjoy; to these he committed the care of his interests. When Southampton, in April, 1600, went to join Lord Mountjoy in Ireland, Essex sent letters to Mountjoy, saying he relied on him and Southampton as his best friends, and would take their advice in all things. It was upon the intercession of Southampton, says Sir Henry Wotton, that the fatal tempter, Cuffe, was restored to his place after Essex had dismissed him;

<sup>1</sup> *Morgan's History of Ireland*, Book I. chap. ii. p. 173.

and he "so working upon his disgraces and upon the vain foundations of vulgar breath, which hurts many good men, spun out the final destruction of his master and himself, and almost of his restorer, if his pardon had not been won by inches."

It was at Southampton's residence, Drury House—on the site of which now stands the Olympic Theatre—that the chief partisans of Essex held their meetings in January, 1601. And Southampton in his youthful zeal and fervent friendship seems to have felt that, come what might, it was his place to dwell with Essex in disgrace, and if need be, fall by his side in death. Though what the Essex conspiracy was formed for or amounted to it is very difficult to determine. Essex and his sister, Lady Rich, we know intrigued and plotted for the purpose of bringing James to the throne, but that was never put forward on this occasion.

Lord Mountjoy being under the influence of Lady Rich, and held captive in her strong toils of grace, was to some extent bound up with the cause of Essex. His Secretary tells us that he was privately professed and privy to the Earl's intentions, though, as these were so vague and full of change, the acquiescence of Mountjoy may have been very general. According to Sir Charles Danvers, Mountjoy had promised that if the King of Scots would head the revolution and strike for the throne of England, he would leave Ireland defensively guarded and come over with 5000 or 6000 men, "which, with the party that my Lord of Essex should make head withal, were thought sufficient to bring to pass that which was intended." He had afterwards advised the Earl of Essex to have patience and wait. Southampton had opposed this march on London. He held it altogether unfit, as well in respect of his friend's conscience to God and his love to his country, as his duty to his sovereign, of which he, of all men, ought to have greatest regard, seeing her Majesty's favours to him (Essex) had been so extraordinary, wherefore he, Southampton, could never give his consent to it.<sup>1</sup>

To me the attempt of Essex looks like a too audacious endeavour to apply, in a more public way, the rights of personal familiarity which he had in some sort acquired and so often relied on in private with the Queen. But the force and freedom of the personal were on the wane. Essex had shown disloyalty to her Majesty's person, which was more than disloyalty to her throne. He had said the "*Queen was cankered, and her mind had become as crooked as her carcase.*" "These words," quoth Raleigh, "cost the Earl his head."<sup>2</sup> Also, there were statesmen round the throne who represented the public element, which was now rising in power as the life and vigour of the royal lioness were ebbing, and they were anxious that this personal fooling should cease, and the State policy be shaped less by whims and more by fixed principles. Else, according to Camden, the so-called conspirators were surprised to hear of a trial for treason. They had thought the matter would have been let sleep, and that the Queen's affection for Essex would cause it to be privately settled or kept in the dark.<sup>3</sup> No doubt there were some who stood about the Earl and urged him on with desperate advice, that secretly nursed the wildest hopes of what a success might

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Southampton after his arraignment.

<sup>2</sup> "And as, with age, his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers."—*Tempest*, IV. i.

<sup>3</sup> *Camden's Elizabeth*, p. 622.

bring forth for them, who also calculated that the Earl's influence with the Queen would tide them over a defeat.

Southampton had his personal complaint with regard to the attack made upon him in the street by Lord Grey, and to this he alluded in the course of the parleyings at Essex House before the surrender; but of course he knew this was no warrant for his being in arms against his sovereign. With him it was essentially a matter of personal friendship; he acted according to his sense of personal honour, which blinded him to all else. He had told Sir Charles Danvers that he would cast in his lot with my Lord of Essex, and venture his life to save him. He had done all that he possibly could on behalf of a man who had lost his head long before it fell from the block. He was one of those who in 1599 dissuaded Essex from one of his projected attempts, in which he purposed reducing his adversaries by force of arms. He opposed the contemplated march upon London. He advised the Earl's escape into France, and offered to accompany him into exile and share his fortunes there. He, with Sir Charles Danvers, had, as Essex admitted, persuaded the rash Earl to "parley with my Lord General." Evidently he had seen all the peril, but thought his place was with his friend, no matter what might be their fate. As he pleaded on his trial, the first cause of his part in the matter was that affinity betwixt him and Essex, "being of his blood, and having married his kinswoman," so that for his sake he would have hazarded his life. He had the good sense to see that the "rising," as it was called, the going into the city, was a foolish thing, and he said so, but he continued, "My sword was not drawn all day." It was indeed foolish, for such a cause, and such a cry of revolution as "*For the Queen! For the Queen! My life is in danger!*" were never set up in this world before or since. Stowe informs us that the wondering citizens, not knowing what to make of the cry, fancied that it might be one of joy because Essex and the Queen had become friends again, and that her Majesty had appointed him to ride through London in that triumphant manner.

Southampton urged in his defence, "What I have by my forwardness offended in act, I am altogether ignorant, but in thought I am assured never. If through my ignorance of law I have offended, I humbly submit myself to her Majesty, and from the bottom of my heart do beg her gracious pardon. For, if any foolish speeches have passed, I protest, as I shall be saved, that they were never purposed by me, nor understood to be so purposed, to the hurt of her Majesty's person. I deny that I did ever mean or intend any treason, rebellion, or other action against my sovereign or the state; what I did was to assist my Lord of Essex in his private quarrel; and therefore, Mr. Attorney, you have urged the matter very far; my blood be upon your head. I submit myself to her Majesty's mercy. I know I have offended her, yet, if it please her to be merciful unto me, I may live, and by my service deserve my life. I have been brought up under her Majesty. I have spent the best part of my patrimony in her Majesty's service, with danger of my life, as your lordships know." Southampton was in his twenty-eighth year when he was tried for treason. He had espoused the Earl of Essex's cause unwarily, and followed him upon his fatal course imprudently. But there was something chivalrous in his self-sacrificing friendship; a spirit akin to that of the Scottish chieftain, who, when the Pretender made his personal appeal, saw all the danger, and said, "You have determined, and we shall die for you;" and proudly open-eyed to death they went.



The historian notes that when my Lord Grey was called at the trial, "the Earl of Essex laughed upon the Earl of Southampton, and jogged him by the sleeve," to call his attention to his old "sweet enemy."

Perhaps we shall get at the Earl of Southampton's view of the matter in a letter written by Sir Dudley Carleton to Sir Thomas Parry, dated July 3, 1603; the remarkable words being spoken when and where there was no need for the speaker to "hedge" on the subject:—

"The Lords of Southampton and Grey, the first night the Queen came hither, renewed their old quarrels, and fell flatly out in her presence. She was in discourse with Lord Southampton touching the Lord of Essex' action, and wondered, as she said, that so many great men did so little for themselves. To which Lord Southampton answered, that *the Queen being made a party against them, they were forced to yield, but if that course had not been taken, there was none of their private enemies, with whom their only quarrel was, that durst have opposed themselves.* This being overheard by the Lord Grey, he would maintain the contrary party durst have done more than they. Upon which he had the lie hurled at him. The Queen bade them remember where they were."<sup>1</sup> This was in vain. The bickering continued, and they had to be sent to their lodgings to which they were committed, with a guard placed over them. On that occasion the King had to settle the quarrel, and make peace between them.

Southampton was condemned to die, and lay in the Tower at point of death; he was long doubtful whether his life would be spared. His friends outside hoped for the best, but sadly feared the worst. In a letter to Sir George Carew, dated March 4, 1601, Secretary Cecil professes to be pleading all he dare for the "poor young Earl of Southampton, who, merely for the love of Essex, hath been drawn into this action," but says that he hardly finds cause to hope. It is "so much against the Earl that the meetings were held at Drury House, where he was the chief, that those who deal for him are much disadvantaged of arguments to save him." Yet "the Queen is so merciful, and the Earl so penitent, and he never in thought or deed offended save in this conspiracy," that the Secretary will not despair. At last the sentence was commuted to the "confined doom" of perpetual imprisonment.

At the death of the Queen the Earl was much visited, says Bacon, who was one of the first to greet him, and who wrote to assure his lordship that, how little soever it might seem credible to him at first (he having been counsel against Southampton and Essex on their trial), yet it was as true as a thing that God knoweth, that this great change of the Queen's death, and the King's accession, had wrought in himself no other change towards his lordship than this, that he might safely be that to him now, which he was truly before.<sup>2</sup> We may rest assured that Shakspeare was one of the first to greet his "dear boy," over whose errors he had grieved, and upon whose imprudent unselfishness he had looked with tears, half of sorrow, and half of pride. He had loved him as a father loves a son; he had warned him, and prayed for him, and fought in soul against adverse "Fortune" on his behalf, and he now welcomed him from the gloom of a prison on his way to a palace and the smile of a monarch. This was the poet's written gratulation:

<sup>1</sup> Nicholls's *Progresses of James I.*

<sup>2</sup> Birch's *Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 500.

“ Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
 Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,  
 Can yet the lease of my true love control ;  
 Supposed as forfeit to a Confined Doom !  
 The Mortal Moon hath her Eclipse endured,  
 And the sad Augurs mock their own presage,  
 Incertainties now crown themselves assured,  
 And Peace proclaims Olives of endless age :  
 Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
 My love looks fresh ; and Death to me subscribes,  
 Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes :  
 And thou in this shalt find thy Monument  
 When Tyrants' crests and Tombs of Brass are spent.”

Mr. Chamberlain, writing to Dudley Carleton, April 1603, says, “The 10th of this month the Earl of Southampton was delivered out of the Tower by warrant from the King,” sent by Lord Kinloss—“These bountiful beginnings raise all men's spirits, and put them in great hopes.” Wilson says,<sup>1</sup> “The Earl of Southampton, covered long with the ashes of great Essex his ruins, was sent for from the Tower, and the King looked upon him with a smiling countenance, though displeasing happily to the new Baron Essingdon, Sir Robert Cecil, yet it was much more to the Lords Cobham and Grey, and Sir Walter Raleigh.”

Shakspeare's was not the only poetic greeting received by the Earl as he emerged from the Tower. Samuel Daniel hastened to salute him, and give voice to the general joy :

“ The world had never taken so full note  
 Of what thou art, hadst thou not been undone ;  
 And only thy affliction hath begot  
 More fame, than thy best fortunes could have won :  
 For, ever by Adversity are wrought  
 The greatest works of Admiration ;  
 And all the fair examples of Renown  
 Out of distress and misery are grown.

He that endures for what his conscience knows  
 Not to be ill, doth from a patience high  
 Look only on the cause whereto he owes  
 Those sufferings, not on his misery :  
 The more he endures, the more his glory grows :  
 Which never grows from imbecility :  
 Only the best-compos'd and worthiest hearts,  
 God sets to act the hard'st and constant'st parts.”

John Davies of Hereford also addressed the Earl on his liberation, and grew jubilant over the rising dawn of the new reign, opening on the land with such a smiling prospect :

“ The time for mirth is now, even now, begun ;  
 Now wisest men with mirth do seem stark mad,  
 And cannot choose—their hearts are all so glad.  
 Then let's be merry in our God and King,  
 That made us merry, being ill bestadd :  
 Southampton, up thy Cap to Heaven fling,  
 And on the Viol their sweet praises sing ;  
 For he is come that grace to all doth bring.”

<sup>1</sup> *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 663.

Southampton was invited to meet the King on his way to London. In Nicholls's *Progresses of James I.*<sup>1</sup> we read, that "Within half a mile of Master Oliver Cromwell's (our Oliver's uncle), the Bailiff of Huntingdon met the King, and there delivered the sword, which his Highness gave to the new-released Earl of Southampton, to bear before him. O admirable work of mercy, confirming the hearts of all true subjects in the good opinion of his Majesty's royal compassion; not alone to deliver from captivity such high nobility, but to use vulgarly with great favour, not only him, but also the children of his late honourable fellows in distress. His Majesty passed on in state, the Earl bearing the sword before him, as I before said he was appointed, to Master Oliver Cromwell's house."

His lands and other rights, which had been forfeited by the Earl's attainder, were now restored, with added honours and increase of wealth. He was appointed Master of the Game to the Queen, and a pension of 600*l.* per annum was conferred upon his countess. He was also installed a Knight of the Garter, and made Captain of the Isle of Wight. By a new patent, dated July 21, he was again created Earl by his former titles. And the first bill after the recognition of the King, which was read in the parliament that met on the 19th of March, 1604, was for restitution of Henry, Earl of Southampton. On the 4th of this month, Rowland White writes, "My Lady Southampton was brought to bed of a young lord upon St. David's day (March 1), in the morning; a saint to be much honoured by that house for so great a blessing, by wearing a leek for ever upon that day."<sup>2</sup> On the 27th of the same month the Child was christened at Court, "the King and Lord Cranbourn with the Countess of Suffolk being gossips." March 30 the Earl was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, together with his friend the Earl of Devonshire. Towards the end of June Southampton was arrested suddenly. The cause was, in all probability, some sinister suggestions of one or other of the Scotch lords who were jealous of his advancement and of the favour shown to him by the Queen. These marks of favour were followed, in June, 1606, by the appointment of his lordship to be Warden of the New Forest (on the death of the Earl of Devonshire), and Keeper of the Park of Lindhurst. In November, 1607, the Earl lost his mother, who had been the wife successively of Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, Sir Thomas Heneage, and Sir William Hervey. We are told that she "left the best of her stuff to her son, and the greater part to her husband." The "stuff" consisted of jewellery, pictures, hangings, &c., chiefly collected by Sir Thomas Heneage, for the possession of which the Earl of Arundel ranked him among the damned.

The Earl of Southampton was a very intimate friend of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and both, like the sage Roger Ascham, were sadly addicted to cock-fighting. Rowland White records, on the 19th of April, 1605, that "Pembroke hath made a cock-match with Suffolk and Southampton, for 50*l.* a battle;" and May 13 he says, or rather sings—

The Herberts, every cockpit day,  
Do carry away  
The gold and glory of the day.

This fellowship in sport led to the quarrel with Lord Montgomery, recorded in Winwood's *Memoria's*.<sup>3</sup> Southampton and the wild brother of the Earl of

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. iii. p. 154.

Pembroke fell out, as they were playing at tennis, in April, 1610, when an l "where the rackets flew about their ears, but the matter was compounded by the King without further bloodshed."

The two Earls, Southampton and Pembroke, were yoked in a nobler fellowship than that of sport. They fought side by side in the uphill struggle which colonization had to make against Spanish influence. They carried on the work of Raleigh when his adventurous spirit beat its wings in vain behind the prison bars, and continued it after his gray head had fallen on Tower Hill. They both belonged to the Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of Loudon for the first colony of Virginia (May 23, 1609): Southampton being appointed one of the council. He became a most active promoter of voyages of discovery, and a vigilant watcher over the interests of the colonists. December 15, 1609, the Earl writes to Lord Salisbury, that he has told the King about the Virginian squirrels brought into England, which are said to fly. The King very earnestly asked if none were provided for him, and whether Salisbury had none for him, and said he was sure Salisbury would get him one. The Earl says he would not have troubled Lord Salisbury on the subject, "but that you know so well how he is affected to these toys." A squirrel that could fly being of infinitely more interest to James than a colony that could hardly stand.

In 1607 Southampton and Sir Ferdinando Gorges had sent out two ships, under the command of Harlie and Nicolas. They sailed along the coast of New England, and were sometimes well but oftener ill received by the natives. They returned to England in the same year, bringing five savages back with them. One wonders whether Shakspeare's rich appreciation of such a "find" has not something to do with his discovery of Caliban, the man-monster, and land-fish.

It is pretty certain that the Earl's adventures as a colonizer had a considerable influence on the creation of Shakspeare's *Tempest*. The marvellous stories told of "Somer's Island," called the Wonderful Island, for the plantation of which a charter was granted to Southampton, Pembroke, and others, may have fired the Poet's imagination and tickled his humour.

August, 1612, the English merchants sent home some ambergris and seed pearls, "which the devils of the Bermudas love not better to retain than the angels of Castile do to recover."

October 27, 1613, a piece of ambergris was found, "big as the body of a giant, the head and one arm wanting; but so foolishly handled that it brake in pieces, so that the largest piece brought home was not more than 68 ounces in weight." Again, we read that the Spaniards, dismayed at the frequency of hurricanes, durst not adventure there, but called it *Dæmoniorum insulam*.

On the 12th of May, 1614, the Earl of Southampton supported the cause of his young plantation in Parliament, on which occasion Dick Martin, in upholding the Virginian colony, so attacked and abused the House that he was had up to the bar to make submission. Sir Thomas Gates had just come from Virginia, and reported that the plantation must fall to the ground if it were not presently helped.

The Earl lived to see the colony founded and flourishing. In 1616 Virginia was reported by Sir Thomas Dale to be "one of the goodliest and richest kingdoms in the world, which being inhabited by the King's subjects, will put such a bit into our ancient enemy's mouth as will curb his haughtiness of monarchy." And in 1624, the year of the Earl's death, the colony was so far thriving that it

had "worn out the scars of the last massacre," and was only pleading for a fresh supply of powder. The good work was crowned. "The noble and glorious work of Virginia," as it was called by Captain Bargrave, whose estate had been ruined in its support, and his life afterwards dedicated to the "seeing of it effected."

The Earl of Southampton has left his mark on the American map; his name will be found in various parts of Virginia. Southampton Hundred is so called after his title; and the Hampton Roads, where President Lincoln met the envoys from the South, to broach terms of reconciliation and peace, memorable likewise as the meeting-place of the *Merrimac* and *Monitor*, were so named after the friend and patron of Shakspeare.

Our American friends were oblivious of much that was stirring in the mother's memory, when the heart of England thrilled to the deeds done by Virginians in the late civil wars. In spite of her face being set sternly against slavery, she could not stifle the cry of race, and the instinct of nature,—could not but remember that these also were the descendants of her heroic adventurers, the pioneers of her march round the globe, who laid down their weary bones when their work was done, and slept in the valleys of old Virginia, to leave a living witness that cried from the mountains and the waters with the voice of her own blood, and in the words of her own tongue.

As the friend of Essex, whom King James delighted to honour, the Earl of Southampton received many marks of royal favour, although he was not one who was naturally at home in such a court. On June 4, 1610, he acted as carver at the splendid festival which was given in honour of young Henry's assumption of the title of Prince of Wales. In 1613 he entertained the King at his house in the New Forest. A letter written by him to Sir Ralph Winwood,<sup>1</sup> August 6, 1613, gives us a glimpse of his feelings at the time. He was one of the friends chosen to act on the part of Essex' son Robert, in the matter of devising the means of a divorce. And he writes with evident disgust at the conduct of affairs: "Of the Nullity I see you have heard as much as I can write; by which you may discern the power of a King with Judges, for of those which are now for it, I knew some of them, when I was in England, were vehemently against it. I stay here only for a wind, and purpose (God willing) to take the first for England; though, till things be otherwise settled, I could be as well pleased to be anywhere else; but the King's coming to my House imposeth a necessity at this time upon me of returning." In 1614, he made a visit to the Low Countries, and was with Lord Herbert of Cherbury at the siege of Rees, in the duchy of Cleves. In 1617, Southampton accompanied James on his visit to Scotland. And, from a letter of the Earl's to Carleton, April 13, 1619, we learn that he has been chosen a privy councillor. He remarks, that he will rather observe his oath by keeping counsel than giving it; much is not to be expected from one "vulgar councillor," but he will strive to do no hurt. It is said that he had long coveted this honour. June 30, 1613, the Rev. Thos. Larkin, writing to Sir Thos. Puckering, had said—"My Lord of Southampton hath lately got licence to make a voyage over the Spa, whither he is either already gone, or means to go very shortly. He pretends to take remedy against I know not what malady; but his greatest sickness is supposed to be a discontentment conceived that he cannot compass to be made one of the

<sup>1</sup> *Winwood Memorials*, vol. iii. p. 475.

Privy Council ; which not able to brook here well at home, he will try if he can better digest it abroad."

If he had looked up to this as the consummation of his wishes, he could have found but little satisfaction, and no benefit, from it when realized. He was unable from principle to acquiesce in the measures of the Court. Those who had kept the Council Chamber closed against him for so long had by far the truer instinct. He is spoken of by Wilson as one of the few gallant spirits that aimed at the public liberty more than their own personal interests or the smiles of Court favour. This writer says <sup>1</sup>—"Southampton, though he were one of the King's Privy Council, yet was he no great Courtier. Salisbury kept him at a bay, and pinched him so, by reason of his relation to old Essex, that he never flourished much in his time ; nor was his spirit (after him) so smooth shod as to go always at the Court pace, but that now and then he would make a carrier that was not very acceptable to them, for he carried his business closely and slyly, and was rather an adviser than an actor."

He was a member of the notable Parliament of 1620, when he joined the small party that was in opposition to the Court, his ardent temperament often kindling into words which were as scattered sparks of fire inflaming the little band that thwarted the meaner and baser wishes of the King and his ministers. Contrary to the desire of Government, he was chosen Treasurer of the Virginia Company. Also, in Parliament, he came forward to withstand the unconstitutional views of ministers and favourites. Early in the year 1621 he made a successful motion against illegal patents ; and Camden mentions that during the sitting of the 14th of March "there was some quarrelling between the Marquis of Buckingham, and Southampton and Sheffield, who had interrupted for repeating the same thing over and over again, and that contrary to received approved order in Parliament."

The Prince of Wales tried to reconcile them. Buckingham, however, was not the man to forget or forgive an affront. And those on whom he fixed his eye in enmity sooner or later felt the arm of his power, although the blow was sometimes very secretly dealt. Twelve days after the Parliament had adjourned, Southampton was committed to the custody of the Dean of Westminster, to be allowed no intercourse with any other than his keeper (Sir Richard Weston). June 23, Sir Richard Weston declined to be the Earl's keeper, and Sir W. Parkhurst was appointed.

The Rev. Joseph Mead writes to Sir Martin Stutville, June 30 of this year—"It is said that this week the Countess of Southampton, assisted by some two more countesses, put up a petition to the King, that her lord might answer before himself ; which, they say, his Majesty granted." <sup>2</sup>

Various others were imprisoned, about the same time, for speaking idle words. Among the rest, John Selden was committed to the keeping of the Sheriff of London ; he was also set at liberty on the same day as the Earl of Southampton, July 18, 1621. In a letter of proud submission sent to the Lord Keeper Williams, Southampton promises to "speak as little as he can," and "meddle as little as he can," according to "that part of my Lord Buckingham's advice !" In these stormy discussions and early grapplings with irresponsible power, we hear the first mutterings of the coming storm that was to sweep through

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Reign of King James I.*, p. 736.

<sup>2</sup> *Court and Times of James*, vol. ii. p. 263.

England, and feel that, in men like Southampton, the spirit was stirring which was yet to spring up, full statured and armed, for the overthrow of weak prince and fatal parasites, to stand at last as a dread avenger flushed with triumph, smiling a stern smile by the block at Whitehall. His imprisonment did not repress Southampton's energies or lessen his activity. In the new Parliament, which assembled on the 9th of February, 1624, he was on the committee for considering the defence of Ireland; the committee for stopping the exportation of money; the committee for the making of arms more serviceable. He was a true exponent of the waking nation, in its feeling of animosity against Spain, and of disgust at the pusillanimous conduct of James, who would have tamely submitted to see his son-in-law deprived of the Palatinate. The aroused spirit of the country having compelled the King to enter into a treaty with the States-General, granting them permission to raise four regiments in this country, Southampton obtained the command of one of them. "This spring," says Wilson, "gave birth to four brave Regiments of Foot (a new apparition in the English horizon), fifteen hundred in a Regiment, which were raised and transported into Holland (to join the army under Prince Maurice) under four gallant colonels: the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Southampton, the Earl of Essex, and the Lord Willoughby." This was a fatal journey for the Earl, the last of his wanderings, that was to bring him the "so long impossible Rest." "The winter quarter at Rosendale," Wilson writes, "was also fatal to the Earl of Southampton, and the Lord Wriothesley his son. Being both sick there together of burning fevers, the violence of which distemper wrought most vigorously upon the heat of youth, overcoming the son first; and the drooping father, having overcome the fever, departed from Rosendale with an intention to bring his son's body into England, but at Berghen-op-Zoom he *died of a lethargy*, in the view and presence of the relator." The dead son and father were both brought in a small bark to England, and landed at Southampton; both were buried at Titchfield, on Innocents' day, 1624.

"They were both poisoned by the Duke of Buckingham," says Sir Edward Peyton, in his *Catastrophe of the House of the Stuarts* (p. 360), as plainly appears, he adds, "by the relation of Doctor Eglissham." This relation of Eglissham's will be found in the *Forerunner of Revenge*.<sup>1</sup> The doctor was one of King James's physicians for ten years. His statement amounts to this—that the Earl of Southampton's name was one of those which were on a roll that was found in King Street, Westminster, containing a list of those who were to be removed out of Buckingham's way. Also, that when the physicians were standing round the awfully disfigured body of the dead Marquis of Hamilton (another supposed victim of Buckingham's), one of them remarked, that "my Lord Southampton was blistered all within the breast, as my Lord Marquis was."<sup>2</sup>

This statement made me curious enough to examine Francis Glisson's report of the *post mortem* examination of the Earl of Southampton's body: it is in the British Museum;<sup>3</sup> and I found it to be so suspiciously reticent that the silence is far more suggestive than what is said. It contains no mention whatever of the

<sup>1</sup> *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. ii. pp. 72-7.

<sup>2</sup> It is strange that Wilson should notice the statements of Eglissham with regard to the poisoning of the King, and also of the Marquis of Hamilton, and have no word of reply respecting the alleged poisoning of Southampton, he having been the Earl's secretary, and present when he died!

<sup>3</sup> *Vide* Ayscough's catalogue of MS.

condition of the blood or the brain, the spleen or bowels, the heart or liver, the stomach or lungs. The bladder and kidneys are the only parts described. An altogether unsatisfactory report, that looks as though it were a case of suppressed evidence. This, coupled with the *lethargy* noticed by Wilson, and the known implacable enmity of Buckingham, does at least give colour to the statements of Sir Edward Peyton and Dr. Eglisbam. But for us it will remain one of the many secrets—for which John Felton, “with a wild flash in the dark heart of him,” probed swiftly and deeply with his avenging knife.

One cannot but feel that the Earl of Southampton did not get adequate scope for his energies under James any more than in the previous reign, and that he should have lived a few years later, for his orb to have come full circle. He might have been the Rupert of Cromwell's horsemen. He was not a great man, nor remarkably wise, but he was brave, frank, magnanimous, thoroughly honourable, a true lover of his country, and the possessor of such natural qualities as won the love of Shakspeare. A comely noble of nature, with highly finished manners; a soldier, whose personal valour was proverbial; a lover of letters, and a munificent patron of literary men. Camden affirms that the Earl's love of literature was as great as his warlike renown.

Chapman, in one of his dedicatory Sonnets prefaced to the *Iliads*, calls the Earl “learned,” and proclaims him to be the “choice of all our country's noble spirits.” Richard Braithwaite inscribes his *Survey of History, or a Nursery for Gentry* to Southampton, and terms him “Learning's select Favourite.” Nash calls him “a dear lover and cherisher, as well of the lovers of poets as of poets themselves.” Florio tells us that he lived for many years in the Earl's pay, and terms him the “pearl of peers.” He relieved the distress of Minshew, author of the *Guide to Tongues*. Barnaby Barnes addressed a Sonnet to him in 1593, in which he expressed a hope that his verses, “if graced by that heavenly countenance which gives light to the Muses, may be shielded from the poisoned shafts of envy.”

Jervais Markham inscribed his poem on Sir Richard Grenville's last fight to him in the following Sonnet—

“Thou glorious Laurel of the Muses' hill,  
Whose eyes doth crown the most victorious pen;  
Bright Lamp of Virtue, in whose sacred skill  
Lives all the bliss of ear-enchanting men,  
From graver subjects of the grave assays,  
Bend thy courageous thoughts unto these lines,  
The grave from whence mine humble Muse doth raise  
True honour's spirit in her rough designs;  
And when the stubborn stroke of my harsh song  
Shall seasonless glide through Almighty cars,  
Vouchsafe to sweet it with thy blessed tongue,  
Whose well-tuned sound 'stills music in the spheres;  
So shall my tragic lays be blest by thee,  
And from thy lips suck their eternity.”—J. M.

Wither appears to have had some intention of celebrating the Earl's marked virtues and nobility of character as exceptionally estimable in his time, for, in presenting him with a copy of his *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, he tells him—

“I ought to be no stranger to thy worth,  
Nor let thy virtues in oblivion sleep:  
Nor will I, if my fortunes give me time.”



In the year 1621, the Earl had not ceased his patronage of literary men, as is shown by the dedication to him of Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Mind in General*.

The historical student may learn from the political circumstances of the time why the collected works were not offered to the foremost friend of Shakspeare. The patronage of the two brothers who were in high favour at Court was of far greater value than that of Southampton would have been, when he was in active opposition to the King and his parasites. Player-like, Heminge and Condell "wear themselves in the Cap of the time; there they do muster true gait, speak and move under the influence of the most received star."

Many elegies were sung over the death of Southampton, of which the following, by Sir John Beaumont, is the best—

"I will be bold my trembling voice to try,  
That his dear name in silence may not die;  
The world must pardon if my song be weak,  
In such a cause it is enough to speak.  
Who knew not brave Southampton, in whose sight  
Most placed their day, and in his absence night?  
When he was young, no ornament of youth  
Was wanting in him, acting that in truth  
Which Cyrus did in shadow; and to men  
Appeared like Peleus' son from Chiron's den:  
While through this island Fame his praise reports,  
As best in martial deeds and courtly sports.  
When riper age with winged feet repairs,  
Grave care adorns his head with silver hairs;  
His valiant fervour was not then decayed,  
But joined with counsel as a further aid.  
Behold his constant and undaunted eye,  
In greatest danger, when condemned to die!  
He scorns the insulting adversary's breath,  
And will admit no fear, though near to death.  
When shall we in this realm a Father find  
So truly sweet, or Husband half so kind?  
Thus he enjoyed the best contents of life,  
Obedient children, and a loving wife.  
These were his parts in peace; but, O, how far  
This noble soul excelled itself in war.  
He was directed by a natural vein,  
True honour by this painful way to gain.  
I keep that glory last which is the best,  
The love of learning, which he oft expressed  
In conversation, and respect to those  
Who had a name in arts, in verse, or prose."

His Countess survived the Earl for many years, and died in 1640.

Walpole, in his *Anecdotes of Painting*, mentions a portrait, half-length, of Elizabeth Vernon, as being at Sherburn Cast'e, Dorsetshire. It is by Cornelius Jansen, who was patronized by the Earl of Southampton,<sup>1</sup> and may thus have

<sup>1</sup> Peachum, in his *Graphicæ, or the most Ancient and Excellent Art of Drawing and Linning*, says, the Earls of Southampton and Pembroke were amongst the chief patrons of painting in England.

N. B.—In the footnote p. 220 of Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, Mr. Dallaway speaks wrongly of this work as being first published in 1634. The first edition, a copy of which is in the British Museum, was published in 1612.

drawn the portrait of Shakspeare. This picture, says Walpole, is equal to anything the master executed. The clothes are magnificent, and the attire of her head is singular, a veil turned quite back. The face and hands are coloured with incomparable lustre. This likeness was in the Portrait Exhibition held at Kensington in 1866. A noble picture of a queenly woman! There is also an authentic portrait of this lady, in good preservation, at Hodnet Hall, which represents her as a type of a beauty in the time of Elizabeth. Her dress is a brocade in brown and gold, her ribbons are scarlet and gold, her ruff and deep sleeve cuffs are of point lace, her ornaments of coral; her complexion is fresh, vivid, auroral, having clearly that war of the red rose and the white described by Shakspeare in his 99th Sonnet. The hair is suggestive, too, of the singular comparison used in that Sonnet betwixt glossy red-brown hair and "buds of marjoram."

An engraving by Thompson, from a portrait by Vandyke, a copy of which is in the British Museum, shows Lady Southampton to have been tall and graceful, with a fine head and thoughtful face; the long hair is softly waved with light and shadow, and the look has a touch of languor, different from the Hodnet Hall picture, but this last may be only a Vandyke grace.

It is pleasant to remember that from this much-trying pair, in whom Shakspeare took so affectionate an interest, sprang one of the most glorious of Englishwomen, one of the pure white lilies of all womanhood! This was the wife of Lord William Russell, she whose spirit rose so heroically to breast the waves of calamity; whose face was as an angel's shining through the gathering shadows of death, with a look of lofty cheer, to hearten her husband on his way to the scaffold; almost personifying in her great love, the good Providence that had given to him so precious a spirit for a companion, so exalted a woman to be his wife! Lady Russell was the grand-daughter of the Earl and Countess of Southampton. She was the daughter of Thomas Wriothesley, who was called the Virtuous Lord Treasurer of Charles II., by his first wife, daughter of Henry de Massey, Baron de Rouvigni, a French Protestant noble.

## SIDNEY'S STELLA.

PENELOPE DEVEREUX was a daughter of one of those proud old English houses, whose descendants love to dwell on the fact that they came in with the Norman Conquest. The progenitor of the English branch of the Devereux family bore high rank in Normandy before he carved out a larger space for himself on English soil at the battle of Senlac as one of Duke William's fighting men. He became the founder of an illustrious House that was destined to match four times with the royal Plantagenets, and to be enriched with the blood and inherit the honours of the Bohuns and Fitzpierces, Mandevilles and Bouchiers. On the father's side, Penelope descended from Edward III., and her mother, Lettice Knollys, was cousin, once removed, to Queen Elizabeth. Thus a dash of blood doubly-royal ran in her veins, and in her own personal beauty this vital sap of the family tree appears by all report to have put forth a crowning flower.

Her father was that good Earl Walter whom Elizabeth called "a rare jewel of her realm and an ornament of her nobility," whose character was altogether of a loftier kind than that of his more famous son Robert, the royal Favourite. His story is one of the most touching—he having, as it was suspected, had to change worlds in order that Leicester might change women.

Penelope was four years older than her brother Robert. She was born at Chartley in 1563. Very little is known of her childhood. She was but thirteen years of age, the oldest of five children, at the time of her father's early death, and the bitterest pang felt by the brave and gentle Earl was caused at his parting from the little ones that were being left so young when they so much needed his fatherly forethought and protecting care.

There are few stories more pathetic than that told of this Earl's bearing on his deathbed, by the faithful pen of some affectionate soul, said to have been one of his two chaplains, Thomas Knell by name. He suffered terribly and was grievously tormented, says the narrator, for the space of twenty-two days. He was dying far from his poor children, who were about to be left fatherless, with almost worse than no mother. He may have had a dark thought that he had been sent away by one of his enemy's cunning Court-tricks to be stricken and to die—"nothing was omitted," says Camden, "whereby to break his mild spirit with continual crosses one in the neck of another"—that Leicester was secretly taking his life preliminary to the taking of his wife; but he bore his affliction with a most valiant mind, and, "although he felt intolerable pain, yet he had so cheerful and noble a countenance that he seemed to suffer none at all, or very little," nor did he murmur through all the time and all the torture. He is described as speaking "more like a divine preacher and heavenly prophet" than a mortal man, lying or kneeling with a light soft as the light of a mother's blessing, smiling down from her place in heaven, on his fine face, which was moulded by Nature in her noblest mood, and finished by suffering with its

keenest touch. "What he spoke," says the narrator, "brake our very hearts, and forced out abundant tears, partly for joy of his godly mind, partly for the doctrine and comfort we had of his words. But, chiefly I blurred the paper with tears as I writ." His only care in worldly matters was for his children, to whom often he commended his love and blessing, and yielded many times, even with great sighs, most devout prayers to God that He would bless them and give them His grace to fear Him. For his daughters also he prayed, lamenting the time, which is so vain and ungodly, as he said, considering the frailness of women, lest they should learn of the vile world. He never seemed to sorrow but for his children. "Oh, my poor children," often would he say, "God bless you, and give you His grace." Many times begging mercy at the hands of God, and forgiveness of his sins, he cried out unto God, "Lord forgive me, as I forgive all the world, Lord, from the bottom of my heart, from the bottom of my heart, even all the injuries and wrongs, Lord, that any have done unto me. Lord, forgive them, as I forgive them from the bottom of my heart." He was anxious that Philip Sidney should marry his daughter Penelope, and with fervent feeling he bequeathed her to him. Speaking of Sidney, two nights before he died, he said, "Oh, that good gentleman! have me commended unto him, and tell him I send him nothing, but I wish him well, and so well that if God so move both their hearts, I wish that he might match with my daughter. I call him son. He is wise, virtuous, and godly; and if he go on in the course he hath begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as England ever bred." Two days before his death he wrote his last letter to the Queen, in which he humbly commits his poor children to her Majesty, and her Majesty to the keeping of God. "My humble suit must yet extend itself further into many branches, for the behoof of my poor children, that since God doth now make them fatherless, yet it will please your Majesty to be a mother unto them, at the least by your gracious countenance and care of their education, and their matches." The night before he died "he called William Hewes, which was his musician, to play upon the virginals and to sing. Play, said he, my song, Will Hewes, and I will sing it myself. So he did it most joyfully, not as the howling swan, which, still looking down, waileth her end, but as a sweet lark, lifting up his hands and casting up his eyes to his God, with this mounted the crystal skies and reached with his unwearied tongue the top of the highest heavens. Who could have heard and seen this violent conflict, having not a stoned heart, without innumerable tears and watery plaints?" Unhappily, the dying father's wish on the subject of his daughter's marriage was not to be fulfilled. Waterhouse, in his letter to Sir H. Sidney,<sup>1</sup> unconsciously uttered a prophecy when he said, "Truly, my lord, I must say to your lordship, as I have said to my Lord of Leicester and Mr. Philip, the breaking off from this match will turn to more dishonour than can be repaired with any other marriage in England!" The marriage did not take place, and in many ways the predicted dishonour came.

It has been conjectured that Sidney alluded to Lady Penelope in a letter to his friend, Languet, who, in the course of their correspondence, had exhorted him to marry. He says, "Respecting her of whom I readily acknowledge how unworthy I am, I have written you my reasons long since, briefly indeed, but yet as well as I was able."<sup>2</sup> If Sidney spoke of Lady Penelope Devereux in

<sup>1</sup> *Sidney Memoirs*, i. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence of Sidney and Languet, translated by S. A. Pears, 1845, p. 144.

this letter, his reasons for not marrying just then may have been that he thought her too young at that time, for she was but fifteen years old, the date of his letter being March, 1578. Sidney had first met "Stella" at Chartley, where he had followed the Queen on her visit there in 1575. His comparative poverty and lack of prospect may have been a cause for diffidence on his part. In his 33rd Sonnet the Poet gives us one account of the matter. He reproaches himself for not being able to see by the "rising morn" what a "fair day" was about to unfold. It is not probable that the two lovers were already apart three years before the lady's marriage with Lord Rich. The time came, however, when, from some fatal cause or other, they were sundered, although there is proof that they had been drawn together by very tender ties.

"I might, unhappy word! O me! I might,  
And then would not, or could not see my bliss,  
Till now, wrapt in a most infernal night,  
I find how heavenly day, Wretch! I did miss.  
Heart! rend thyself, thou dost thyself but right;  
No lovely Paris made thy Helen his!  
No force, no fraud, robbed thee of thy delight,  
Nor Fortune of thy fortune author is:  
But to myself, myself did give the blow,  
While too much wit (forsooth!) so troubled me,  
That I respects *for both our sakes* must show:  
And yet could not, by rising Morn foresee  
How fair a day was near! O punished eyes!  
That I had been more foolish, or more wise."

I see no sense in arguing against this being Sidney's lament for not marrying Stella. There *was* a time when it might have been. He might have called her his own, but he must needs show his wisdom by waiting a little longer. He was troubled in the matter with too many thoughts, and too much wit forsooth. He stood upon respects for both their sakes, which kept them asunder until it was too late. For whilst he would, and would not; looked and longed, other influences were brought to bear. The lady's friends were anxious that she should wed a wealthy fool, and possibly the proud impetuous beauty of sixteen or seventeen may have felt piqued at Sidney's delay, and wilfully played into the hands of an evil fortune. How Sidney was aroused from his dream, and awoke to the fact that he had lost his day, and might now stretch forth his empty arms till they ached, and call in vain upon those eyes that were far from him as the stars, is told in his Sonnets; how the reckless lady found that she had dashed away the sweetest, purest cup of noble love ever proffered to her lips, is written in her after-life, and in the useless search for that which she had missed once and for ever. The two were doomed to walk on the opposite banks, with yearnings towards each other, while the river of life kept broadening on between them, pushing them farther and farther apart, who were sundered at least for life.

The character of Lord Rich as a husband is painted by Sidney in Sonnet 22. The description agrees with others in representing him to have been a poor, vulgar Lord with a very sordid soul. And she was the wife of this man, and might have been his!

Lady Penelope Devereux, in her eighteenth year, had bloomed into such a

rose of beauty, as would have found (we like to think) a fit nestling place for giving forth its sweetness in the bosom of Philip Sidney! And it seems one of those sad inevitable things which make so much of the tragedy of the human lot, that these two should not have come together. If they had married, how different it all might have been! What tragedies of love may be expressed in those words "*Might have been!*" Heyden describes Penelope Devereux as being "a lady in whom lodged all attractive graces of beauty, wit, and sweetness of behaviour, which might render her the absolute mistress of a'l eyes and hearts." She grew to be a woman of brilliant physical beauty, with intellectual capacity and mental charms to match, as richly furnished within as attractively without.

What Sidney was, the world has gathered from the glimpse we get of him, in his brief beautiful life, and saintly death. In his nature, humanity nearly touched the summit of its nobleness. And from him Penelope was taken to be given to a man whose character as nearly sounded the depths of human baseness. Thus the radiance of her tender romance died out, and the hues of love's young dawn all faded into a sadly beclouded day!

Sidney has told the story of his love for Lady Rich under the title of *Astrophel and Stella*, in 108 Sonnets, which were first printed in quarto, 1591. He asks us to listen to him, because he must unfold a riddle of his own life. It was of this personal passion of his that the Muse said to him: "*Fool! look in thy heart and write.*" The object of his writing, he tells us, was that the "dear she," whom he had lost for ever through her marriage with Lord Rich, might "take some pleasure of his pain;" a sentiment that springs straight from the deepest root of the feeling of which it has been said, "All other pleasures are not worth its pains!"

We can see something of Penelope Devereux's personal graces as pictured by her lover in the *Arcadia*. In these Sonnets he again describes her as having "black eyes," and "golden hair," and he dwells much upon those "black stars," and "black beams" of her eyes. He illustrates the peculiarity of her complexion, and the "kindly claret" of her cheek, by a story. The 22nd Sonnet relates how on a hot summer's day he met "*Stella*" with some other fair ladies. They were on horseback, with a burning sun in the cloudless blue. The other ladies were compelled to shade their faces with their fans to preserve their fairness; "*Stella*" alone rode with her beauty bare, and she, the daintiest of all, went openly free from harm, whilst the "hid and meaner beauties" were parched.

"The cause was this;  
The Sun which others burned, did her but kiss."

She had the most unique complexion of a *blonde brunette*.

The Sonnets lead us to think that the lady's heart remained with Sidney; although or *because* he depicts the passion as being kept sacred chiefly through her own strength of character. In Sonnet 11 he treats the subject in an elegantly quaint manner. "In truth, O love," he exclaims, "with what a boyish mind thou dost proceed in thy most serious ways! Here is heaven displaying its best to thee. Yet of that best thou leavest the best behind." For like a child that has found some pretty picture-book with gilded leaves, and is content with the glitter and the outside show, and does not care for the written

riches, so love is content to play at "looking babies" in Stella's eyes, and at bo-peep in her bosom.

"Shining in each outward part,  
But, fool! seeks not to get into her heart."

Then the lover's pleadings grow more in earnest.

"Soul's joy! bend not those morning stars from me,  
Where virtue is made strong by beauty's might;  
Where love is chasteness, pain doth learn delight,  
And humbleness grows on with majesty:  
Whatever may ensue, oh, let me be  
Co-partner of the riches of that sight:  
Let not mine eyes be hell-driven from that light;  
O look! O shine! or let me die, and see!"

In Sonnet 73 the Poet has dared to steal a kiss whilst the lady was sleeping, and the aspect of her beauty, when ruddy with wrath, causes him to exclaim—

"O heavenly fool! thy most kiss-worthy face,  
Anger invests with such a lovely grace,  
That Anger's self I needs must kiss again!"

This stolen kiss was the one immortalized in his famous 81st Sonnet, commencing

"O kiss! which dost those ruddy gems impart."

In one of the songs interspersed among the Sonnets, the Poet also tells us of a stolen interview on the part of the two Lovers.

"In a grove most rich with shade,  
Where birds wanton music made;  
Astrophel with Stella sweet,  
Did for mutual comfort meet;  
Both within themselves oppressed,  
Both each in the other blest.  
Him great harms had taught much care;  
Her fair neck a fowl yoke bare:  
Wept they had; alas the while!  
But now tears themselves did smile."

Here they had met, with eager eyes and hungry ears, asking to know all about each other in absence.

"But, their tongues restrained from walking,  
Till their hearts had ended talking!"

At length the lover pleads—

"Stella, sovereign of my joy,  
Fair triumpher of annoy;  
Stella, star of heavenly fire,  
Stella, loadstar of desire:  
Stella, in whose shining eyes,  
Are the lights of Cupid's skies:  
Stella, whose voice when it speaks,  
Senses all asunder breaks;  
Stella, whose voice when it singeth,  
Angels to acquaintance bringeth;

Stella, in whose body is  
 Writ each character of bliss,  
 Whose face all, all beauty passeth  
 Save thy mind, which it surpasseth,  
 Grant, O grant—but speech alas !  
 Fails me, fearing on to pass ;  
 Grant—oh me, what am I saying ?  
 But *no fault there is in praying!*”

Stella replies, and

“ In such wise she love denied  
 As yet love it signified.”

For whilst telling him to cease to sue, she says his grief doth grieve her worse than death, and

“ If that any thought in me  
 Can taste comfort but of thee,  
 Let me feed, with hellish anguish,  
 Joyless, helpless, endless languish !  
 Therefore, Dear, this no more move  
 Least, though I leave not thy love,  
 Which too deep in me is framed,  
 I should blush when thou art named.”

Thus we have it upon Sidney's testimony, that the lady triumphed in her purity, whilst acknowledging him to be the natural lord of her love. The conditions on which she was his are stated in Sonnet 69—

“ O joy too high for my low style to show,  
 O bliss fit for a nobler state than me !  
 Envy put out thine eyes, lest thou do see  
 What oceans of delight in me do flow.  
 My friend that oft saw'st through all masks of woe,  
 Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee.  
 Gone is the winter of my misery ;  
 My Spring appears ; O see what here doth grow !  
 For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,  
 Of her high heart given me the monarchy :  
 I, I, oh ! I may say that she is mine :  
 And though she give but thus conditionly  
 This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,  
 No kings be crown'd but they *some* covenants make.”

The poetry of Sidney is a little like a gorgeous court-dress of his time, seamed stiffly with precious stones and pearls of price. But to Lady Rich it is indebted for its most life-like breathings of nature and its most visible beatings of the human heart beneath. To her beauty we owe delicious descriptions in which poetry grows divinely dainty. It was Stella's beauty, seen through Philoclea's transparent veil, that inspired some of the loveliest, most movingly delicate things ever said or sung of bodily beauty. This was Stella's hair—

“ Her hair fine threads of finest gold  
 In curled knots man's thought to hold.”

These were Stella's eyes, the “ matchless pair of black stars ”—

“ Their arches be two heavenly lids,  
 Whose wink each bold attempt forbids.”



These were Stella's cheeks—

“ Her cheeks with kindly claret spread,  
Aurora-like new out of bed.”

These were Stella's lips—

“ But who those ruddy lips can miss,  
Which blessed still themselves do kiss ! ”

And of love in Stella's lips, it is said that, for very sweetness—

“ With either lip he doth the other kiss.”

These were Stella's pretty pearly ear-tips—

“ The tip no jewel needs to wear ;  
The tip is jewel to the ear.”

It was of Stella that Sidney wrote—

“ Her shoulders be like two white doves  
Perching ! ”

And of Stella's hand—

“ Where whiteness doth for ever sit,  
And there with strange compact do lie  
Warm snow, moist pearl, soft ivory.”

Sidney's description of his own love—

“ In truth, O Love, with what a boyish mind  
Thou dost proceed in thy most serious ways,”

is characteristic of his own proceedings.

With all the simplicity of a child that is ignorant of use and wont, he dallies with, enumerates, and describes her naked bodily charms from her forehead down to her foot, “ whose step on earth all beauty sets,” with a freedom astonishingly frank. And after recounting her outer perfections with the purity of a spirit whose warmest thoughts walk naturally in white, he tells how all this beauty is but

“ the fair Inn  
Of fairer guests which dwell within.”

There is a lovely description of the same lady weeping in the third book of the *Arcadia*<sup>1</sup>—“ Her tears came dropping down like rain in sunshine, and she, not taking heed to wipe the tears, they hung upon her cheeks and lips as upon cherries which the dropping tree bedeweth.” The chief point of attraction, however, in her life time, as now, is the lady's eyes. It was the wonder of Sidney why, with such tawny hair and face so fair that the roses blushed and drooped half dotingly, half enviously, to see the deeper bloom in her cheek, these eyes should have been so black. He asks did nature make them so, like a cunning painter, on purpose to produce the utmost effect of light and shade ?

Twenty years ago I did not do justice to Sidney, nor see how great

<sup>1</sup> The *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* is not exactly “ a Poem,” but Mr. Grosart reprints 177 pages of verse from it.

a fostering influence he had been to Shakspeare; nor know how far their Sonnets are bound up together. In all the love-poetry ever written or the poetry of love ever lived there are no pleas more pathetic, none more *naïvely* winsome than those of Sidney's. His expressions of love-longing are almost unparalleled in their power of piercing to the quick. Many of his touches are sharply pathetic. He toys with the keen edge of his love, trying it over and over like a child essaying the edge of a knife with which he cuts himself, and as the drops of life run ruddily, keeps on smiling through those other drops in his eyes, which wear a glister of glory. Some of his pleas are pathetic enough to give a man the heart-ache as he reads them, whatsoever their effect on the woman for whom they were written. Some of his felicitous conceits are extravagantly fine. But the flowers are sweet however artificial they may look, however prim in pattern; their rootage is in a ground of the naturalst simplicity of character. His lines are *loded* with precious metal of subtle thought, richly worth the mining for; and this no one ever understood better than Shakspeare did. He is fain to write in verse, and show his love, that—

“She, dear she, my take *some pleasure of my pain.*”

“They love indeed who quake to say they love” (54).

He tries to entice sleep to come to him by promising him that he shall see the image of Stella enshrined in his heart more like life than anywhere else:—

“O make in me these civil wars to cease!  
I will good tribute pay if thou do so;  
Take thou of me, sweet pillows, sweetest bed;  
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light;  
A rosy garland and a weary head:  
And if these things, as being thine by right,  
Move not thy heavy grace, *thou shalt in me,  
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see!*”

What a way of praying sleep to come “for love of Stella,” or “for Stella's sake!” He learned that Stella had lately pitied a lover in romance, she who has no pity for him who loves her so really. And he pleads for himself—

“Then think, my dear, that you in me do read  
Of lovers' ruin some thrice-sad tragedy.  
*I am not I; pity the tale of me.*”

Again,

“O, let not fools in me *thy works reprove,*  
And scorning say, ‘*See what it is to love!*’” (107)

Again,

“O do not let Thy Temple be destroyed.”

Sidney's Sonnets, not Daniel's, were the true prototype if not literary model of Shakspeare's. The distilled sweetness, the antithetic thought as well as expression, the serious kind of wit, are at times pre-eminently Shakspearcan, *e. g.*

“I had been vext if vext I had not been” (87).

“Blest in my curse, and cursèd in my bliss” (60).

“Not thou by praise, but praise in thee is raised;  
It is a praise to praise, when thou art praised” (135).

In this way *Love's Labour's Lost* is alive with Sidney.  
Sidney's first Sonnet, with its forcible last line—

“ Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write,”

was like a trumpet-call to Shakspeare in 1591. The impression that line stamped in him comes out immediately and most vividly in the play of that period, *Love's Labour's Lost*. For example—

“ Small have continual plodders ever won,  
Save base authority from others' books.”

“ Why, all delights are vain ; and that most vain,  
Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain :  
As, painfully to pore upon a book,  
To seek the light of truth ; while truth the while  
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look :  
Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile :  
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,  
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.”

I am digressing here ; but this unwedded pair of lovers cannot be put asunder by any man for all time ; they are so bound up together by Sidney's poetry.

The marriage of Penelope Devereux with Lord Rich appears to have been promoted by the Earl of Huntingdon, then Lord President of the North, who was a great friend of the family, a relative also, and one of the guardians of the young Earl of Essex. The sisters, Penelope and Dorothy, sometimes resided in his house. In a letter addressed to Lord Burghley, the other guardian, March 10th, 1580, the Earl of Huntingdon proposed that a match should be made between the Lady Penelope and the young Lord Rich, “ he being a proper gentleman, and in years very suitable.”<sup>1</sup> In August of the same year, Essex informs Burghley that he is about to leave Cambridge for a time, on purpose to accompany Lord Rich, “ who, for many causes not unknown ” to the guardian, was very dear to him. The handing over of the Lady Penelope to this Lord Cloten was then about to be completed.

In his “ Epistle to the King,” with which the Earl of Devonshire accompanied the “ Discourse ” written by him in defence of his marriage with Lady Rich, the case is thus put on behalf of the “ poor lost sheep,” shut out of the fold, as he calls his wife. “ A lady of great birth and virtue, being in the power of her friends,<sup>2</sup> was by them married against her will unto one against whom she did protest at the very solemnity, and ever after ; between whom, from the first day, there ensued continual discord, although the same fears that forced her to marry, constrained her to live with him. Instead of a comforter, he did study in all things to torment her ; and by fear and fraud did practise to deceive her of her dowry ; and though he forbore to offer her any open wrong, restrained with the awe of her brother's powerfulness, yet as he had not in long time before (the death of Essex) in the chiefest duty of a husband used her as his wife, so presently after his death he did put her to a stipend, and abandoned her without pretence of any cause, but his own desire to live without her.” It was, says Mountjoy, after Lord Rich had withdrawn himself from her bed for the space of twelve years, that he did, “ by persuasions and

<sup>1</sup> *Lonsd. MSS.*, 31, f. 40.

<sup>2</sup> “ O, Hell ! to choose love by another's eyes ! ” says Hermia, when Lysander speaks of love depending on the “ choice of friends.”

threatenings, move her to consent unto a divorce, and to confess a fault with a nameless stranger !”

Two years after the marriage of Penelope Devereux with Lord Rich, Philip Sidney married the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, but if we are to trust the Sonnets, and poetry is often true to the deepest truth, his love for Lady Rich, and her love for him, must have survived the marriage of both. Sidney was struck down with his mortal wound at Zutphen, on the 22nd of September, 1586, and he died on the 17th of the October following.

His widow was again married, this time to the Earl of Essex, in the year 1590. She thus became sister to Lady Rich, Sidney's first love. The Sonnets in which Sidney had proclaimed his passion were first published in the next year. And, as a curious illustration of the manners of the time, Spenser, in a new Volume of Poems printed in 1595, also celebrated the loves of “Astrophel and Stella,” and inscribed the poem “to the most beautiful and virtuous Lady, the Countess of Essex.” Thus Sidney, having lost his first love, and being in all likelihood married at the time, was not only deeply in love with the wife of another man, but sang of it in fervent verse, and rejoiced in it, “though nations might count it shame,” and, after his death, his friend, the Poet Spenser, publishes an apotheosis of this passion, and respectfully dedicates his poem to Sidney's widow, who had now become Lady Rich's sister !

In applying the latter Sonnets of Shakspeare to the character of Lady Rich, it will be well to recall this puzzling state of things, in relation to the Sonnets of Sidney, and the poetry of Spenser. Spenser introduces Lady Rich as “Stella” in his *Colin Clout's come home again*—

“No less praiseworthy Stella, do I read,  
Though nought my praises of her needed are,  
Whom verse of noblest Shepherd, lately dead,  
Hath praised and raised above each other star.”

And in his *Astrophel; a pastoral Elegy upon the Death of the most noble and valorous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney*, he has caught up for immortality that early love of Sidney's for Lady Rich, with the tenderness of its dewy dawn about it, and the purple bloom of young desire. Many maidens, says the Poet, would have delighted in his love, but

“For one alone he cared, for one he sigh't,  
His life's desire, and his dear love's delight.  
Stella the fair, the fairest star in sky,  
As fair as Venus or the fairest fair ;  
A fairer star saw n ver living eye  
Shoot her sharp-pointed beams through purest air ;  
Her he did love, her he alone did honour,  
His thoughts, his rhymes, his songs were all upon her.  
To her he vowed the service of his days,  
On her he spent the riches of his wit,  
For her he made hymns of immortal praise,  
Of only her he sung, he thought, he writ.  
Her, and but her, of love he worthy deemed ;  
For all the rest but little he esteemed.”

And this is dedicated to Sidney's widow.

This “gentle Shepherd born in Arcady” was engaged in hunting, on foreign

soil, in a forest wide and waste, where he was wounded by a wild beast. There he lay bleeding to death,

“ While none was nigh his eyelids up to close,  
And kiss his lips like faded leaves of rose.”

At length he was found by some shepherds, who stopped his wound, though too late, and bore him to his “dearest love,” his Stella, who, when she saw the sorry sight,

“ Her yellow locks, that shone so bright and long,  
As sunny beams in fairest summer's days,  
She fiercely tore, and with outrageous wrong  
From her red cheeks the roses rent away.  
His pallid face impicturèd with death,  
She bathèd oft with tears and drièd oft ;  
And with sweet kisses sucked the wasting breath  
Out of his lips, like lilies, pale and soft.”

He dies, and her spirit at once follows his !

“ To prove that death their hearts cannot divide,  
Which living were in love so firmly tied.”

Spenser's representation is false and utterly unfair to Sidney's wife, who followed him to the Netherlands in June or July ; was near him in his pain, to soothe him and kiss the fading lips, and when the knitted brows smoothed out nobly into rest, she was there “ his eyelids up to close.” This thought, however, did not trouble the serene Spenser in his poetizing.

Matthew Roydon wrote lovingly of Sidney—

“ When he descended from the mount<sup>1</sup>  
His personage seemed most divine ;  
A thousand graces one might count  
Upon his lovely cheerful eyne :  
To hear him speak and sweetly smile,  
You were in Paradise the while.  
  
Did never love so sweetly breathe  
In any mortal breast before ;  
Did never Muse inspire beneath  
A Poet's brain with finer store :  
He wrote of Love with high conceit,  
And Beauty reared above her height.”

We are not told in prose how Lady Rich felt and bore the death of Sidney, but Lodowick Bryskett, in his *Mourning Muse of Thestylis*,<sup>2</sup> professes to give an account of her bearing and appearance under the affliction. He says 'twas piteous to hear her plaints, and see her “heavy mourning cheere,” while from “those two bright stars, to him sometime so dear, her heart sent drops of pearl.” He continues in some quotable lines—

<sup>1</sup> Of the Muses.

<sup>2</sup> “Thestylis,” says the Countess of Pembroke in her *Doleful Lay of Clarinda*, written on Sidney's death, was

“ A swain  
Of gentle wit, and dainty-sweet device,  
Whom Astrophel full dear did entertain,  
Whilst here he lived, and held in passing price.”

“ If Venus when she wailed her dear Adonis slain,  
 Aught moved in thy fierce heart compassion of her woe,  
 Her noble Sister's plaints, her sighs and tears among,  
 Would sure have made thee mild, and inly rue her pain :  
 Aurora half so fair herself did never show,  
 When, from old Tython's bed, she weeping did arise.  
 The blinded archer-boy, like lark in shower of rain,  
 Sat bathing of his wings, and glad the time did spend  
 Under those crystal drops, which fell from her fair eyes ;  
 And at their brightest beams him proyned in lovely wise.  
 Yet sorry for her grief, which he could not amend,  
 The gentle boy 'gan wipe her eyes, and clear those lights,  
 Those lights through which his glory and his conquest shines.”

We shall not find a prettier picture of Love and Lady Rich !

Spenser, in his poem on the death of Astrophel, makes Stella follow “ her mate like turtle chaste.” Lady Rich did nothing of the kind in reality ; it might have been better for her if she had. Her position was now most perilous ; one that made her beauty a fatal gift. Much that was noble in her nature seems to have passed away with the noble Sidney. In this sense there may have been some allegorical shadow of the truth in the Poet's representation. There was no love in her own home to kindle at the heart of her life, and touch the face of it with happy health, and hallow her superb outward beauty with the light that shines sacredly within, or gives the expression from above, whilst the well-known fact of Sidney's love for her, and the halo of romance which his poetry had created round her name, were but too likely to expose her more than ever to fresh temptations. To these sooner or later she undoubtedly yielded ; and “ not finding that satisfaction at home she ought to have received, she looked for it abroad, where she ought not to find it.” Whether Mountjoy was the first cause of serious quarrel betwixt her and Lord Rich, is not on record. But according to his statement, it must have been as early as 1592 or 1593, that Lord Rich, either with or without just cause, withdrew himself from his marriage bed. He soon found that the wife he had bought had to be paid for. Her friends had forced her to the altar, where she made her unavailing protest, but there was the after-life to be lived with her, face to face, when the same friends could not help him. She was not the kind of woman to bear her sorrow proudly silent, or receive his unkindness meekly.<sup>1</sup> His morose selfishness was not calculated to draw out her better part. Hers was not the nature from which the sweetness is to be crushed by treading on ; not the spirit to submit to a passive degradation.

He dreamed a bonny blooming Rose to wed :  
 He woke to find a briar in his bed.

He caught at the flower of which he had obtained legal possession, and he fell among the thorns. These must have pricked him unmercifully at times with the finger pointings of scorn, the darts of her wild wit, and the sharp thrusts of the very sting of bitterness.

In a letter written by this poor Lord to Essex, Sept. 11th, 1595, we perceive how uneasily he wriggles on one of his thorns ! He is suspicious of the contents of his wife's letters, which he dares not intercept or open.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Fulke Greville's Letter printed with his Poems in 1633.

"MY LORD,—I acknowledge with all thankfulness, your Lordship's favour, signified by your letters, which I received yesterday by my man; entreating leave also to put you in mind to remember your letters into Staffordshire to your sister, and to the *other party*. I met this messenger from thence, but durst not intercept the letters he brings, for fear these troublesome times will bring forth shortly a parliament, and so perhaps a law to make it treason to break open letters written to any my lords of the Council, whereby they are freely privileged to receive writings from other men's wives without any further question, and have full authority to see every man's wife at their pleasure. A lamentable thing, that this injustice should thus reign in this wicked age. I only entreat your Lordship, that as you hear anything farther of *that matter* I wrote to you of, I may have your pleasure and farther directions. And so, commending your Lordship to the blessed tuition of the Almighty, I remain your Lordship's poor brother to command in all honesty.

"RO. RICH."<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that the "*other party*" of this letter may have been Mountjoy, and "*that matter*" referred to the beginning of his *liaison* with Lady Rich. If so, Essex did not trouble himself much in the matter, he rather winked at the freedom of his sister in trying to exchange the "foul yoke her fair neck bore," for the solace of her lover's arm. He had his own designs upon Mountjoy.

He could have cared little for the lady's morals, to have brought home to her close acquaintanceship, and placed on the most familiar footing, the sparkling, clever, vain, and presumptuous Antonio Perez, the Spanish renegade, whose intimacy with her son Francis made good old Lady Bacon hold up her hands in horror. "Though I pity your brother," she writes in a letter to Anthony Bacon,<sup>2</sup> "yet so long as he pities not himself, but keepeth that bloody Perez, yea, as a coach companion and bed companion; a proud, profane, costly fellow, whose being about him I verily fear the Lord God doth mislike, and doth less bless your brother in credit and otherwise in his health; surely I am utterly discouraged, and make conscience further to undo myself to maintain such wretches as he is, that never loved your brother but for his own credit, living upon him." Lady Bacon felt more care for her son than Essex did for his sister.

A pretty fellow was this Perez to fill the situation assigned to him, in the following letter from Mr. Standen to Mr. Bacon, which also serves to show us something of the uncertain temperament and incalculable turns of the Lady Rich. The letter was written in March or April, 1595.

"RIGHT WORSHIPFUL,—As we were at supper, my Lady Rich, Signor Perez, Sir Nicholas Clyfford, and myself; there came upon a sudden into the chamber, my Lord and Sir Robert Sidney, and there was it resolved that Signor Perez must be, to-morrow morning at eight of the clock, with my Lord in Court; after which my Lord means to dine at Walsingham House, and in the way, to visit Mr. Anthony Bacon; which, my Lady Rich understanding, said she would go also to dine with them at Walsingham's. And my Lord, asking how she would be conveyed thither, she answered, that she would go in their companies, and in coach with them, and, arrived at Mr. Bacon's house, and there disembarked my Lord, her brother, Sir Robert should bring her to Walsingham's, and return back with the coach for my Lord, her brother. All which I write unto you, Sir, by way of advice, to the end you be not taken unarmed. Women's discretions being uncertain, it may be she will not dismount, and the contrary also will fall out. *Now, it is resolved, that Mr. Perez shall not depart, for that my Lord hath provided him here with*

<sup>1</sup> Among *Anthony Bacon's Papers*.

<sup>2</sup> *Birch*, i. 143.

*the same office those eunuchs have in Turkey, which is to have the custody of the fairest dames; so that he wills me to write, that for the bond he hath with my Lord, he cannot refuse that office."*<sup>1</sup>

In a postscript to one of her letters to Anthony Bacon, dated May 3rd, 1596, Lady Rich being at the time in a "solitary place where no sound of any news can come," entreats him to let her know something of the world. Amongst other things, she would fain hear what has become of his wandering neighbour, Signor Perez. This flattering knave and charming hypocrite, who had the insinuating grace of the serpent, the subtlety and impudence of Iachimo, was on such familiar terms with Lady Rich as to write the following letter to her, March 26th, 1595—

"Signor Wilson hath given me news of the health of your Ladyships, the three sisters and goddesses, as in particular, that all three have amongst yourselves drunk and caroused unto Nature, in thankfulness of what you owe unto her, in that she gave you not those delicate shapes to keep them idle, but rather that you should push forth unto us here many buds of those divine beauties. To these gardeners I wish all happiness for so good tillage of their grounds. Sweet ladies mine, many of these carouses! O what a bower I have full of sweets of the like tillage and trimmage of gardens."<sup>2</sup>

The clever scamp goes on to say that he has written a book full of such secrets as some persons would not like to have known. He appears to intimate that on his return to England, these people must pay or he shall publish, so that with the one means or the other he will live by his book. "My Book," he says, "will serve my turn. But I will not be so good cheap this second time. My receipts will cost dearer, wherefore let every one provide!"

In the December of this year 1595, we learn by Rowland White's Letters that there was to be a christening at Sir Robert Sidney's, to which Lady Rich and Lord Mountjoy were both invited. "I went to Holborn," says White, "and found my Lord Mountjoy at his house. I said my lady sent me unto him, to desire him, both in your name and hers, to christen your son that was newly born, which he very honourably promised to do; and when I told him my Lady Rich was godmother, he was much pleased at it!"

Lady Rich had willingly agreed to be a godmother. White told her that both the mother and child had the measles, "to which she suddenly replied, that after eight days there was no danger to be feared, 'and therefore,' she said, 'it shall be no occasion to keep me from doing Sir Robert Sidney and my lady a greater kindness.' When I saw her so desperate, I humbly besought her ladyship to take a longer time to think upon the danger, which she did till that afternoon, and then coming to her to Essex House, she told me she was resolved." Her ladyship was not afraid of the measles. And yet the christening was deferred. Writing later in the month, White reports Lady Rich to be in Town, but "the christening is put off till Wednesday, New Year's Eve. She says that my Lord Compton desired her to defer it till then, because of some urgent business he hath in the country, that will keep him away till Tuesday night; but, *I do rather think it to be a tetter that suddenly broke out in her fair white forehead which will not be well in five or six days, that keeps your son from being christened.* But my Lady Rich's desires are obeyed as commandments by my Lady."<sup>3</sup> Evidently the lady wished to look her best, and show no spot on the

<sup>1</sup> *Birch*, vol. i. p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Stoane MSS.*, 4115.

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 385.



face of her beauty, in the presence of my Lord Mountjoy. The interest which these two mutually inspired kept increasing, until at length their illegal intercourse was publicly known; the husband being looked upon as no impediment. Johnstone intimates that the patience of Lord Rich as a husband was more wondered at than admired; and that his strange conduct in retaining his wife, after being perfectly well aware of her connection with Lord Mountjoy, was thought anything but prudent. But the morality of the time does not appear to have been greatly outraged. The Queen showed the first sign of disapproval. Camden records the fact, that in 1600, Lady Rich "had lost the Queen's favour for abusing her husband's bed." This he softened, on revision of his work, to "*Quæ, mariti thorum violare suspecta.*"

There is a letter written by Lord Rich to the Earl of Essex, dated April 16th, 1597, which has been held to be so dark in meaning, so enigmatical in expression, that nothing has hitherto been made of its contents. Lady Rich had just got out of danger from the small-pox. In a letter dated three days later, Rowland White says, "My Lady Rich is recovered of her small-pox, without any blemish to her beautiful face." Lord Rich's letter refers to this illness of his wife, and the consequent danger to her fair face, but it also contained an enclosure touching certain love-matters therein written of, to the perplexity of his Lordship, and relating to a "fair Maid" in whom the Lady Rich was interested, of whose beauty she was so careful as not to send the writing direct for fear of infection:—"My Lord, your Sister, being loth to send you any of her infection, hath made me an instrument to send you this *enclosed epistle of Dutch true or false love*; wherein, if I be not in the right, I may be judged more infected than fitteth my profession, and to deserve worse than the pox of the smallest size. If it fall out so, I disburden myself, and am free from such treason, by my disclosing it to a Councillor, who, as your Lordship well knows, cannot be guilty of any such offence. Your Lordship sees, by this care of a fair maid's beauty, she doth not altogether despair of recovery of her own again; which, if she did, assured by envy of others' fairness, would make her willingly to send infection among them. This banishment makes me that I cannot attend on you; and this wicked disease will cause your sister this next week to be at more charge to buy a masker's visor to meet you dancing in the fields than she would on [once?] hoped ever to have done. If you dare meet her, I beseech you preach patience unto her, which is my only theme of exhortation. Thus, over saucy to trouble your Lordship's weightier affairs, I take my leave, and ever remain your Lordship's poor brother to command, Ro. RICH." Now, to my thinking, there is no more natural explanation of this mysterious letter than that the "fair Maid" of whose beauty Lady Rich is so thoughtful a guardian, and to whom the "epistle of Dutch true or *simulated* love" evidently belongs, is Elizabeth Vernon, cousin both to Lady Rich and to the Earl of Essex, and that we here catch a glimpse of some of the Sonnets, as they pass from hand to hand. The "Epistle" over which Lord Rich tries to shake his wise head jocosely, is not sealed up from him. He has read it, and finds it only sealed in the sense; it is, as the unlearned say, all Greek to him, or, as he says, it is "Dutch." The subject, too, is amatory, so much he perceives; but whether it pertain to real life or to fiction is beyond his reach; he merely hopes the brother, who is a Councillor of State, will discover no treason in it. If this love-epistle, the purport of which his Lordship failed to fathom, should have consisted of the

Sonnets that Elizabeth Vernon speaks to Lady Rich in her jealousy, it would fit the circumstances of the case as nothing else could, and perfectly account for Lord Rich's perplexity. We may imagine how little he would make of them when their meaning has kept concealed from so many other prying eyes for nearly three centuries. If my suggestion be right, this letter gives us a most interesting glimpse of the persons concerned, and of the light in which they viewed the Sonnets; here contributing to the private amusement of Lady Rich, her brother Essex, and Elizabeth Vernon, whilst Lord Rich is not in the secret.

Let us now glance for a moment at the Lady Rich in another of the many-coloured lights in which she was seen by her contemporaries. In November, 1598, Bartholomew Young, a poet of the time,—he who is the largest contributor to *England's Helicon*,—inscribed to her his Translation of the *Diana* of George of Montemayor, with the following dedication,—

“To the Right Honourable and my very good lady, the Lady Rich.

“Right Honourable, such are the apparent defects of art and judgment in this new portrayed *Diana*, that their discovery must needs make me blush, and abase the work, unless with undeserved favour erected upon the high and shining pillar of your honourable protection, they may seem to the beholder less or none at all. The glory whereof as with reason it can no ways be thought worthy, but by boldly adventuring upon the apparent demonstration of your magnificent mind, wherein all virtues have their proper seat, and on that singular desire, knowledge, and delight, wherewith your Ladyship entertaineth, embraceth, and affecteth honest endeavours, learned languages, and this particular subject of *Diana*,<sup>1</sup> warranted by all virtue and modesty, as Collin, in his French dedicatory to the illustrious Prince Louis of Lorraine, at large setteth down and commandeth; now presenting it to so sovereign a light, and relying on a gracious acceptance, what can be added more to the full content, desire, and perfection of *Diana*, and of her unworthy interpreter (that hath in English here exposed her to the view of strangers), than for their comfort and defence to be armed with the honourable titles and countenance of so high and excellent a Patroness. But as, certain years past, my honourable good Lady, in a public show at the Middle Temple, where your honourable presence, with many noble Lords and fair Ladies, graced and beautified those sports, it befell to my lot, in that worthy assembly, unworthily to perform the part of a French orator, by a dedicated speech in the same tongue, and that amongst so many good conceits, and such general skill in tongues, all the while I was rehearsing it, there was not any whose nature, judgment, and censure in that language I feared and suspected more than your Ladyship's, whose attentive ear and eye daunted my imagination with the apprehension of my disabilities, and your Ladyship's perfect knowledge in the same. Now, once again, in this Translation out of Spanish (which language also with the present matter being so well known to your Ladyship), whose reprehension and severe sentence of all others may I more justly fear, than that which, Honourable Madame, at election you may herein duly give or with favour take away? I have no other means, than the humble insinuation of it to your most Honourable name and clemency, most humbly beseeching the same pardon to all those faults, which to your learned and judicious views shall occur. Since then, for pledge of the dutiful and zealous desire I have to serve your Ladyship, the great disproportion of your most noble estate to the quality of my poor condition, can afford nothing else but this small present, my prayer shall always importune the heavens for the happy increase of your high and worthy degree, and for the full accomplishment of your most honourable desires.

“Your Honour's

“Most humbly devoted,

“BARTHOL. YOUNG.”

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<sup>1</sup> From which Sidney had made some translations.

Such was the language of literature addressing Lady Rich, in the year 1598.

Troubled times were now coming for the house of Essex; the clouds were gathering fast in which the star of Lady Rich was to suffer temporary eclipse.

We may be satisfied that both Essex and his ambitious sister were continually haunted with the thought of his relationship to Elizabeth being as near as that of Queen Mary Stuart's son, and that their blood would be running too red and high with this royal reminder, which begat the most tantalizing hopes; sang with insidious suggestion in his ear, and secretly undermined his whole life, and that Lady Rich fanned this fire in her brother's blood, and fed the foolish aspirations of his perturbed spirit. Possibly the early intrigue of Essex and his sister with James in 1589,<sup>1</sup> in which the "Weary Knight" expressed himself as so tired of the "thrall he now lives in," so desirous of a change, and offered himself, his sister, and all their friends in anything he (James) had to "do against the Queen," arose in great part from their thinking that a change, if brought about turbulently, would give Essex a chance of taking the throne. Quite as unlikely things had occurred in the national History. Stowe remarks on the tendency of the Kentish Men to be swayed lightly at the change of Princes.

It is certain that Essex's sister was with him in his schemes, although she personally escaped the consequences. The Sonnets of Shakspeare hint as much. And on the morning of the fatal Sunday, when Essex and his armed followers rushed through the streets on their mad mission, she was moving about like the very bird of the storm: her spirit hovers visibly above the coming wave of commotion. Both Lady Rich and her cousin the Countess of Southampton were at Essex House that morning in the midst of the armed men. The Earl of Bedford (Edward the 3rd Earl), in his letter of exculpation to the Lords of the Council,<sup>2</sup> relates how Lady Rich came to his house in the midst of the sermon, and told him that the Earl of Essex desired to speak with him. When he got to Essex House, he found out how he was caught, and he declares that when the sally was made, he secretly escaped down a cross street, and made his way home again. There can be no doubt that her ladyship was a clever, determined whip for the Essex cause. The Earl of Nottingham, writing to Lord Mountjoy on the behaviour of Essex after the trial, tells how he spared none in "letting us know how continually they laboured him about it." "*And now,*" said Essex, "*I must accuse one who is most nearest to me, my sister who did continually urge me on with telling me how all my friends and followers thought me a coward, and that I had lost my valour.*"<sup>3</sup> Truly his sister had loved him not wisely, but too well. "It is well known," she said, "that I have been more like a slave than a sister; which proceeded out of my exceeding love, rather than his authority."<sup>4</sup> This occurs in her letter of defence, written to the Earl of Nottingham, in the postscript of which there is a natural touch. "Your Lordship's noble disposition forceth me to deliver my grief unto you, hearing a report that some of these malicious tongues have sought to wrong a worthy friend of yours. I know the most of them did hate him for his zealous following

<sup>1</sup> Brewer, p. 17. <sup>2</sup> Brewer, p. 17. <sup>3</sup> Brewer, p. 17. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the service of her Majesty, and beseech you to pardon my presuming thus much, though I hope his enemies have no power to harm him." This worthy friend of the Earl's, about whom the lady is so anxious, was Lord Mountjoy.

On the accession of James to the English throne, the star of Lady Rich shone once more in the Court horizon. We find pompous John Florio among the first to hail its re-arising. She was one of the five noble ladies to whom he erected his five altars, and burnt incense, when he inscribed to them his Translation of *Montaigne's Essays*, in 1603; her ladyship being one of those from whom he had received countenance and favour; "one of those whose magnanimity and magnificent frank nature have so kindly bedewed my earth when it was sun-burnt; so gently thawed it when frost-bound, that I were even more senseless than earth, if I returned not some fruit in good measure."

The new reign opened with a general restoration of Essex's friends. Lady Rich was one of the six noble personages chosen to proceed to the Scottish border for the purpose of meeting and conducting the new Queen to the English Capital. Lady Anne Clifford, in a note to her narrative, says the Queen showed no favour to the elderly ladies, when the meeting took place, but to my Lady Rich and such like company. Here is the testimony of an eye-witness that the lady of forty kept her place in appearance with the younger ones of the Court, with whom she is classed. The new Queen was in some respects a kindred spirit, and made a favourite companion of Lady Rich. She was, says the French Ambassador Rosni, afterwards Duke de Sully, of a bold and enterprising nature; loved pomp and splendour, tumult and intrigue. With such a Queen, and in such a Court, Lady Rich was again in her glory. Her *status* in the new Court was defined by special license. On the occasion of the Royal procession from the Tower to Whitehall, March 15th, 1604, her place was appointed at the head of fourteen Countesses, who all bore most noble names.

The King granted to Lady Rich "the place and rank of the ancientest Earl of Essex, called Bouchier, whose heir her father was, she having by her marriage, according to the customs of the laws of honour, ranked herself according to her husband's barony. By this gracious grant, she took rank of all the Baronesses of the kingdom, and of all Earls' daughters, except Arundel, Oxford, Northumberland, and Shrewsbury." The Earl of Worcester, writing to the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1603,<sup>1</sup> says, in reporting news of the Court, "This day the King dined abroad with the Florentine Ambassador, who taketh now his leave very shortly. He was with the King at the Play at night, and supped with my Lady Ritchie in her chamber. . . . We have ladies of divers degrees of favour; some for the private chamber, some for the bed-chamber, and some for neither certain. The plotting and malice among them is such, that I think Envy hath tied an invisible snake about most of their necks, to sting one another to death."

The Lady Rich would be able to hold her own, and feel perfectly at home in the Court of James and Oriana, where the morals were loose, and the manners free, and her singular beauty shone nightly unparagoned as *Stella Veneris*. "The Court," Wilson says, "being a continued *Maskerado*, where she, the Queen, and her ladies, like so many sea-nymphs or Nereides, appeared often in various dresses, to the ravishment of the beholders; the King himself being not a little delighted with such fluent elegancies as made the night more glorious than the day." "Their apparel was rich," says Carleton, speaking of the ladies

<sup>1</sup> *Lodge's Illustrations* vol. iii.

in one of these masques, "but too light and courtesan-like for such great ones." At the masque which followed the marriage of Sir Philip Herbert, we learn by Winwood's *Memorials*,<sup>1</sup> that "there was no small loss that night of chains and jewels, and many great ladies were made shorter by the skirts, and were very well served that they could keep cut no better." Also, Carleton, in his letter to Mr. Winwood, giving an account of the marriage, supplies us with a curious picture of the Court and King, and the manners of both. He says, "The Bride and Bridegroom were lodged in the Council Chamber, where the King, in his shirt and night-gown, gave them a *réveille-matin*, before they were up, and spent a good time in or upon the bed, choose which you will believe."

And all went merrily for the Lady Rich. So long as she only lived in adultery with Mountjoy, her honoured position in Court and society was unquestioned. But Mountjoy was conscientious enough to wish to make her his wife, and obtain the Church's blessing on the bond which had held them together so long, if so loosely. He desired to make his wife an honest woman, and his children legitimate. By an agreement among the several parties a judgment was obtained from the Ecclesiastical Court. Lady Rich was divorced from her husband, and the Earl of Devonshire immediately married her. But the divorce proved to be only a legal separation; not a sufficient warrant for a subsequent marriage. The motives of Mountjoy were of the purest and most manly, but an oversight had assuredly been made in interpreting the law. This attempt to make the Lady Rich his own lawful wife, drew down on the head of Mountjoy a bursting thunder-cloud. The Court world, which had looked on so complacently whilst the supposed law of God was broken full in its sight, was horrified at this violation of the law of man, even though it were done unwittingly. The King was moved to such anger that he told Mountjoy he had "purchased a fair woman with a black soul!" others chimed in, most indignantly rejecting the lady's right to become private property. Yet, this "fair woman with a black soul" had, whilst merely living in open criminal intercourse, been accepted as the light and glory of the Court. Mountjoy pleaded with manly tenderness and charity for his wife, and tried to justify his act, but in vain. He told the King that "the laws of moral honesty, which, in things not prohibited by God, I have ever held inviolable, do only move me now to prefer my own conscience before the opinion of the world." In spite of which noble sentiment, his heart broke, trying to bear the sad lot that had befallen him. "Grief of unsuccessful love," says his secretary Moryson, "brought him to his last end." He died within four months of his marriage, April 3, 1606.

Sir Dudley Carleton, writing to Mr. J. Chamberlain, at Ware Park, on Good Friday, April 17, 1606, says:—

"My L. of Devonshire's funeral will be performed in Westminster, about three weeks hence. There is much dispute among the heralds, whether his lady's arms should be impaled with his, which brings in question the lawfulness of the marriage, and that is said to depend on the manner of the divorce. Her estate is much threatened with the King's account, but it is thought she will find good friends, for she is visited daily by the greatest, who profess much love to her for her Earl's sake; meantime, amongst the meaner sort you may guess in what credit she is, when Mrs. Blunsen complains that she had made her cousin of Devonshire shame her and her whole kindred.

"2nd May.—It is determined that his arms shall be set up single, without his wife's."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> S. P. O.

The first publication of the dramatic poet, John Ford, was a poem on the death of the Earl of Devonshire, printed in 1606, entitled *Fame's Memorial*, and dedicated "To the rightly Right Honourable Lady, the Lady Penelope, Countess of Devonshire." Some of the lines are interesting :—

"Linked in the graceful bonds of dearest life,  
Unjustly termed disgracful, he enjoyed  
Content's abundance ; happiness was rife,  
Pleasure secure ; no troubled thought annoyed  
His comforts sweet ; toil was in toil destroyed ;  
Maugre the throat of malice, spite of spite,  
He lived united to his heart's delight :

"His heart's delight, who was the beauteous Star  
Which beautified the value of our land ;  
The lights of whose perfections brighter are  
Than all the lamps which in the lustre stand  
Of heaven's forehead by Discretion scanned ;  
Wit's ornament ! Earth's love ! Love's paradise !  
A saint divine, a beauty fairly wise :

"A beauty fairly wise, wisely discreet  
In winking mildly at the tongue of rumour ;  
A saint merely divine, divinely sweet  
In banishing the pride of idle humour :  
Not relishing the vanity of tumour,  
More than to a female of so high a race ;  
With meekness bearing sorrow's sad disgrace."

It is difficult to resist smiling at the idea of making the Lady Rich a sort of winking saint. The Poet is nearer the mark when he likens her, in another stanza, as a wit among women, to a nightingale amidst a quire of common song-birds.

Poor Lady Rich ! Her fate was as full of contrast as the moral mixture of her nature, or the outward show of her twilight beauty. The most striking opposites met in her complexion, her character, and her life ; as though the parental elements in her were not well or kindly mixed. Like Beatrice, she seems to have been born in "a merry hour when a star danced" over her father's house ; born to be clothed in the purple of choicest speech a poet's love can lavish ; to sit as a proud queen in the hearts of some who were among the kingliest of men, and be crowned with such a wreath of amaranth as descends upon the brow of but few among women. One of the bright particular stars of two Courts ; the beloved idol of two heroes ; one of the proudest, wittiest, most fascinating women of her time ; the Beauty, in singing of whom, the poets vied like rival lovers, as they strung their harps with "Stella's" golden hair, and strove together in praise of the starry midnight of those eyes that were so darkly lustrous with their rich eastern look. And her day of stormy splendour appears to have ended in the saddest way imaginable ; closing in impenetrable night : all the pride of life suddenly laid low in the dust of death, and so dense a darkness about her grave, that we cannot make out her name.

Her mother, the "little Western Flower," lively-blooded Lettice Knollys, "She that did supply the wars with thunder and the Court with stars," lived on in her lustihood to a green and gray old age, walking erectly, to appearance, after all the crookednesses of her career ; her sunset going down with a mellow and tranquil shine, and dying at last amidst her mourners in the very odour of

sanctity. But the daughter vanishes from view in a moment, while yet the star of her life rode high, it goes out suddenly, and we are left in the darkness all the blinder for the late dazzle of her splendour. She who had been the cynosure of all eyes, passes out of sight almost unnoticed, and one who was among the first in fame becomes suddenly unknown. Of all who were so well known in their lifetime, she surely must have been the least remembered in her death. It looks as though the disappearance had been intentional; as though she had *taken* the black death-veil, and drawn the dark curtains about her, and that by a tacit agreement betwixt her and the world, her name and reputation should be buried with her body, as one of those, of whom the Poet sings, who were

“ Merely born to bloom and drop ;  
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop :  
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop ?  
' *Dust and ashes* ' so you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.  
Dear, dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold  
Used to hang and brush their bosoms ? I feel chilly and grown old.”<sup>1</sup>

So completely did Lady Rich pass out of sight that not a portrait of her remains. Yet she was often painted, and there must have been various pictures of her extant at the time of her death. One of Burghley's secret agents, who writes to the English Minister from the Scottish Court, informs him on the 20th of October, 1589, that Rialta (Lady Rich) has sent the King her portrait. There is also a portrait of her mentioned, among the goods and chattels at Wanstead, in the inventory taken of Leicester's property after his death. But I have failed to trace either painting or engraving of Lady Rich at present in existence. There is a portrait by Vandyke of her son Henry, first Earl of Holland, whose curious complexion had such attractions for James ! He had light hair, possibly golden, and the black eyes of his mother. It is also most difficult to find any record of her out of poetry and the *Sydney Memoirs*. I know of but one mention of her death : it was disinterred by Professor Craik only a few years ago from the Latin History of Robert Johnstone (*Historia Rerum Britannicarum*), published at Amsterdam in 1655. At page 420, the writer relates that Devonshire, stung by the reproaches of the King, who told him he had purchased a fair woman with a black soul, broke down altogether and breathed his last in the arms of Lady Rich, passing away in the midst of her adorations, tears, and kisses. And he adds that the lady, worn out with grief and lamentation, did not long survive him, but, laden with the robes and decorations of mourning, lay night and day stretched on the floor in a corner of her bed-chamber, refusing to be comforted, except by death. “Happy pair,” he says, “had but a legal union sanctified their glowing and constant love.” This is the only ray of light that pierces the gloom ; the only word that breaks the silence.

The *liaison* with Lord Mountjoy attracted the public attention at the time. But it may be remembered that although Lady Rich was more closely attached to Lord Mountjoy in the years 1599 and 1600, for instance, than to her husband, who, according to Mountjoy, had kept her from his bed for the space of twelve years before they finally and absolutely parted ; yet there was no bond that bound her to Mountjoy with inviolable ties when he was away, for example, with his army in Ireland. Mountjoy, we may be sure, was not the only “noble ruin of her magic.” At the most he could but claim a share in her until he

<sup>1</sup> “ *A Toccato of Galuppi's*.” Robert Browning.

had made her his own, after her divorce from Lord Rich. This, indeed, he acknowledges by his diffidence on the score of paternity, for, out of the five children assigned to him by Lady Rich, he only recognized and provided for three of them as his own. These five children were all born after the Lord Rich (on Mountjoy's own showing) had withdrawn himself from his lady's bed, and at least four of the five were born before the re-marriage of her Ladyship with Mountjoy. Sidney has painted the Lady Rich as an Angel of Light. The allusions to her and to the shady side of her reputation in Shakspeare's Latter Sonnets tend to make her look more like an Angel of Darkness. But there was a living woman in whom these two alternated, and out of which her nature was compounded—the woman who, with her tropical temperament and bleak lot in marriage, could yet remain the conqueror of Sidney and herself in such circumstances of peril as he has depicted in his confessions—the woman who would fight for her husband through thick and thin, and hurry back to him if she heard he was ill, wait upon him and watch over him day and night from a sense of duty rather than a necessity of affection—the woman who was passionately fond of her children, and so devoted to her brother Robert that she would have bartered body and soul for him, and gone through hell-fire for his sake—who was always ready to help a friend when her influence was of value at Court—this woman has never been portrayed for us, unless some approach to her picture under other names has been made by the one great master, solely capable, in his dramatic works.

It is difficult, as Fuller has said, to draw those to the life who never sit still. The Lady Rich is one of these subjects, all sparkle and splendour, and the radiance as of rain which continual motion keeps a-twinkle, so various in their humours and sudden in their change. In her the most perplexing opposites intermixed with a subtle play and endless shiftings of light and shade, many-coloured and evanescent as the breeze-tinted ripples of a summer sea. No two portraits of her could possibly be alike. Her letters, some of which have been recovered by Mr. Grosart since last I wrote, show her to have had the kindly heart that was always ready to succour the distressed. For example—

In March 1596, she writes to Essex:—"Worthy Brother, I was so loth to importune you for this poor gentlewoman, as I took this petition from her the last time I was at the Court, and yesterday I sent her word by her man that I would not trouble you with it, but wished her to make some other friends. Upon which message, her husband, that hath been subject to frantiness through his troubles, grew in such despair as his wife's infinite sorrow makes me satisfy her again, who thinks that none will pity her misery and her children if you do not; since, if he cannot have pardon, he must fly, and leave them in very poor estate. Dear brother, let me know your pleasure; and believe that I endlessly remain your most faithful sister, PENELOPE RICH."

Again, she writes to

"MR. RENALLS,—My old woman Harny hath a suit to my brother, which I would not have her trouble him with; but that it is only his letter to my lord Mayor for a mean place that is fallen in his gift, which she desires for her son White. Let me entreat you to draw a letter, and that somebody may go if you have no leisure yourself, that will be earnest with the Mayor, since it is like he will excuse it if he can for some creature of his own; and so in haste I rest,

"Your very assured friend,

"PENELOPE RICH.

"To my friend Mr. Renalles." (1604.)



## TO THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON.

"NOBLE SIR,—I hope my first letter will excuse some part of my fault, and I assure you nothing shall make me neglect to yield you all the earnest assurances I can of my affection and desires to be held dear in your favour, whose worthy kindness I will strive to merit by the faithfullest endeavours my love can perform towards you, who shall ever find me unresumably,

"Your lordship's faithful cousin and true friend,

"PENELOPE RICH.

"Your lordship's daughter is exceeding fair and well, and I hope by your son to win my wager.

"Chartly, this 10th of May."

It is endorsed "The Lady Rich to the Earl of Southampton," and has a note, "This alludes to the expectation the Earl had of a son at this time. See Lodge." The seal is a "*deer*," very much resembling that used by Andrew Marvell. [Grosart.]

## TO THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON.

"The exceeding kindness I receive from your lordship in hearing often from you doth give me infinite contentment, both in referring assurance of your health, and that I remain in your constant favour, which I well endeavour to merit by my affection unto your lordship. My Lord Rich doth so importune me daily to return to my own house as I cannot stay here longer than Bartelmentide, which I do against his will, and the cause of his earnest desire to have me come up is his being so persecuted for his land, as he is in fear to lose the greatest part he hath and his next term, who would have me a solicitor to bear part of his troubles, and is much discontented with my staying so long: wherefore I beseech your lordship to speak with my brother, since I am loth to leave my lady here alone, and if you resolve she shall go with me into Essex, which I very much desire, then you were best to write to me that you would have her go with me, which will make my Lord Rich the more willing, though I know he will be well contented, to whom I have written that I will come as soon as I know what my brother and yourself determine for my Lord. I am sorry for Sir Harry Bower's hurt, though I hope it is so little as it will not mar his good face; and so in haste I wish your lordship all the honour and happiness you desire.

"Your lordship's most affectionate cousin,

"PENELOPE RICH.

"Chartly, this 9th of July.

"To the most honourable the Earl of Southampton."

## TO THE EARL OF SALISBURY.

"NOBLE LORD,—This gentlewoman hath entreated me to recommend her suit unto you, of whose good success I should be very glad, because she is one I have been long acquainted with, and is of the best disposition that ever I found any of her nation. I beseech your Lordship to favour her, that if it be possible she may attain some satisfaction if her desires be not unreasonable; and so wishing your Lordship all happiness and contentment, I remain

"Your Lordship's most affectionate friend to do you service,

"PENELOPE RICH.

"Ennile (?) this last of May (Indorsed 1605).

"To the right honourable My Lord, the Earl of Salisbury."

And Rowland White gives us a pleasant glimpse of her ladyship in the aspect of a beggar for others.

In March 1597, he had occasion to seek her aid for the purpose of getting

presented to the Queen a very earnest petition of Sir Robert Sidney's. He says, "I took this opportunity to beseech her to do you one favour, which was to deliver this letter (and showed it to her) to the Queen; she kissed it and took it, and told me that you had never a friend in Court who would be more ready than herself to do you any pleasure; I besought her, in the love I found she bore you, to take some time this night to do it; and, without asking anything at all of the contents of it, she put it in her bosom and assured me that this night, or to-morrow morning, it would be read, and bid me attend her." Which makes us feel a waft of cordial warmth breathed from a kindly-affectioned heart, as the letter disappears in its temporary resting-place.

Let me conclude with the words of Anne Bradstreet, the American Poetess who wrote the first volume of verse that was published in New England. She composed an Elegy on Sidney forty-eight years after his death, in which she said of Lady Rich—

"Illustrious Stella! thou didst shine full well,  
If thine Aspect was mild to Astrophel!"

## SHAKSPEARE AND BACON.

It was, and still is, the custom in some countries for the benighted natives to rush forth from their dwellings at the approach of a lunar eclipse, and howl lustily, with the intention of scaring away the demon of darkness that is supposed to be devouring the moon. But if I, in common with a few others, do raise my voice and put on literary war-paint to face the Donnellian phantom, it is not from any presentiment that the bogey Bacon is going to swallow Shakspeare, nor from any fear that our luminary is about to suffer its eclipse. Mr. Donnelly may talk of "*hurling Shakspeare down from his pedestal*;" according to my calculation, there would be less disparity between modern engineering appliances and the hoisting of the Alps bodily from their base, than there is betwixt his proposed means of removal and the *dethronement of Shakspeare*. I think he might just as well decree a new volcano, or propose a motion for a general earthquake. Therefore I do not turn aside from the more immediate purpose of the present work to say one word in defence of Shakspeare's authorship, because of any anticipation that this revolt against common sense is going to effect his dethronement. I should not even like it to be thought that I take *au sérieux* the proposition that Francis Bacon wrote the Plays and other poetry of Shakspeare; indeed, I am willing to confess that the joke of attributing the works of Shakspeare to Bacon is huge enough to be enjoyable. Only to think of the maddening effect on serious Shakspeareans who will not see the joke! I look upon Mr. Donnelly's information that Bacon was the real author of Shakspeare's and Marlowe's Plays, not to include Montaigne's *Essays*, and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, as a "very great secret" indeed; far exceeding the one confided to George Dyer by Charles Lamb when he told the guileless gobemouche that Lord Castlereigh was the author of the *Waverley Novels*. To me it is what Shakspeare himself terms a "fanatical phantasm." Nevertheless, for the truth's sake, I shall treat the matter seriously in my own way. For it is the same here as everywhere else, there is no sure protection, now or at any time, against fraud and fallacy except in our mastering the fundamental data for ourselves. It is only by taking full possession of the genuine facts that we can prevent the phantoms of unreality from *taking possession* of us, and haunting us with their delusions! We are continually learning and having to relearn the lesson that there is no defence against impostures, no freedom from fallacies, past, present, or future, save in ascertaining the facts, truly estimating their force, and holding on hard and fast to their evidence.

I have no intention of calling names as a substitute for argument. Mr. Donnelly complains that a deluge of opprobrium has been let loose upon him; but the people who have pursued Shakspeare with a blizzard of abuse should not cry out or squirm and squeal when the pitch is made hot for their own behoof.

The Donnellians have been studiously offensive in speaking of Shakspeare. They have done their dirtiest to defame and degrade the life, the character, the relations, and outward circumstances of the man whom Mr. Donnelly calls "Caliban," and to defile his image in the innermost sanctuary of our affection.

Mr. Donnelly has raked in *sterquinarie* to have his fling of filth at Shakspeare. He writes as if he were obsessed with a spirit of hatred and uncleanness against Shakspeare; his personal enmity looks like an unmistakable symptom of confirmed mania. It is only the snob in soul that would speak ignobly of any man, even a Shakspeare, on account of his poverty in early life, or seek for a writer's nobility in his surroundings. Mr. Donnelly's vulgarly virulent treatment of our great Poet, his parents, his bringing-up, his early occupations, his wife, his children, his character, is a thing to be held in derision so long as it may be had in remembrance. Moreover, he who has said "the proposition that Shakspeare, the man of the documents, and the writer of the Plays were one and the same person *cannot be accepted by any sane man*" (p. 46), has no right to complain if he or his co-mates should happen to be called crazed. Personally I do not see how anything but a great mental delusion could account for the hypothesis that Francis Bacon was the author of Shakspeare's Plays, Poems, and Sonnets! But one would not therefore say that the Donnellians are ordinarily insane. Nevertheless, it does seem in accordance with the fitness of things that this delusion should have been engendered in the brain of poor Delia Bacon. I feel that hers was amongst the saddest of all human tragedies—those in which the martyr falls ineffectually on behalf of an error that was sincerely mistaken for the truth. Her sufferings make one gentle for her sake—

The Delian diver wracked her life to grasp  
A pearl she saw by visionary gleams,  
And died with empty hand that could not clasp  
The treasure only real in her dreams!

But facts must be faced, and whether as a birth of physical disease or only of mental perversion, whether as the cause of disease or the result of it, this fabric of false vision was first dreamed into existence by Delia Bacon in the year 1845; her belief being announced in Putnam's *Magazine* for January, 1856. The delusion was primarily conceived through falsely assuming that Shakspeare had neither the natural qualifications nor the education befitting the writer of the plays; and all the efforts following her desperate venture have been directed to the support of that fundamental fallacy.

First, it was hastily assumed that Shakspeare could not, and it was then inferred that he did not, write his own works. They tell us that his handwriting and the nose of his bust at Stratford are dead against his being the real author of the Plays and Poems!

But to suppose that a college education and a profound acquaintance with the classics are necessary to the bringing forth of a Shakspeare is to *miss the lesson of his life*, the supreme lesson of all literature, because in him it was triumphantly demonstrated once for all, that these are not necessities of the most real self-developing education; that nature grows her geniuses like her game-birds and finer-flavoured wildfowl, by letting them forage for their own living, to find what they most need. It was learning in the school of life that was the best education for him, and in that school, as he says of Cardinal Wolsey,

"From his cradle  
He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one."

Probably he had not many books to read; but he was not made out of books. When Nature wants a new man, it is not her way to make him out of old books.

Books are too often used as the means of getting our thinking done for us. Shakspeare did his own. He could transmute from books, but his genius preferred to work on nature, and draw his drama directly from the life. It is with too many people as Butler says—

“ Yet he that is but able to express  
No sense at all in several languages,  
Will pass for learned than he that's known  
To speak the strongest reason in his own ! ”

That delusion has been very common, and it is a delusion still, although one that is being exploded.

Mr. Ruskin once wrote to me—“ Your education was a terrible one, but mine was far worse ! ” The one having had all that wealth could buy, the other all that poverty could bring.

“ Fair seed-time had my soul,” says Wordsworth in referring to the influences of nature that helped to educate him as a boy, when he too was a bit of a poacher, and indifferent to the study of books.

The great point here is, that nature did not produce Shakspeare as the result of a scholastic education, nor by refining an ancient type that had been long manipulated by men, but threw back for a fresh start to produce a new type altogether from her own font. She did just what she taught Shakspeare himself to do ! Instead of adopting and polishing or further effacing the old literary types, it was his wont to go back to nature on numerous lines of character to find the fresh soil in which he could secure the life and strength and hoarded riches of an original rootage. The secret of this matter is to be found in nature, and not in the cram of mere acquirement. It was by nature Shakspeare had that relationship with Source itself, that rootage in the spiritual which taps the well-springs of the universal life, and directly draws its strength and succour from the Infinite !

No approximately correct estimate of Shakspeare in relation to those few bare facts of his life to be found in the documents can be formed unless we take them *plus* the personality of the Man, as he was known to his “ fellows,” to Chettle, to Marston, to Henry Wriothesley, to Ben Jonson, to the stage, and as we see him in the mirror of his works. “ The older one grows,” says Goethe, “ the more one prizes natural gifts, because by no possibility can they be procured and stuck on.” And in “ natural gifts,” as we know, our Shakspeare was pre-eminent, was supreme. Ben Jonson saw this when he told the world how little Shakspeare was indebted to Latin and still less to Greek. Nor did he need it, says Jonson, who was the nearest of them all in taking the measure of the man !

“ Leave thee alone for the comparison  
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome  
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.  
I confess thy writings to be such  
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.”

He recognized the well-spring of ebullient life that rose and overran with its irrepressible force of abundance. He portrays him as a very Mercurio of a man, flowing with that facility which made it necessary that he should at times be stopped to prevent a deluge. Such an inexhaustible fount of life rose in him, springing fresh and free from the world of life beyond all literature !

B D

In the minds of Delia Bacon, Mrs. Pott, and Mr. Donnelly, the genesis of the delusion may be traced to the beginning at first with false ideas concerning Shakspeare, and next to fallacious inferences resulting in a false Ideal of Bacon. It is not a fact that Shakspeare was a low-born, illiterate fellow, or that his father was a "Poor Peasant," but a falsehood to begin with. His father was a Yeoman. As to his classical acquirements; in accordance with the education of the time, he would learn sufficient Latin at the Grammar school to read and draw from Ovid as he does some years afterwards in his *Venus and Adonis*, to which he prefixes the Latin motto, and says proudly and defiantly to those who had decried him and his scholarship, "*Let the mob marvel at things base, to me also golden-locked Apollo shall supply cups filled with water of Castaly.*"

Mr. Donnelly soon demonstrates the fact that he is not to be trusted either in his statements or quotations without verification. He writes again and again, "he was not *for* an age, but for all time." Twice over the "*mightiest Julius*" is quoted as the "mighty Julius." These are small matters, but significant when credit is at stake. He falsely asserts, that in *Shakspeare's time* the very name of Shakspeare was considered to be the quintessence of vulgarity! He falsely asserts that Shakspeare's pursuits and his associates (who included Lord Southampton) were not favourable to his acquiring knowledge in London. He falsely asserts that there is no evidence whatever to show that Shakspeare was a diligent student of books! The satirist Marston has emphatically assured us that he was. Also we learn that Shakspeare was a buyer of books at sales by some memoranda that were found at Stratford on the back of the panel of a jury dated Nov. 1596, beginning, "Mr. Shaxpere, one book. Mr. Barber, a coverlet." There had been a suit between Margaret Younge and Jane Perat, and a sale, at which Shakspeare was present on the look-out for books. At least we infer that it was he, and not his father, who could not write.

The *Great Cryptogram* abounds in errors concerning well-known matters of fact, in oversights and contradictions. Shakspeare was not "an obscure actor" in 1601 (p. 633). We are not told that Bacon dashed off a play in a fortnight (as Mr. Donnelly says), but that Shakspeare did so! It is not, as he asserts, wholly different with Shakspeare from other men of the time. We know far more about him, for instance, than we do of Beaumont and Fletcher.

The Dedications of Shakspeare's two Poems to the Earl of Southampton are not merely "supposed to imply" a close "social relationship," as Mr. Donnelly phrases it; they prove it!

Judith Shakspeare signs her initials in a very straggling manner, whereupon Mr. Donnelly gets up a long and futile tirade against Shakspeare for not teaching his daughter to *read* and *write*; *ergo* he could not have written the plays! and yet the cipher proclaims that Susannah Shakspeare was "WELL-TAUGHT" (p. 747). In short, it is difficult to believe one word the gentleman says who has a waist-coat on of THAT colour. His reasoning constantly reminds one of the man who prognosticated that people would soon cross the Atlantic in three days, and who "*did not see how it could be otherwise.*" He has no diffidence on account of ignorance. He quotes—

"*But I con him no thanks.*"

and

"*Y'et, thanks, I must you con.*"

and denounces both as "sheer nonsense." But to "con thanks" is good provincial English still current in the North. Sidney uses it in the *Arcadia* (p. 224)—

"I con thee thank to whom thy dogs be dear." (1590.)

It means to express an obligation. The same ignorance, ludicrous errors, and absurdities of assertion are apparent in the cipher-narratives, which of themselves suffice to prove the ciphers cannot have been the work of Bacon. There is no need to "rack the style" of Mr. Donnelly to make it confess that the language is not Bacon's. It is thrice impossible for this to be Bacon's English—"My lord struck his spur up to the rowel against the panting sides of his horse" (p. 737). Struck his spur *up to the rowel* has *no meaning*, because the rowel *includes* the spur-points that revolve with it. Neither is *one* spur enough to be struck against *both sides* of the horse. What Shakspeare himself wrote on the subject was this—

"And bending forward (he) struck his *armed heels*  
Against the panting *sides* of his poor jade  
*Up to the rowel-head.*"

That is English. But in picking out the cipher-narrative the English has been completely destroyed.

Again, the narrative says—"Bardolfe is now *almost as good as dead ; slain, killed outright by the hand of the old jade.*" Now a man who was not quite dead could not be said to have been killed outright. Moreover, the act could not be attributed to the *hand* of the Queen, who had only ordered the pursuit (p. 682).

Stratford is called "*one of the Peasant Towns of the West*" (p. 730). A double impossibility, as the town was not in the West, but exactly in the middle of England, and townspeople are not identical with but opposed to the Peasantry or Pagan. They were not 15,000 peasants who lived in Stratford-on-Avon in the time of Shakspeare. The number is Mr. Donnelly's.

The cipher story tells of a desperate attempt on the part of the Queen (in 1601) to find out who was the author of the play of *Richard II.*, which was certainly well known to be Shakspeare's, as it had been published in 1597 and again in 1598, with his name on the title-page; of that fact there never was a doubt.

One of Mr. Donnelly's many "reasonable probabilities" is that Robert Cecil, "Says Ill," or "Seas-Ill," being Bacon's most bitter and inveterate enemy, was well aware that he was the real author of the Plays; knew that he had shared in the Essex conspiracy, and wrought on behalf of rebellion in writing the Play of *King Richard II.*, but that he concealed the fact and kept the secret to himself, only having his revenge by compelling Bacon to take a dastardly part against Essex at his trial!

And here is a pretty story told of Shakspeare by the cipher-narrative. "*His health is very poor. It was my presurmise that he is blasted with that dreaded disease, a most incurable malady. His looks prove it. One day I did chance to meet him, and although I am well acquainted with him I would not have known him, the transformation was so great. . . He is not more than thirty-three, in his youth. written down old with all the characters of age. His cheek is white, his voice hollow, his hand dry, his hair grey, his step feeble, and his head WAGS as he*

WALKED. *There is a beastly wound new healed on the side of his neck, and a great wen or gall, something like the king's evil, which every day grows greater.*" In another statement assigned to Bacon, Shakspeare is said to be "*not yet thirty-three,*" but he is a stooping, decrepid, WHITE-haired old man. He is being eaten away with several diseases. He has the gout, the French pox, horrible breakings out, doubtless meant for buboes, and he "*hath fallen into a consumption.*" Now, Shakspeare was thirty-three in 1597, and at this time, in 1596-7, the character of Falstaff was created for the dramas of *First King Henry IV.*, and the following *Merry Wives of Windsor*. The cipher-narrative also volunteers the information that Bacon and his brother Anthony drew the fat man Falstaff and his "*great round belly*" from Shakspeare as their "*original model*" (p. 815), who is also described as a great over-greedy glutton, or greedy-guts, "*weighing two hundred pound*" (p. 814). And the narrative relates how the play-house was crowded to see this decrepid, diseased, consumptive, pox-rotted, strumous, white-faced, white-haired, worn, wizened, and bowed-down old man (in 1597) "*capere*" in his grossness with his "*great round belly.*"

Thus we have it all on the same authority that Shakspeare was physically decayed or rotten and sick unto death in the year 1597; his life was being eaten out of him daily by at least two incurable diseases, not to mention the "*venerean speculation,*" or latest novelty from France; and that he was then tottering and trembling on the crumbling edge of the grave. At the same time, or immediately afterwards, in 1597, we find him not only as the original model for Falstaff, but capering on the stage in the performance of that character; still later, we are told by the same authority, that the Queen calls Shakspeare "*the fat creature,*" and Cecil refers to him as "*the fat fellow.*" And, it may be added, when Shakspeare signed his will in March, 1616, we find he did so "*in perfect health and memory.*" If these revelations are considered astounding, it must be confessed that the language in which they are put forth is altogether in keeping. Here are a few samples of the new Baconian English conveyed by the mediumship of figures.

"*I derived these news.*" "*Almost half dead.*" "*I asked him what he is doing here.*" "*The much-admired plays we all rate so high!*" "*The subjects are beyond his ability.*" "*He is subject to the gout in his great toe.*" "*Enough brain-power.*" "*A bold, forward, and most vulgar boy.*" This was done—"So that not only their bodies but their souls might be damned." The question is, how did the figures get infected so that Bacon's English should be converted into the vulgarest nineteenth century newspaperese?

The cipher goes with the language of it—the one cannot be Elizabethan and not the other. If the language be not Bacon's, then he is not the author of the cipher, nor responsible for the narratives evolved by Mr. Donnelly. In one place the cipher-narrative says that Shakspeare "*is a poor, dull, ill-spirited, greedy creature.*" Here we can at once convict it of lying grossly and maliciously by the personal testimony of the men who knew him, such as Chettle, John Davies, and Ben Jonson. Their evidence is sufficient to destroy all credence in the narrative, and consequently all truth in the cipher. But independently of these eye-witnesses, the cipher goes on to convict itself once more, for, on another page (815), the narrative affirms that the same man "*hath a quick wit.*" Mr. Donnelly plainly shows us how his theory was falsely founded from the first. He lets us see the unfolding of his drama of self-delusion. How the



false vision was externalized, and the eyes were brought to see that which was subjectively supplied. He that hides may find; and he has consequently found the ciphers that none but himself had hidden and none but himself could find. For example, he discovered that the words "disease" and "diseases" occurred more frequently than usual in the Play of 2 *Henry IV.* He says, "They are found *twelve times*; this, with the cipher-system of using the same word over many times, probably implies thirty-six different references, nearly all, I take it, to Shakspeare's diseases" (p. 80). Such a fanatical faith would furnish the writer's mind with germs of Shakspeare's manifold diseases which are afterwards unfolded by aid of the cipher. Mr. Donnelly declares that such compounds as "*Seas Ill*" for Cecil, "*Jack spur*" for Shakspeare, "*And It*" for Aunt, and "*Ba and Can*" for Bacon, were necessitated and adopted in order that the secret cipher might not be detected. At the same time, the whole inscrutable scheme was revealed to him because the name of Bacon is openly used in the Play of 1 *King Henry IV.*, and the name of Francis *appears twelve times over*; the writer having gone out of his way to emphasize the name of Francis by reading Tom, Dick, and Francis, instead of Tom, Dick, and Harry. Thus the directions for finding the veritable author of the plays were given plainly and publicly as those on a sign-post; Francis Bacon, Nicholas Bacon's son, St. Albans (1 *Henry IV.*, IV. ii.).

Mr. Donnelly could not understand why Falstaff should say "On, *Bacons*, on," unless Francis Bacon wrote that and the other plays. If they had been called "Hogs" he might have comprehended. But *Bacons*! Here was a mystery indeed. He did not know that "*Bacons*" was good provincial English for country clowns, as we have it still in "Chaw-Bacons," with no particular reference to Francis or Delia Bacon, or the "*Bacons*" that do follow them. With a simplicity almost touching he says, "When I read that phrase, '*On, Bacons, on,*' I said to myself, '*Beyond question there is a cipher in this play.*'" And he did not see how it could be otherwise. Beginning with the "Francis Bacon" and "St. Albans" in 1 *Henry IV.*, we can see how the picking out of certain words suggested his narratives. For example, the word "Bacon" had been looked up by Mr. Donnelly in the Plays, and found in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. i., where it is said that "*Hang hog is Latin for Bacon.*" This also is supposed to furnish evidence that Lord Bacon wrote the Plays! The story was that Sir Nicholas Bacon, father of Francis, being on the Northern Circuit, a criminal once pleaded with him for his life on account of their kinship, for, as he urged, his name was Hog and the Judge's was Bacon. Whereupon Sir Nicholas replied that Hog was not Bacon until it had been well-hanged. We may suppose the "*Hang hog is Latin for Bacon*" in the play to have been based on the *story*. But what then? The *story* would not be alluded to without a moral or a purpose. What would that intention be in the year 1599? At that time Bacon had got all he could out of Essex or by his means, and was working against him more than was visible above board. Bacon was an avid, not to say a greedy man. As Mr. Donnelly might say, he was somewhat "hoggish," and a hog that is hanged being Bacon, the humour in reversion would consist in Bacon being a hog, *well-hanged*. That I offer as the likelier version of the interpolated passage or shifting scene in this Play.

If, as now to be inferred, there was an intended gird at the living Bacon, considered as a hog only, then another of Mr. Donnelly's mysteries may be cleared

up, as this would account for the name of Francis occurring twenty times in one column, when the special object was to conceal the writer's own name! In thus repeating the Christian name the writer is rubbing in the salt, as it were, to make the Bacon. Moreover, he has added a sign-post in his reference to the St. Alban's road, so that none of the initiated could mistake the way.

But imagine Bacon as the author making fun of that kind at his own expense, or giving any such a chance for people to point the moral in this way—Hang-hog = Bacon, Bacon = Hog to be hanged! What an enjoyable jest for him! No wonder the young lords of the Essex faction were spending their time in 1599, as Rowland White records, "doing nothing but seeing Plays."

Mr. Donnelly has not understood the humour of Shakspeare, but has taken his "Gammon of Bacon" much too seriously. The man who caricatured King James on the stage in 1606 would never have hesitated at making fun of Bacon or any one else who offered the occasion. There is, however, a far more important thing to be considered in the Windsor Play—that is, the deer-stealing and the venison of which game—or game-pie—is made in this drama. Was Bacon the deer-stealer, and all the rest of Shakspeare the Stratford youth? Assuredly the man who did steal the deer also wrote the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, in which the deer-stealing is acknowledged, and the Lucys' coat of arms is punned upon by name, and Sir Thomas Lucy is converted into Justice Shallow, and served up with the venison, for the amusement of all the world for all time. The Luces, fish, are turned into Louses by Sir Hugh Evans! Page says, "I thank you for my venison, Mr. Shallow;" and Shallow says, "It was ill-killed." But Page hopes to "drink down all unkindness" over the venison pasty. The writer of that was most certainly Will Shakspeare, the native of Stratford, not the Londoner, Francis Bacon. Moreover, this Play was composed by command of Queen Elizabeth, and, as we are credibly assured, was written in a fortnight by the man who stole the deer! That command would cause a flutter at the theatre, and a fitting of parts by Shakspeare himself, with copy in his own handwriting. Do you think that his playfellows Burbage and Kempe, Lowine and Arnim, were not sharp enough to know their man, of whom they were so proud as a "shrewd fellow," who beat all the University men? Do you imagine they did not know whether he wrote his own work, or only kept a *ghost that came up through the trap-door* when called for, as Bacon? Such a quick response in fulfilment of the royal command would be the crowning feat of that fertility of invention, that facility and incredible celerity in execution, which gave him his unapproachable supremacy amongst the playwrights of his or any other time.

It is strange for me, who have spent many years with Shakspeare, to recount facts and reformulate the evidence that shows he was really the writer of his own works! But as I happen to be responsible for this elaborate elucidation of the Sonnets, I am able to bring forward witnesses with testimony that seems to have been but little suspected by the Baconians. Also I see that Mr. Donnelly quotes me as having said something which appeared to favour his view.

There is some advantage in a writer being well-read in his own subject, but I have seen no instance of the anti-Shakspeareans knowing anything like enough of the evidence that bristles against them impenetrably in the Sonnets. Either from ignorance or from wariness they appear to be very shy of the Sonnets, and I can assure them there are sound reasons for their being so. The Sonnets have

something decisive to say on this part of the subject. They will furnish a reply against which there will be no possible appeal. The Sonnets are full of data the most definite, criteria the most conclusive, and facts the most fatal to their great fallacy. But these facts will not be ignored by any sticking of one's head in the sand not to see them; they remain visible to others, however the Baconians may be blinded by the miopœia of a false theory!

To recapitulate. Briefly, the facts are these. In the year 1590 Shakspeare had begun to be known as the writer of Songs and Sonnets. As already shown, he began to write them in 1590 for the young Earl of Southampton, then a youth of seventeen. The early ones were written with his "*Pupil Pen*," before he had printed his first poem of *Venus and Adonis*. Afterwards he writes some of them in a book that has been provided for the purpose by the Earl. In writing such Sonnets in Southampton's own table-book or album, his friend is to supply the subject-matter, is to furnish his own arguments, is to become the Tenth Muse, is to inspire and give light to the invention or imagination needed for the purpose of writing. So much is to be read in Sonnet 38. In Sonnet 77 we see him writing in this very Book, which he calls "Thy Book," when he invites his friend also to write in it! In that Book certain of the Sonnets were written by Shakspeare himself. There they were to stand in the sight of his friend, and his friends, to be read, as he says, by those "curious days." There they were read by the "Private Friends" (as known to Meres) in the Poet's own handwriting, which certainly could not be mistaken by Southampton and Essex for Francis Bacon's.

Thus the Sonnets were known to be Shakspeare's when they were circulating in MS. among his "Private Friends" before 1598. They were known to Francis Meres as Shakspeare's in 1598. Two of them were printed as Shakspeare's in the *Passionate Pilgrim* (1599). They circulated amongst the Private Friends during many years in Shakspeare's own hand-writing. Chief of his "Private Friends" was the Earl of Southampton, to whom he publicly dedicates his two poems; when he tells his friend that he has future work then in hand that is pre-dedicated to him! He offers the Sonnets as this promised work, hence he describes them as the "Barren tender of a Poet's debt"—that is, the debt already contracted and acknowledged in the inscription to *Lucrece*. In 1609 the Sonnets were printed by Thorpe as Shakspeare's, and dedicated to William Herbert, who was one of the later Private Friends of the Poet; and who, as the editors of the first folio tell us, had pursued Shakspeare with very great favour. Although Shakspeare did not publish them himself they were known to be his, and, as we learn from Benson, the editor of the second edition (1640), Shakspeare not only identified them as his own, he likewise defended them against some charge of impurity. Now, they tell us that Shakspeare was one of those unlearned people who are not educated at college, and therefore he was not qualified to write the Plays, Poems, and Sonnets; whereas Bacon was one of the Learned. He was educated at Cambridge. This same charge of not being one of the Learned, as Marlowe, Nash, and Bacon were, was made against Shakspeare by his earliest opponents and rivals. He was pointed to as the *man of a little country grammar knowledge*, i. e. he was educated at a country grammar school, and never was "gowned in the University." But they identified him as the unlearned man who DID write the Plays, not as the unqualified man who did not! They charged him with stealing from them—not from Bacon. Now, the writer of the Sonnets is confessedly this man who did not receive a college education!

He personally recognizes the charges brought against him by the Nash and Greene clique that he was one of the unlearned, not a University man, not a Master of Arts, but a self-educated man, and, in short, an ignoramus! Nash personified him as "Ignorance," and Shakspeare, as writer of the Sonnets, accepts that designation. He tells Southampton—

"So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,  
And found such fair assistance in my verse,  
As every alien pen hath got my use,  
And under thee their poesy disperse :  
Thine eyes, that TAUGHT THE DUMB ON HIGH TO SING,  
And HEAVY IGNORANCE ALOFT TO FLEE,  
Have added feathers to the Learned's wing,  
And given Grace a double Majesty :  
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,  
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee :  
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,  
And ARTS with thy sweet graces graced be ;  
But thou art all my art, and dost advance  
As high as Learning my rude ignorance." (78)

Whereas Francis Bacon was *one of the Learned*, was a College man, educated at Cambridge, was "*gowned in the University*," and he was a man whose *rude ignorance* could not be lifted to the side of Learning by the patronage of Southampton, or anybody else, as Shakspeare's had been! That is the reply of the Poet who wrote the Sonnets, to the people who say he did not write them *because he was an unlearned man!*

We also gather from the Sonnets, not only that Shakspeare wrote Plays, but that he looked upon the writing of Plays as his own proper "*work*," for he speaks of his Poems and Sonnets, devoted to Southampton, as being the product of his "*idle hours*," distinguished from his working hours. Next, we have the disparaging estimate made by Shakspeare himself of his own work as a playwright. This occurs in the 100th Sonnet, about the year 1598. He had not written to his friend for some time past, and he chides his Muse for playing truant and neglecting her one supreme subject—

"Where art thou, Muse, that thou forgett'st so long  
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?  
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,  
Dark'ning thy power to lend base subjects light?  
Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem  
In gentle numbers time so idly spent ;  
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,  
And gives thy pen both skill and argument."

His labours for the theatre were spent on subjects considered to be inferior when compared with the work he had to do for his noble friend!

The Baconians do not explain whether Southampton, Essex, Herbert, and other of the "Private Friends," amongst whom the Sonnets circulated as Shakspeare's, were impostors also as parties to the stupendous fraud, or whether they were humbugged into thinking that the Sonnets, with their promises of immortality, and the dedications, with their offering of eternal love, were Shakspeare's, whereas he was only a mask, and the man behind it all the while was Francis Bacon, who pretended to be the non-academic and unlearned Shakspeare

whom Southampton had exalted to a seat beside the University men. Are we to suppose that Southampton never knew which was Shakspeare and which was Bacon; that Shakspeare himself was only the friend of Southampton by proxy, and that both he and Bacon were co-partners in practising a huge, an unfathomable, an impossible imposture,—fooling Southampton, Essex, and the other "Private Friends" with the Sonnets, even as they were fooling all the clever actors and keen rival dramatists, the public, and the world in general for three hundred years in the matter of the Plays? Do they mean to say that Bacon pretended to be a poor, despised player in the Sonnets? Did he assert that he had gone "here and there" to play the part of the fool on the stage, and that Fortune was guilty of these disreputable deeds which branded his brow with indelible disgrace, *because* she had made him an actor on purpose to delude them into the belief that he was Shakspeare?

The Sonnets present evidence for Shakspeare's authorship like the links of chain-mail in an armour of proof. And the man who wrote the Sonnets must also have written the Poems and Plays. This can be established by those principles of scientific demonstration that have been applied to both in the present work. *The same unlearned man wrote both!* Thus the secret history in the Sonnets is in agreement with the public history of the time, and both are in antipodal antagonism to the Great Cryptogram.

A most important witness is Henry Chettle, who was both a writer and a printer or publisher of the time. Greene's Pamphlet had been issued to the public by Chettle, and upon learning that it had given offence to Shakspeare, he offered an apology in an epistle to the Gentlemen Readers, which he prefixed to his *Kind-Hart's Dream*. In this he tells the public that he himself has observed Shakspeare's personal demeanour as being no less civil than he was excellent in the quality he professed, *i. e.* as a player and a playwright. Besides which, he says "divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art."

This testimony to Shakspeare as a known and proved writer was given in 1592, the year before he printed the poem of *Venus and Adonis*, therefore it was as the writer of Plays that he was known to Chettle, who was himself a dramatist, and to those "divers of worship" who had come forward in defence of Shakspeare personally, and testified to his uprightness of character, and to the facetious grace or graceful felicity of his writing. As he was then known to be the author of the *Comedy of Errors*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*, no apter epithet than that of "facetious grace" could have been applied to such of his early dramas as were entirely original. Then we have the public and personal dedication of Shakspeare's two poems to the Earl of Southampton in 1593-4. In the next year Jervais Markham salutes Southampton as the man "whose eyes do crown the most victorious pen;" obviously in allusion to his patronage of Shakspeare, and not of Bacon.

In 1594 Robert Southwell grudgingly refers to Shakspeare as one of the "finest wits" who are distilling love-sweets from "Venus' Rose!" In his epigrams Richard Weever salutes him in 1595, and says—

"Honey-tongued Shakspeare, when I saw thine issue,  
I swore Apo lo got them and no other."

Then there is the description of the man as the author of *Romeo and Juliet*, written by the satirist Marston, who shows us what a diligent student and collector our Shakspeare must have been with his "huge long-scraped stock of Plays;" the "worthy poet" who "put on the pumps" when the "orbs celestial" danced Kempe's jig at Shakspeare's theatre.

In 1598 he was proclaimed by the competent critic, Francis Meres, to be the supreme genius of his time, the most all-round man in tragedy, comedy, and lyrical love-poetry. If the Muses would speak English, he says, it would be with Shakspeare's tongue.

Next we can cite the appreciation of his fellow-players, who, like Kempe, knew that their "*fellow Shakspeare*" could "*put down all the University pens*" as recorded in the "*Return from Parnassus*," where Kempe says—"Few of the University pen plays well. Why, here's our fellow Shakspeare puts them all down, ay! and Ben Jonson too!" "*It's a shrewd fellow indeed!*" responds Burbage. (1601-2.) Something of this same pride looks out from Shakspeare's representations of country mother-wit in the plays. He is noted by Camden in his *Remains* (1603) as one of the "most pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire." He is appealed to by Chettle in 1603 as the Poet who ought to write the National Elegy on the death of Elizabeth. John Davies of Hereford addresses Shakspeare as our English Terence about 1611, and says—

"Thou hast no railing, but a reigning wit.  
And honesty thou sowest which they do reap,  
So to increase their stock which they do keep."

That is, the Players reaped the benefit of what Shakspeare honestly sowed in writing the Dramas, and, as Davies knew, they *held and kept the copyright!*

Here, by the bye, is an answer to the Baconians who urge that Shakspeare made no claim to the Plays and no disposition of them in his will. *He could not!* They were left the *property of the theatre*.

This is followed by the evidence of Heminge and Condell, who collected and edited the Plays, and who declare from personal knowledge that the author was known to them as Shakspeare, "and that as he was a happy imitator of nature, he was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

These men were eye-witnesses for many years to what they testify! And lastly we have the long, loud, and lasting blazon of Ben Jonson, who knew and loved the man, and sounded his praise as with the trumpet of eternal truth, when he wrote his IN MEMORIAM in remembrance of "MY BELOVED, THE AUTHOR, MR. WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, AND WHAT HE HATH LEFT US," which would be recognition enough of the man, his genius and his works, even if it stood by itself alone in literature. Jonson testifies that Shakspeare's "mind and manners," as known to him in personal intercourse, ARE reflected in his works, just as the father's face "lives in his issue." He, the classical scholar, the learned rival and less popular writer, had no misgiving as to whether Shakspeare was personally qualified to write the Plays.

Mr. Donnelly comments on the remarkable fact that Shakspeare left no manuscripts behind him. But we see that he did leave manuscripts behind. How else should the Folio have been printed? Shakspeare's manuscripts

were preserved at least for seven years after his death. *Per contra*, the Baconians have not one jot or tittle, shred or vestige of contemporary evidence, to rebut or invalidate the testimony of all these and other witnesses for Shakspeare's authorship. Not one word was ever uttered on behalf of Bacon; no claim was ever set up by him or his friends even for having had a hand in a single one of the thirty-six Plays! What they are forced to do is to falsify the facts. Thus when Ben Jonson says the writer of the Plays "had small Latin and less Greek," this charge Mr. Donnelly holds to have been aimed satirically at Bacon in verses written by his own request as an intentional blind. And he thinks that Ben must have vastly enjoyed the whacking of his good friend Bacon over Shakspeare's shoulders. He likewise misunderstands or perverts the lines—

"Sweet Swan of Avon, what a sight it were  
To see thee in our waters yet appear,"

where "yet" means still.

He tells his readers that the writer here expresses the hope that the Poet will reappear. And as he had also said, "Thou art alive still," and "Shine forth, thou star of Poets," here is good evidence that he was not addressing the spirit of any dead Shakspeare, but was really aiming at the living Bacon. In short, everybody did everything to prove that Bacon did not write the Plays, but you've only got to stand on your head or go off it altogether to reverse all that, and see that Bacon *was* the real author.

There is no doubt of Bacon being greedy for enduring fame. He HAD the last infirmity of noble minds most profoundly. He made every preparation for the perpetuation of his works, and did his utmost to insure their transmission to future times. He not only wrought at them himself, he paid others to render his writings from English into Latin, for the express purpose of insuring their descent to posterity on the double line of two languages. He showed the greatest care for their being preserved in the most accurate, elegant, and perfect form. He was the most fastidious of writers himself; one who could never finish his work to satisfy his acute critical sense. With him the file was even more than the pen. He transcribed and amended his *Advancement of Learning* seven times over, his *NOVUM ORGANUM* twelve times over, his *ESSAYS* thirty times over. And yet the collected Plays came into print with some 10,000 errors on their head. Also, any number of these errors were repeated without question from the earlier quartos.

Not only did Bacon NOT correct a single play, nor make sure that one was corrected, or turned into Latin, he did not take the trouble to identify which of the thirty-six Plays were genuine, or what part of the whole was spurious work, where the mixture is such that the author only could have discriminated. Moreover, the folio edition was collected and published in the very beginning of the time when Bacon set about collecting, revising, and translating his own works, on purpose to secure their survival after his death. He stamped them as his by name with his own living hand. In his last will and testament Bacon wrote—"As to that durable part of my memory, which consisteth in my works and writings, I desire my executors, and especially Sir John Constable and my very good friend Mr. Bosville, to take care that of ALL MY WRITINGS, both of English and of Latin, there may be books fair bound and placed in the King's library, and in the library of the University of Cambridge, and in the library of Trinity College,

where myself was bred, and in the library of the University of Oxonford, and in the library of my Lord of Canterbury, and in the library of Eaton."<sup>1</sup>

Not a sign is there in the Will, or the Works, of the Plays, Poems, or Sonnets. Yet Shakspeare had been gone nine years, and the first folio was printed, and left with none to look after it, two years before Bacon made his Will. And in spite of all this nervous anxiety on the subject of his writings, all the fastidiousness in correction and finish, all his precaution against misrepresentation or mistake, all this manifest intention for his own works to live on as his own under his own name, he never deposited at Cambridge or elsewhere, never translated into Latin or corrected in English, never claimed a single one of the Plays in folio, or quarto, or MS., on the stage or off it, in conversation, in his Will, or anywhere else. Nor did he breathe a whisper of the great Cryptogram that he had concealed in the folio edition of the Plays, nor leave any hint or clue for its discovery.

Bacon actually wrote a chapter on ciphers in his "*De Augmentis*," published in the same year as the folio edition of Shakspeare's Plays, and did not include Mr. Donnelly's, nor mention that he had employed it, nor offer any clue either to the discovery or the reading of it. And we are asked to believe that this cipher was invented by Bacon a score of years before it was wanted, and woven bit by bit as a kind of birth-mark into the warp of his work, so secretly, so inscrutably, that it could only be discovered by the man who has shown his inability to make out a very simple cipher that is found in Bacon's own works!

We now come to the second of the two factors in the genesis of this delusion, which has to be identified in the likeness of thought and expression to be found in the works of Shakspeare and Bacon. The process of attaining a false conclusion may be followed in this way.

Mr. Donnelly holds that Bacon not only wrote the Plays of Shakspeare and Marlowe, but that he is likewise the veritable author of Montaigne's *Essays*. Doubtless the cipher might be devised that would show him to have been the author of the Bible. But this inference with regard to Montaigne is not derived as one of the cipher-revelations! It is founded on internal evidence, viz. the identities and likenesses of thought and expression which are more or less apparent in the writings of both Bacon and Montaigne. The evidence for Bacon being the writer of Montaigne's *Essays*, then, is just as good and entirely of the same nature as is that for his being the author of the Plays, and in each case the false conclusion was attained independently of any cipher. The comparative faculty of the Baconian advocates is preternaturally alive to the least likeness that seems to tell in their favour. The vast mass of their comparisons are of non-effect. Not more than one in ten would stand close scrutiny. In many cases it is enough to remember that both Shakspeare and Bacon wrote Elizabethan English, or drew from a common source. Indeed there are close upon 200 parallels in Mr. Donnelly's first volume, which only show that both writers USED THE SAME WORD IN EACH PARTICULAR QUOTATION—and these words were first used by Shakspeare, as our great National Dictionary will show. But when all deductions are made there does remain a considerable residuum of likeness, not only distinguishable in separate ideas, for the philosophical writings of Bacon are suffused and saturated with Shakspeare's Thought! Such is the fact, although their explanation of it is false.

<sup>1</sup> Spedding's *Life and Letters of Bacon*, vol. vii. p. 539.



There is sufficient likeness between the writings of Bacon and Shakspeare to arrest attention and call for remark. Also these likenesses in thought and expression are mainly limited to those two contemporaries. It may also be admitted that one must have copied from the other. This fact is reasonably certain, and deserves to be treated reasonably. But I am about to show how the true explanation of the fact does not depend upon the assumption that Bacon's and Shakspeare's works were both written by one author. I quote from the identical evidence the anti-Shakspeareans trust to for demonstrating that Bacon wrote the Plays.

## SHAKSPEARE.

Ghoster's show  
 Beguiles him, as the mournful crocodile  
 With sorrow snares relenting passengers.  
 Pt. II. *Henry VI.*, III. i.  
 And well such losers may have leave to speak.  
 Pt. II. *Henry VI.*, III. i.  
 This pretty lad will prove our country's  
 bliss, . . .  
 Likely, in time, to bless a regal throne.  
 Pt. III. *Henry VI.*, IV. vi.  
 Small have continual plodders ever won  
 Save base authority.  
*Love's Labour's Lost.*  
 This is the ape of form, Monsieur the nice.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii.  
 You know that *love*  
*Must creep in service where it cannot go.*  
*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. ii.  
 On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace.  
*Richard III.*, I. iii.  
 Snail-paced beggary.—*Richard III.*, IV. iii.  
 That is not moved with concord of sweet sounds.  
*Merchant of Venice*, V. i.  
 There's not the smallest orb which thou  
 beholdest  
 But in his motion like an angel sings,  
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.  
*Merchant of Venice*, V. i.  
 In the base court? Base court, where kings  
 grow base,  
 To come at Traitors' calls and do them grace.  
 In the base court, come down.  
*Richard II.*, III. ii.  
 The tongues of dying men  
 Enforce attention like deep harmony.  
*Richard II.*, II. i.  
 Then if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,  
 Fading in music.  
*Merchant of Venice*, III. ii.  
 'Tis strange that death should sing.  
 I am the cygnet to this pale, faint swan,  
 Who chants a doleful hymn to his own death.  
*King John*, V. vii.

## BACON.

It is the wisdom of crocodiles that shed  
 tears when they would devour.—*Essay, Of*  
*Wisdom for a man's self.*

Always let losers have their words.  
*Promus*, 972.

This is the lad shall enjoy the crown for  
 which we strive.—*Essay, Of Prophecies.*

Neither let him embrace the license of con-  
 tradicting or the servitude of authority.—  
*Interpretation of Nature.*

Custom . . . an ape of nature.—*Advanc-*  
*ment of Learning*, Book II.

I pray your pardon if I send it for your  
 recreation, considering that *love must creep*  
*where it cannot go.*—*Letter to King James.*

. . . which possesseth the troublers of the  
 world.—*Advancement of Learning.*

Whose leisurely and snail-like pace.—*His-*  
*tory of Henry VII.*

To fall from a discord, or harsh accord  
 upon a concord of sweet accord.—*Advancement*  
*of Learning.*

The heavens turn about in a most rapid  
 motion, without noise to us perceived; though  
 in some dreams they have been said to make  
 an excellent music.—*Natural History*, cent. II.

This base court of adversity, where scarce  
 any will be seen stirring.

The last words of those that suffer death for  
 religion, like the songs of dying swans, do  
 wonderfully work upon the minds of men, and  
 strike and remain a long time in their senses  
 and memories.—*Wisdom of the Ancients—*  
*Diomedes.*

## SHAKSPEARE.

The miserable have no other medicine  
But only hope.—*Measure for Measure*, III. i.  
Malevolent to you in all aspects.

Pt. I. *Henry IV.*, I. ii.

The brain of this foolish compounded clay,  
man.—Pt. II. *Henry IV.*, I. ii.

Turning the accomplishment of many years  
Into an hour-glass.—*Henry V.* (Prologue).

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out.

*Henry V.*, IV. i.

One woman is fair ; yet I am well : another  
is wise ; yet I am well : another virtuous ; yet  
I am well : but till all graces be in one woman,  
one woman shall not come in my grace.—  
*Much Ado About Nothing*, II. ii.

Only in the world I fill up a place, which  
may be better supplied when I have made it  
empty.—*As You Like It*, I. ii.

I will follow thee to the last gasp.

*As You Like It*, II. iii.

O Heaven ! a beast, that wants *discourse of*  
*reason*.—*Hamlet*, I. ii.

To *thine own self be true*,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be *false* to any man.

*Hamlet*, I. iii.

The dram of leaven  
Doth all the noble substance of 'em sour.

*Hamlet*, I. iv.

How *infinite in faculties*.—*Hamlet*, II. ii.

The paragon of animals ; *the beauty of the*  
*world*.—*Hamlet*, II. ii.

What read you, my lord ?

Words, words, words.—*Hamlet*, II. ii.

This majestical roof fretted with golden fire.  
—*Hamlet*, II. ii.

For in the very torrent, *tempest*, and, as I  
may say, the *whirlwind* of your passion.—  
*Hamlet*, III. ii.

Nor do not saw the air too much—your hand  
thus ; but use all gently.—*Hamlet*, III. ii.

## BACON.

To make hope the antidote of human diseases.  
—*Med. Sacrae*.

A malign aspect and influence.—*Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

Man's body is the most extremely compounded.  
—*Wisdom of the Ancients—Prometheus*.

The hour-glass of one man's life.—*Advancement of Learning*.

There is formed in everything a double  
nature of good.—*Advancement of Learning*,  
Book II.

For the affections themselves carry ever an  
appetite to good, as reason doth.—*Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

To report as to her "complexion, favour, fea-  
ture, stature, health, age, customs, behaviour,  
condition, and estate," as if he meant to  
find all things in one woman.—*History of*  
*Henry VII.*

For we die daily ; and as others have given  
place to us, so we must in the end give way to  
others.—*Essay, Of Death*.

I will pray for you to the last gasp.—*Letter*  
*to King James*, 1621.

Martin Luther but in *discourse of reason*,  
finding, &c.—*Advancement of Learning*, Book I.

Be so *true to thyself* as thou be not *false* to  
others.—*Essay, Of Wisdom*.

As a little leaven of new distaste doth com-  
monly sour the whole lump of former merits.  
—*History of Henry VII.*

. . . *infinite variations* . . . *the faculties*  
of the soul.—*Advancement of Learning*,  
Book II.

The souls of the living are *the beauty of the*  
*world*.—*Essay, Pan.*

Here, therefore, is the first distemper of  
learning, when men study words, and not  
matter.—*Advancement of Learning*, Book I.

For if that great Work-master had been of a  
human disposition, he would have cast the  
stars into some pleasant and beautiful works  
and orders, like the frets in the roofs of houses.  
—*Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

But men . . . if they be not carried away  
with a *whirlwind* or *tempest* of ambition.—  
*Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

It is necessary to use a steadfast counte-  
nance, not wavering with action, as in moving  
the head or hand too much, which showeth a  
fantastical, light, and fickle spirit.—*Civil*  
*Conversations*.

## SHAKSPEARE.

*Assume* a virtue if you have it not.—  
*Hamlet*, III. iv.

Consider, he's an enemy to mankind.  
*Twelfth Night*, III. iv.

I charge thee fling away ambition :  
By that sin fell the angels.  
*Henry VIII.*, III. ii.

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods :  
They kill us for their sport.—*Lear*, IV. i.

Ripeness is all.—*Lear*, V. ii.

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
The gods themselves throw incense.  
*Lear*, V. iii.

And I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people.  
*Macbeth*, I. vii.

Infirm of purpose. Give me the daggers.  
*Macbeth*, II. ii.

Oh, these flaws and starts  
(Impostors to true fear) would well become  
A woman's story by a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandam.  
*Macbeth*, III. iv.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased ?  
*Macbeth*, V. iii.

'Tis a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.—*Macbeth*, V. v.

Life's but a walking shadow.  
*Macbeth*, V. v.

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured.  
*Sonnet 107, on the death of Elizabeth.*

That Art  
Which, you say, adds to nature  
*Winter's Tale.*

## BACON.

All wise men, to decline the envy of their own virtues, use to ascribe them to Providence and Fortune; for so they may the better assume them.—*Essay, Of Fortune.*

And therefore whatsoever want a man hath, he must see that he pretend the virtue that shadoweth it.—*Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

Pirates and impostors . . . are the common enemies of mankind.—*History of Henry VII.*

The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall.—*Essay, Of Goodness.*

As if it were a custom that no mortal man should be admitted to the table of the gods, but for sport.—*Wisdom of the Ancients—Nemesis.*

The ripeness or unripeness of the occasion must ever be well weighed.—*Essay, Of Delays.*

Upon the first grain of incense that was sacrificed upon the altar of peace at Boloign, Porkin was smoked away.—*History of Henry VII.*

I do extremely desire there may be a full cry from all sorts of people.—*Letter to Villiers*, June 12, 1616.

Seeing they were infirm of purpose, &c.—*The Interpretation of Nature.*

My judgment is that they ought all to be despised, and ought but to serve for winter talk by the fireside.—*Essay, Of Prophecies.*

The particular remedies which learning doth minister to all the diseases of the mind.

It is nothing else but words, which rather sound than signify anything.

Let me live to serve you, else life is but the shadow of death to your Majesty's most devoted servant.—*Bacon to King James.*

The Queen hath endured a strange eclipse.—*History of Henry VII.*

We make them also by their art greater than their nature.—*New Atlantis.*

In all these instances of likeness, as well as in a hundred others, the chronology will show that the thought or expression is Shakspeare's originally, and that it was repeated by Bacon in a later writing. Shakspeare's work being first, he could not be the borrower; and, as Bacon could, we need no remoter explanation of the fact.

So far from these vaunted parallelisms proving the Plays of Shakspeare and the writings of Bacon to be the work of one mind, all they do tend to establish is the priority of Shakspeare. No matter whether it may be as the natural philosopher, the philologist, the politician, the legist, or any other character, it is Shakspeare who is everywhere first, and it is Bacon who follows him, as demonstrated by the dates. In his *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon recommends the taking of Notes and making collections of these, or keeping a Common-place book as a "*provision or preparatory store for the furniture of speech and readiness of invention.*" This, as the *Promus* proves, had been his own custom. It was likewise the practice of Shakspeare, who, as Marston says, had made a Common-place book out of his huge, long-scraped stock of plays. Bacon compiled his notes from various sources, plays being one of them. But not only PRINTED plays. He appears also to have jotted down numerous things that he heard in the spoken drama! Mrs. Pott and others have assumed the impossibility of Bacon having made notes from Shakspeare's Plays on the stage! But this is not only a possible explanation, it is a PROVABLE one according to demonstrable fact. And this is the conclusion that is destined to be final.

A study of the *Promus folios* will show us something of Bacon's method, and allow us to overlook him at work either with his tablets in hand at the theatre, or else filling his folios afterwards from memory when imperfect recollection may be held to account for some of his inaccurate quotations. At one time he quotes, at another he comments; sometimes he moralizes the meaning, or generalizes the particular thought that is to be found expressed over and over again by Shakspeare. Sometimes his reflection takes the form of paralleling or finding an equivalent in Latin or some other language. He paraphrases to utilize, and possibly to disguise. Shakspeare's favourite phrases may often be seen in transition. Some of the notes contain repartees or snatches of dramatic dialogue in the form of a saying and a retort which can be paralleled in the Plays. Note 198 (fol. 87) reads "*Hear me out.*" Answer: "*You never were in!*" which sounds like an echo of "*If my hand is out, then belike your hand is in*" (*L. L. L.*, IV. i.). The mode is essentially Shakspearean, and the thought, the quip, the turn of expression, are often identifiably Shakspeare's.

Bacon has thus recorded various words characteristic of Shakspeare, which were but little used by his contemporaries, and some of which were first used by Shakspeare as his own coinage. Numerous expressions were copied by Bacon from the early plays, which are Shakspeare's from the first and several times over afterwards! Evidence can be adduced and multiplied indefinitely by those who have the time, and think it worth while to show that making notes at or from the Play was one of Bacon's modes of "*setting down the knowledge of scattered occasions.*" For instance, he listens to a complex passage in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, I. i. 75, and condenses it in his note—"The soldier like a *Corselet; bellaria et appetina.*" "*He had rather have his will than his wish*" is Bacon's note (113, fol. 85). Who would? Why, Proteus in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. ii. Silvia. "*What is your will?*" Proteus. "*That I may compass yours.*" Silvia. "*You have your wish; my will is even this,*" &c. Comment by Bacon—"He had rather have his will than his wish!" This play is one of the earliest—about 1591. "*Black will take no other hue*" (38, fol. 83 b) looks like Bacon's reflection on Biron's praise of Rosaline's black beauty.

"Your mistresses dare never come in rain,  
For fear their colours should be washed away."

Whereas black would not change its hue.

Here are a few parallels drawn from the *Promus* Notes and the Plays—

## SHAKSPEARE.

Wealth the burden of wooing.

*Taming of the Shrew*, I. ii.

Is supper ready, the house trimmed, rushes  
strewed—every officer with his wedding-  
garment on!—*Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i.

Go, go, begone to save your ship from wreck,  
Which cannot perish having thee aboard,  
Being destined to a drier death ashore.

*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. ii.

Be patient, gentle Nell; forget this grief  
. . . Ah, Nell, forbear.

Pt. II. *Henry IV.*, II. iv. .

*Prin.* Hold, Rosaline, this favour thou  
shalt wear;  
And then the king will court thee for his  
dear:

Hold, take thou this, my sweet, and give me  
thine;

So shall Biron take me for Rosaline.

And change your favours too: so shall your  
loves

Woo contrary, deceived by these removes. . . .

*Bir.* The ladies did change favours; and  
then we,

Following the signs, woo'd but the sign of she.

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

Sir, you say well, and well do you conceive.

*Taming of the Shrew*, I. ii.

I do fear colourable colours.

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

However you colour it . . . Come, tell me  
true.—*Measure for Measure*, II. i.

I'll warrant you.

*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. ii.

I think the boy hath grace in him.

I warrant you, my lord, more grace than boy.

*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, V. iv.

Now the dog all this while sheds not a tear.

*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. iii.

*Pauca verba.*—*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii.

Few words suffice.—*All's Well*, I. i.

This Counsellor

Is now most still, most secret, and most grave.

*Hamlet.*

Seldom cometh the better.

*Richard III.*, II. iii.

## BACON'S 'PROMUS.'

*Dixilia impedimenta virtutis.*—67, fol. 84.

Ceremonies and green rushes for strangers.  
—118, fol. 85.

He may go by water, for he is sure to be well  
landed.—135, folio 85 b.

It is vain to forbear to renew that grief by  
speech which the want of so great a comfort  
must ever renew.—143, fol. 86.

You draw for colours, but it proveth con-  
trary.—185, fol. 86 b.

Now you begin to conceive—I begin to say.  
—194, fol. 87.

You speak colourably; you may not say  
truly.—205, fol. 87 b.

It is so, I will warrant you. You may  
warrant me, but I think I shall not vouch  
you.—207, fol. 87 b.

All this while.—283, fol. 89.

Few words need.—292, fol. 89.

*Optimi consiliari mortui.* (The dead are the  
best counsellors.)—364, fol. 90.

Seldom cometh the better.—472, fol. 92.

## SHAKSPEARE.

She hath in that sparing made huge waste.  
*Romeo and Juliet*, II. vi.  
 The world upon wheels.  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. i.  
 Signor Romeo, *bonjour*.  
*Romeo and Juliet*, II. iii.  
 There golden sleep doth reign.  
*Romeo and Juliet*, II. iii.

## BACON'S 'PROMUS.'

Ever spare and ever bare.—488, fol. 92 b.  
 The world runs on wheels.—669, fol. 96 b.  
 Bon iouyr Bon iour bridegroome!—1194,  
 fol. 111.  
 Golden sleep.—1207, fol. 111.

In the opening scene of this last play Romeo had said of Rosaline, "*O teach me how I should forget to think;—Thou canst not teach me to forget.*" Afterwards he tells Friar Laurence, when he mentions Rosaline, "*I have forgot that name.*" In another scene Juliet says she has forgotten why she called her lover back; and Romeo would stay and have her still forget. Bacon's comment on all this forgetting is, "*Well to forget*" (1232, fol. 111). Now, a crucial test of Bacon's practice is afforded by his *Promus* and Shakspeare's play of *Romeo and Juliet*, and therefore we must look a little closer at these. First we see that "ROMEO" is quoted by name—the sign over the *e* showing that the vowel *o* has suffered elision; next the salutation *Bon iouyr*, *Bon iour Bridegroome*, represents the *Bon jour Romeo* in the play. Then we find the following "heads" of the play are all noted in this ONE folio, No. 111, the previous folio being headed "Play." *Good morrow* (1189). *Bon iouyr*, *Bon iour Bridegroome* (1194). *Good day to me and good morrow to you* (1195). *I have not said all my prayers till I have bid you Good morrow* (1196). *Late-rising—finding a-bed*. *Early-rising—summons to rise* (1197). *Rome* (1200). *Falsa quid est somnus Gelidæ nisi mortis imago* (1204). *Golden sleep* (1207). *The cock* (1211). *The lark* (1212). *Abed—rose you out bed* (1214). *Uprouse, you are up* (1215). *Amen* (1221). *Well to forget* (1232). Various other "heads" found in, or characteristic of, *Romeo and Juliet* might be quoted, but here is enough to show the method of Bacon. It renders a bird's-eye view of the play, or a sketch of it in a thumb-nail etching, for his own use. He notes the salutations especially, and applies them and manipulates them mentally. A compliment is suggested (1196) which he will probably pay to the Queen, as he is in search of "FORMULARIES AND ELEGANCIES" of expression—SUCH BEING THE TITLE FOUND ON THE BACK OF THIS FOLIO. He realizes the Poet's description of Juliet in the "*borrowed likeness of shrunk death*," by turning it into Latin. He is greatly struck with the notes and signs of early rising, being a regular slug-a-bed himself, and one who enjoys the antithesis; hence the "cock," the "lark," the "golden sleep," and the "uprouse." His own mother had been an early riser who had great trouble o' mornings with her boys.

In a letter dated May 24, 1592, Lady Bacon had written to Anthony, "*I verily think your brother's weak stomach to digest hath been much caused and confirmed by untimely going to bed, and then musing I know not what (nescio quid) when he should sleep; and then in consequence, by late rising and long lying in bed, whereby his men are made slothful and himself continually sickly. But my sons haste not to hearken to their mother's good counsel in time to prevent.*"

In making these jottings he probably mused upon his mother. We also gather from Lady Bacon's letters that her sons were confirmed play-goers about the year 1594. The *Promus* then affords sufficient proof of his practice and

method of noting anything curious, proverbial, rarely old or newly rare, as he does the provincial modes of morning and evening salutation which Shakspeare had brought to town with so many other things that were familiar enough to the country folk if not to courtiers.

No writer ever made such a use of antithesis and analogy as Shakspeare, more particularly in his earlier writings. No one like him for moralizing two meanings in one word. No one like him for showing his wit in wisdom and wisdom in his wit. No one whose thought was so pregnant in suggestion, or flowered double so determinedly, as if everything with him must needs be born twin from the lusty fertility of so liberal a nature. These indigenous qualities are specially noted and illustrated by Bacon's quotations from the Plays, in which he must have found provender in plenty. Now when we have once traced Francis Bacon at the playhouse making his notes and storing his mind from Shakspeare's treasury, as we can and do where the drama is *Romeo and Juliet*, we are at the beginning of a discovery of which we cannot see the end. How many more of the plays had he listened to with the express object of gathering gems of thought and ingots of intellectual gold? The practice and the purpose can be proved, but the extent of his direct borrowing and indirect assimilation are not to be gauged; his indebtedness cannot now be measured.

Mrs. Pott asserts that there are several hundred notes in Bacon's *Promus* of which no trace has been discovered in his acknowledged writings nor in those of any other contemporary writer except Shakspeare, and that these appear in the Plays and Sonnets. "Several hundreds" and "no trace" are exaggerations, but the *Promus* DOES contain a vast deal that was taken from Shakspeare's dramas, and we can now see how it was derived orally, and how the notes of Bacon were made, his memory stored, his pockets replenished from the Shakspearean mint of source. In fact, we are witnessing the building up of Bacon instead of the demolishing of Shakspeare. Bacon would be one of the first to perceive the value of Shakspeare's work, especially in its wealth of proverbial wisdom and folk-lore. He would there find in profusion that which comes most home to the business and the bosoms of men. Shakspeare, who portrayed the country clowns, provincial mother-wits, and queer kinky characters among the peasantry, was also in possession of their humours, their oral wisdom, their homely sayings, pithy apophthegms, wise saws and quaint expressions; much of which matter HE BROUGHT INTO LITERATURE FOR THE FIRST TIME. All this would be richly appreciated by the town-born, book-learned Bacon, then striving more and more for the realities of nature. Shakspeare had brought his proverbial philosophy directly from the people, and fresh from the country, having gathered it as the Ancient Wisdom used to be imparted, orally, from that source which underlies the literature of different lands, and often obliterates the claims of any one special nationality, because the Sayings are common to all. Bacon must have known that the mind of Shakspeare was a richer storehouse even than Heywood's *Book of Epigrams*, or Erasmus's *Adagia*.

The *Promus* jottings PROVE that he did not go to Shakspeare on the stage for FORMULARIES AND ELEGANCIES OF EXPRESSION only, but that he also took note of many things, ranging from the lightest foam and flash of fancy on the surface down to the plumbing of his profoundest depths of thought. Still, the *Promus* jottings do not betray the Poet, or the lover of poets, in search of the sweets of poetry, nor yet of humour in its glory. What he most appreciated

was *analogy*, *antithesis*, and *double meaning*, felicities of expression, the wisdom of thought in the wit of words, which furnished matter that was portable in prose. And nowhere else could he have discovered such an EL DORADO of this wealth as in the works of Shakspeare.

Bacon in search of antithetic thoughts and expressions would delight in a passage like this, from *Romeo and Juliet* (I. ii.)—

“ *O brawling love ! O loving hate !  
O anything of nothing first created !  
O heavy lightness ! serious vanity !  
Mis-shapen Chaos of well-seeming forms !* ”

And Bacon in his *far* later *Wisdom of the Ancients*, writes of Cupid as an Atom. “ *They say that Love was the most ancient of all the Gods and existed before everything else, except Chaos, which is held coeval therewith. Love is represented absolutely without progenitor* ”—this being the *later version* of the two, and Shakspeare's indubitably first.

The tables are suddenly and satisfactorily turned on the Baconians if it can be demonstrated that the ownership of the observations, the subtleties of thought, the imagery, the antithesis, the metaphors, the peculiar turns of expression, the newly-coined words, belongs to Shakspeare primarily and pre-eminently ; and that can be proved once for all by the chronology !

The only time that Bacon is known to have had a hand in the production of a play was when he helped in devising the “dumb show” for *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. He was also engaged on a masque or two, and he asserts that he did ONCE WRITE A SONNET—much as Beau Brummel *once* ate a pea—but even that one Sonnet has never been found. Shakspeare was a well-known writer for some years before Bacon had begun to make these preliminary PROMUS notes. The earliest date found on the top of the first page of *Promus* is Dec. 5, 1594. At that time Shakspeare had published his two poems and written at least one-half of the Sonnets. Some ten of the Plays were then extant, including *Henry VI.* in three parts, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Taming of the Shrew*. Further, the notes were continued for some two years according to date, and so they cover the ground for including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III.*, *King John*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Thus nearly one-half of Shakspeare's harvest was reaped, and he had stored the seed-corn for producing the rest before he could possibly have derived anything whatever from Bacon, who first printed ten of his Essays, and also the *Colours* and *Meditations*, in the year 1597. It is the idlest folly to point to the later plays as evidence that the wise or witty antithetic thoughts, the special imagery or peculiar turns of expression are Bacon's because they may come later than the *Promus*, i. e. after 1594-6. For it was Shakspeare's constant habit to reproduce a character, a fundamental figure, a description, or an image in later dramas far more perfectly than in the early ones. He would often give his gems of thought a different setting, or cut them with a fresh facet, to catch the ray of another relationship, and show them in a newer light. For example—

“ *Who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of Cælo,—the sky.* ”  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. i. (1591.)



"Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new."—Sonnet 27. (1593.)

"It seems she hangs upon the cheek of Night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear."—*Romeo and Juliet*, I. v. (1595.)

Their first appearance in the early plays, however, stamps and warrants the property to be Shakspeare's own when it reappears in the later works. Thus, a number of thoughts, images, wise sayings, and proverbial expressions found in Bacon's notes and essays can be identified first of all in the early plays of Shakspeare. Some of these appear afterwards in the *Promus*. They reappear in plays that are later than *Promus*, and then have been short-sightedly attributed to Bacon as the author; whereas they are Shakspeare's from the first; Shakspeare's several times over; his in the seed, his in the germ, his in the final flower, no matter how or where or by whom they are made use of intermediately.

When Bacon sent a portion of his History to James I. he wrote—"This being but a leaf or two, I pray your pardon if I send it for your recreation, considering that love must creep where it cannot go." Of this Mrs. Pott remarks—"The same pretty sentiment reappears in the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' IV. ii., in this manner, 'You know that love will creep in service where it cannot go.'" "RE-APPEARS"!! Why the play was written as early as the year 1592, and James did not come to England until 1603, eleven years later.

"You shall not be your own carver" is found in *The Advancement of Learning*, which was not printed until 1605. "This," says the same writer, "is the model which is adopted in 'Richard II.,' 'Let him be his own carver and cut out his way;'" whereas the Play was published in 1597, that is, eight years earlier. Now you cannot reverse things in that way without your head being turned.

Amongst other antithetic apophthegms assigned to Polonius is the wise saying—

"To thine own self be true,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

This is adopted, altered, and reapplied by Bacon in his *Essay Of Wisdom for a Man's Self*, where it furnishes the sage Baconian reflection, made in the attitude of offering advice—"Be so true to thyself as thou be not false to any man"! Here we have the proof of Shakspeare's priority and of Bacon's deliberate adoption or borrowing from the great original whom he so thoroughly ignored! The Play of *Hamlet* was entered on the Stationers' Register July 26th, 1602. We know not how much earlier it was acted, but it was printed in 1603, in 1604, and again in 1605; therefore it must have been much sought after by readers. The Essay was NOT amongst the Earliest Ten, and therefore could not have been borrowed from by Shakspeare! In this same Play Hamlet tells his mother to

"Refrain to-night;  
And that shall lend a kind of casiness  
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;  
For use can almost change the stamp of nature,  
And master the Devil."—IV. iv.

This is the *Essay Of Nature in Man*, visible in the embryo, "He that seeketh victory over his nature, let him not set himself too great nor too small tasks," etc.

"*There is no means to help this, but by reasonable intermission,*" etc. The merest hints of Bacon's way of working must suffice, as others can complete the full comparison. My point is that these two Essays were not amongst the first ten (1597), and did not appear until 1612, consequently Shakspeare could not have been the borrower. Here, as elsewhere, HIS is the germ which Bacon developed into the Essay. Here we can see the philosopher at work from the printed book, just as we previously traced him making his notes from the acted Play.

Various other Essays show the same elaboration in stately prose of that which Shakspeare had already said more pithily and compressly in his poetry, which contains a thousand such Essays in embryo, together with a thousand other things beside! A closer study on the right track will make this more and more manifest, and the setting up of false claims on behalf of Bacon will make the true claims of Shakspeare all the more apparent.

It is this borrowing from Shakspeare by Bacon that has given so much trouble and labour in vain to the Baconians. It is this adopting, developing, assimilating, and transforming the thought of Shakspeare that has so bewildered, disturbed, and unsettled their wits, and set them off in pursuit of their false lights and *ignis fatui* of the likenesses. The simple solution is that Bacon was the unsuspected thief, who has been accredited with the original ownership of the property purloined from Shakspeare. As Bacon himself reminds us, "*The nature of everything is best considered in the seed*" (*Promus*, 1451, fol. 128), or, as Shakspeare had previously said it of "*Things as yet not come to life, which in their seeds and weak beginnings lie intreasured!*" (*2 King Henry IV.*, III. ii.).

By taking this cue we shall find that Shakspeare's early plays and poems provided the seed for all the rest; and they were produced before the *Promus* and the Essays of Bacon! But, as Shakspeare was writing so long prior to the publication of Bacon's first Essays, it has been assumed that there is no other way of accounting for his mind being mirrored in Bacon's works except by concluding that Bacon was the author of Shakspeare's Plays and Poems! This leap has been logically taken by the leaders in the Baconian aberration who have thus gone the whole hog; but they are wrong from the first, wrong all through, and wrong for ever. It is true the ways of working in poetry and in prose may be diametrically different. When Shakspeare adopted matter of thought as the ore for his mintage, he stamped his own ineffaceable features on the coin that he made current for all time; whereas Bacon melted the coins down again, and mixed the gold into an amalgam that was remoulded by him in his prose. In this way much of the original likeness was lost.

The likeness looks doubly definite in the original poetry. Hence it is not so easy to identify the good things that Bacon borrowed from Shakspeare! A vast deal of Shakspeare's thought must have gone into Bacon's *sweating-bag* or *melting-pot*, which is not to be recovered or recognized now by any familiar features or quotation marks. But, as we have seen, it was his practice to make notes at the theatre, or to jot down from memory the remarkable things that arrested his attention there. His *Promus* is the record of much that he took directly from Shakspeare. For eight or ten years he had free play and full pasturage in Shakspeare's field before he published his first ten Essays! Moreover, as Spedding points out, Bacon *had a regular system of taking notes, and of intentionally altering the things that he quoted.* This was a Baconian PROCESS of

making the borrowed matter his own, or chewing the food to digest it, by so far *disguising the original* or giving to it the turn and trend of his own thought. Such a method of manipulation being left visible in his notes and other writings, this opens a vast vista of possibility in his covert mode of assimilating the thought, purloining the gold, or clipping *the coinage of Shakspeare*. Also, the first folio of *Promus* is numbered eighty-three, so that eighty-two preceding folios of Bacon's notes are missing! But doubtless they were made and used.

A large number of Wise Sayings and Adages are quoted by Bacon in his *Promus* which are not directly used in his known writings, *ergo* it was thought they must be used in his unacknowledged ones. And as large numbers of these same Sayings, or something like them, appear in the Plays, it seemed to follow of course that Shakspeare's acknowledged writings must be the unacknowledged work of Bacon! Such reasoning is as logical as that of the Quaker who tried to palm off his dog as a wol'-hound. He had found the animal was totally unfit for anything else, and so he inferred that it MUST be a wolf-hound, *faute de mieux!* No cloud appears too unsubstantial for a castle in the air. No mental mist is too thin to sustain a delusion.

Bacon quotes a Latin Saying from the *Adagio* of Erasmus—" *Ijsdem e' literis efficitur Tragedia et Comedia*"—*Tragedies and Comedies are made of one alphabet*. Which merely means that both are composed from the *same letters*. But the word "*alphabet*" has an underlined significance, because Bacon alludes to his *Works of the Alphabet*, of which he sends a copy to his friend Tobie Matthew. These works of the "*Alphabet*" are in all likelihood, as Mr. Spedding guesses, communications written in Bacon's cipher. The language *denotes a cipher composed of letters, instead of a numerical one*, such as was used by Rowland White. It was something for use between the two friends, and it was EMPLOYED FOR THE PURPOSE OF SECRECY. Hence Bacon's remark—" *These works of the alphabet are in my opinion of less use to you where you are now than at Paris;*" meaning that where he is now there is less need of secrecy than there was in the French capital; still he sends the communication in cipher for the use of friends, but says cautiously—" *For my part, I value your own reading more than your publishing them to others.*" Now as the word "*alphabet*" is used by Bacon in writing of his letter-cipher, and as both Tragedies and Comedies are composed of the same letters or alphabet, it ought to follow as another matter of course that Bacon is alluding in this letter to those tragedies and comedies which he had written, and which have been so falsely ascribed to Shakspeare!

When James I. was on his way to England, Master John Davis went to meet him, and Bacon sent after him a letter in which he begs for Davis to use his influence and good offices with the King in his favour, and concludes with desiring him "*to be good to all concealed Poets.*" This, says Mr. Donnelly, half proves my case, and he quotes it for us to infer that Bacon was the concealed Author of the Plays. What the letter does point to is, that Bacon was practising a bit of his covert and underhand work; just as he did when he wrote of himself to Essex as *if from his brother Anthony*, saying of himself that he was "*too wise to be abused and too honest to abuse*" in a letter intended for the eyes of the Queen. He had a natural instinct for underhand methods and the *low politique*. In the present instance he had evidently written some adulatory lines of greeting to the King, but these were sent unsigned, and the suggestion is that Davis will make known, "quite promiscuous like," *who* the

concealed and diffident poet is. The tone is identical with that of his other "Apology," in which he alludes to the Sonnet he had once written, "*although I profess not to be a poet!*" According to Mr. Donnelly, "*Francis Bacon seems to have had these Plays in his mind's eye when he said—'If the Sow with her snout should happen to imprint the letter A upon the ground, wouldst thou therefore imagine that she could write out a whole tragedy as one letter!'*" No doubt he had the Plays in view. It is strictly in keeping with Mr. Donnelly's system that as the sow makes bacon we should read the sow = Bacon. But what a rebuke is administered in this passage to the Baconians, when the august Shade itself appears to say with a grave look and a modest majesty—

"If Bacon did write a Sonnet or a few lines of poetry (not the A B C, mark, but only the A of the alphabet), wouldst thou therefore imagine that he could write (not the whole of the tragedies and comedies, but) a whole tragedy!" The spirit of Bacon evidently stands aghast at such temerity in going the whole Hog, or, as he phrases it, "the Sow!"<sup>1</sup>

Ben Jonson describes Bacon at a celebration of his own birthday as looking self-absorbed and rapt away from the persons around him; he says—

*"In the midst  
Thou stand'st as though a mystery thou didst."*

Here, again, is good evidence for Mr. Donnelly that Jonson knew the great secret, and that Bacon was looking conscious of writing the Plays!

Baconians like Mr. Smith will pretend to quote from Bacon's Will, and claim that he hinted at some great secret which was intended to be made known "*after some time be passed over.*" But there are no such words in the "Will." And still they continue to quote this mis-quotation in proof of the forthcoming revelation. What Bacon did say was this, "*For my name and memory I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations and the next ages.*" This was a reference to his trial and his other troubles, NOT to his authorship of Shakspeare's Plays!

My contention now is, in reply to the Anti Shakspeareans, that the writer of the *Promus* notes was not the Author of the Plays, but he *was* the plagiarist from them; and in such wise that the EXTRACT of Shakspeare became ESSENCE OF BACON. As early as 1592 Shakspeare had written in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*," II. iv.—

*"Even as one heat another heat expels,  
Or as one nail by strength drives out another;"*

and one of Bacon's notes in the *Promus* contains the adage "*Clavum clavo pellere.*" Shakspeare's lines really contain an erroneous scientific theory of heat which Bacon seems to have adopted as a result of utilizing the proverbial wisdom that he found in Shakspeare or in earlier writers.

The inevitable inference is that Bacon was enormously indebted to the man whose name and works he never mentioned, for felicitous expressions and words, old sayings, profound reflections, antitheta, and the ripe results of wisdom found ready to hand. Personally I have sometimes thought there was something conscious, not to say sinister, in the silence of Bacon respecting Shakspeare, whom he must have known as the friend of Southampton, the friend of Essex, the friend of Bacon. Bacon as a frequenter of the theatre with Essex

<sup>1</sup> Interpretation of Nature.

and Southampton, and other of the "Private Friends," who are described as "*spending their time in seeing Plays,*" must have apprehended the presence of that genius which had arisen to enrich the stage with *Love's Labour's Lost*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Taming of the Shrew*, the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the early historic plays; they presented such a fund of noteworthy matter. He must have perceived how lavishly this new writer scattered his wit and wisdom round with such a bounty of abundance that harvests might be had for the gleanings by those who listened intently and gathered industriously. It has often been a matter of much surprise that Bacon should not have recognized Shakspeare or his work. But we now *know that he did*. He has shown this in his own way, and left us the means of convicting him of the fact. He has amply proved his appreciation by his system of conveying the wisdom into his own works, and by his mode of drawing directly from the fountain head of living speech at the theatre, as well as from Shakspeare's published Poems and Plays. The truth of the matter then is, NOT that Bacon was the author of Shakspeare's plays, but that he *took so many notes of them, and derived so much mental sustenance from them, beginning as a listener to them on the stage, that much of the wisdom attributed to him is really and originally the personal property of Shakspeare*. It is enough to know that he noted, adopted, absorbed, and assimilated so much from Shakspeare's works as to give a colourable pretext to the inference that the writer of Bacon's books and his *Promus* was also the author of Shakspeare's dramas. And such is the ACTUAL state of the case when we can get the horse once more in its proper place before the cart! Such is the true explanation of his Notes! Such is the *solution of the problem* which has been so foolishly apprehended and so falsely presented to the world.

Moreover, we have ample means of differentiating the two men, Shakspeare and Bacon, and various ways of distinguishing their completely diverse minds one from the other. For example, Bacon had been the right-hand man of the Earl of Essex. But, as early as the year 1596 he had begun to fall away from him, and to speak unwelcome words of warning with regard to his wild courses and ambitious designs. It is certain that after 1596 Bacon was NOT heartily WITH his early friend. In 1597 it was seen by him that Essex was on the road that led to his fatal end on the scaffold. He reasoned with him, he tried to serve him, but was totally opposed to him in polity. In 1599 the two men stood on the opposite sides of a separating gulf that widened between them day by day.

As Mr. Donnelly points out, "When the fortunes of Bacon and Southampton afterwards separated, because of Southampton's connection with the Essex treason, the Poem of *Venus and Adonis* was reprinted (in 1599) without the dedication to Southampton, because Bacon was then opposed to Essex." At last, as some people would say, Bacon deserted Essex altogether. In a letter written by Essex to Bacon in 1600, he says scornfully, "I can neither expound nor censure (judge of) your late actions."

It is enough for me to maintain that Bacon did not abet him, but was opposed to his secret plans and rash public acts, and that they took directly opposite sides. But the writer of the Plays and Sonnets continued to be a devoted and a fettered friend of the Essex faction. He continued to fight on their side and in their behalf.

The absence of the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* to Southampton in the edition of 1599<sup>1</sup> may be attributed to the caution of the publishers. In *King Henry V.* the writer goes out of his way to compliment the Earl, and make a popular appeal in his favour. This was in 1599; and it is provably impossible for Bacon to have done this, as it was diametrically opposed to his view of affairs with regard to Essex and Ireland.

It can be shown that Shakspeare wrought most covertly in *Hamlet* on behalf of the Essex faction, in one of the Players' Shifting Scenes, and in a way that can only be explained by the personal friendship of Shakspeare for Southampton, the most intimate friend of Essex. It is also shown by the playing of *King Richard II.*, and the adding of the deposition scene for the purpose. Now the man who had opposed the pretensions of Essex to his face, and opposed his policy publicly in parliament, and privately before the Queen, would not have given him his secret support at the same time in plays performed on the stage or in the streets.

The Queen declared to Lambard that *Richard II.* had been played forty times for the conspirators in "open streets and houses."

If it were a fact that Queen Elizabeth is called an old jade and a termagant in the Plays, that would make for Shakspeare's authorship and not for Bacon's, as he was on the Queen's side against Essex, and Shakspeare was not. If Bacon was practising covertly at that time, it would not have been in that way nor in favour of Essex, but in his own behalf. For he was then playing a somewhat double part, and one that bordered on treachery. Being prescient of the coming danger, he was prepared to rat and leave the vessel that he foresaw was doomed to wreck. But if he had been the writer of *Richard II.* and *Hamlet* he would not have dared to turn on Essex during his trial and compare him with Cain.

The man who wrote the Plays stuck to his friends, although he did not always approve of their courses. It was he who had said in *King Richard II.*—

*"I count myself in nothing else so happy  
As in a soul remembering my good friends."*

It was he also who wrote about this time in *Twelfth Night*—

*"I hate ingratitude more in a man  
Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,  
Or any taint of vice whose strong corruption  
Inhabits our frail blood."*

Whether intentionally aimed or not, the friends of Essex could not but see how that applied to Bacon. Not, however, as the writer of the Play.

The Sonnets present further proof that their author was not Bacon, but that he was on the other side of the gaping gulf which divided Essex politically from Bacon. Here is another way of distinguishing the two men. Bacon was a VIVISECTOR, Shakspeare was NOT. Bacon writes—"Though the inhumanity of ANATOMIA VIVORUM was by Celsus justly reprov'd, yet in regard of the great use of this observation, the inquiry need'd not by him so slightly to have been relinquish'd altogether, or referred to the casual practices of surgery; but might have been well diverted upon the dissection of beasts alive, which notwithstanding the dissimilarity of their parts, may sufficiently satisfy this enquiry."—*Advancement of Learning.*

<sup>1</sup> *Isham Reprints.* Edited by Charles Edmonds.

Shakspeare writes in *Cymbeline*—

“ Queen. *I will try the forces  
Of these thy compounds on such creatures as  
We count not worth the hanging, (but none human,)  
To try the vigour of them, and apply  
Allayments to their act ; and by them gather  
Their severall virtues and effects.*  
Doctor. *Your highness  
Shall from this practice but make hard your heart :  
Besides, the seeing these effects will be  
Both noisome and infectious.”*

In these two passages the two men again stand face to face with each other, and are seen to be directly opposed. Bacon condemns Celsus because he had not only reprobated the cruelties of *Anatomia vivorum*, but had protested against the practice of vivisection itself as inhuman. He distinctly advocates the “dissection of beasts alive.” *Cymbeline* was produced later than Bacon’s book, which Shakspeare may have read. He makes the vile queen a vivisectionist or torturer of animals, on purpose to point out the heart-hardening effect on human nature, and therefore he is protesting against such practices. Shakspeare’s writings, more particularly the Sonnets and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, prove that he was a devout student of Sidney’s poetry ; whereas the writings of Bacon show no obvious or necessary acquaintanceship with Sidney’s verse. Indeed it may be said that the direct indebtedness in the one case is so great, and the non-indebtedness in the other so apparent, that these of themselves would suffice to differentiate two distinct literary workers.

In truth Bacon was not a poet himself. He has left us quite evidence enough in the verse which he did write to show and determine very definitely what he did not write, and could not have written. He never possessed the temperament, the ear, the eye, the inner soul, the voice, or outer vesture of the poet ; he never was possessed by the essential passion for poetry.

The intellect of Bacon was as typically scientific as Shakspeare’s was poetic. He had not that emotional transcendency or afflatus of inspiration which mounts and demands the highest expression in poetry as its natural language. The lyric rapture, the winged motion, the golden cadences, the communicative kindly heat of heart, the glow of animal spirits, the vision and the faculty divine,—these are NOT the characteristics of Francis Bacon. He never mistook himself, and never can be mistaken for Shakspeare. He disowns any claim to the title of poet. He says of his own mental moods and tendencies—“The contemplative planet carrieth me away wholly.” When, in the same letter to Burleigh, he speaks of taking all knowledge for his province, it is for the purpose of analysis and scientific discovery, which were the works of his recreation, NOT for the dramatic representation of human life. That was no more his aim than it was within his scope. Bacon was amongst the least dramatic-minded of men ; whereas Shakspeare was the world’s one supreme dramatist, the hive of whose thoughts swarmed year by year with ever-issuing crowds of human personalities.

In his preface to the *Interpretation of Nature*, Bacon tells us that he was fitted for nothing “so well as for the study of truth ; as having a mind nimble and versatile enough to catch the resemblances of things.” That is, he was competent to apply the comparative method of science as the process for ascertaining

the truth, and "for nothing so well" as that. Bacon as an interrogator of nature was one of the inquisitors and torturers for the truth.

Shakspeare was an interpreter of truth; an unveiler of beauty with a loving heart and gentle hand. Bacon's process of setting forth acquired truth was antipodal to Shakspeare's. He builds up the skeleton, so to say, and then clothes it externally. Shakspeare's creation is unfolded from the embryo, and developed like a living organism from within. Bacon was no great lover of poetry, *qua* poetry; he was neither the friend nor the companion of poets, excepting Ben Jonson, who was in his employ. His knowledge of English poetry seems limited to that of Shakspeare. The explanation of this exceptional acquaintanceship may be found in his personal relationship to Essex, and in the friendship of Southampton, Essex' most intimate friend, for Shakspeare! This would suffice to call Bacon's attention to the man whose work he studied at the theatre and pillaged in the printed plays, but whose name he never even whispered to posterity.

Another note of difference! *Troilus and Cressida* we may call the most Baconian of Shakspeare's works. The one in which he might have taken counsel for once with Nicolo Machiavelli. But this drama, which is most like Bacon in its worldly kind of wisdom and want of heart, is the least like Shakspeare of all that he ever wrote! The true Shakspearean wisdom is blithe. It can laugh with an unwrinkled brow; the Baconian has a look of furrowed reflectiveness on the forehead, and if not exactly bitter in the mouth, it lacks the "honey tongue" of Shakspeare's.

It is true that Shakspeare shows signs of legal knowledge, and there is at times a legal logic in his thought, and a fondness for legal terms and expressions in his language. This he has in common with Bacon, the lawyer. But for this one thing in common with Bacon, Shakspeare, the great Poet, has qualities incomparable and peerless, that Bacon had *not* in common with him! Legal knowledge can be acquired, but the great poet must be born with original gifts and faculties inherited straight from nature; such as the great lawyer never set out with, and could not possibly acquire. Shakspeare shares one hemisphere of the mental world with Bacon, who does not share the other half with Shakspeare. Bacon was a born lawyer, conceived as such by his precise, cautious, methodical, masterful, law-giving mother. He was a lawyer by nature, a law-reformer, a codifier, and interpreter of the law whether natural or forensic! Law was as much his province as that of the great dramatist was the gnosis of human life. When he turned from his legal studies to Nature at large his attention was attracted to experimental philosophy and the operations of law in physics. But it may be said with all certitude, that he had less of poetry than Shakspeare had of law!

When Bacon was sixty years of age, Ben Jonson salutes him on his birthday, and portrays the man as a picture of gravity—"Son of the grave, wise keeper of the seal," who was sealed from birth as the destined heir to the Chancellorship, begotten, born, and bred to be a judge! Elsewhere he describes him as the great orator, and speaks of his supremacy here as the "Greatness that was *only proper* to himself!" And, as Ben says aptly, "*There cannot be one colour of the mind and another of the wit. If the mind be staid, grave, and compos'd, the wit is so,*"—as Bacon's undoubtedly was! These words follow Ben's eulogium of Bacon's greatness of character and work. Nothing could more correctly measure



the mind and manners of the man—"staid, grave, composed," and most capacious in his calmness. But the wit in Shakspeare's plays is not so; it is of an entirely different nature, and has neither the colour nor the limitation of the Baconian mind, which is so profoundly, so inherently, so typically unlike the Shakspearean.

Francis Bacon, his mark, may be read through all his writings. He was ancient in formality from an early age, a true continuation of his precise, quaint, methodical mother. The one man most himself of all the Elizabethans who could not have disguised himself effectually with the dramatic mask under any name whatsoever! He never lost sight of himself; whereas Shakspeare's greatness lay in his Protean power of getting or going out of himself!

There is music in the march of Bacon's prose. In reading the *Novum Organum* we are "at a solemn music," stately and sustained. But the range is limited to the hymn-tune, the anthem, or chorale; sacred music in the dissenters' sense, when compared with Shakspeare's vivacity and infinite variety. The majesty is somewhat automatic; the rhythms are laboured. The writer certainly was not master of "all numbers" even in prose. The effect is plainly powerful as that of many voices in unison. It is the law set to music, the measured music of well-ordered prose, not the spontaneous, many-voiced music of great poetry. We know Shakspeare's work equally well and are able to distinguish it, not only from Bacon's, but from all other work whatsoever. No Shakspearean worthy of the name could mistake his writing for that of any verse or prose-writer of his or any other time, nor long accept any other writing that might be palmed off under his name. And just as we can recognize the work, so is it possible to see the worker in the work, read his visage in his mind and recognize the man—at least to the extent of knowing the man behind the mask is not Bacon.

Bacon may assume the purple of royalty in prose, but Shakspeare is all purple within, as Alexander said of Antipater. Bacon's style is gravid with the weight of thought, but it does not soar on wings of language like Shakspeare's. Bacon is somewhat slow and ponderous, a little pragmatism, and shows a conscious pride in his gravity. He was the real author of Johnsonese English.

So far as I am able to gauge their work or comprehend their characters, no two natures were ever less alike fundamentally, or more distinctly unlike, than these of Bacon and Shakspeare, except in their fondness for antitheta. From the lowest root to the topmost twig of their genius, they start asunder with all their growth and stand apart with all their height and amplitude, having the innermost, the largest, the loftiest unlikeness! They lean so widely apart; there can be no parallel. The likeness on the surface is mainly the result of Shakspeare's influence on Bacon. The true mental complexion of the two was as different as that of the weevil, coloured brown with the books it fed on, and the caterpillar that is green with the life of living leaves. Bacon was born as the bookworm in a library. Shakspeare as the chrysalis out of doors in the country.

When they took wing, the flowers they settled on, the facts they fed on, were found in two widely different worlds! And the mental "feed" supplied by these two minds has all the difference that there is between the green grass, juicy with the sap of life, and the hay that is made from it when dead and dry!

The mind of Bacon had no such depth of rootage in the life of the people, no such heritage by direct descent in that storage of the past, which formed the

richest part in the soil of the present for Shakspeare, not only in the saved-up-in-an-old-stocking-sort-of-housewife-kind-of-wisdom—not only the lore that was then un-mined for and not yet gathered up in books, but the soil itself was radically different from that which gave birth to Bacon.

Of all great spirits that have found expression in literary form, the writer of Shakspeare's Plays, Poems, and Sonnets was the liveliest, quickest, and most quintessential; compared with him Bacon was in every way a man of far lower vitality. He has no such pulse of intense life, no such heart, no such divinely-humane good-humour. His heat is not radiant, his life is not ruddy, his sympathy has no such wide-armed, far-reaching, human embrace. Compare what he has written about women, of married love and of children, with Shakspeare's loveliest delineations of love and womankind, and see the difference.

Early in life Bacon was a sick and ailing man; a querulous sufferer from gout and ague all through the prime of his years. He writes to Lady Paulett in 1593 of his "long, languishing infirmity;" and his work manifests no such health and hey-day of high spirits, no such fertilizing influence as that which Shakspeare sheds around like vernal heaven the whole world over. Bacon's own description of his lack of health and want of time is fatally conclusive against his being the writer of thirty-six dramas! He tells us in the *Novum Organum* that he was "*the one man amongst his contemporaries who had been the most engaged in public business*"—that was in politics, not poetry; in State and Legal affairs, not theatrical; and he says he has not been "strong in health"—which, as he observes, "causes a great loss of time." Even his weakness of moral fibre had a physical basis!

Shakspeare was altogether the manlier and the radically nobler man. His works reflect the image of a supreme manliness, whether the character be the Noble, Gentle, or Simple. Bacon was an obsequious Courtier, who practised those arts of adulation and shaven and shorn emasculation that Shakspeare held in abhorrence, and for which he felt the most virile kind of scorn! In presence of Royalty and in his dedications to a thing so base as Buckingham, Bacon would bow with so much obeisance, and lout it so lowly in his voluntary poor-devilism, that, like the devout but dilapidated woman in the Greek story, he exposed the nakedness of his hinder parts to the derision of his contemporaries and the pity of posterity. He made an idol, a divinity, of that shoddy Solomon, King James!

Shakspeare, according to John Davies, made fun of him, and staged him as a royal fool! Shakspeare makes Falstaff say he would as lief be a hangman as a hanger-on in Court! He carried the countryman's contempt for liveried flunkies into the highest intellectual court, and every word he uttered against all parasitic favourites and fulsome flatterers is a cordial condemnation and a repudiation of Francis Bacon's being the writer of the plays, or of the same intellectual kith and kin as the writer. Bacon was the man who thought that Latin was the only language for immortality, and he tells us how his "*labours are now most set*" to have his works translated out of our transitory tongue "*by the help of some good pens which forsake me not,*" to be secure against the time when modern languages should "*play bankrupts with books.*" "*And since I have lost much time with this age, I would be glad if God would give me leave to recover it with posterity.*" He left his works to Latin and his name to foreign nations for PERMANENT preservation.

On the other hand, English was good enough for "our fellow" Shakspeare! He had no fear lest literature might not live and last without his seeking refuge in the ark of a dead language. And he alone is the man who sufficed of himself to *make our English tongue immortal!* Bacon thought the wheel of time was on the down-grade. He who only caught a glimpse of the true beginning fancied he saw the coming end. Shakspeare never troubled about beginning or end—he did his work, and simply was, and is, and ever shall be—like *still* Eternity itself!

In conclusion, I do not think this anti-Shakspearean delusion is strong enough to constitute a snare; there need be no fear lest the disease should become hereditary. The dose of facts here presented should of itself suffice if taken at an early stage. With Mr. Donnelly's book the great delusion has become drivelling in its phase of impotent dotage. The "Great Cryptogram" is just an unfinished intellectual Forgery that stops short of furnishing the absolute and final proof for a criminal conviction!

To repeat Shakspeare's own figure, Mr. Donnelly has reared "the fabric of his folly whose foundation is piled upon his faith," and not upon the rock of fact. He began by putting in a false bottom for his building; one that was far too infirm for any true basis. He assumed that the peculiarities of printing in the first folio—the use of italics, capitals, brackets, and hyphens—not only denoted a purpose, but were intentionally employed as signs of a secret cipher. Whereas they never had and never could have had the significance he assumes. They were used *faute de mieux*, and therefore not from any choice in the matter. Scarcity and mixture of types, together with the ignorance and indifference of compositors, will account for the main peculiarities of the printing. These irregularities likewise appear in certain of the Quartos, and in the works of other writers, where it is not pretended they refer to any hidden cipher.

It has been conclusively shown by the author of *Corrigenda and Explanations of the Text of Shakspeare*, a practical printer of fifty years' standing, that when one type ran short the printers used another. They also eked out with italic type that was not used on any principle. "In the first signature (of 12 pp.) there are forty-eight italic capitals of a smaller body, and there are others of a wrong font. Both capital and small w ran out, and double v was used instead. Small k was also exhausted."<sup>1</sup> In two pages of italics used for Ben Jonson's tributary lines, there is but one italic capital of the right body used throughout, that being in the word *Malice*, eleventh line.

This being literally the state of the *case*, it was the blindest folly to build on so false a foundation, or to make a mystery of meaning out of that which only demanded a very simple explanation. The cipher-narratives are based upon a false belief that has made him blind to the true interpretation of historic facts. They are but the re-constituted forms of his pre-extant belief. He has asserted his national privilege to do as he "damn pleases" with the English language, with Shakspeare, with the Plays, with History, with figures and reckonings, in attaining his impotent results. He has put certain portions of the Plays to "the question," and racked them with a torture calculated to make them confess anything that was wanted, but he has neither established nor disestablished anything.

The name of Shakspeare is got out of "Jack" and "Peere," "Shakst" and

<sup>1</sup> *Corrigenda and Explanations*, by George Gould. Virtue & Co.

"Peer," and also out of "Sphere" (1) and "Jack" (2). The name of Marlowe is got out of "More" and "Low"; Cecil out of "Says III" and "Seas III"; the word "Aunt" is made up from "And" and "It"; and the name of "Sir Thomas Lucy" has to be *re-membered* from the disjointed "Loose," "See," "to, amiss, Sir;" just as a joker might print the author of the cipher's name as *Done-a-lie!* or, as the Scotch would render it, *Done-a-lee*. "A smack on his back" is turned into a "Smock on his back" as a make-shift. The effect of thus racking the text is ghastly as it would be to make a dead man grin and wink at you by the application of galvanism. He selected certain words for his cipher on account of their rarity, and others because of their frequent recurrence. He combines syllables in the most arbitrary and outrageous manner. Some of the cipher-narratives are based upon passages in the plays which are perverted to his own use, and the English of them is destroyed in the course of conversion, as already illustrated in the narrative from 2 *King Henry IV*. This is to play the fool with his own riddle, and to fling away all pretext for keeping the law and rule of any cipher.

At one time the Plays are written for the cipher, and the Shakspearean Muse had to dance in the fetters of all its figures. Mr. Donnelly says, "We owe many of the finest gems of thought in the Plays to the dire necessities of the great Cryptologist, who, driven to straits by the cipher, fell back upon the vast resources of his crowded mind, and invented sentences that would bring the patchwork of words before him into coherent order" (p. 754). At others the cipher is invented for the Plays, and has to be inserted many years afterwards, when the Plays were left to posterity horribly disfigured, with not an error corrected. We see how the narratives demanded his cipher; one cipher necessitated many ciphers; the numerous ciphers needed a free hand and the nimblest swiftness in manipulating, adding, or subtracting. If one figure would not fit, another must be found. There was a theologian once who tried to apply the number of the Beast in a case where the letters only yielded the numeral value of 665, and who proclaimed his belief that the missing one had been subtracted by Anti-Christ. But when Mr. Donnelly is one short he adds one to make his total, and does not show his warrant or offer any reason why. He employs root-numbers, the basis of which he dare not or does not reveal, and supplements these with modifying numbers according to his need. He runs up and down the columns, begins where he pleases, and ends where he is compelled to. He will count upward or downward, begin with a first column or the second, count the word with a hyphen, or one without as a hyphenated word. There is no more fixity in his figures than in those of a sandy desert. He employs a perplexing phantasmagoria of formulæ, a continual dissolving view of changing figures. Naively enough he speaks of the "*formula changing as we work*" (p. 812); and it does so in such a way that nothing can be definitely fixed, although the latitude is insured for making something out of anything. He is done for wherever the wriggling can be stopped. His factors are discredited by this continual change of cipher-figures, which points to the figures being adjusted to the positions of the words. The ciphers are discredited by the hundred make-shifts adopted in place of the right words which would be necessary for proving the cipher to be true. And both the ciphers and their narratives are finally discredited by the results attained, as well as by the processes adopted for attaining the results.

It has been shown that Mr. Donnelly had tampered with Shakspeare's text in 2 *Henry IV.* to make out one of his cipher-narratives. In the *Flight of the Actors* he gave a passage as follows—" . . . her grace was furious, and hath sent out a body of twenty well-horsed soldiers to ride as posts to look for Shakspeare." Now, the word "horsed" is indicated by Mr. Donnelly to be the 455th word on the second column of p. 75 of the *Histories* in the Folio of 1623, stage directions and words in brackets being kept out of the count. But the 455th word in that column is "houre" and not "horsed," and this entirely mars the cipher sentence. How does Mr. Donnelly come by the word "horsed"? It is the third word of the sixteenth line of Northumberland's magnificent speech on hearing of the death of his son Hotspur which is in question—see 2 *Henry IV.* I. i., according to most editions, and sc. ii. of the Folio (which calls the Induction sc. i.). It commences thus—

"For this I shall have time enough to mourn,  
In poison there is physic," &c.

And, taking it up at l. 15—

"Now bind my brows with iron; and approach  
The ragged'st hour that time and spite dare bring  
To frown upon the enraged Northumberland."

Of course to substitute "horsed" for "houre" (*i. e.* hour) in the above passage is preposterous.<sup>1</sup> This has now been smuggled out of sight, but with no explanation. There is other evidence to show that its author has read his cipher into the Plays.

A discovery was made a few years since in a register at Worcester that William Shakspeare was married to *Anne Whately*. This was undoubtedly an error of the scribe. The original marriage document is extant, which shows that Shakspeare married Anne Hathaway. But the cipher is made to support the false inference drawn from the Worcester document. Now the inevitable conclusion is, that a cipher which tells lies to one's face in this way is not to be trusted out of sight!

Mr. Donnelly declares that the cipher of itself demonstrated its own reality by revealing to him the fact that Henry VIII. once captured the French town of Guinegate, which fact was entirely unknown to him at the time. He has been challenged to show the process for attaining the result by rational and consistent rules. This has not been done.

If the Great Cryptogram had been a demonstrable reality and a patent or patentable fact of which Mr. Donnelly had taken absolute possession, it would at least have been completely communicable, and it could not have needed one volume of dirt to be flung at Shakspeare, and another of dust to be cast in the eyes of his readers, before the cipher was to be unfolded.

And, finally, if such a cipher as is proclaimed were actually demonstrated to be extant for all to see in the Folio edition of the Plays; if it could be established past question for a fact that Bacon had concealed it there; that would only prove him to be the author of the cipher thus surreptitiously inserted, not the writer of the Plays. The inevitable solution would be that Bacon had played the villain, and after stealing from the works at first had finally tried to

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Smith in *Daily Telegraph*.

foist himself into the author's place by a plot that has no parallel; a specimen of recondite devilry that has no match, and succeeded perfectly in doing a "deed without a name." But it would never prove that he wrote the Plays and poems of William Shakspeare. And the proposition is as infamous a slander on Bacon as on Shakspeare, therefore doubly damnable. But the Great Cryptogram remains unfinished AFTER ALL. Instead of reaching to the root of the matter, it only leads and leaves us up a tree which offers a thousand branches for further pursuit or a final escape of the thing pursued.

The stupendous culmination of all the credulity attains its climax at last in the fact that the alleged cipher does not state that Bacon wrote the Plays, Poems, and Sonnets of Shakspeare!

Mr. Donnelly has ridiculously failed even in RAISING A QUESTION as to Shakspeare's authorship on any ground of evidence whatever. Consequently the Cryptogram suffers a complete collapse, and all its ciphers must end in nought. So far as the work does go, I look upon it as a series of tentative experiments upon human credulity, commencing with the author's own; a woof of delusion woven upon a warp of illusion; an abortion that must be accorded phenomenal pre-eminence amongst the monstrosities of literary mania. But

If Delia Bacon gave the abortion breath,  
Ignatius Donnelly will be its death.

There is nothing for it now but to fulfil what Falstaff threatened, and "tickle his Catastrophe."

We have a class of people who are known to English humour as the "Moon-Rakers." Metaphorically speaking, these are people who do not see a fact so plain as the luminous orb in heaven, but will go dredging after the image of it reflected in their own village pond. Mr. Donnelly is an old moon-raker. He has previously dredged the Atlantic ocean in search of the "Lost Atlantis," being misled by a reflection from the astronomical mythology to seek for it as a geological reality.

He repeated his error in *Ragnarock* by again mistaking mythical matters for mundane. And now the moon-rakers have turned their attention to this reflection of Shakspeare that is seen shimmering in the writings of Bacon, or, as they apprehend it, the image of Bacon in the writings of Shakspeare; they have been very busy dredging and trying to land the delusive likeness; and there's the real moon in heaven all the while, high overhead, laughing in all its glory at their poor futile efforts to rake out of the water this wavering, mocking, deluding, drowned reflection of that lofty, large, and lasting intellectual light.

## THE MAN SHAKSPEARE AND HIS PRIVATE FRIENDS.

“ What is your Substance ? whereof are you made,  
That millions of strange Shadows on you tend ?  
Since every one hath, every one, one Shade,  
And you, but one, can every Shadow lend ! ”

THIS is the tri-centennial year in which we celebrate the famous defeat of the Invincible Spanish Armada ; and in proudly glancing back to the period when our little country lived thus greatly, we shall find few pictures so attractive in the long gallery of the past as that of England in the time of “ Good Queen Bess,” the “ Gloriana ” of Spenser's *Faery Queen* ; she who moves amongst the fine spirits of her day all smilingly surrounded with the strength of a mighty people, that lift her up, in their love and worship, a whole heaven above them.

But it is not Queen Bess who is the most important personage of her era in our eyes to-day.

In that Elizabethan group of glory there is one bright particular star which shines out large and luminous above the rest. This we look up to with never-ceasing wonder and delight. There are many near it, but not one that comes second to it. We should like to get a little nigher and look a little closer into the face of it ; if we only had a glass to draw down the star of Shakspeare sufficiently near so that we might make out the human features, amid the dazzle of his intellectual light. How few of all who ever read his works, or make use of his name, have any adequate, or even shapable, conception of the Man Shakspeare. He who, of all poets, comes the nearest home to us with his myriad touches of nature, yet seems the most remote from us in his own mortal personality. And still we stand looking up at that lustrous orb on tiptoe with longing, and want to see his “ visage in his mind.”

We know that somewhere at the centre lives the spirit of all the brightness, however lost in light. Throbs of real human life, pulses of pleasure and thrills of pain, first made the rays well forth and radiate with all his radiance, and still shoot out each sparkle of splendour and every gleam of grace. Shakspeare's own life—Shakspeare Himself, must be at the heart of it all. Shakspeare Himself, not Bacon, nor another. Although a miracle of a man, and, as a creative artist, just the nearest to an earthly representative of that Creator or Evolver who may be everywhere felt in his works, but is nowhere visible, yet he was a man, and one of the most intensely human that ever walked our world. Thackeray has pleasantly remarked that he would have liked to black the shoes of William Shakspeare, just to have looked up into his face. And what would we not give if we could only get one of those accurate sun-pictures, so common now-a-days, a *carte* of his visit to our earth ? Just to look on the face of him who is so far ahead of all other poets that we measure our greatest writers not by their distance from us so much as by their nearness to him. Just to see, in human form, that glorious dome of thought which overarched the “ highest heaven of invention ” in Shakspeare's brow—the eyes deep with life ; the lines of the face that tell how far the waves of emotion have reached and wasted ; the ripe, cordial mouth, with

its lurking quips of humour in the corners; the rich health of spirit and body, touched and tempered with a stately reserve; and all the vital activities of temperament crowned with a great thoughtful calm. So, at least, we think of him. So we picture him. Yet there is nothing more likely than that we should be considerably disappointed with his personal appearance if it were possible for us to meet Shakspeare in the streets of Stratford, and could look upon him as he lived, aged about fifty. To us he is all immortal now. We might be looking for the halo, and the garland, and the singing-robos about him, with the lyre in his hands perhaps, or maybe the wings at his shoulders; whereas we should probably meet with a man of business, weather-worn, with wise wrinkles round his eyes, with a hat set firmly on his fine forehead. Good sound boots on his feet—not sandals. And he, instead of being rapt away in a fit of inspiration, or “boeing” his poetry like Wordsworth, might be carrying samples of corn, and devoutly meditating the price current, or congratulating himself on having sold out his shares the year before the Globe theatre was burned down, as we know he did. If we were told that *this* was the man, he would hardly be our Shakspeare. And so we should still have to seek in his works for the most elusive Protean spirit that ever played bo-peep with us from behind the mask of matter in the human form.

It has been asserted by the obtuse critic and uncongenial commentator, Steevens, that all we know with any degree of certainty concerning Shakspeare is that he “was born at Stratford-on-Avon, married and had children there, went to London, where he commenced actor and wrote poems and plays, returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried.” Indeed, we have dwelt so long and so loudly on the little we know about Shakspeare personally, that certain foolish people have taken it into their heads to think we might never know the difference if somebody else were put in his place and proclaimed to be the writer of his plays. But Steevens wrote a century ago, when there were no such collections of material extant as Halliwell-Phillipps’ *Outlines*, and Dr. Ingleby’s *Centurie of Prayse*. Still, the recorded facts of Shakspeare’s life are few, and the documents are very scarce. We have not the personal data ready at hand for making a life-length portrait, finished in every feature, and clothed in the vesture of an ample biography. We have not got our Shakspeare to bring him home in any such familiar way. The Protean spirit has eluded our grasp in his outer life almost as effectually as he does in his works. We can at most move round about him at a distance, and make out his features according to our mental vision—to which love may have added something of its precious seeing—and grasp the skirts of his human personality here and there, in accordance with contemporary fact, and the characteristics reflected unconsciously by his Plays and Poems.

It is my present object to try briefly to get at the man himself, and make out his features so far as our means will allow, by extracting what spirit of Shakspeare we can from his works, taking advantage of the fresh data to be derived from the present reading of the Sonnets, and clothing that spirit as best we may; a trait of human personality, a tint of human colour, a touch of real life, being of more value for my purpose than all the husks of Antiquarianism, although I have also browsed amongst these long and hungrily. In retelling or re-touching an old story, my plea is that I adduce fresh evidence, present novel facts, and bring new witnesses into the Court of Criticism.



Therefore I ask for another hearing. Over three centuries have passed since the little child opened its eyes on the low ceiling and bare walls of the poor birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon, to grow up into that immortal godsend of a man whom we call William Shakspeare. In all this long procession of years we meet with no other such face looking out on us; the eyes rainy or sunny with the tears and laughters of all time! No other such genius has come to transfigure English literature. All this while the world has been getting hints of what the man Shakspeare was, and how infinitely wonderful and precious was the work he did; how richly ennobling to us was the legacy of his life. Innumerable writers have thrown what light they could upon his page to help the world on its way, but, as Coleridge has said, "No comprehension has yet been able to draw the line of circumscription round this mighty mind so as to say to Itself, 'I have seen the whole.'" In Ben Jonson's words—

"Nothing but the round  
Large clasp of Nature such a wit can bound."

Still one cannot agree with Goëthe's declaration that everything said of Shakspeare is inadequate. Any true thing said truly is adequate in virtue of its being true, and a good many true things have been said amongst the many that may not be actually true. Nor shall we soon grow weary of any true thing said concerning Shakspeare.

That Spanish Emperor who fancied he could have improved the plan of creation if he had only been consulted, would hardly have managed to better the time, the place, and circumstances of Shakspeare's birth. It seems supremely fit that his birthplace should have been in the heart of England! The world could not have been more ripe, or England more ready—the stage of the national life more nobly peopled—the scenes more fittingly draped—than they were for his reception. It was the very quickening-time of a loftier national life—a time when souls were made in earnest, and life grew quick within and large without. The full-statured spirit of the nation had just found its sea-legs and waved its wings full-feathered on the wind. The new spirit of adventure was just beginning to get daringly afloat, to show that the little Island was the natural home of the kings of the sea.

Into a mixed, multiform, many-coloured world was William Shakspeare born, three hundred years ago. Old times and an ancient faith had been passing away—like the leaves of Autumn wearing their richest glory of colour—and every rent of ruin and chink of old decay were all in flower with the new life. Shakspeare's England was picturesque to look upon, as is our woodland at the time of the year when Winter still reigns in the bare dark boughs above, and the young Spring is coming up in a mist of leafy green and a burst of song-birds below. In the year of Shakspeare's birth we find that the sum of two shillings was paid by the corporation for defacing an image of the ancient faith in the chapel at Stratford. The cucking-stool was still a real terror for wives of a termagant tongue. Fellows sat up all night in the stocks, on the village green, making the darkness hideous with their drunken ribaldry. Troops of strolling players wandered the country through, and won a merrier welcome than did the Wandering Friars who preceded them of old. The citizens of London were still in the habit of going forth on the 1st of May to gather the hawthorn bloom, and "get some green," as Chaucer has it, in the village of

Charing; and the violets grew where the effigy of Nelson now stands mast-headed on that terrible monument of his in Trafalgar Square. English lasses would wash their faces in the May-dew, and join the lads in a game of hot-cockles or barley-break. The fires of Smithfield had only just smouldered down, leaving a smoke in the souls of men that was sure to burst forth into a nobler, intenser flame of freer national life; and fiercely in the minds of Englishmen there burned the memory of "bloody Mary." The spirit of a new time had entered the land, to take shape in a proud array of great deeds, and a literature unparagoned; such as should place this England of ours side by side if not high above either Greece or Rome. The stage of political life was crowded with splendid forms in sumptuous attire; heroes, statesmen, poets, sea-kings, magnificent men, with women to match! Hercules who, like Drake, won their victories with such a dashing dare-devilry; and others who won and wore their glory with a Philip Sidney's grace! A rare group of men and women who came as courtiers into the presence of Elizabeth, looking as though they had just walked through a shower of jewels; and spread their braveries as in the very sun of pageantry.

Into such a mixed, multiform, many-coloured, magnificent time was William Shakspeare born, April 23rd, 1564. His father came of the fine old yeoman class who clung to the bit of soil which their families had cultivated for ages, and who were ready to fight for it in the day of England's need. This was the breed of men that served their country so well as the Bowmen of Cressy and the Billmen of Agincourt. One gets an idea that Shakspeare's father was a man who had seen better days, but who was gradually sinking in the world, and losing his hold of his little bit of landed possession. He seems dispirited, and the burden of his family is too much for him. His circumstances declined from 1571—some-what rapidly. He had held the highest office at Stratford, and entertained both parsons and players at his house, and been liberal in his gifts to the poor. We learn that in the year 1552 he was certainly doing business as a glover, and in 1556 he brought an action against Henry Field for unjustly detaining eighteen quarters of barley, which looks as though he were then a maltster or farmer. In 1565 he was chosen an alderman; in 1569 he was high-bailiff, and thenceforward bears the title of magister. In 1571-2 he was chief alderman. In 1579 he is styled a yeoman. He was in pretty good circumstances when the Poet was born, having a small landed estate near Stratford and some property in the town. It appears as though he met with a great and sudden reverse of fortune about the year 1578, whereby he became no longer worshipful; what or how we are unable to conjecture. In 1587 we find him in prison for debt, and in 1592 we find his name in a list of persons who, it is supposed, were afraid to go to church on account of debt, and for fear of process, or being served with a summons.

When the boy Shakspeare was five years of age, his father, as high-bailiff, entertained the players. This is the earliest notice we have of theatrical performances in the town. And in all likelihood the child caught his first glimpse in the Stratford Guildhall of that fairy realm in which he was to become the mightiest magician that ever waved the enchanter's wand, and, as the trumpet sounded for the third time and the dramatic vision was unveiled, we may imagine how the yearnings of a new life stirred within him, and he would be dreamingly drawn toward those rare creatures that seemed to have no touch of common earthiness as they walked so radiant in such a world of wonder. It would be an event, indeed—that first sight of the Players!

It is curious to notice, as we are searching for facts respecting the life of Shakspeare, that in the year 1558 it is recorded, as if in smiling mockery of our endeavours, that Shakspeare's father was fined fourpence for not keeping his gutters clean! And again he is fined twelpepence for the same reason.

It is pleasant to know that Shakspeare could have his fair share of a mother's tenderness, and was not compelled too early to fall into the ranks by his father's side and fight the grim battle against poverty, with childhood's small hands and weary feet.

Shakspeare's mother was Mary Arden, youngest daughter of Robert Arden of Wilmecote, the Wincote where Marian Hacket chalked up the score of fourteen pence behind the door against that good customer of hers, Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-Heath. By the bye, the name of Arden or Ardern is taken to mean the wooded height, but that derivation does not go back far enough. Ard, Art, or Old is the ancient word for the height, but Erne or Ern means an eagle. Therefore Arderne, whence Arden, denoted the high place of the eagle. That Shakspeare should descend from the eagle's perch is prettily appropriate! The old British word for wood, *i. e.* cuit or cote, enters into the name of Wilmecote.

Nearness to Nature we may look on as the great desideratum for the nurture of a national poet, and this was secured to Shakspeare. He came of good healthy yeoman blood, he belonged to a race that has always been heartily national, and clung to their bit of soil from generation to generation—ploughed a good deal of their life into it, and fought for it, too, in the day of their country's need. No doubt Nature stores up much health and freshness of feeling, love of green things, and songs of birds and quiet appreciation of all out-of-door sights and sounds in men like these—carefully hoarding it until one day it all finds expression, and the long and slowly-gathered hereditary result breaks into immortal flower, when, in the fulness of time, the Burns or Shakspeare is born.

Very little is known of the childhood of our supremest Englishman. There is no reason to doubt that he was educated at the Free School, Stratford, until his father was compelled to take him away to help him in the business at home. Maybe the boy became an assistant, or what we should now call a pupil teacher; and this would afford some foundation for the tradition which makes a country schoolmaster of him. As Dogberry has it, "to write and read comes by nature," and no doubt Shakspeare found it so—in his case. He had the gift recognized by Dogberry. We know fairly well what his little book-learning was. A live lad like him would be reading Ovid and Cicero in Latin, and one or two of the Greek writers by the time he was in his teens. There was no such range of reading then as we have now, but the few books were often better read, and these *got more out of the reader*. That is the truest education which gets most out of the reader rather than out of the book! There can be no doubt the boy was an adept, "epopt and perfect" in the education that had to be acquired freely out of doors. His acquaintanceship with external nature was at first hand and first-rate. Nature wrote her own book over again in his mind, and richly stored his memory for future use.

As a boy he knew the colours and patterns of all the birds' eggs by robbing the nests; the number of legs on the caterpillar by counting them; the red-tailed humble-bee by taking its bag of honey. Fortunately apples were plentiful, or a few orchards might have suffered. He knew them all—Bitter-sweetings,

Pippins, Leathercoats, Pomewaters, Warden-pies, Russets, and Apple-Johns. His knowledge of animals and insects, their appearance, their works and ways, was derived directly from nature. He was remarkably well versed in wild flowers, and they always blossom in their proper season. He did not seek his botany in books. His was the living letter of Nature's own font.

When he went to London, it was from the heart of the country, with the country at the heart of him, and all the pictures photographed in colours and in lustres all alive. Hence the country magic of his sylvan scenes. Hence the country-boru and country-bred who listen to certain of his Plays and passages of poetry in London will look on the stage with loving eyes, filled by the spring from an overflowing heart that is far away in the country, the child-heart in the nature of the woman or man to whom he will bring back the long-past life of the country transfigured and glorified. The illusion is no longer theatrical, the magic is real as that of nature. No other poet was ever such a countryman in town.

But if we are to suppose that Shakspeare was of the trade or profession that he seems to have known most about we shall be puzzled indeed, for he seems to have known something of everything—not only what men were, but all they could do. If his name had been John instead of Will we should at once have identified him as the popular Jack-of-all-trades, only, in his case, he seems to have been Master of all. He was an all-round hand! Some of his Plays are full of physic, and they say he was a doctor. Others, again, with some of his Sonnets, are full of law, and not office-sweepings either. One thinks he must have been a sailor. Another tells you he had all the shepherd's fondness for young lambs. Another claims him as a brother gardener. It has even been conjectured that he knew something of the baking business, because he speaks of an offering being "unmixed with seconds," that is, inferior flour. Another infers that he was a butcher from the passage, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may"—the butchers being accustomed to buy their skewers rough-hewn, and it took a clever man to shape their ends. The butcher was compelled to be his own divinity. Possibly Willie never got so far in the butchering-line as the sharpening of skewers. The truth no doubt is, that the boy helped his father in the business, which may have included tending the sheep on their bit of land; killing the sheep and selling the meat; dealing in the wool that grew on the sheep, and even selling the gloves made from the wool. A man in the position of Shakspeare's father generally tries to live in a small way by a multiplicity of means.

It must be confessed that in the "making out" of Shakspeare we continually vouch for more than is warranted or needed. This was more especially so in the earlier estimates, when the object was to magnify and make the most of him as a phenomenon. The very matter-of-fact, dry-as-dust writer will as widely misinterpret the testimony at times as the most fantastical. Thus Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who expressly limits himself to furnishing a complete collection of well-known facts, cannot resist the temptation to suggest that Shakspeare's wife was a *sufferer from mental derangement!* Even the anti-Shakspearean attempt on the life and works of Shakspeare may have the effect of causing us to look still more closely to our foundations in fact, and to make us more wary of vouching for too much. We all do it, more or less, in the process of externalizing our idea of Shakspeare. But a Judge like Lord Campbell ought to

have known better, or been more judicial than to assert that Sonnet 46 "is so intensely legal in its language and imagery, that without a considerable knowledge of *English forensic procedure* it cannot be fully understood."<sup>1</sup> But is that so?—

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,  
 How to divide the conquest of thy sight ;  
 Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would bar,  
 My heart mine eye the freedom of that right :  
 My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,  
 (A closet never pierced with crystal eyes,)  
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,  
 And says in him thy fair appearance lies :  
 To 'cide this title is impannellèd  
 A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart ;  
 And by their verdict is determinèd  
 The clear eye's moiety, and the dear heart's part :  
 As thus ; mine eye's due is thine outward part,  
 And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

Surely it does not demand a lawyer, not to say a profound one, to read the imagery of empanelling a jury, the plea for the plaintiff, the reply for the defendant, followed by the verdict? And that is all the law there is in the Sonnet. Moreover, the proceedings are not in their proper order, for the plea and defence are both made before the jury is empanelled to give the verdict, which is not altogether lawyer-like. That Shakspeare ever served an apprenticeship to the law I do not suppose. To say that he has a wider acquaintance with law—uses legal forms and phrases more freely and unerringly than any other poet, is only to say that we are speaking of Shakspeare in one of the many departments of knowledge where, as a poet, he is unparalleled ; he is not a whit more wonderful in this than in so many other things. I think he obtained his insight through a personal connection with some live spirit of a friend, who could throw a light into the dark intricacies and cobwebbed corners of the law, rather than from any dead drudgery in an attorney's office. Nor have we far to seek for such a possible friend. There was Greene, the attorney, a Stratford man, and a cousin of the Poet, whose brain and books may have been at his service, and Shakspeare was the man who could make more use of other men's knowledge than they could themselves. The worst of it for the theory of his having been an attorney's clerk is, that it will not account for his insight into Law. My own notion is that there was some traditional right of property in the family that had an influence on the mind of young Shakspeare, which led to his looking up the law and poring over books belonging to his cousin Greene, the lawyer, such as the *Law of Real Property*, and the *Crown Circuit Companion*. His law-terms chiefly apply to Tenure and the transfer of Real Estate, such as fee-simple, reversion, remainder, forfeiture, fine, and recovery, double voucher, fee-farmis entail, capable of inheriting, &c. According to the will of her father, Mary Arden was to receive all his land in Wilmecote called Ashbies, together with the crops it produced. Then it is noticeable that in the motto chosen for the Shakspeare Coat-of-Arms he asserts a claim, *Non sans droict*, not without right ; which corresponds in character to the assertive motto of his first poem.

In the summer of 1575, when Shakspeare was eleven years old, there were brave doings and princely pageants at Kenilworth, where the Earl of Leicester

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare's Legal Acquirements*, p. 102.

gave royal entertainment to Queen Elizabeth. The superb affair was kept up for eighteen days, and as a *whet* to the sight-seeing, there were three hundred and twenty hogsheads of beer drunk on that occasion. Was the boy Shakspeare present at those princely pleasures of Kenilworth? I think he was; and a vision of it comes over his memory in a certain *Midsummer Night's Dream!* That is his dramatic way of telling us he was there. When our Shakspeare was sixteen years of age, there was a William Shakspeare drowned at Stratford in the river Avon. Now this fact offers a rare chance for the anti-Shakspeareans. They should complete their case by coming forward boldly and swearing that that was our William Shakspeare who was drowned, and there was an end of him once for all. For he could not be the author of his own works if he was drowned in 1580 at the early age of sixteen years. Nothing short of proving some such *alibi* can ever establish their theory, and I make them a present of this suggestion. Never will they get such another!

There has been a little too much anxiety perhaps to invest our Shakspeare's youth with the halo of *bourgeois* respectability. Some have even doubted or denied the tradition of his poaching, which he himself has warranted true in the opening scene of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where he makes fun of the Lucy coat of arms and the significance of the name. "The dozen white louses do become an old coat well. It is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love." Poaching has done good service in its time, if only in sending many a stout fellow to help found our other Englands on the southern side of the world. It is more than likely that it may have sent Shakspeare to found new empires on the stage.

One feels that there is a considerable basis of truth in the traditions which have reached us, telling that the young Shakspeare was somewhat wild, and joined with other young fellows, and let his spirits overflow at times in their boisterous country way. Hence we hear of the drinking bouts and poaching freaks. We may depend on it there was nothing prim and priggish about Willie Shakspeare; for "Willie" he would be to his youthful companions as well as to his "play-fellows" of later days! Not that there was any great harm in his frolics, only they may have been too expensive for the father's position. He may not have been able to afford what the youth was spending with a lavish hand. Possibly he kept the worst as long as he could from his son's knowledge. Suddenly there came a change. The young man looked on life with more serious eyes. He would see his father, as it were, coming down the hill, beaten and broken spirited, as he was mounting full of hope and exulting vigour. He would have sad thoughts, such as gradually steadied the wild spirits within him, and make resolves that we know he fulfilled as soon as possible in after-life. Gentle Willie would not be without self-reproach if he was in the least a cause of his father's declining fortunes. This thought we may surmise was one of the strongest incentives to that prudence which became proverbial in after years; and one of the quickest feelings working within him, as he strove so strenuously to make his father a gentleman, was that he had once helped to make him poor. It may be a worthless fancy, but I cannot help thinking that our Poet's great thrift and his undoubted *grip* in money matters had such an unselfish awakening.

At eighteen years of age our William Shakspeare was married to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a yeoman at Shottery (or at Temple Grafton).

We read in the Hebrew Mythos that Eve was formed from one of the ribs of

Adam, which was taken from him during a deep sleep. In like manner other Eves have been created by the hand of love during a deep sleep of the soul, and the waking has not been always so delightful as that of Adam, who, according to the poet's fancy, found his wife waiting for him in Eden with all her comeliness fresh from the Creator's hand.

"Grace in her steps and heaven in her eye ;  
In all her gestures dignity and love."

Their waking has been rather more like Titania's when the glamour was gone from her eyes. And it has been surmised that Shakspeare's was a case of this kind—that he threw the auroral hues of his dawning imagination round Anne Hathaway, and married before he knew where he was. There is nothing known, however, to give colour to this theory, which is derived from reading the Sonnets as personal to Shakspeare himself. Certainly, she was some eight years older than he was, and he has in his works left a warning against others going and doing as he did—so at least the critics say ; more especially Mr. Grant White, who grows positively vixenish against poor Anne Hathaway for marrying Will Shakspeare. If Mr. White could have had his way, Shakspeare would never have had his ; and if Mr. White had had his Will, poor Anne certainly would not have got hers ! He thinks the second-best bed too good for her. He contends that if Shakspeare had loved and honoured his wife, he would not have written those passages, which must have been "*gall and wormwood to his soul.*" That is good argument then that he did love her, and that they were not quite so bitter to him. Surely it is the more mean and unmanly to suppose that he wrote them because *he did not* love and honour his wife ! It is sad indeed to learn that Anne Hathaway brought the Poet to such "sorrow and shame," as Mr. White says is frequently expressed in the Plays and the Sonnets. This Critic takes the matter of Anne's age so much to heart, that one would be glad to suggest any source of consolation. Possibly Mrs. William Shakspeare may have been one of those fine healthy Englishwomen—I have a sovereign sample in my mind's eye now—in whose presence we never think of age or reckon years ; whose tender spring is followed by a long and glorious summer, an autumn fruitful and golden. These do not attain their perfection in April ; they ripen longer and hoard up a maturer fragrance for the fall o' the year, a mellow sweetness for the winter, and about mid-season they often pause, wearing the bud, flower, and fruit of human beauty all at once. Possibly her ripened perfections or fuller flower might be a ground of equality in such a pair. Possibly the lusty Shakspeare was a man of larger growth than usual, maturer for his years than most young men, and a mate for any woman considerably older than himself !

But there really is no reason to suppose he ran away from his home because he disliked his wife, or that he was not fond of her. She is said to have been eminently beautiful, and she was fond of him ; according to tradition, she begged to be laid in the same grave with him. Some of the autobiographists have hunted for Shrews in the early Plays. But to what end, when in the same play the sweet character of Luciana is present to equate with her shrewish sister ?

At one time Shakspeare writes :—

*"Prosperity's the very bond of love,  
Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together  
Affliction alters."*

Whilst at another he affirms that

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

Both sentiments are spoken in character; they are strictly in keeping and dramatically true in their place, but it would be idle to apply either to Shakspeare as a test of his own personality. For a man who was miserably married he is a somewhat enthusiastic advocate for early marriage in his first Sonnets, and in his very early Play of *Love's Labour's Lost*. But if we were to found upon a character or a text or two we should soon have as many interpretations of Shakspeare as there are contending sects of Christians. I rather think we shall get nearer to young Will Shakspeare and Anne Hathaway in the *Lover's Complaint* than in the Sonnets. In this poem the Poet is audibly making fun of their own early troubles. There is a pleasant exaggeration throughout, both in his description of her and her description of him. The humour is very *paucy*. Some people, he suggests, might have thought her old in her ancient large straw-bonnet, or hat. But he assures us, Time had not cut down all that youth began, nor had you't quite left her; some of her beauty yet peeped through the lattice of age! The lady is anxious for us to think that she is old in sorrow, not in years. The description of him is pointed by the author with the most provoking slyness, and used in her defence for the loss of her "White Stole." There is the subtle Shakspearean smile at human nature's frailties in the suggestion of Stanza 23, that in like circumstances we seldom let the *by-past perils of others* stand in *our* future way. Whatsoever the object of this poem, and to whomsoever it was written, we have here the most life-like portrait of Shakspeare extant, drawn by himself under the freest, happiest condition for insuring a true likeness—that is, whilst humorously pretending to look at himself through the eyes of Anne Hathaway, under circumstances the most sentimental. A more perfect portrait was never finished. The frolic life looks out of the eyes, the red is ripe on the cheek, the maiden manhood soft on the chin, the breath moist on the lip that has the glow of the garnet, the bonny smile that "gilded his deceit" so bewitchingly. He is—

"One by Nature's outwards so commended,  
That maiden eyes stuck over all his face ;  
Love lacked a dwelling and made him her place,  
And when in his fair parts she did abide,  
She was new-lodged and newly Deified.

"His browny locks did hang in crooked curls,  
And every light occasion of the wind  
Upon his lips their silken parcel hurls ;  
Each eye that saw him did enchant the mind,  
For on his visage was in little drawn,  
What largeness thinks in Paradise was sawn.

"Small show of man was yet upon his chin ;  
His phoenix-down began but to appear,  
Like unshorn velvet, on that termless skin,  
Whose bare out-bragged the web it seemed to wear,



Yet showed his visage by that cost more dear ;  
And nice affection wavering, stood in doubt,  
If best were as it was, or best without."

The very hair, in shape and hue, that Shakspeare must have had when young, to judge by the bust and the description of it as left, coloured from life! The inner man, too, was beauteous as the outer.

"His qualities were beauteous as his form,  
For maiden-tongued he was and thereof free."

Gentle he was until greatly moved, and then his spirit was a storm personified—but only such a storm

"As oft twixt May and April is to see,  
When winds breathe sweet, unruly though they be."

He was universally beloved, and what a winning tongue he had!—

"So on the tip of his subduing tongue,  
All kinds of argumen's and questions deep,  
All replication prompt and reason strong,  
For his advantage still did wake and sleep,  
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep."

And he was such an actor too!—

"He had the dialect and different skill,  
Catching all passions in his craft at will ;  
In him a plenitude of subtle matter,  
Applied to Cautills, all strange forms receives,  
Of burning blushes, or of weeping water,  
Or swooning palenes ; and he takes and leaves,  
In either's aptness, as it best deceives,  
To blush at speeches rank, to weep at woes,  
Or to turn white and swoon at tragic shows."

And to think

"What a hell of witchcraft lay  
In the small orb of one particular tear,"

when wept by him! Poor Anne! No marvel that

"My woeful self—  
What with his *Art* in Youth, and *Youth* in art—  
Threw my affections in his charmed power ;  
Reserved the stalk, and gave him all the flower."<sup>1</sup>

We learn by the 16th Stanza that he was also a capital rider ; much admired when he followed the hounds across country with a daring dash, or came cantering over to Shottery with a lover's sideling grace.

Who can doubt that this is "Will. Shakspeare," the handsome young fellow of splendid capacity, so shaped and graced by nature as to innocently play the very devil with the hearts of the Warwickshire lasses? The poem is founded on a circumstance that preceded the marriage of the Poet and Anne Hathaway ; the "lover" being one who hath wept away a jewel in her tears, and who is described as older than her sweetheart. His own gifts and graces are purposely

<sup>1</sup> Thus prettily anticipating an illustration in Burns' *Bonny Doon!*

made the most of in humouring the necessities of poor Anne's case—the helplessness of his own. These things which she points to in extenuation also serve him for excuse, as if he said, "being so handsome and so clever, how can I help being so beloved and run after? You see, it is not my fault!" This smiling mood has given free play to his pencil, and the poem brings us nearer to the radiant personal humour of the man than all his Plays, especially that story of the Nun—

His "parts had power to charm a sacred Nun"—

a lady whose beauty made the young nobles of the Court dote on her, who was wooed by the loftiest in the land, but kept them all at a distance, and retired into a nunnery, to "spend her living in eternal love." Yet, pardon him for telling it; he confesses the fact with an *im-*"pudency so rosy!" No sooner had she set eyes on him, by accident, than she too fell in love. In a moment had "religious love put out religion's eye." I think this a glorious outbreak of his spirit of fun!

If I am right then in my conjecture that "gentle Willie" was the beguiling lover of this forlorn lady of the "Complaint," we shall find a remark of his to the point on which I have touched. In reply to some of the charges brought against him, he says,

"All my offences that abroad you see,  
Are errors of the blood; none of the mind."

Another supposition obtains that he left Stratford on account of his propensities for deer-stealing. I can only say, if he did taste Sir Thomas Lucy's venison, I hope he liked it. There has been enough talk about it. And I trust that

"Finer or fatter,  
Ne'er ranged in a park, or smoked in a platter."

But he did not need Sir Thomas Lucy's deer to drive him forth into the world in search of a living. His own dear had just presented him with a brace of twins. And at this hint of his "better half," he no doubt thought it was quite time to look out for better quarters. He may have remarked on this overproduction, "Anne hath a way I like not." And then they said he did not like Anne Hathaway. The stories about his being a link boy, and holding horses at the theatre door, are foolish on the face of them. He was not a boy when he first went to London, but a man of twenty-one, and most likely a fine lusty fellow.

In all probability our Poet went to London to be a player. He must have been a born actor; a dramatist, in that shape, before he became one in writing. This was the constitution of his nature; the very mould of his mind. The strongest proof to me that the *Lover's Lament* is personal to Shakspeare, is the description of his exquisite art and abundant subtlety as an actor. His tendency and inclination, if not his capability as such, must have been known to some of his fellow-townsmen, and he would easily secure a good introduction to the Blackfriars theatre, from some player who had visited Stratford. Or he may have been the servitor of a townsman of his own, and entered as a kind of theatrical apprentice. Having obtained his admission to the theatre, we lose sight of him for four years. He began as a Player, and not as a poetizer,

or we should have heard more about him personally. As a Player, he was just the man to feel supremely happy in making a living, and something over, by work he loved to do; just the man of business to felicitate himself on the good fortune that enabled him to be the Player and Playwright both, which doubled his chance for making the most of both arts of which he was a master. A false reading of the Sonnets has left a thick film over the eyes of many who might otherwise have had a clear and clean conception of his character. It has discoloured and distempered their vision for life.

It is from a false view of the Sonnets that it has been supposed he lived his tragedies before he wrote them. It is in natures of the Byronic kind that the amount of force heaving below images itself permanently above in a mountain of visible personality. Shakspeare's truer image would be the ocean that can mould mountains into shape, yet keep its own level; and grow clear and calm as ever, with all heaven smiling in its depths, after the wildest storm, the most heart-breaking Tragedy.

His was not one of your "suffering souls." These are wrung and pinched, gnarled and knotted into a more emphatic form of personality than he wears for us. He could not sing about himself in a miserable mood. He was not one of the subjective brood of poets, who find their inspiration in such a source. Unlike Byron, who wrote most eloquently about himself, largeness of sympathy with others, rather than intensity of sympathy with self, was Shakspeare's nobler poetic motive! His soul was not self-reflecting. He was not a good listener to self. To adapt the words of Montaigne, he could not "put his ear close by himself, and hold his breath to listen." This is provable by means of his Poems and Plays, and I have now demonstrated *how* the same man wrote the Sonnets. He could keep a calm "sough"; convert his surplus steam into force; consume his own smoke, make his devil laugh and draw for him. He gathered all the sunshine he could and ripened on it, and his spirit enlarged and mellowed in content. He was happy whether the marriage was so or not.

This, however, we may safely infer; his circumstances were not very flourishing at first, or we should hardly hear of his father being in prison for debt, where we find him in 1587, when Shakspeare had been in London two years. His strong sense of family pride would have prevented such a thing if possible. We hear of him again in 1589, when he has been four years in London, and, if apocryphally, it must be near the mark.

Mr. Browning tells us there are two points in the adventure of the diver—

"One—when, a Beggar, he prepares to plunge!  
One—when, a Prince, he rises with his pearl!"

Our Poet had now made his plunge, and emerged into daylight once more. If we could have asked him what he had grasped in the gloom, he might probably have told us a handful of mud, having experienced the worst of his theatrical life. He had become a player and a playwright for the Blackfriars theatre. But he had also found his pearl. They had set him to vamp up old plays, put flesh on skeletons, and adapt new ones; and he had discovered that he also could make as well as mend. During this time he had been working, invisible to us, at the foundations of his future fame; like the trees and plants in the night-time he had been clutching his rootage out of sight. There was nothing sudden in his rise, he did not attain the height *per saltum*, but by climbing that

was gradual and persistent. He was an indefatigable worker from first to last, and had the infinite capacity for taking pains, which great genius implies, as well as the "right happy and copious industry" described by Webster. Shakspeare was no spontaneous generation of nature or ready-made result. He had to be built up as well as born. He had to build himself up by catching hold, as the ape developed hands. He caught hold of everything that would serve, and had the force to mount two steps at a time.

In reply to those who are advocates for his having had a period of *sturm und drang*, nothing can be more instructive than to note the masterly ease and divine good-humour with which he mimics and mocks the affectations of the time in his early drama of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and typically plays off the country mother-wit against the current artificialities of the courtiers. Note also the symptoms shown in an early play like the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the gentlemanly quietude and perfect ease which give the grace to good bearing and manners. The young man Shakspeare is "all there," but with no strain of effort to appear more than nature warrants for the time being. He does not try to attract notice by being loud; has no tiptoeing to look taller. He is a master thus far. His work culminates according to its range, and he has the happiness of present attainment. The rest is left to future growth. All in good time, he seems to say with his pleasant smile.

His first rising into recognition is sun-like, with the mists about him; the mists of malice formed by the breath of envy. As Chaucer has it—

"The sun looks ruddy and brode  
Through the misty vapours of morrowning,  
And the dew as silver shining  
Upon the green and sotè grass!"

The earlier writers for the stage are jealous and disgus'ed that a mere player, a *factotum* for the theatre, should enter the arena with "college pens" and gowned classical scholars. But for these mists, and for the visible blinking of the little lights at the glory of a great sunrise, we should not know when or where the new orb was first visible on the horizon.

These personalities serve for ever to identify Shakspeare in person as the writer of the Plays, who was known as such by all his contemporaries, whether enemies or friends.

The earliest of all allusions to Shakspeare as a Playwright is probably made by Greene in his *Perimedes*, 1588, when he girds at some *novice* who tickles the public with self-love, and who is described as one that sets the fag-end of scholarship in an *English blank verse*. This might be aimed at Marlowe so far as the blank verse goes. But Marlowe was a Master of Arts, and he belonged at the time to the Greene clique. Besides which, the "end of scholarship," the tail-end or leavings, points to the man of a "little country grammar knowledge" who was jibed at by Nash in a passage already quoted (p. 50). Again, in his epistle prefixed to Greene's *Menaphon*, Nash also speaks of those "who think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of blank verse." Later, in 1592, Greene says the new man "*supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute JOHANNES FAC-TOTUM, is in his own conceit the only Shakspeare in a country.*" Thus we have the blank verse of Shakspeare aimed at thrice over by his opponents. It was this new power manifested in blank verse that constituted the disturbing element in the minds

of Nash and Greene. They recognized the strength of that in which they were the weakest.

It is evident from these references to Shakspeare that he had a period of blank verse preceding the rhyming Plays. He must have done considerable work before he wrote original dramas. This work was applied to the English Chronicles, some of those which had already been turned into Plays. In doing this early work our Poet wrought in conscious rivalry with Marlowe, who was his one great successful competitor at the opposition theatre. In Marlowe's rude resounding work he got a glimpse of the freedom and force of blank verse. In this way we may assume that *Titus Andronicus* was retouched, and so became mixed up with Shakspeare's early Plays.

In his *Pierce Penniless* Nash admits that it would have delighted brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after two hundred years in the tomb, he should triumph again upon the stage before ten thousand spectators (at several times), as Nash says, he having counted the houses! This resurrection was the result of Shakspeare's infusion of his new spirit into the old bones of the history.

Greene points to Shakspeare as the re-writer of the third part of *Henry VI.*, when he quotes from that play to identify him by means of the line which he parodies for the purpose. Shakspeare had written, "*O Tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide.*" This is echoed by Greene in his "*Tiger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide!*" who certainly aimed at Shakspeare as the writer of the line. And as Shakspeare is charged with filching their feathers, that points to the historic Plays, which he had partly re-written, such as the second and third parts of *Henry VI.*, founded on the two old histories that were pre-extant. Meanwhile he turns from the Chronicles to try his hand at more literary and poetical Plays, like the *Errors* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. The *Errors* is undoubtedly an early Play (about 1590), and it contains much easy-going, graceful blank-verse. It is not great for Shakspeare, but must have been amazing enough to Greene as the production of a professed Player, who supposed he was able to "*bombast out a blank verse*" with any of them! And here once more we can identify Greene identifying Shakspeare by making use of his imagery for the purpose. Antipholus of Ephesus says—

"Well, I'll break in; *Go, borrow me a crow.*"

Dromio replies—

"*A crow without a feather; Master, mean you so?  
For a fish without a fin, there's a fowl without a feather:  
If a crow help us in, sirrah, we'll pluck a crow together.*"

Greene takes up the "*Crow without a feather,*" and applies the image to the player, whom he calls "*an upstart crow beautified in our feathers.*"

Shakspeare did not remain so silent under these attacks as is commonly assumed. To Greene's description of him as a crow "*beautified in our feathers,*" with his "*Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide!*" Shakspeare mockingly retorts—

"*Seems he a dove, (gentle Willie!) his feathers are but borrowed!  
For he's dispos'd as the hateful raven (or upstart crow).  
Is he a lamb? his skin is surely lent him,  
For he's inclin'd as the ravenous wolves.*"

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The false feathers are again referred to in *Hamlet*—" *Would not this, Sir, and a forest of feathers (if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk (i. e. break faith) with me), with two Provençal roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players ?*" " *That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase ; ' beautified ' is a vile phrase,*" he says in the same play ; and " *Beautified in our feathers*" was Greene's phrase. Shakspeare, having been charged with purloining the feathers of those who were learned, makes a reference to this in the Sonnet already quoted, where he tells Southampton that his patronage has " added feathers to the Learned's wing ! " That is, the patron and friend has given back the feathers which he, the Poet, had been charged with stealing from them, and has thus restored far more than his Poet borrowed. Plainly enough this indicates the way in which Shakspeare took his place in the Blackfriars company, and also contains a smiling allusion to Greene's charge as to the manner of feathering his nest there.

There is more, however, in Hamlet's words than this making fun of the " feathers " ; something covertly concealed *under the rose* that no one has yet espied. If we look intently we shall see the snake stir beneath the flowers ; a subtle snake of irony with the most wicked glitter in its eye !

Reference is frequently made by the Elizabethan dramatists to the devil hiding his cloven hoof under a rose stuck on the shoe. Webster alludes to it in his *White Devil*—

" Why 'tis the Devil !  
I know him by a great rose he wears on 's shoe,  
To hide his cloven foot."

And Ben Jonson has a character, " Fitzdottrel," in *The Devil is an Ass*, who has long been desirous of meeting with Satan ; so long that he begins to think there is no devil at all but what the painters have made. On suddenly seeing " Pug " he is startled into fearing that his great wish may be at last realized, and he exclaims—

"'fore hell, my heart was at my mouth,  
Till I had view'd his shoes well ; for those Roses  
Were big enough to hide a cloven hoof !"

Hamlet's remark assuredly glances at this legend of the devil hiding his cloven hoof under the rose. The Poet has a double intention in making such an allusion. On the surface it may be interpreted as pointing to the trick played on the King and Court, by Hamlet's having so cunningly used the players for his purpose in touching upon the matter of the murder—thus hiding the cloven hoof in the buskin. But it goes deeper, and means more. It is the private laugh about the " feathers " continued. The Poet is still jesting at the consternation and amazement which his presence and his success had created amongst his *learned* rivals, and the outcry they made, as though the very devil had broken loose in the theatre, and was hiding his cloven foot in a player's shoe !

Again, in this same play he pokes fun at Master Nash ! He has taken the identical subject treated by Marlowe and Nash in their *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, for the purpose of mocking the rant and bombast of these *learned* writers, the speech chosen, most probably, being the work of Nash. " *One speech in it I chiefly loved,*" says Hamlet, " 'twas Æneas' tale to Dido ; and thereabout of it, especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter." He then proceeds to outdo the said speech, which in *Dido* begins—

“ At which the frantic Queen leap’d on his face,  
And in his eyelids hanging by the nails,  
A little while prolonged her husband’s life ;”—

the “frantic Queen” is turned into the “mobled Queen,” and in both speeches poor old Priam is struck down with the wind of Pyrrhus’ sword.

It was not Shakspeare’s way to get into a passion and turn pamphleteer. Being a great dramatist, he could put all he had to say into his Plays, or rather, as he was essentially an actor, he staged and played his opponents in character. They soon found that this was a fellow who could play the fool at their own expense, and make fools of them for the public ; who could exhibit them as his puppets, and pull the strings at his pleasure for the profit of the players ; set all the gods in the gallery grinning at them by showing up their likenesses ; whelming them with his wit, deluging them with his overflowing humour, and drowning them and their outcries in the floods of his own merriment and laughter. In short, they discovered that they had caught a Tartar who could “take them off.”

Nash had inveighed against his monstrous ignorance in 1590 (see p. 50), and in the next play and next year he writes—

“Oh, thou monster Ignorance, how deformed dost thou look !”

Nash had written—

“Oh, this Learning ! what a thing it is !”

This is mimicked by Shakspeare in his

“Oh, this Woodcock ! what an Ass it is !”

After what they had said about their learning and his lack of it, he must have meant a *double entendre*, or had the dual consciousness when he wrote, “William is become a good scholar !” (1599), and the boy was being put through his “little Latin.”

A prolonged reply to Nash can be detected in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, a play that runs over with his ridicule of the affectation-mongers. In this I hold the character of the little Moth (= Mote) to be meant for Tom Nash. For these reasons. Nash was known by the name of “Young Juvenal,” and Moth is introduced as “My tender Juvenal,” and is said to be a “most acute Juvenal !” He was the author of *Pierce Penniless*, and his *Pennyworth of Wit* is glanced at when Moth tells Armado that he purchased his experience by his “penny of observation.” Costard says to him, “Your pennyworth is good.” “What’s the price of this inkle ?” “A penny ?” “No ! I’ll give you a remuneration.” “An I had but one penny in the world thou should’st have it to buy gingerbread.” “Thou halfpenny purse of wit, thou pigeon-egg of discretion.” Nash had said of some one whom he supposed had been a lawyer’s clerk, and who could scarcely “Latinize his neck-verse,” that “if you intreat him fair in a frosty morning he will afford you whole Hamlets—I should say handfuls of tragical speeches.”

This infinitesimal joke is annotated when Costard calls Moth that “Handful of Wit ! Ah, heavens ! it is a most pathetic nit. I marvel, thy master hath not eaten thee for a word ; for thou art not so long by the head as *honorificabilitudinitatibus*.” Shakspeare had no learning, but Costard says to Moth, “Thou hast it *ad* dunghill, at thy fingers’ ends.” “Oh, I smell false

Latin; dunghill for *unguem*," Holofernes remarks, as if Shakspeare were retorting on the Hamlets for handfuls. Moth is set to do in the play what Nash attempted out of it, that is, to perform the part of Hercules and scotch the snake. But it ends in failure and inextinguishable fun. "An excellent device! If any of the audience hiss you may cry, 'Well done, Hercules; now thou crushest the snake!'" Shakspeare gets out his magnifying-glass to see the mote with. Here he begins to betray his own size. He takes up Tom Nash in his hand as Gulliver might the Liliputian, and then with a great hearty laugh he sets the mite to play the part of Hercules in strangling the snakes, saying, "Great Hercules is presented by this imp!" Half the fun of a play like this depended on recognizing the originals of certain characters in real life. Greene probably escaped being stricken by a sunstroke of Shakspeare's humour through dying just in time, after giving his runaway knock at the stage-door of the Shakescene's theatre.

But the most amusing of Shakspeare's personal retorts are those relating to old John Davies of Hereford, he who wrote the epigram of *Drusus, his deere Deer-hunting*.<sup>1</sup>

More than once did Davies dare to gnarr at his heels, or do what was still worse—pat him on the back.

In 1603 he wrote of the Players—

"Players, I love ye, and your quality,  
As ye are men, that pass time not abused :  
And some<sup>2</sup> I love for *painting, poesey*,  
And say fell Fortune cannot be excused,  
That hath for better uses you refused :  
Wit, Courage, good shape, good parts, and all good,  
As long as all these goods are no worse used,  
And though the stage doth stain pure gentle blood,  
Yet generous ye are in mind and mood" (p. 215).<sup>3</sup>

In 1609 he printed these lines—

"Some followed her by acting all men's parts,  
These on a stage she raised (in scorn) to fall :

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. C. M. Ingleby remarks on this (*Centurie of Prayse*, p. 67)—"Here too we find Burbage and Shakspeare associated as they were by Marston and by Davies." Marston, however, only does so if we identify Drusus with Shakspeare! That being admitted, there is less force in an objection made by the same writer, p. 28, where he says "Roscio was a sobriquet of Burbage, which convinces Mr. Gerald Massey that John Davies' epigram 'Of Drusus his deere Deer-hunting' (No. 50 in the *Scourge of Folly*) was meant to allude to Shakspeare's escapade at Charlecote or Fulbroke. To help his case, however, Mr. Massey has to omit the epigram and to alter the title." Not exactly so. It is true I used the phrase deer-stealing as *my own* in place of Davies' deer-hunting, but I expressly said that "the contents" of the epigram "could not be applied to Shakspeare," and that there was "more likelihood in the title." I took it that Drusus was meant for Shakspeare by Davies as well as by Marston, and Dr. Ingleby wanted to *take it so*, and at the same time *leave it too*, in order that he might score a point against me.

The critic well may sigh, "Ah, me!  
How perfect should a censor be."

<sup>2</sup> *W. S. R. B.*

<sup>3</sup> *Microcosmos: The Discovery of the Little World, with the Government thereof*. 1603. Reprinted by Rev. A. B. Grosart, in the Chertsey Worthies Library, 1878.



And made them Mirrors by their acting Arts,  
Wherein men saw their faults, though ne'er so small :  
Yet some she guerdoned not, to their deserts ;  
But, other some, were but ill action all ;  
Who while they acted ill, ill stayed behind,  
(By custom of their manners) in their mind" (p. 208).<sup>1</sup>

Also to our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare (about 1611)—

"Some say (good Will) which I, in sport, do sing,  
Hadst thou not played some kingly parts in sport,  
Thou hadst been a companion for a king ;  
And, been a king among the meaner sort.  
Some others rail ; but, rail as they think fit,  
Thou hast no railing, but, a reigning wit :  
And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reap ;  
So, to increase their stock which they do keep." <sup>2</sup>

I am of opinion that Davies' Epigram on the Player as English Æsop was aimed at Shakspeare—

"I came to English Æsop on a tide,  
As he lay tired (as tired) before the play ;  
I came unto him in his flood of pride ;  
He then was king and thought I should obey.  
And so I did, for with all reverence, I  
As to my sovereign (though to him unknown)  
Did him approach ; but lo ! he cast his eye,  
As if therein I had presumption shown.  
I like a subject (with submiss regard)  
Did him salute ; yet he regretted me  
But with a nod, because his speech he spared  
For lords and knights that came his grace to see."

He did but mark "my feigned fawnings with a nod!" says Davies. Thus Davies describes Shakspeare, praises him, flatters him, calls him "Good Will" ; he pities him for being a player, and says that but for his tendency to rail at and make game of people, more especially of kings, he might have been the companion of a king! But he has played the fool to his own detriment. Davies claims to know him so well in his *Microcosmos* ! This the Poet resents ! This he replies to.

In the person of Menenius in *Coriolanus* Shakspeare smites him thus—  
"I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tiber in it ; said to be something imperfect, in favouring the thirst complaint : hasty, and tinder-like, upon too trivial motion. What I think I utter ; and spend my malice in my breath, &c. . . . If you see this in the 'Map of my Microcosm,' follows it that I am known well enough too? What harm can your bisson conspectuities glean out of this character, if I be known well enough too?" Not only does Shakspeare take him by the beard to smite him thus and give him, as Hood says, two black eyes for being blind, but he has pluralized the old schoolmaster for the pleasure of thrashing

<sup>1</sup> *The Civile Warres of Death and Fortune* (being the "Second Tale" in the volume of which "Humours Heav'n on Earth" is the first). 1609. Reprinted by Rev. A. B. Grosart in the Chertsey Worthies Library, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scourge of Folly*, consisting of Satyricall Epigramms and others, &c. About 1611. Reprinted by Rev. A. B. Grosart, in the Chertsey Worthies Library, Davies' Works, p. 26.

him double. "I cannot say your worships have delivered the matter well, when I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables, and though I must be content to bear with those that say you are reverend grave men, yet they lie deadly that tell you you have good faces. You know neither me, yourselves, nor anything!" Our Poet had a double reason for his retort. He resents what Davies had said of the stage as well as of himself and Burbage. He speaks for the Company in general. He says in effect—"You have sat in judgment, you ridiculous old ass, but you have not handled the matter wisely or well. And as for the railing that we are charged with, why, our very priests must become mockers if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When you speak best unto the purpose it is not worth the wagging of your beard."

It will not be easy to detect any dramatic motive in these replies of Menenius; there was no sufficient cause in the words of the Tribunes: they had not drawn the *map of his Microcosm*; had not characterized him at all, but merely remarked, "you are well enough known too!" Neither was there any hint in Plutarch. No one can, I think, compare what Davies wrote of our Poet in his three different poems with this outburst of Menenius' without seeing that the Poet has here expressed the personal annoyance of himself and fellows. We may, perhaps, take it as a slight additional indication of Shakspeare's having John Davies in mind that nearly the next words spoken by Menenius on hearing that Coriolanus is returning home are, "Take my cap, Jupiter, and I thank thee;" and poor John had, in lines already quoted, greeted Southampton on his release from the Tower, with the words, "Southampton, up thy cap to heaven fling!" In his *Paper's Complaint*, which is full of tortured conceits, chiefly personal to himself, Davies says of Shakspeare—

"Another (ah, *Lord help me!*) vilifies  
With art of love, and how to subtilize,  
Making lewd Venus, with eternal lines,  
To tie Adonis to her love's designs.  
Fine whit is shed therein, but finer 'twere  
If not attired in such baudy gear."

This is immediately followed by allusions to the paper war between Nash and Harvey, and to the writings of Greene.

Again he writes in his *Scourge of Folly*—

"And oh, that ever any should record  
And *Chronicle the Sedges of a Lord!*"

Not sieges of castles and towns, he explains, but sedges of a vile kind. This *Chronicle* containing the "Sedges of a Lord" is obviously the *Taming of the Shrew*, with its induction in which "A Lord" is the chief character, and his jest at the expense of Christopher Sly is the low pastime called by Davies the "Sedges of a Lord." This is sufficient to identify Davies hitting at and replying to Shakspeare. And it is in this same poem he complains that he has suffered a great permanent injury from some playwright who has publicly put him to confusion and shame, and he regrets that

"Poets, if they last, can hurt with ease  
(Incurably) their foes which them displace."



I have wit enough to lie straight in my bed." Shakspeare did not bite his lip there for nothing! We are "railers" and "zanies," are we? "I protest," says Malvolio, "I take these wise men that crow so at these set kind of fools, no better than the fools' zanies!" No envious allusion, let us hope, on account of the Poet's noble patrons who "spent their time in seeing plays." To be sure, Davies' lines happened to be charged with that feeling. And what a blithe-spirited, sweet-blooded reply this draws from the happy, cordial heart of the man himself—"O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guilt'ess, and of a free disposition, is to take those things for birdbolts that you deem cannon bullets. There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail; nor no railing in a *known discreet man*, though he do nothing but reprove." I will only remark here that the fool in the play cannot be the "known discreet man," but we may divine who was.

John Davies was a schoolmaster. He published a book named the *Writing-master*. He was a wonderful calligraphist. Nicholas Deeble calls him "thrice-famoured for rarity." He challenged all England to contest the palm for penmanship, and one of his admirers challenged the whole world on his behalf. He appears to have taught one half the nobility to write, and on the strength of that to have solicited the other half to read his writings. Next, Davies was the great master of writing on parchment, i.e. sheepskin; the "*niggardly, rascally sheepbiter*;" the great professor of calligraphy,—

*"I think we do know the sweet Roman hand."*

We saw how, with the air of a connoisseur, he studied the shape of my lady's letters. "These be her very C's, her U's, and her T's; and thus makes she her great P's." "Her C's, her U's, and her T's; WHY THAT?" asks Sir Andrew. "Ah, mocker, that's the dog's" profession. Then, he "*looks like a pedant that keeps a school i' the church.*" No doubt of it: he was a schoolmaster; and he puts himself into the trick of singularity, as we know John Davies did.

Davies was a Puritan. As such he made his feeble, foolish attacks on the Players, and got stripped and whipped for his pains. "But, dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" "Marry, Sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan! The devil a Puritan that he is, or anything constantly but a time-pleaser—an affectioned ass, that cons state without book and utters it by great swarths; the best persuaded of himself, so crammed as he thinks with excellences, that it is his ground of faith that all that look on him love." Only those who know Davies from his writings, and have watched him as he stands before the mirror of himself in his dedications and other maunderings, "Practising behaviour to his own shadow," Malvolio-like, can judge how true the delineation is. Here we have the "affectioned ass" that Davies says the dotard, Malvolio, had made of him. Then Davies complains that the chronicler, or playwright, had spotted him with a "medley of motley livery." Nothing could more surely characterize the dress in which the goose got his dressing—yellow-stockinged, and cross-gartered most villainously—and was fooled, as threatened, "black and blue." Thus was Davies made the "most notorious geck and gull that e'er invention played on;" thus the

"Lucrece knife  
With bloodless stroke"

was driven home ; " the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal " ; and if he was not phlebotomized by the stroke, he was Bottom-ized all over ; his ass-hood made permanent for ever.

*Why* should Shakspeare have done this ? He will tell us—

" Myself and Toby  
Set this device against Malvolio here,  
Upon some stubborn and uncourteous parts  
We had conceived against him.  
How with a *sportful* malice it was followed,  
May rather pluck on laughter than revenge ;  
If that the injuries be justly weighed  
That have on both sides past."

But how do the dates tally ? I know of no book published by Davies with a date previous to the year 1602—*Wit's Pilgrimage* having no date—in which year, according to *Manningham's Diary*, *Twelfth Night* was performed. But, as Mr. Halliwell has said, Davies' poems may, in either case, have been written years before publication ; some of his Epigrams appeared with Marlowe's translation of *Ovid's Elegies* in 1596-7 ; and we know that Davies bewails the difficulty he had in getting his poems printed. The *Scourge of Folly* consists of various pieces, written during many years. Davies was educated at Oxford, and was a hanger-on of the Pembroke family. He wrote a poem on the death of Herbert's father, and says, " My friend did die, and so would God might I." This brings him very near to Herbert in the only accountable way, and explains the familiarity of Davies' early dedications. As tutor, with Puritan pretensions, he would warn the young Earl against Shakspeare and the Players, for he was unboundedly liberal with his advice. In this way many things might come to Shakspeare's eyes and ears long before they were made public, for we know with what " favour " Herbert " prosecuted " our Poet. The young lord could not help making fun of his own absurd, " peculiar John," as Davies signed himself when " double-bound to W.," and that in concert with Shakspeare, and then be generous enough to help him to get his pitiable endeavours to appear witty and wise shown up in print as fun-provoking follies. Shakspeare knew better than we do what Davies may have written and said previous to 1602, but I have quoted enough, I think, from Davies for him to stand self-identified as Malvolio.

We are told (*Centurie of Prayes*, p. 49) that Dr. Nicholson thinks " there is no character in Shakspeare which, in various ways, so well stands for Jonson " as Malvolio. But Ben was no Puritan. He writes in *Eastward Hoe*—" Your only smooth skin to make vellum is your Puritan's skin ; they be the smoothest and sleekest knaves in a country." And surely Ben was no sworn enemy to cakes and ale, or even canary wine ! Ben had too robust and assertive a self-esteem to become the foolish gull of his own vanity. Ben was a lusty asserter of himself rather than a self-worshipper. He boasted mostly of his work. His was not the Malvolian fatuity of conceit. He did not simper simiously.

Malvolio is a Puritan and a pious prig at that. He is virulently virtuous, he is a zealous foe to all good fellowship, and laughing and " daffing." The happiness of others makes his bile rise bitter in the mouth. What possible likeness to Malvolio can any one see in the man who lavished his laudation so abundantly upon his contemporaries, that forty may be seen feeding as one upon his over-plenteous praise of them ? Prythee, think no more of that !

I still hold to my opinion, expressed in 1866, that we owe to Gabriel Harvey the earliest worthy word in recognition of Shakspeare's dawning genius. In September 1592 Gabriel Harvey took up the cudgels on behalf of himself and his family who had been attacked and outrageously abused by the Greene "set," and replied to "Woeful Greene and beggarly Pierce Pennilesse, as it were a Grasshopper and a Cricket, two pretty Musicians but silly creatures; the Grasshopper imaged would be nothing less than a Green Dragon, and the Cricket malcontented the only Unicorn of the Muses." The letters are "*especially touching parties abused by Robert Greene—incidentally of divers excellent persons, and some matters of note.*" In the third of these we have what I judge to be the most appreciative of all contemporary notices of Shakspeare: the only intimation that any one then living had caught the splendid sparkle of the jewel that was yet to "lighten all the isle." Harvey is partly pleading, partly expostulating with Nash. I speak, he says, to a Poet, but "good sweet orator, BE a *divine Poet* indeed." He urges him to employ his golden talent to honour virtue and valour with "heroical cantos," as "noble Sir Philip Sidney and gentle Maister Spenser have done, with immortal fame." He is pleading for more nature in poetry. "Right Artificiality," he urges, "is not mad-brained, or ridiculous, or absurd, or blasphemous, or monstrous; but deep-conceited, but pleasurable, but delicate, but exquisite, but gracious, but admirable." He points out what he considers the finest models, the truest poetry of the past, and, turning to the Elizabethan time, he names some dear lovers of the Muses whom he admires and cordially recommends, making mention of Spenser, Watson, Daniel, Nash and others. These he thanks affectionately for their studious endeavours to polish and enrich their native tongue. He tells the poets of the day that he appreciates their elegant fancy, their excellent wit, their classical learning, their efforts to snatch a grace from the antique, but he has discovered the bird of a new dawn, with a burst of music fresh from the heart of Nature, and its prelusive warblings have made his spirits dance within him. He will not call this new Poet by name, because, were he to say what he feels, he would be suspected of exaggeration, over-praise, or unworthy motive. But he says it is the "*sweetest and divinest Muse that ever sang in English or other language!*"

Now this cannot be either Spenser or Sidney; these he has named. It cannot be Drayton, for it is a new man, and this is a plea for a new Poet, one of those whom Greene has abused. The writer is bespeaking the attention of Poets and Critics, more especially of Thomas Nash, to the writings of this new Poet, who is not Nash himself, and he pleads with those who flatter themselves on being learned not to sneer at or neglect this "fine handiwork of Nature and excellent Art combined. Gentle minds and flourishing wits were infinitely to blame if they should not also, for curious imitation, propose unto themselves such fair types of refined and engraced eloquence. The right novice of pregnant and aspiring conceit will not outskip any precious gem of invention, or any beautiful flower of elocution that may richly adorn or gallantly bedeck the trim garland of his budding style. I speak generally to every springing wit; but more especially to a few, and at this instant singularly to one (Nash) whom I salute with a hundred blessings, and entreat, with as many prayers, to love them that love all good wits, and hate none, but the Devil and his incarnate imps notoriously professed." This is a reply to the petulance and bitterness of Greene, and his

friend, the "byting satyrist." It is addressed to Thomas Nash, who, it must be remembered, was Shakspeare's "old sweet enemy"; about the earliest to sneer at the player who was gradually becoming a Poet, in his *Anatomie of Absurditie*, printed in 1590, two years before he was pelted with the wild and stupid abuse of the *Groat's-worth of Wit*—in which, if Nash had no hand, we have only too true a reflex of his spirit. If Nash and Greene aimed at Shakspeare in their attacks, assuredly it is Shakspeare whom Gabriel Harvey defends. In effect Harvey replies to Nash, "You are infinitely to blame in the course you are pursuing with regard to this new writer. Do not, I beseech you, wilfully blind your eyes to so much beauty." This he does in a gentle, conciliatory spirit, not wishing to stir up strife. "Love them that love all good wits," he says, "and hate none."

Never did I assume or suppose that the "worst of the four" spoken of by Harvey was meant for Shakspeare. I never inferred that Shakspeare was the man whom Harvey did salute "with a hundred blessings and as many prayers." I said it was Nash. Nor do I see how Dr. Ingleby could have fallen into his error, when Harvey was so obviously addressing Nash! But I see no need for Dr. Ingleby to throw away the child with the water it was washed in by Mr. Simpson.<sup>1</sup> It appears to me that Dr. Ingleby, having mixed up Nash with the new Poet, who is only alluded to incidentally, has made a further mistake in adopting Mr. Simpson's explanation as conclusive against Harvey's making any reference whatever to Shakspeare.

It is but Mr. Simpson's inference that this great rising Poet was one of the Harveys, because Gabriel only mentions the family of four, when limiting or directing his reply to the one particular book, Greene's *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*. Harvey, however, in his Letters was writing "especially touching parties abused by Robert Greene, *incidentally* of *divers excellent* persons, and some matters of note." And this advertisement covers the whole ground necessary to include Shakspeare, who had been badly abused by Greene and Nash, and therefore is not to be excluded from Harvey's defence, if he does still more expressly champion the four persons, who were his father and the three Harvey brothers. Taking the Harvey family to be those who were *especially* abused by Greene, there yet remain the "divers excellent persons" who are alluded to incidentally; and my contention still is, that Shakspeare is one, and the chief one, of these persons incidentally alluded to. He uses the very language of Chettle, "Myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he possesses." There is no collision between Nash as the person saluted with the "hundred blessings," and Shakspeare as the "sweetest and divinest Muse that ever sang in English." These latter words were not meant for Nash, they do not go with the others, but have to be carefully distinguished from them. Nash did not take them to himself—he knew that he was not the great unnamed when he wrote in *Strange News*—"To make me a small seeming amends for the injuries thou hast done me, thou reckonest me up amongst the dear loves and professed sons of the Muses, Edmund Spenser, A. Fraunce, T. Watson, S. Daniel. With a hundred blessings and many prayers thou intrestest me to love thee. Content thyself; I will not."

Harvey was "*only* referring to the *Quip*," says Mr. Simpson. But that is a gross mistake. He is also replying to *Beggarly Pierce Penniless*, who had made at least

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare Allusion Books*. Postscript to general Introduction, by C. M. Ingleby, LL.D.

two attacks on Shakspeare before 1592. I still maintain that the "Sweetest and divinest Muse that ever sang in English," which is left nameless by Harvey, was that of Shakspeare, the then known author of the *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—the man abused by Nash and Greene,—and not one of the brothers Harvey. Possibly Harvey was acquainted with the *Venus and Adonis*, then forthcoming, and with the early Sonnets, then in MS., written for the young Earl of Southampton whom the Doctor knew, and whose patronage of Shakspeare would undoubtedly weigh with Harvey.

Thus to Harvey belongs the honour of first proclaiming the sunrise. Others may have perceived the orient colours, but this writer first said it was so, and cried aloud the new dawn in English Poetry—had the intuition necessary for seeing that the nature of Shakspeare's work was incomparably higher than all the Art of the Classical School, and uttered his feeling with a forthright, frank honesty, in a strain so lofty, that it found no echo in that age until Ben Jonson gave the rebound in his noble lines to Shakspeare's memory. But Jonson then stood in the after-glow that followed the sunset. Harvey penned his eulogy in the light of the early sunrise. He pointed out the first springing beams, and called upon all who were true worshippers of the sacred fire. He alone dared to speak such a lusty panegyric of the new Poet's natural graces, and exalt his art above that of his most learned rivals with their fantastic conceits, their euphuistic follies, and "Aretinish mountains of huge exaggeration." He alone called upon those who were decrying Shakspeare so coarsely, to study his works; this he did in words which have the heart-warmth of personal friendship trying to make friends for a friend out of the bitterest enemies: words which were snarled at viciously by Nash.

This early recognition of Shakspeare arises out of the old quarrel of Learning *versus* the natural brain, which appears and reappears in all we hear of Shakspeare's literary life. In this quarrel Nash made the first onset, continued the battle along with the Greene clique, until awed into silence by the majestic rise and dilation of Shakspeare's genius, or forced to lay his hand on his mouth because, as Chettle confessed, "divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his Art." And because some influence had been brought to bear on Nash to make him so quickly follow the *Groat's-worth of Wit* with a Private "Epistle to the Printer" prefixed to the second edition of his *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Divell* (1592), in which he repudiates having had anything to do with Greene's pamphlet.

Jonson spoke the last word in this quarrel, then grown kindly, when he said that Shakspeare *had* little Latin and less Greek. We should prefer to think the anecdote true that tells of Shakspeare's reply to Jonson, it looks so representative. It is said our Poet was godfather to one of Ben's children. After the christening Ben found him in a deep study, and asked him what he was thinking about. He replied that he had been considering what would be the most fitting gift for him to bestow on his god-child, and he had resolved at last. "I prythee what?" says the father. "I'faith, Ben," (fancy the rare smile of our gentle Willie!) "I'll e'en give him a dowzen good *Lattin* spoones, and thou shalt translate them."

In Marston's *Scourge of Villanie*, satire 11, entitled "Humours," there is a description which most unmistakably points to Shakspeare, and no one else—



"Luscus, what's plaid to-day? Faith, now I know  
 I set thy lips abroach, from whence doth flow  
 Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo!  
 Say who acts best? Drusus or Roscio?  
 Now I have him, that nere of ought did speak,  
 But when of Playes or Players he did treat—  
 Hath made a Commonplace-Book out of Playes,  
 And speaks in print: at least what ere he saies  
 Is warranted by curtain plaudites,  
 If ere you heard him courting *Lesbia's eyes!*  
 Say (courteous Sir), speaks he not movingly,  
 From out some new pathetique Tragedy?  
 He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts, (what not?)  
 And all from out his huge, long-scraped stock  
 Of well-penned Playes."

Marston had in a previous satire (the 7th) parodied the exclamation of Richard in "A Man! a Man! a Kingdom for a Man!" And in this he repeats the expressions and parodies the speech of Capulet when calling upon his company for a dance—

"A hall! a hall! give room, and foot it, girls.  
 More light, ye knaves," &c.

Capulet had previously said—

"At my poor house, look to behold this night  
 Earth-treading stars."

This Marston mocks thus—

"A hall! a hall!  
 Room for the spheres, the orbs celestiall  
 Will dance Kemp's jigge; they'll revel with neat jumps;  
 A worthy Poet hath put on their pumpe."

This will show how visibly Shakspeare was in the writer's mind. Next "Roscius" was a name by which Burbage was everywhere known: he was called by that name in his lifetime, and Camden uses it in chronicling the player's death. Then we have Shakspeare coupled with him as "Drusus," either after the eloquent Roman Tribune or some character in a play now lost. The two are named together as the chief men of the company that played *Romeo and Juliet*. So these two, Shakspeare and Burbage, are afterwards named together by John Davies in his *Microcosmos*. Shakspeare is also identified by the allusion to *Romeo and Juliet*. This *Luscus* is a worshipper of the new dramatic poet, who speaks so movingly from out each new pathetic tragedy. He talks of little else than Shakspeare, and is infected by the ebullient passion of this wonderful drama that has taken the town by storm. At the mention of a theatre, Shakspeare's is first in the satirist's mind, and at the mention of plays he says, "Now, I know you are off! nothing goes down with you but Shakspeare's play; you can talk of nothing but Shakspeare." This notice is intensely interesting. It is the gird of an envious rival, who pays unwilling tribute to our Poet's increasing popularity, and at the same time gives us the most perfect little sketch of the man and his manners, as Marston saw him! He has marked his reticence in such company as that of Playwrights and Players; only speaking upon what to them would be the subject of subjects; and he feels well enough that he has never got at him. Now, he says, "I have him who is so difficult to get at." He is known also as a great maker of

extracts; he keeps a Common-place book filled from out his huge long-accumulating stock of plays. So that he has been a diligent collector of dramas, a maker of notes, and a great student of his special art. It has been his custom to copy the best things he met with into his scrap-book. The satirist almost repeats Greene's *Johannes Fac-totum* in his description of our Poet's varied ability, his aptness in doing many things with as much earnestness as though each were the one thing he came into this world to do. He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts (what not?). And all—this is how the malevolent rival accounts for the abounding genius!—and all from out his collection of plays and the scraps hoarded in his common-place book. Marston's *Satyres* were published in 1598, and this is evidently written at the moment when *Romeo and Juliet* is in the height of its success. It is the new pathetic tragedy of these lines. Also, the image of the love-poet courting Lesbia's eyes is obviously suggested by the balcony scene of this play.

It is curious, too, that he should ask which of the two is the better actor—Shakspeare or Burbage? "*He speaks in print*" reminds us of Hamlet's speech to the players. According to this witness, it would look as though the Poet had there figured himself for us somewhat as his contemporaries saw him amongst his own company of players. It makes one wonder how much he had to do personally with the great acting of Burbage in moulding such an embodiment of his own conceptions, and inspiring the player when spirit sharpened spirit and face kindled face. He was six years older than Burbage and the great Master of his Art. Of course, Marston's notice is meant to be satirical, although he wriggles in vain to raise a smile at his subject. This writer has another mean "gird" at our Poet in his *What you Will* (Act II. sc. i.)—

"Ha! he mounts Chirall on the wings of fame,  
A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!  
Look thee, I speak play scraps!"

which still further helps to identify Shakspeare by a double allusion.

The reader may now see how exceedingly probable is the suggestion (p. 101) that Marston does allude to the Sonnets written by Shakspeare for Southampton, when, after speaking of Roscio's (Burbage's) verses, he says that "absolute Castilio had furnished himself in like manner in order that *he might pay court to his mistress.*" Marston says of Shakspeare, "He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts (what not?)."

There is no need to repeat the reasons previously given for rejecting the belief that Spenser's well-known description in his *Tears of the Muses* was meant for Shakspeare. Here the representation is so according to our present view of the Poet that it has been caught at and identified. But we may safely say that no man living in 1590 (the year in which the poem was printed, possibly for the second time) ever saw Shakspeare as the "man whom Nature's self had made to mock herself, and truth to imitate."

The lines in *Colin Clout's come home again*, supposed to point out our Poet, are in every way more likely—

"And there, though last not least, is Ætion;  
A gentler Shepherd may no-where be found;  
Whose Muse, full of high thoughts' invention,  
Doth, like himself, heroically sound."

These suit the Poet's name, his nature, and his histories.

We get a side-glimpse, and can to some extent gauge how far Shakspeare was known to his contemporaries generally in the year 1600, by turning over the pages of *England's Parnassus*, in the *Heliconia*. Here we come upon numerous quotations from the *Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, but the extracts from the Plays are most insignificant. Yet at the time mentioned he had in all probability produced some twenty of his dramas, including the *Midsommer Night's Dream*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, with other fine works of his early and middle periods.

A breath of the passionate fragrance of the last-named love-drama had reached beyond the stage. But how could the editor make so few extracts from such a mine of wealth, and snatch no more from its "dark of diamonds"? He is in search of illustrations for given subjects, each of which Shakspeare has enriched with pictures surpassing those of all other writers. He possesses taste enough to quote many of the choicest passages from Spenser's poetry. The inference is inevitable that the Poet and the poetry revealed to us in Shakspeare's Plays were unknown to Robert Allot, and possibly he only quoted at second-hand. A Playwright was not looked upon as a Poet so much as a Worker for the Stage. Plays were not considered literature proper or *belles lettres* until Shakspeare made them so. They were written for a purpose and paid for. The Plays of Shakspeare were the property of the theatre. Spenser was the great Apollo of his age. He had the true mythological touch and classical tread. Accordingly, the *Heliconia* contains nearly four hundred quotations from Spenser and only ninety-six from Shakspeare; these mainly from his two poems.

Webster, in his Dedication to the *White Devil*, speaks of the "right happy and copious industry of Master Shakspeare," but he names him after Chapman and Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher.

It was impossible for Shakspeare's contemporaries to divine what there was in his works as we know them. They could not help hearing of his dramatic successes, and would often feel these to be unaccountable.

The early poems were well known, and some of the Sonnets were in circulation, but no one could predicate from these the stupendous genius that orbled out and reached its full circle in *Lear*, and the other great Tragedies.

He was better known, however, within the Theatre, and there Ben Jonson, being himself a player and playwright, got the truest glimpse of Shakspeare's mental stature. But if Jonson had really understood what Shakspeare had done for the stage, for dramatic poetry, for English Literature, how could he afterwards boast that he himself would yet "raise the despised head of Poetry; stripping her out of those rotten and base rags wherewith the times have adulterated her form, and restore her to her primitive use and majesty, and render her worthy to be embraced and kissed of all the great and master spirits of the world"? This, after Shakspeare had found Poetry on the stage the slave of drudgery, the menial of the mob, and taken her by the hand, like his own Marina, and led her forth appalled in all freshness of the spring; fairer to look on than the "evening air, clad in the beauty of ten thousand stars," and made her the nursing mother of children strong and splendid; set her on a throne and crowned her as a queen whose subjects are wide humanity, whose realm is the world.

Ben's mind was hardly of a kind to jump with that of Shakspeare in its

largest leaps. He was the genuine prototype of the critical kind that has yet a few living specimens in those persons who still persist in looking upon Shakspeare as a writer far too redundant in expression. They appear to think the foliage waving above too lusty and large for the sustaining rootage below. They have a feeling that Shakspeare was a Poet marvellously endowed by Nature, but deficient in Art, the truth being, that what they mean by Art is the smack of consciousness in the finish left so apparent that the poetry is, as it were, stereotyped, and the finish gives to it a kind of metallic face; smooth to the touch, and flattering to a certain critical sense.

They like their poetry to be fossilized and wear a recognizable pattern. Whereas Shakspeare's is all alive, and illuminated from within; as full of Nature in a book as the flowers are in the field.

The secret which, in Shakspeare, is unfathomable can be found out in the works of more self-conscious men. In them Nature is subordinate to Art. But this is not the greatest Art; it is the lesser Art, made more striking because there is less Nature.

His is not the serene art of Sophocles; it does not always smile severely on the surface. Then he has—

“Such miracles performed in play,  
Such letting Nature have its way!”

and the Nature is so boundless, we have to traverse such an infinity of suggestiveness, that it is not easy for us to beat the bounds. But the Art of Shakspeare transcends all other Art in kind as much as the inscrutable beauty of soul transcends the apparent beauty of form and feature; and his judgment is as sure as his genius is capacious. Judge him not by Greek Drama or French Art, but accept the conditions under which he wrought, the national nature with which he dealt, and he has reached the pure simplicity of uttermost perfection fifty times over to any other Poet's once! In all Shakspeare's great Plays his Art, his mastery of materials, is even more consummate, though less apparent, than that of Milton, and it holds the infinitely larger system of human world and starry brood of mind in its wider revolutions, with as safe a tug of gravitation. It is the testimony of all the greatest and most modest men that the longer they read his works, the more reasons they find to admire his marvellous wisdom, and his transcendent intuition in all mysteries of Law as well as knowledge of life.

Harvey's lusty *réveille* and Ben Jonson's eulogy notwithstanding, it is quite demonstrable that Shakspeare's contemporaries had no adequate conception of what manner of man or majesty of mind were amongst them. We know him better than they did! He came upon the stage of his century like the merest lighter of a theatre. He kindled there such a splendour and jetted such “brave fire” as the world never before saw. He did his work so quietly, greeted his fellows so pleasantly, and retired so silently, that the men whose faces now shine for us, chiefly from his reflected light, did not notice him sufficiently to tell us what he was like; did not see that this man Shakspeare had come to bring a new soul into the land—that here was the spontaneous effort of the national spirit to assert itself in our literature, and stand forth free from the old Greek tyranny which might otherwise have continued to crush our drama, as it seems to have crippled our sculpture to this day—that in these plays all

the rills of language and knowledge running from other lands were to be merged and made one in this great ocean of English life. Not one of them saw clearly as we do that whereas Homer was the poet of Greece, and Dante the poet of Italy, this gentle Willie Shakspeare, player and playwright, was destined to be *the* Poet of the World!

His real glory was unguessed at! They could have given him no assurance of the "all-hail hereafter"; the lofty expansion of his fame that now fills the proud round of the great Globe Theatre of our earth. His future was beyond the range of prophecy. How could they dream of the imperial way in which the Player should ascend his throne, to set the wide round ringing whose vast arch reverberates his voice from side to side, whilst wave on wave, age after age, the pæan of applause is caught up and continued and rolled on for ever by the passing Generations?

I often think that one reason why he left no profounder personal impression on them was because he was so much of a good fellow in general; his nature was so commonly human and fitting all round, as to seem to them nothing remarkable in particular. They failed to penetrate the mask of his modesty. His greatness of soul was not of a kind to puff out mere personal peculiarities, or manners "high fantastical." He did not take his seat in a crowding company with the bodily bulge of big Ben, or tread on their toes with the vast weight of his "mountain belly" and hodman's shoulders, nor come in contact with them as Ben would, with the full force of his hard head and "rocky face." Shakspeare's personal influence was not of the sort that is so palpably felt at all times, and often most politely acknowledged. He must have moved amongst them more like an Immortal invisible in the humanity. There was room in his serene and spacious soul for the whole of his stage-contemporaries to sit at feast. His influence embraced them, lifted them out of themselves, floated them up from earth; and while their veins ran quicksilver, and the life within them lightened, they would shout with *Matheo*, "Do we not fly high?" Are we not amazingly clever fellows?—How little they knew what they owed to the mighty one in their midst! How little could they gauge the virtue of his presence which wrapped them in a diviner ether! When we breathe in a larger life, and a ruddier health from the atmosphere that surrounds us and sets us swimming in a sea of heart's-ease, we seldom pause to estimate how much in weight the atmosphere presses to the square inch! So was it with the personal influence of Shakspeare upon his fellows. They felt the exaltation, the invisible radiation of health, the flowing humanity that filled their felicity to the brim; but did not think of the weight of greatness that he brought to bear on every square inch of them. The Spirit of the Age sat in their midst, but it moved them so naturally they forgot to note its personal features, and he was not the man to be flashing his immortal jewel in their eyes on purpose to call attention to it.

Big Ben took care to bequeath his body as well as his mind to us. We know how much flesh he carried. We know his love of good eating and strong drink; his self-assertiveness and lust of power. We know that he required a high tide of drink before he could launch himself and get well afloat, and that amongst the Elizabethan song-birds he was named, after his beloved liquor, a "Canary" bird. One cannot help fancying that Shakspeare, as he sat quietly listening to Ben's brag, got many a hint for the fattening and glorifying of his own Falstaff. How different it is with our Poet! We get no glimpse of him in his cups. The

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names they give him, however, are significant. They call him the "gentle Willie," the "beloved," the "honey-tongued." Fuller's description produces an impression that Ben Jonson was no match for Shakspeare in mental quickness when they met in their wit-combats at the 'Mermaid.' Ben carried most in sight; Shakspeare more out of sight. For the rest, there is not much to show us what the man Shakspeare was, or to tell us that his fellows knew what he was. But their silence is full of meaning. It tells that he was not an extraordinary man in the vulgar sense, which means something peculiar, and startling at first sight. He must have been too complete a man to be marked out by that which implies incompleteness—some special faculty held up for wonder, and half picked out by disparity on the other side; as the valley's depth becomes a portion of the mountain's height. There was nothing of this about Shakspeare. And his completeness, his ripeness all round, his level height, his serenity, would all tend to hide his greatness from them. They can tell us the shape of Greene's beard, which he "cherished continually, without cutting; a jolly long red peak, like the spire of a steeple, whereat a man might hang a jewel, it was so sharp and pendant," his "continual *shifting of lodgings*;" the nasal sound of Ben Jonson's voice, and his face "punched full of eyelet-holes like the lid of a warming-pan." But they tell us nothing in this kind about Shakspeare, man or manner, and this tells us much.

We know they thought him a man of sweetest temper and readiest wit, honest and frank, of an open and free nature, very gentle and lovable, and as social a good fellow as ever lived. And, indeed, he must have been the best of all good fellows that ever was so wise a man. Like other fixed stars he could twinkle. He could make merry with those roystering madcaps at the 'Mermaid,' who heard the "chimes at midnight" but did not heed them, and he could preserve the eternal rights of his own soul, and keep sacred its brooding solitude. He could be the tricky spirit of mad whim and waggery; one of the sprightliest maskers at the carnival of high spirits, and then go home majestic in his serious mood as he had been glorious in his gladness, and brood over what he had seen of life, and put forth those loveliest creations of his which seem to have unfolded in the still and balmy night-time when men slept, and the flowers in his soul's garden were fed with the purest dews of heaven.

Ben Jonson certainly knew his greatest contemporary best, and his unstinted praise is all the more precious for his criticism. I have before now spoken too grudgingly of Ben, having, like others, been unduly influenced by the often-asserted ill-feeling said to have been shown by him toward Shakspeare. It does seem as though you have only to repeat a lie often to get it confirmed with the world in general as a truth. I ought to have relied more on the spirit of his poem. He has left us the noblest lines ever written on Shakspeare; in these we have the very finest, fullest, frankest recognition of the master-spirit of imagination. Ben's nature never mellowed into a manly modesty like that of Shakspeare's, nor did he ever bask in the smiles of popular favour or the golden sunshine of pecuniary success as did his overtowering and victorious contemporary, but, in recognizing Shakspeare as a writer too great for rivalry, he actually reaches a kindred greatness.

Speaking of Jonson's eulogy, Dr. Ingleby has remarked, "One could wish that Ben had said all this in Shakspeare's lifetime." Nay, but think how the kindest remembrance of the man came over him, and overcame all rival memories,

and how the likeness of Ben becomes truly self-glorified whilst he is passing under Shakspeare's shadow, from which he suffered permanent eclipse! Nor do I think the likeness in the well-known tributary lines presents the only personal impression of Shakspeare left by Ben Jonson. If it had not been for the persistent endeavour to prove Shakspeare a lawyer, and too confidently assumed that the character, or rather the name, of Ovid, in the *Poetaster* (*produced at Shakspeare's theatre*, 1601), was intended for Shakspeare, it would have been seen that it is in the character of "Virgil" that Jonson has rendered the nature of the man, the quality of his learning, the affluence of his poetry, the height at which the Poet himself stood above his work, in the truest, best likeness of Shakspeare extant:—

*Horace.* I judge him of a rectified spirit,  
 (By many revolutions of discourse  
 In his bright reason's influence) *refined*  
*From all the tartarous moods of common men:*  
 Bearing the nature and similitude  
 Of a right heavenly body: *most severe*  
*In fashion and collection of himself,*  
*And then as clear and confident as Jove.*  
*Gal.* And yet so chaste and tender is his ear,  
 In suffering any syllable to pass,  
 That he thinks may become the honoured name  
 Of issue to his so-examined self,<sup>1</sup>  
 That all the lasting fruits of his full merit,  
 In his own poems, he doth still distaste;  
 As if his mind's piece, which he strove to paint,  
 Could not with fleshly pencils have her right.  
*Tib.* But to approve his works of sovereign worth,  
 This observation, methinks, more than serves,  
 And is not vulgar. That which he hath writ  
 Is with such judgment laboured, and distilled  
 Through all the needful uses of our lives,  
 That *could a man remember but his lines,*  
*He should not touch at any serious point*  
*But he might breathe his spirit out of him.*  
*Cæsar.* You mean, he might repeat part of his works,  
 As fit for any conference he can use!  
*Tib.* True, royal Cæsar.  
*Cæsar.* Worthily observed;  
 And a most worthy virtue in his works.  
 What thinks material Horace of his learning?  
*Horace.* His learning savours not the school-like gloss  
 That most consists in echoing words and terms,  
 And soonest wins a man an empty name:  
 Nor any long or far-fetched circumstance  
 Wrapped in the various generalities of Art,  
 But a direct and analytic sum  
 Of all the worth and first effects of Arts.  
 And for his poesy, 'tis so rammed with life,  
 That it shall gather strength of life with being,  
 And live hereafter more admired than now."—Act V. sc. i.

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<sup>1</sup> "Look how the father's face  
 Lives in his issue; even so the race  
 Of Shakspeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
 In his well-turned and true-fil'd lines."—BEN JONSON.

Part of this is spoken by "Horace," who is Ben himself, and said in reply to Cæsar, who had just described him as the likeliest to *envy* or *detract*. This, therefore, is the writer's own defence! How cordially one can repeat his epitaph—

"O RARE BEN JONSON!"

It is recorded on his monument at Stratford, that Shakspeare was a Nestor in judgment, a Socrates in genius, and a Virgil in art!

But for the influence which a personal theory of the Sonnets has unconsciously had, it would have been inferred, that, as soon as he was able, our Poet would naturally have his wife and family to live with him in London. It has been discovered that he paid rates, and why should he not have received his wife and children at his home near the Bear-garden, in Southwark, or St. Helen's, Bishopsgate? He was by nature a family man; true to our most English instincts, his heart must have had its sweet domesticities of home-feeling nestling very deep in it—our love of privacy and our enjoyment of that "safe, sweet corner of the household fire, behind the heads of children." The true reading of Betterton's story, told through Rowe, is that Shakspeare left his wife and family temporarily, and, as he could not have returned to them after the short time of parting to live at Stratford, they, of course, rejoined him in London. Besides which, the mention of his going to Stratford once a year suggests that his home was in London, and this was a holiday visit. And, if the wife is to be thrust aside, on account of her age, can we imagine that Shakspeare's home would be in London, and his daughter Susannah and his boy Hamnet, in whom lay his cherished hope of succession, at Stratford? Again, if he had left Anne Hathaway in dislike, why should he have been in such apparent haste to go back to live with his rustic wife, and buy for her the best house—the Great House—in Stratford? We may rest satisfied that Shakspeare did just the most natural thing—which was to have a home of his own, with his wife and family in it; that he dwelt as Wisdom dwells, with children round his knees. And in this privacy he was hidden, when others of his contemporaries were visible about town, living their homeless tavern life; here it was that so much of his work would be done; here "his silence would sit brooding;" so many of his days were passed unnoticed, and he could live the quiet happy life that leaves the least personal record.

We should have still fewer facts of Shakspeare's life than we have, were it not for his evident ambition to make money, and become a man of property. Whatsoever feeling for fame and immortality he may have had, he assuredly possessed a great sense of common human needs. He never forgot those little mouths waiting to be fed by his hand; and we may believe him to have been as frugal in his life as he was indefatigable in his work. He had seen enough of the ills and felt sufficiently the stings of poverty in his father's home. So he sets about gaining what money he can by unwearied diligence in working, and when he has made it grasps it firmly.

Not long since some documents were discovered, in which the sons of James Burbage make affidavit that they built the Globe Theatre, with sums of money taken up at interest, "which lay heavy on us many years, and to ourselves we joined those deserving men, Shakspeare, Hemings, Condall, Phillips and others," as partners in what they term the "profits of the House." The Globe was built



about the year 1594. This appears to show that Shakspeare was a shareholder, though not an owner; that is, one who had a share in the takings, or *the House*, as it is still called. So that in 1594, or thereabouts, Shakspeare had obtained his "Cry in a Fellowship of Players," referred to in *Hamlet*, though he could not, as we say, "cry halves" in the full profits, not being a proprietor. Still, as a proof of his prosperity it may be noted, that his father had applied to the Heralds' College, in 1596, for a grant of coat-armour; and, in 1597, a suit in Chancery was commenced on the part of John and Mary Shakspeare, for the recovery of an estate which had been mortgaged by them. In this year 1597 he is able to buy the best house in Stratford, called New Place. In the next year he sells a load of stone to the Corporation for 10*d.* From this little fact we may infer that alterations were going on at New Place. He had worked hard for some years to make a nest, and was "feathering" it ready for the time when he could quit the stage, and retire to Stratford. He is also doing a stroke of business as a maltster, and in February, 1598, he is claimed as a Townsman of Stratford. In the year 1598 he was assessed on property in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate. Two years later his name had dropped out of the list. Now, as New Place was bought and made ready by that time, the most probable inference is that his wife and family left the house in London and went back to Stratford to live in their new home. His circumstances had so far improved that he could look forward to longer visits to Stratford, and, as he wrote more he would undoubtedly begin to play less. London may not have agreed with his children. Had not his boy Hamnet died in 1596?

He not only makes money, but he invests it, and turns it over. The fame of his wealth soon spreads, and he is looked up to in the Golden City. Some of his country friends want him to buy, and he does buy; others want him to lend, and he is able to lend. He lends to Richard Quiney, the father of his future son-in-law, the sum of £30. We are not sure that he did not take interest for it. The transaction has a smack of percentage about it. Of this we may be sure, that if Shakspeare did not take interest *for* his money, he took a most lively interest *in* it. In May, 1602, his brother Gilbert completed for him the purchase of one hundred and seven acres of arable land, from William and John Comb. In September of the same year he bought other property in his native town. In 1604 he brought an action against Philip Rogers, in the Court of Record, at Stratford, to recover a debt of £1 15*s.* 10*d.* In July, 1605, he made his largest investment. He purchased for the sum of £440—more than £2000 of our money—half of the lease of tithes, to be collected in Stratford and other places, which had some thirty-one years to run.

He is now trying to leave the stage as player and manager, and live at Stratford, where he can look after his tithes for himself. He has acquired houses and lands, and obtained a grant of arms, and shown every desire to found a county family; to possess a bit of this dear England in which he could plant the family tree, and go down to posterity *that* way. He appears to have been careless of personal fame, and to have flung off his works to find their own way as best they could to immortality. It is possible that he had some large and lazy idea of one day collecting and correcting an edition of his works. If so, it passed into that Coleridgian Limbo of unfulfilled intentions where so many others have gone, or else death overtook him all too swiftly before the theatre-rights had expired. But that he was ambitious of founding a local family house,

which should have such foundations in the soil of England as he could broaden out with his own toil, is one of the most palpable facts of his life, enforced again and again, a fact most absolutely opposed to the fancy that he lived apart from his wife—and it brings the man home to us with his own private tastes and national feelings, plainly as though he had lived but the other day, as Walter Scott.

The position attained by Shakspeare in 1598 was such that Meres can speak of the group amongst whom the Sonnets circulated, that is, persons of quality like Southampton, Rutland, Herbert, Elizabeth Vernon, Lady Rich, and her brother, the Earl of Essex, whose characters are assuredly reflected in the dramatic mirror of the works, as Shakspeare's "Private Friends."

Hallam was of opinion that he drew but little from the living model. My study of Shakspeare leads me to the conclusion that of all our great poets he derived most from real life, that he would not otherwise have overflowed with such infinite variety of character in such prodigal profusion. I think his men and women are so live and real for us to-day because he so faithfully mirrored those of his own day. He drew from life-figures rather than lay-figures. He did not evolve characters out of his own head, nor from the depths of his own inner consciousness. Poets who work in that fashion become the Dantes, Byrons, and Hugos of poetry.

Minds that do not draw much from the living model, or look outwardly on the world to take all the help that Nature offers them, must of necessity be subjective, and all the character they can ever produce, shaped more or less in the mould of their own personality, comes forth in the favour and features of themselves. Shakspeare does not envisage all nature within the limits of his own lineaments, but masks himself in the living likenesses of other men. I grant that no one transfigures his living model as he does. No one, like him, can fix our sight on the mirage produced in imagination, and make us overlook and forget the facts that he was working from.

He relies on reality as the engineer on the rock, but his cunning in transforming the matter is alike subtle with his art of vanishing from view in his own person. When the spaces of his thought are spanned and the scaffolding disappears as though all fairy world had lent a hand to the labour, and the creation is finished like an air-hung work of wonder, it is almost as difficult to connect it with the real earth whereon he built as it would be to find the bases of the rainbow. The way in which he creates for immortality out of the veriest dust of the earth, deals divinely with things most grossly mortal, and conjures the loftiest sublimities from the homeliest realities, is one of the great Shakspearean secrets. As a slight example, see the lines in *Macbeth*—

"The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this *vault* to brag of!"

Here are Earth and Heaven, Wine-cellar and the concave Vast wedded, in a word, with one fusing flash of his imagination! But who thinks or dares to think of the idea, as first conceived, in the august presence of its after-shape! The scenery of his theatre was poor. But if a blanket serves for the curtain, he will turn it to account and enrich it with great interest. That simple drapery of his tragedy is good enough for hangings in heaven, and so the curtain of night becomes the "Blanket of the Dark."

He makes appalling use of a common provincialism. An instance may be pointed to in this same play. In the depth of the tragedy, when Macbeth and his wife are wading hand in hand through blood to a throne, he makes the Thane turn to his partner, when in the very mid-current of the murders, and call her by a most innocent country term of tenderest endearment—

“ Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest Chuck,  
Till you approve the deed.”

So was it with his realism when portraying human beings; no one like him in converting his friends into our friends; in turning his time into all time. But this was not done by idealizing them so much as by getting at the utmost reality. It is not that he did not picture the people whom he saw and knew, but he has rendered the very spirit of them so absolutely, so interiorly, they live for us in his poetry so inwardly, so vitally, so familiarly, that we seem to know them more intimately, and commune with them more closely, than we should have been able to do even in real life; and the personages that walk in history under some of their names are mere fleshless phantoms and attenuated shadows beside them.

Shakspeare's finest and most impressive characters are so real and profound, because of the amount of real life at the heart of them, that breathes beneath the robe of other times; the mask of other names. Living men and women move and have their being in his dramas. And the greatest of all reasons why his characters exist for all time is, because he so closely studied the men and women of his own time, and wrote with one hand touching the pulse of life, the other on the pen. Some of those who must have come the nearest home to him, would be the “Private Friends” of his “*Sugred Sonnets*.”

The group of Shakspeare's Private Friends, for whom the Sonnets were written, being thus far identified, it remains to be seen whether, by way of further corroboration, we can find any trace of their characters in the plays. We may be quite sure that Shakspeare was hard at work, whilst, to all appearance, merely at play in the Sonnets. He would mark the workings of Time and Fortune on those in whom he took so tender an interest, wistfully as a bird watches the mould upturned by the plough, and pick up the least germs of fact fresh from life, and treasure up the traits of his friends for a life beyond life in his dramas. He had followed Southampton's course year after year anxiously as Goëthe watched his cherry-tree in patient hope of seeing fruit at last; though one season the spring-frosts killed the blossom, another year the birds ate the buds, then the caterpillars destroyed the green leaves, and next there came a blight, and still he watched and hoped to see the ripened fruit!

That course of true love which never did run smooth was expressly exemplified for him in the life of his friend Southampton. It is represented first in his comedy, and it culminates in his tragedy. His own dear friend was the tried lover and banished man in reality of whom we hear again and again in the Plays.

There is much of Southampton's character and fate in Romeo the unlucky, doomed to be crossed in his dearest wishes, whose name was writ in sour Misfortune's book. The Queen's opposition to the marriage stands in the place of that ancient enmity of the two Houses. The troubled history of Southampton's love for Elizabeth Vernon, and the opposition of Fortune, much dwelt upon in the Sonnets,

could not fail to give a more tragic touch to the play, a more purple bloom to the poetry, when the subject was the sorrow of true but thwarted love. The Poet must have often preached patience to his friend, like the good Friar Lawrence, and at the same time apprehended with foreboding feeling and presaging fear some tragic issue from the clashing of such a temperament with so trying a fortune.

In choosing the subject of *Romeo and Juliet* the fact could not have been overlooked by Shakspeare that his friend Southampton was *also* a *Montague* on the mother's side; she being Mary, daughter of Anthony Browne, the first Viscount Montague! Looked at in this light, the question of Juliet—

“Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?”

has a double emphasis. Also, there are expressions pointing to the lady of the Early Sonnets as being in the Poet's mind when he was thinking of Juliet. A remarkable image in the 27th Sonnet is also made use of in Romeo's first exclamation on seeing Juliet for the first time. In the Sonnet the lady's remembered beauty is said to be “like a jewel hung in ghastly night,” which

“Makes black Night beauteous, and her old face new.”

And Romeo says—

“Her beauty hangs upon the check of Night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.”

Considering who the Sonnets were written for, this figure reappears in too pointed a way not to have some suggestive significance. There is likewise a significant bit of Shakspeare's by-play in what seems merely the Nurse's nonsense respecting the letter R; but in these cases we have to watch him closely, and be quick to catch the hint.

“*Nurse.* Doth not Rosemary and Romeo *both* begin with a letter?”

*Romeo.* Ay, Nurse; what of that? both with an R.

*Nurse.* Ah, mocker! that's the dog's name: R is for the— No; *I know it begins with some other letter: and she hath the prettiest sententious of it, of you and Rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it.*

*Romeo.* Commend me to thy lady.”—Act II. sc. iv.

More is meant in this passage than meets the eye. The Nurse is being used. There is something that she does not quite fathom, yet her lady does. She is prettily wise over a pleasant conceit. Romeo understands it too, if we may judge by his judicious reticence. The Nurse, however, knows there is *another letter* involved. There is a name that begins with a letter different from the one sounded, but this name is not in the Play, therefore it cannot be Rosemary which the Nurse knows does not begin with an “R.” Name and letter have to do with Romeo, the lady sees how, but the Nurse, who started to tell the lover a good joke about Juliet's playing with his name, is puzzled in the midst of it; can't make it out exactly, but it's a capital joke, and it would do his heart good to see how it pleases the lady, who is learned in the matter, though she, the Nurse, be no scholar!

This bit of Shakspeare's fun has perplexed his commentators most amusingly; their hunt after the Dog and the “dog's letter R” being the best fun of all. The only “dog” in the Nurse's mind is that “mockery” of herself, the audacious lover of her young lady. Romeo has put her out of reckoning by saying “both with

an R." And the Nurse, with the familiarity of an old household favourite, and a chuckle of her amorous old heart, says in effect, "Ah, you dog, you, 'R' is for 'Rosemary,' and also for— *No, there's some other letter*, and my lady knows all about it;" only she says this half to herself, as she tries to catch the missing meaning of her speech, the very point of her story. "Rosemary" is merely the herb of that name. "*That's for remembrance*" with Juliet, not for the name of a dog! The dog number one is Shakspeare's; dog number two is only Tyrwhitt's. If R were the dog's letter in the name of Rosemary, nothing could make it any other letter. What then is the "other letter" involved? Now if, as suggested, the living Montague, Southampton, be Shakspeare's life-figure for Romeo, we shall find a meaning for the first time, and make sense of the Nurse's nonsense by supposing, as we well may, that here is an *aside* on the part of the Poet to his private friends, and that the name which begins with *another letter* is Wriothesley!

In this name the two letters R and W are sounded as one, and both like the R in Rosemary. This meeting-point is not found in the name of Romeo, but it is in that of Wriothesley. Those who think such an interpretation impossible do not know Shakspeare. We have a like allusion to the first letter of a name that is not in the Play when Beatrice sighs for the "letter H," or for the person whose name it represents, and who cannot be Benedick, her lover in the Play. There is also a similar bit of by-play and personal allusion in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Mrs. Quickly asks Master Fenton, "*Have not your worship a wart above your eye?*" "Yes, marry, have I; what of that?" "Well, thereby hangs a tale;—good faith, it is such another Nan. We had an hour's talk of that wart;—I shall never laugh but in that maid's company! But, indeed, she is given too much to allicholly and musing. I will tell your worship more of the wart, the next time we have confidence."

That this is private by-play and not public business may be gathered from the fact that such a question need not have been put, as the wart would have been visible to Mrs. Quickly. And as Shakspeare is working up his Stratford reminiscences and characters in this Play, as Justice Shallow represents Sir Thomas Lucy, it is not unlikely that "sweet Anne Page" was drawn from poor Anne Hathaway, and Master Fenton from William Shakspeare,—the player in and with and from reality. But perhaps an apology should be offered to the autobiographers for so malicious a suggestion.

In *Romeo and Juliet* the Poet is using the Nurse for the amusement of his friends, just as he uses Mrs. Quickly and Dogberry for ours; that is, by making ignorance a dark reflector of light for us; causing them to hit the mark of his meaning for us whilst missing it for themselves; thus they are befooled, and we are flattered.

It is exceedingly probable that in the previous scene of this same act we have another *aside* which glances at my reading of the Sonnets, if only for a moment, the twinkling of an eye, yet full of merry meaning.

Mercutio says of Romeo in love, "Now is he *for the numbers Petrarch flowed in*: Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench; marry, *she had a better love (or friend) to be-rhyme her.*" Supposing my theory to be the right one, the perfection of the banter here—as between Shakspeare and Southampton—would lie in an allusion unperceived by the audience, but well known to poet and patron, as relating to the Sonnets which were then being written. This *aside*

would be no more than his making a public allusion to the Sonnets, as work in hand, when he dedicated the poem of *Lucrece*. Besides, Shakspeare may be the original of Mercutio (see Ben Jonson's description of his liveliness !), he may even be playing the part on the stage to Burbage's Romeo, and the joke at his own and his friend's expense would be greatly heightened by an arch look at Southampton sitting on the stage in "the Lords' places, on the very rushes where the Comedy is to dance." Many things would be conveyed to the initiated friends by the Poet's humour thus pawkily playing bo-peep from behind the dramatic mask, as it indubitably does.

His promises of immortality made to the Earl of Southampton, in the Sonnets, have had a fulfilment in the Plays of which the world but little dreams. Every heroic trait and chivalric touch in the Earl's nature would be carefully gathered up to reappear enriched in some such favourite type of English character as King Henry V. Who but Henry Wriothesley, the gay young gallant, the chivalrous soldier, the *beau subreur* and dashing leader of horse, could have lived in the mind's eye of Shakspeare when he wrote—

" I saw young Harry with his beaver on,  
His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly armed,  
Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury !  
He vaulted with such ease into his seat,  
As if an angel dropped down from the clouds,  
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,  
And witch the world with noble horsemanship."

Here we have the very man to the life, named by name, just as the Poet had seen him mount horse for the wars when he bade him farewell and triumphed in his pride. The words are put into Sir Richard Vernon's mouth, but it is Shakspeare's heart that speaks in them. Camden relates that about the end of March (1599) Essex set forward for Ireland, and was "accompanied out of London with a fine appearance of nobility and the most cheerful huzzas of the common people." And, seeing that Shakspeare in Henry V. makes his allusion to Essex's coming home, I infer that in Henry IV. he pictures Southampton as he saw him at starting, on a similar occasion, dressed in heroic splendours, to his proud loving eyes; the noblest, the fieriest of the troop of young gallants, all noble, all on fire, "all clinquant, all in gold!"

Three times over in the earlier Plays two of the female characters are cousins—Hermia and Helena in the *Midsommer Night's Dream*; Celia and Rosalind in *As You Like It*; Beatrice and Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Now I take it there was a reason in real life for this repetition. I hold that the originals of these cousins were known to Shakspeare as the two cousins, Elizabeth Vernon and Lady Rich. We might assume without further proof that if the Lady Rich sat to Shakspeare for some of his Sonnet-sketches, she would be certain to reappear, full-picture, in some of his plays. She was too rare a product of Nature not to leave an impress on the mould of his imagination that would not easily pass away—an image that would give its similitude to characters afterwards fashioned by the Poet. If he wrote about her on account of others, we may be sure he did on his own. Now, *As You Like It* is based on a banishment from Court and an exile in the country. The Play may be dated 1599. And we learn from the history of the Private Friends that a banishment from

Court of Essex, Elizabeth Vernon, Lady Rich, and the rest, had occurred in reality at the end of 1598.

About this time (see p. 327) Elizabeth Vernon was laid up at Essex House "with reasons," and her cousin, Lady Rich, was laid up with her, and her banished brother Essex. "*Then there were two cousins laid up; when the one should be lamed with reasons, and the other mad without any*" (*As You Like It*, I. ii.). In the Play we see the two cousins are confessedly jesting on matters that can be identified outside of it. "But, turning these jests out of service, let us talk in good earnest." In most of these asides he leaves a proof of his by-play, but it is touch-and-go with him, he is so subtle in his double-dealings!

I have already suggested that the Rosaline of *Love's Labour's Lost* and the lady of the *Latter Sonnets* are both drawn from the same original—the Lady Rich. And if that be so, it can hardly be otherwise than that "My Lord Biron" is meant for Sidney. It then follows that one aim of the Play was to stage the follies, and make fun of that "college of wit-crackers" who sought to found the "Areopagus," as Spenser termed it, and about which Shakspeare knew far more than we do. There is a mine of matter here which I am unable to work from lack of time. But I consider that in the character of Lord Biron, the poet and wit of the royal party, he has aimed at Sidney; and that in Biron's passion for Rosaline, the "Whitely wanton with the velvet brow," with her two black burning stars for eyes, and her "continent of beauty," who set the fashion of blackness in beauty which could not be imitated or falsified, it was so natural-true, we have Sidney's passion and pursuit of Lady Rich represented over again by Shakspeare, to live for ever also in his lines. I further think that to the jealousy of Elizabeth Vernon and the bickerings of the two cousins, as *glimpsed* in the *Sonnets*, we owe one of the loveliest conceptions that ever sprang on wings of splendour from the brain of man, the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; dreamed by the potent magician, when he lay down as it were apart from the stir and the strife of reality, under the boughs of that Athenian wood—a region full of fantasy; and in the mystic time, and on the borderland of life, the fairies came floating to him under the moonlight, over the moss, on divers-coloured, dew-besilvered plumes, lighting up the leafy coverts with their glow-worm lamps, moving about him in tiny attendance, to do his spiritings as they filled the sleeping forest with the richness of that dream.

The play and the by-play are the very *forgery* of Jealousy; the jealousy of mortals mirrored with most exquisite mockery in fairy world.

Hippolyta covertly gives the cue to the underlying realities in the life beyond the stage, when she proclaims as in an epilogue, that

"All the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigured so together,  
*More witnesseth than Fancy's images.*"

It is a fantasia upon matters of fact.

In the *Sonnets* we have the position of two women, who are cousins, wooing one man; in the Play two men are made to pursue the love of one woman. Puck, speaking of the effect of the flower-juice squeezed on the eyes, says,

"Then will two at once woo one."

Only the parts being reversed, the two that were wooing *Hermia* so passionately are compelled to follow *Helena* as persistently. The object too of *Oberon's*

sending for the magic flower, was, in its human aspect, to turn a false love into true, but by a mistake on the part of Puck, that was intentional on the part of the Poet, a true love is subjected to a false glamour, through the "misprision" that ensues. A sweet Athenian lady is in love with a disdainful youth, who has capriciously left her to pursue the betrothed of another, and thus gives the leading movement to the love-fugue. "Anoint his eyes," says Oberon, that he, in fact,

"May be as he was wont to be,  
And see as he was wont to see."

And Helena, groping through the glimmering night, half-blind with tears, in pursuit of her truant lover, chides almost in the same language as the lady of the Sonnets—

"Fair Demetrius!  
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex;  
We cannot fight for love as men may do;  
We should be wooed, and were not made to woo."

The Poet having written Sonnets upon Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of her cousin Lady Rich, found enough reality, and no more, in it to *play* with the subject. So the pain and the petulance, the pleadings and reproaches, all passed away into this haunted realm of his imagination. He *dreamed* about it, and the fact of the day became the fiction of the night; this being the transfigured shape it took in the spirit-world of things—a rainbow of most ethereal beauty, that rose up in wonder-land, after the April storm of smiles and tears had passed from the face of real love, in the human world!—an arch of triumph, under which the friends were to pass, on their way into the world of wedded life. All fairy-land is lit up for the illustration of the forgeries of jealousy, and we have the love-tiffs, fallings-out, and makings-up of the Poet's friends, represented in the most delicate disguise. His fancy has been tickled, and his humour is all alive with an elfish sparkle. He will make the wee folk mimic the quarrels of these human mortals; the fairy jealousy shall be just theirs, translated to the realm of the quaint spirits, who are a masked humanity in miniature. Thus Oberon asks—

"How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,  
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta?"

In dream-land, too, the Poet can have his own way, and turn the tables on the facts of real life. He will play Oberon, and use the charmed juice for a "fair maid's sake." The lover shall be punished, that was of late so mad with longings for Hermia, and have his eyes opened by a truer love-sight, and be rejected by Helena, as the breather of false vows. The lady that drew all hearts and eyes shall be forsaken and left forlorn. In the Sonnets, poor Helena has to reproach her cousin for stealing her lover from her side; Hermia is there the "gentle thief." In the Play this is reversed, and Hermia charges Helena for the theft.

"O me! you juggler! you canker-worm!  
You thief of love! What! have you come by night  
And stolen my Love's heart from him."—*Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. ii.

Many touches tend to show that Hermia is Lady Rich, and Helena, Elizabeth Vernon. The complexion of Hermia is aimed at, in her being called a "raven";



complexion and spirit both, in the "tawny Tartar." The eyes of *Stella* are likewise distinguishable in "*Hermia's spherish eyne*;" in "your eyes are *lode-stars!*" also in these lines—

"Happy is *Hermia*, wheresoe'er she lies;  
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes;  
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:  
If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers."

Hers too was the black brow of which we have heard so much, the "brow of Egypt," in which "the Lover" could see "*Helen's beauty.*"

The difference in character and in height of person agrees with all we know, and can fairly guess, of the two cousins. Elizabeth Vernon—*Helena*—is the taller of the two; in her portraits she is a woman of queenly height and of a ruddy colour, with hair like the glossy marjoram-buds. "Thou painted *May-pole!*" *Hermia* calls *Helena*. *Helena* is also the most timid, and, as in the *Sonnets*, fearful of her cousin, who "was a vixen when she went to school," and who is fierce for her size.

*Hermia* protests against yielding herself in marriage to "his lordship, whose unwished yoke my soul consents not to give sovereignty" (to); just as *Stella* protested at the altar against the yoke of Lord Rich. In the 28th *Sonnet* Elizabeth Vernon is thus addressed:

"I tell the Day, to please him, thou art bright,  
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven;  
So flatter I the swart-complexioned Night;  
When sparkling stars tire not, thou gild'st the even."

In the drama *Lysander* exclaims—

"Fair *Helena*, who more engilds the Night,  
Than all the fiery oes and eyes of light!"

Again, in *Sonnet* 109, *Southampton* says, on the subject of his wanderings in the past, and with a special allusion to some particular occasion, when the two lovers had suffered a "night of woe"—this Play being a Dream of that "Night" in which the Poet held the lovers to have been touched with a *Midsummer* madness!—

"As easy might I from myself depart,  
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:  
That is my home of love: if I have ranged,  
Like him that travels, I return again."

And in the Drama the repentant lover, when the glamour has gone from his eyes, says of the lady whom he has been following fancy-sick—

"*Lysander*, keep thy *Hermia*. I will none:  
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.  
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,  
And now to *Helen* it is home returned,  
There to remain."

Lastly, the early and familiar acquaintanceship of the two cousins, *Lady Rich* and Elizabeth Vernon, is perfectly portrayed in these lines. *Helena* is expostulating on the cruel bearing of *Hermia* towards her—

"O, is it all forgot ?  
 All school-days' friendship, childhood-innocence ?  
 We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,<sup>1</sup>  
 Have with our needles created both one flower,  
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,  
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,  
 As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,  
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,  
 Like to a double-cherry, seeming parted,  
 But yet an union in partition ;  
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem,  
 So with two seeming bodies but one heart."

*Midsummer Night's Dream, Act III. sc. ii.*

Mr. Halpin, in *Oberon's Vision*, illustrated,<sup>2</sup> has conclusively shown the "little western flower" of the Allegory to be the representative of Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex, whom the Earl of Leicester wedded after he had shot his bolt with her Majesty and missed his mark of a royal marriage.

My interpretation of Oberon's remark—

"That very time I saw, *but thou could'st not*"—

is to this effect—Shakspeare is treating Puck for the moment as a personification of his own boyhood. "*Thou rememberest the rare vision we saw at the 'Princely Pleasures' of Kenilworth?*" "I remember," replies Puck. So that he was then present, and saw the sights and all the outer realities of the pageant. But the Boy of eleven could not see what Oberon saw, the matrimonial mysteries of Leicester: the lofty aim of the Earl at a Royal prize, and the secret intrigue then pursued by him and the Countess of Essex. Whereupon the Fairy King unfolds in Allegory what he before saw in vision, and clothes the naked skeleton of fact in the very bloom of beauty. My reading will dovetail with the other to the strengthening of both. But Mr. Halpin does not explain *why* this "little flower" should play so important a part; why it should be the chief object and final cause of the whole allegory, so that the royal range of the imagery is but its mere setting; why it should be the only link of connection betwixt the allegory and the play. My rendering alone will show why and how. The allegory was introduced on account of these two cousins; the "little western flower" being mother to Lady Rich, and aunt to Elizabeth Vernon. The Poet pays the Queen a compliment by the way, but his allusion to the love-shaft loosed so impetuously by Cupid is only for the sake of marking where it fell, and bringing in the Flower.

It is the little flower alone that is necessary to his present purpose, for he is entertaining his "Private Friends" more than catering for the amusement of the Court. This personal consideration will explain the tenderness of the treatment. Such delicate dealing with the subject was not likely to win the royal favour; the "imperial votaress" never forgave the "little western flower," and only permitted her to come to Court once, and then for a private interview, after her Majesty learned that Lettice Knollys had really become Countess of Leicester. Shakspeare himself must have had sterner thoughts about the lady, but this was not the time to show them; he had introduced the subject for poetic beauty, not for poetic justice. He brings in his allegory, then, on

<sup>1</sup> "Gods" as Girls. Cf. p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakspeare Society's Papers*, 1843.

account of those who are related to the "little western flower," and in his use of the flower he is playfully tracing up an effect to its natural cause. The mother of Lady Rich is typified as the flower called "Love-in-Idleness," the power of which is so potent that—

"The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid,  
Will make a man or woman madly doat  
Upon the next live creature that it sees."

And the daughter was like the mother. "It comes from his mother," said the Queen, with a sigh, speaking of the dash of wilful devilry and the Will-o'-the-wisp fire in the Earl of Essex's blood! Shakspeare, in a smiling mood, says the very same of Lady Rich and her love-in-idleness. "It comes from her mother!" She, too, was a genuine "light-o'-love," and possessed the qualities attributed to the "little western flower"—the vicious virtue of its juice, the power of glamourie by communicating the poison with which Cupid's arrow was touched when dipped for doing deadliest work.

These she derives by inheritance; and these she has tried to exercise in real life on the lover of her cousin. The juice of "love-in-idleness" has been dropped into Southampton's eyes, and in the Play its enchantment has to be counteracted. And here I part company with Mr. Halpin. "*Dian's bud*," the "*other herb*," does not represent *his* Elizabeth, the Queen, but *my* Elizabeth, the "faire Vernon." It cannot be made to fit the Queen in any shape. If the herb of more potential spell, "whose liquor hath this *virtuous* property" that it can correct all errors of sight, and "undo this hateful imperfection" of the enamoured eyes—

"Dian's bud, o'er Cupid's flower,  
Hath such force and blessed power,"—

were meant for the Queen, it would have no application whatever in life, and the allegory would not *impinge* on the Play. Whose eyes did this virtue of the Queen purge from the grossness of wanton love? Assuredly not Leicester's, and as certainly not those of the Lady Lettice. The facts of real life would have made the allusion a sarcasm on the Queen's virgin force and "blessed power," such as would have warranted Iago's expression, "*blessed fig's end!*" If it be applied to Titania and Lysander, what had the Queen to do with them, or they with her? The allegory will not go thus far; the link is missing that should connect it with the drama. No. "*Dian's bud*" is not the Queen. It is the emblem of Elizabeth Vernon's true love and its virtue in restoring the "precious seeing" to her lover's eyes, which had in the human world been doating wrongly. It symbolizes the triumph of love-in-earnest over love-in-idleness; the influence of that purity which is here represented as the offspring of Dian.

Only thus can we find that meeting-point of Queen and Countess, of Cupid's flower and Dian's bud, in the Play, which is absolutely essential to the existence and the oneness of the work; only thus can we connect the cause of the mischief with its cure. The allusion to the Queen was but a passing compliment; the influence of the "*little western flower*" and its necessary connection with persons in the drama are as much the *sine quâ non* of the Play's continuity and development as was the jealousy of Elizabeth Vernon a motive-incident in the poetic creation.

Such, I consider, was the Genesis of this exquisite Dramatic Vision and most

dainty Dream ; the little grub of fact out of which the wonder rose on rainbow wings ; an instance of the way in which Shakspeare effected his marvellous transformations and made the mortal put on immortality. It was my suggestion that this drama might have been written with the view of celebrating the marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon ; that it was for them his Muse put on the wedding raiment of such richness ; that theirs was the bickering of jealousy so magically mirrored, the nuptial path so bestrewn with the choicest of our Poet's flowers, the wedding bond that he so fervently blest in fairy guise ; that he was, as it were, the familiar friend at the marriage-feast who gossips cheerily to the company of a perplexing passage in the lover's courtship, which they can afford to smile at now, but that the marriage was disallowed by the Queen.

Both the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labour's Lost* appear to have been composed for a private audience rather than for the public stage. They show us the Poet in his Court dress rather than in the manager's suit.

Karl Elze, supported by Hermann Kurz, has tried to prove that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for the celebration of Essex's marriage in 1590, or performed at the festivities on the first of May in that year.<sup>1</sup> Now I have as much interest in Essex as any one can have, but this view is entirely untenable. So is the further suggestion of the same writer to the effect that it was Essex who introduced Shakspeare to Southampton, for whose sake he lent his pen at times to serve the Essex cause. There is no historic or other evidence that Essex was a patron of Shakspeare, early or late. The Poet dedicated nothing to the Earl. Essex was not friendly with or to Southampton when they first met at Court, but behaved to him like an offended rival. This is resented by Shakspeare in his retort on "Ewes," in Sonnet 20 : Southampton had known the Poet some years, and Shakspeare had inscribed his first poem to him before Essex and Southampton became friends through the latter's love for Elizabeth Vernon (see pp. 54, 129). Shakspeare exalts his friend Southampton over Essex (and Ewe) in the Sonnets ; and lastly, the ripe perfection of its perfect poetry shows the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was not written anything like so early as 1590. My contention is, that it followed the death of Marlowe, who is described as "Learning late deceased in Beggary." He was undoubtedly known to Essex as the friend of Southampton, and as the writer of Sonnets on the affection of that Earl for Essex's cousin. In this wise Essex became one of the Private Friends to whom the Sonnets were known in MS., as mentioned by Meres, and the Poet was induced to lend his pen at Southampton's request to serve the Essex cause.

It is, of course, impossible that the Earl of Essex should not have been one of the friends in the mind of Meres when he wrote of those amongst whom the Sonnets privately circulated. Essex was something of a poet : he possessed the kindling poetic temperament and was fond of making verses ; a lover of literature, and the friend of poets. It was he who sought out Spenser when in great distress and relieved him, and, when that poet died, Essex buried him in Westminster Abbey. Being, as he was, so near a friend of Southampton, it could scarcely be otherwise than that he should have been a personal friend of Shakspeare. It is highly probable that some of the Poet's dramas were first performed at Essex House. Plays were presented there before Southampton and Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *William Shakspeare*, p. 178, English Translation ; *Essays on Shakspeare*, pp. 30—36 ; *Shakspeare Jahrbuch*, 4. 300.

Secretary Cecil, when they were leaving London for Paris, January, 1598, as Rowland White relates. The same writer<sup>1</sup> says, that on the 14th of the next month, there was a grand entertainment given at Essex House. There were present the Ladies Leicester, Northumberland, Bedford, Essex, and Rich; also Lords Essex, Rutland, Mountjoy, and others. "They had two Plays, which kept them up till one o'clock after midnight." Southampton was away, but this brings us upon the group of "Private Friends" gathered, in all likelihood, to witness a private performance of two of our Poet's Plays. And now let us examine a passage in *Hamlet*, to see what further light it may shed on the subject of our Poet's attitude towards Queen Elizabeth, and the nature of his relationship to those "Private Friends" of his, including Essex, previously, and I trust sufficiently, identified. One of the real *cruces* and greatest perplexities of Shakspearean editors occurs in a passage in *Hamlet*, which was so bungled or broken that it has never been mended with any satisfaction. The lines are spoken by Horatio, in the opening scene, after he has caught his first glimpse of the Ghost—

"In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.  
And even the like *precurse* of fierce events,  
As harbingers preceding still the fates  
And prologue to the omen coming on,  
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climatures and countrymen."

The asterisks stand for a missing link. Some of the Commentators tried to solder the lines together by altering a word or two, but they could not get them right. Rowe endeavoured to connect the fifth and sixth lines by reading—

"Stars *shone* with trains of fire, dews of blood *fell*,  
Disasters veiled the sun."

Malone proposed to change "as stars" to *Astres*, remarking that "the disagreeable recurrence of the word star in the second line induces me to believe that 'as stars' in that which precedes is a corruption. Perhaps Shakspeare wrote—

"*Astres* with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
*Disastrous veiled* the sun."

Another critic proposed (in *Notes and Queries*) to read—

"Asters with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun"—

meaning by *disasters*, *spots* or blotches. Mr. Staunton conceived that the cardinal error lies in "disasters," which conceals some verb importing the obscuration of the sun; for example—

"Asters with trains of fire and dews of blood  
*Distempred* the sun;"

<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 91.

or *discoloured* the sun. So far as I could learn, no one had gone any deeper into the subject-matter of this passage, or questioned the fact of eclipses of the sun and moon heralding and presaging the death of Julius Cæsar. As the lines stand, we are compelled to read that, amongst other signs and portents of Cæsar's assassination, there were "*disasters in the sun,*" and almost a complete eclipse of the moon. Yet no such facts are known or registered in history. There was an eclipse of the sun the year after Cæsar's death, which is spoken of by Aurelius Victor, Dion, Josephus, and Virgil in his 4th Georgic (vide *L'Art de Verifier les Dates*, vol. i. p. 264). This is known and recorded, but it did not presage and could not be the precursor of Cæsar's fall.

If we turn to Plutarch, we shall find there "were strong signs and presages of the death of Cæsar;" and the old biographer suggests that fate is not always so secret as it is inevitable. He alludes to the lights in the heavens, the unaccountable noises heard in various parts of the city, the appearance of solitary birds in the *Forum*, and says these trivialities may hardly deserve our notice in presence of so great an event; but more attention should be paid to Strabo, who tells us that fiery figures were seen fighting in the air; a flame of fire issued visibly from the hand of a soldier who did not take any hurt from it; one of the victims offered in sacrifice by Cæsar was discovered to be without a heart; a soothsayer threatened Cæsar with a great danger on the Ides of March; the doors and windows of his bedroom fly open at night; his wife Calpurnia dreams of his murder, and the fall of the pinnacle on their house. He mentions the sun in a general way: says the "sun was darkened—the which all that year rose very pale and shined not out." In Golding's translation of the 15th Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* there is an account of the prodigies, which speaks of "Phœbus looking dim," but there is no eclipse, nor is there any allusion to the moon. Neither is there in Shakspeare's drama of *Julius Cæsar*. The poet, as usual with him, has adopted all the incidents to be found in Plutarch. He has repeated Calpurnia's dream; the fiery figures encountering in the air, the lights seen in the heavens, the strange noises heard, the lonesome birds in the public *Forum*, the flame that was seen to issue from the soldier's hand unfelt, the lion in the Capitol, the victim offered by Cæsar and found to have no heart. He describes the graves yawning, and the ghosts shrieking in the Roman streets; blood drizzling over the Capitol, and various other things "*portentous*" to the "*climate that they point upon.*" But there is no hint of any eclipse of sun or moon in Shakspeare's *Julius Cæsar*. Thus we find no eclipse marked in history; no eclipse noted by Plutarch; no eclipse alluded to by Shakspeare when directly treating the subject of Cæsar's fall. How, then, should an eclipse, not to say two, occur in *Hamlet*, and this in the merest passing allusion to the death of Cæsar? Further study of the passage led me to the conclusion that, from some cause or other, the printers had got the lines wrong, through displacing five of them, and that we should read the passage as follows—

"In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.  
*And even the like precurse of fierce events*  
(As harbingers preceding still the fates,  
And *prologue* to the onien coming on)

Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
 Unto our *climatures* and countrymen,  
 As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood ;  
 Disasters in the sun : and the moist star  
 Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse."

It is noteworthy that where the original punctuation has been retained—and this is a warning to those who will be tampering with the text—it goes to corroborate the present reading, for it runs on after "countrymen," and comes to the full stop after "eclipse."

It must be admitted that we recover the perfect sense of the passage by this version, and I have to submit to Shakspeare students and editors that our Poet would not have introduced "*disasters in the sun*" and an almost "*total eclipse of the moon*" where they never occurred; consequently, these can have no more to do with Cæsar in the Play of *Hamlet* than they are connected with him in history. Therefore, as they are wrong in fact, the reading of the passage hitherto accepted *must* be wrong; and as this simple transposition of the lines sets the reading right, with no change of words, I trust that it may be found to correct the printer's error.

We have in the present reading of the lines, then, got away from Rome with our eclipses: they did not occur there. Nor do they occur in the Play prior to the appearance of the Ghost. Nor had they occurred in Denmark. These portents of sun and moon had not been visible to Horatio and his fellow-seers. Their only portent was the apparition of Hamlet's father, this "*portentous figure*" that appeared to the watchers by night. The meteors, the dews of blood, the disasters in the sun, and the complete eclipse of the moon, are wanting in Denmark. Where then did these eclipses take place?

Having spent much time and thought in trying to track our Poet's footprints and decipher his *shorthand* allusiveness, that must have been vastly enjoyed by the initiated, but which so often and so sorely poses us, I was all the more suspicious that there was deeper meaning in this passage than meets the eye on the surface, or than could be fathomed until we had the shifted lines restored to their proper place. Not that my interpretation has to depend altogether on the restoration. However read, there *are* the "*disasters in the sun*" and the ECLIPSE OF THE MOON in the lines, and there is the fact that these did not happen in Rome, and do not occur in Denmark! But I was in hopes that this fracture of the lines might prove an opening, a vein of richness in the strata of the subject-matter, especially as this very passage *was not printed in the quarto of 1603, and it was again omitted in the folio edition of 1623.*

I have to suggest, and if possible demonstrate, that in this passage from *Hamlet* our Poet was going "round to work," as I have traced him at it a score of times in his Sonnets and Plays. I can have no manner of doubt that Shakspeare was referring in those lines to the two eclipses which were visible in England in the year 1598. Though but little noted, the tradition is that a total eclipse of the sun took place in 1598, and the day was so dark as to be called "black Saturday." But that was not enough; an eclipse of the moon was wanted: and I am indebted to the late Astronomer Royal for his courtesy and kindness. I told him I wanted two eclipses in the year 1598, visible in England, to illustrate Shakspeare, and he was good enough to get

J. R. Hind, Esq.<sup>1</sup> and his staff to enter on the necessarily elaborate calculations, and read the skiey volume backwards for nearly three centuries. Sure enough the eclipses were there; they had occurred; and I have the path of the shadow of the solar eclipse over England mapped out, together with notes on the eclipse of the moon, showing that there was a large eclipse of the moon on February 20th (21 morning), Gregorian, and a large eclipse of the sun, possibly total in some parts of Britain, on the 6th of March, 1598. Two eclipses in a fortnight—the sun and the moon darkened as if for the Judgment Day! Such a fact could hardly fail to have its effect on the mind of Shakspeare, and be noted in his play of the period, just as he works up the death of Marlowe, “late deceased in beggary” (i. e. in a scuffle in a brothel), in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the wet, ungenial season of 1593 (same play); the “new map,” in *Twelfth Night*; and the earthquake spoken of by the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*. We shall see further on that Shakspeare has another possible reference to these eclipses of the sun and moon.

According to my restored reading and interpretation, then, the speaker alludes to events that occurred out of the usual order of nature as prognostications of Cæsar's sudden death; and he goes on to say that a “like *precurse*” (not *like precursors*, mark!) has in our country and climate presaged similar things. We too have had our harbingers of the fates, and the coming imminent events have been darkly and fiercely foreshadowed to us on earth by awful signs and wonders in the heavens; or, as he puts it, the “like *precurse*” of “fierce events” have heaven and earth together demonstrated in the shape of meteors, bloody dews, *disasters in the sun, and an almost total eclipse of the moon*. Now, as these latter had not taken place in Rome or Denmark, and *had* occurred in England in 1598, the conclusion is forced upon us that Shakspeare was writing *Hamlet* in 1598, and that the eclipses were introduced there because they had just occurred, and were well known to his audience.

Our Poet had what we in our day of Positive Philosophy may think a weakness for the supernatural, a most quick apprehension of the neighbourhood of the spirit-world bordering on ours, and of its power to break in on the world of flesh. So many of his characters are overshadowed by the “skiey influences.” And with this belief so firmly fixed in the popular mind, and so often appealed to and breathed upon by him in his Plays, he takes these two eclipses in the passage quoted from *Hamlet*, and covertly becomes the interpreter of their meaning to the English people. He does not simply allude to the darkness that covered the land, does not merely describe the late event, but most distinctly and definitely points the moral of it for the behoof of his listeners. Certain deadly signs are said to have ushered in the fate of Cæsar, and the Poet finds in the late eclipses and meteors the “like *precurse*” of a similar event to come; he holds these to be “harbingers *preceding still* the fates,” the “prologue to the *omen coming on*.” He had done the same thing in *King Richard II.*, where the Captain says—

“Meteors fright the fixèd stars of heaven;  
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,  
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change,  
These signs forerun the death or fall of kings.”

<sup>1</sup> Superintendent of the *Nautical Almanack*.



And that was the play chosen for representation the night before Essex made his attempt.

Having identified the eclipses as English, and not Romish or Danish, we must go one step further, and see that the application is meant to be English, and Shakspeare points to the death or deposition of Elizabeth! Obviously, Shakspeare had read William of Malmsbury, who tells his readers that the eclipse of August 2nd, 1133, *presaged* the death of Henry I. "The elements showed their griefs," he says, "at the passing away of this great king, for on that day the sun hid his resplendent face at the sixth hour, in fearful darkness, disturbing men's minds by his eclipse." Our Poet treats the eclipses of 1598 in the same spirit, and holds them to presage similar fierce events to those that took place in Rome, which had been heralded and proclaimed by signs and portents in earth and heaven. It may seem strange that Shakspeare should use the phrase "disasters in the sun;" but very possibly the eclipse had been preceded by other phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is the eclipse of the moon he has to bring out. The "moist star" has to do double duty for the moon and monarch too. Elizabeth *was* the moon, and a changeful one also! She was the "Cynthia" of Spenser, Raleigh, Jonson, and all the poets of the time. She was governess of the sea as much as the moon was "governess of floods." That is why the emphasis is laid on the lunar eclipse, when the sun's must have been so much the more obvious. It is a personification; a fact with Janus faces to it. The general effect of the year of eclipse would thus be gathered up and pointed with its most ominous and particular signification—the coming death or deposition of Elizabeth; and the Poet was turning contemporary circumstances to account, and *underlining* them for private purposes with a covert significance.

He recurs to the subject again in *King Lear*. Gloster says, "These *late* eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. We have seen the best of our time." Possibly Shakspeare replied to himself in the person of Edmund, who, when asked by Edgar what he is thinking of, answers, "*I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read the other day, what should follow these eclipses.*" Edmund mocks at the superstitious notions entertained of eclipses: "This is the excellent foppery of the world! we make guilty of our *disasters* the sun, the moon, and stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly

#### <sup>1</sup> DISASTERS IN THE SUN.

Probably a comet seen by day. On the 7th, 8th, and 16th of December, 1590, "a great black spot on the sun, apparently about the bigness of a shilling, was observed at sea by those on board the ship *Richard of Arundell*, previous to the invention of the telescope."—Dr. KIRKWOOD, quoted in *Nature*, January 13, 1870.

"Several comets stand on record as having been luminous enough to be seen in the day-time, even at noon and in bright sunshine. Such were the comets of 1402 and 1532, and that which appeared a little before the assassination of Cæsar, and was (afterwards) supposed to have predicted his death."—Sir J. F. W. HERSCHEL'S *Astronomy*.

Cardan reports that in 1532 the curiosity of the inhabitants of Milan was strongly excited by a star which every one could see by broad daylight. At the period he indicates (that of the death of Sforza the Second), Venus was not in a position sufficiently favourable to be seen in presence of the sun. Cardan's star was then a comet. It is the fourth visible at full mid-day of which historians have made mention.

The fine comet of 1577 was discovered the 13th of November, by Tycho Brahe, from his observatory on the Isle of Huéne, in the Sound, before the sunset—*Arago on Comets*.

Instances might also be given of cometary matter having fallen in what looked like a rain of blood.

compulsion ; all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on ;"—which sounds like a scoff at what he had previously written ; and there looks like a sly allusion, a *self-nudge*, as it were, in Edgar's question, "How long have you been a sectary astronomical ?" Be this as it may, the allusion to the *late eclipses in the sun* and moon tends to the corroboration of my view that he refers to the same in *Hamlet*. I think he certainly does allude to his prediction made in *Hamlet* with regard to the eclipses, and verify its supposed application to the Queen, thus clinching my conclusion, in the 107th of his Sonnets. This Sonnet I hold to be written by Shakspeare as his greeting to the Earl of Southampton, who was released from the Tower on the death of Elizabeth. In this Shakspeare says :—

"The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,  
And the sad augurs mock their own presage."

He himself had presaged "fierce events," and had afterwards feared the worst for his friend, doomed first to death and then to a life-long imprisonment, but he finds the great change has taken place peaceably.

There is likewise in Sonnet 124 a link such as constitutes a perfect tally with the prediction deduced by me from the passage in *Hamlet*. The speaker says his "love" is so happily circumstanced that it

"fears not policy—that heretic  
Which works on leases of short-numbered hours."

It was the Queen's "policy" for years to prevent the marriage of Southampton, and the Poet here implies that the "heretic" won't live for ever, and when she dies at last, he says,—

"The Mortal Moon hath her eclipse endured."

This correction of mine has since been adopted by certain editors, as it is by the editor of the *Leopold Shakspeare*, but with no recognition of my argument, or the pains taken to secure the proof for establishing the correction, and with no allusion whatever to the bearings of my discovery on the relations of Shakspeare to the Essex faction.

I notice that the editor of the *Leopold Shakspeare* is now of opinion that Shakspeare *did* enter into the politics of his time. He observes in his own early English, "To say that Shakspeare did not allude to political events is all gammon and pooh!"<sup>1</sup> Yet the time was when the same writer publicly opposed my view on that subject in the *Academy*.

I have now adduced the further evidence promised, p. 65, to show that Shakspeare wrought covertly on behalf of Essex, because of his own personal friendship for Southampton. If we glance for a moment at the condition of things in England, and particularly in London, in 1598, it will increase the significance of Shakspeare's presaging lines.

That year lies in shadow ominously and palpably as though the eclipses had sunk and *stained* into the minds of men : this is as obvious to feeling as the eclipses were to sight. We breathe heavily in the atmosphere of that year ; the scent of treason is rank in the air. That was the year in which the nation grew so troubled about the future : the Queen's health was breaking, and Cecil opened secret negotiations with James VI. of Scotland. Essex, his sister and

<sup>1</sup> Introduction, p. 68.

associates, were on the alert with the rest. A witness deposed that as early as 1594 Essex had said he would have the crown for himself if he could secure it; and whether the expression be true or not, one cannot doubt that it jumps with the Earl's and Lady Rich's intent. Moreover, he was as near a blood relation to the Queen as was King James of Scotland. The gathering of treason was ripening fast, to break in insurrection. Essex became more and more secret in his practices. Strange men flocked round him, and were noticed stealing through the twilight to Essex House. He became more and more familiar with those who were known to be discontented and disloyal. The mud of London life, in jail, and bridewell, and tavern, quickens into mysterious activity in this shadow of eclipse. Things that have only been accustomed to crawl and lurk, begin to walk about boldly in the open day. The whisperings of secret intrigue grow audible in the mutterings of rebellion and threats of the coming "fierce events." The Catholics are seen to gather closer and closer round Essex; their chief fighting tools, their Jesuit agents, their dangerous outsiders, hem him round or hang upon his skirts. Blount and others grow impatient of waiting so long, and are mad to strike an early blow. The Earl, as usual, is irresolute. He is not quite a Catholic, and no doubt has his views apart from the hopes and expectations of the Catholics. Still, there is the conspiracy. The plans are formed, the plot is laid, the leaders are all ready, could Hamlet—I mean Essex—but make up his mind to strike. And in this year, in the midst of these circumstances, Shakspeare holds up that mirror, so often held up to Nature, to reflect the signs in heaven, and interpret them to the people as symbols of the coming death of Elizabeth, and the fall of her throne:—

"And even the like precurse of fierce events  
(As harbingers preceding still the fates,  
And prologue to the omen coming on),  
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
Unto our clinatures and countrymen."

The meetings of the conspirators were held at Southampton's house, and it is not possible to doubt that Shakspeare had an inkling of what was going on, and what was expected to occur. Not only does he indicate the "fierce events" which may be looked for, but he reads the portents as heaven's warrant or sign-manual of what is going to happen. I have before argued that Shakspeare took sides with Southampton against the tyranny of Elizabeth in the matter of his marriage with Elizabeth Vernon: that fact I find written all through his Sonnets. And that his intimacy with the Earl, to whom he dedicated "love without end," went still deeper, I cannot doubt. Not that I think our Poet abetted Southampton on the path of conspiracy. I know he bewails the young Earl's courses; his dwelling in the society of evil companions and wicked, dangerous men. In Sonnet 67 he grieves that his young friend should live with "*infection*," and with his presence grace *impiety*; that he should give the "*advantage*" to "*sin*," by allowing it to take shelter and steal a grace from his "*society*." In Sonnet 69 he tells the Earl that he has grown *common* in the mouths of men in consequence of his "ill-deeds," and because by his low companionship he to his "*fair flower adds the rank smell of weeds*;" and warns him that—

"Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

In all likelihood these very men against whom our Poet is warning his young friend are the blackguardly crew that was creeping into the company of Essex and urging him on to his destruction. But I do maintain that our Poet was induced by Southampton to lend his pen, so far as they could get him to go, with the view of serving the cause of Essex, and that for love of Southampton he kept beside him. They sought to make use of him when and where they could, just as a statesman or a conspirator of the time might make use of a preacher at Paul's Cross, to be, as it were, a living poster for the purpose of announcing certain things to the crowd. An intimation could be made by the Dramatist as effectively as though he had distributed hand-bills. And in this covert way, I take it, was Shakspeare working in that passage quoted from *Hamlet*.

The non-appearance of the lines in the first quarto, and their suppression in the first folio edition, tend to corroborate and increase the significance of the subject-matter. They were not printed during the Queen's life, and, as they were not likely to be spoken when her Majesty was at the theatre or Court representation, they would demand careful handling. This may have entailed such a manipulation of the passage as led to the shifting of the lines in print, and the consequent difficulty from which they have not till now recovered.

This would be one of the Players' Shifting Scenes, like that of the Deposition in *Richard II.*, which were not meant for the eye of the censor or the ear of the Queen.

Sir Charles Percy was an adherent of the Essex cause. He served with Essex in the Irish wars, and was at his side when the Earl made his mad ride into the City of London. And it was he who represented the conspirators when they sought to have the Play of *King Richard II.* performed on the eve of Essex's attempt because of its political significance. Augustine Phillips, the player, one of Shakspeare's company, testified that Sir Charles Percy, Sir Joselyne Percy, and Lord Monteagle (whom I hold to have been the "Suborned Informer"), and some three more, came and bespoke the "Play of the Deposing and killing of King Richard II. to be played," promising the players forty shillings more than their ordinary fee if they would perform that drama. Sir Charles was Lord of Dumbleton, near Campden, in Gloucestershire, which is not far from Stratford; and it is possible there is by-play in the allusion to "Master Dumbleton," 2 *King Henry IV.*, I. ii., who would not take Falstaff's bond or Bardolph's, because he "liked not the security."

Shakspeare has been charged by Davies with turning "GRAVE MATTERS OF STATE" into a "PLAY OF PUPPETS," showing that he held up the mirror to the political world of his time, and represented its living characters on the stage.

And now, since Shakspeare was the known author of *King Richard II.*, and whispering tongues informed the Queen that the Play was intended to familiarize the people with the deposition and death of monarchs; since these hints affected her so much that she exclaimed fiercely to Lambard, Keeper of the Records, "I am Richard—know you not that?"—since such was the intimacy of Shakspeare with Essex's friends, and when the Lords Southampton and Rutland were inquired after for non-attendance at Court, her Majesty would learn that they passed their time in seeing plays at the theatre of this playwright, William Shakspeare,—is it possible that our Poet could have escaped suspicion and passed on his way quite unchallenged in the matter? I more than doubt it.

There is an unusual intensity of feeling in one or two of the Personal Sonnets, as when he says :—

“Against my love shall be, as I am now,  
With Time’s injurious hand crushed and o’er-worn.”

He appears to be broken down. It is not a question of health only. It may have had to do with political affairs. One group looks as if the shadow of death lay on the lines, and also on himself, if not on the friend as well. John Davies’ words tend to strongly confirm that conjecture :—

“Well fare thee, man of art and world of wit,  
*That by supremest mercy livest yet !*”

Was it so near a chance with him, then, that it was only by the sheerest mercy that Shakspeare escaped from the wreck and ruin of his “Private Friends?” To all appearance that is what John Davies meant.

All this tends to make it probable that Bacon may have been aimed at in that “hang hog is Latin for Bacon.” And if, as Mr. Donnelly contends, the “Francis” of 1 *King Henry IV.* is meant for Francis Bacon, why then there may be much meaning hidden in the lines—

“*P. Hen.* Nay, but hark you, Francis : for the sugar thou gavest me,—’twas a pennyworth was it not ?

*From.* O Lord, sir ! I would it had been two.

*P. Hen.* I will give thee for it a thousand pound : ask me when thou wilt and thou shalt have it.”

A thousand pounds for a penn’orth of sugar ! What does it mean ? The fooling in the play is incomprehensible. Let us see what it might mean out of it. It happens that in 1595 the Earl of Essex had given to Francis Bacon a small landed estate worth £1000 or £1200 ; and this play was written soon afterwards. A thousand pounds for a penn’orth of sugar was possibly Shakspeare’s estimate of Bacon’s sycophantic services and Essex’s payment. It was not for nothing that Shakspeare began work as a Player. He was a great mimic by nature, and the *mimicry was not limited to the player when on the stage.* The Playwright was likewise a merry mocker beneath the dramatic mask. See how he quizzed the Euphuistic affectations, and other non-natural fashions. How he burlesqued the bombast of Tamburlaine, and made fun of the heroes of Homer. After all, if Bacon was burlesqued and staged in *that way* as Francis the “WAITER,” he had sufficient reasons for not calling attention to Shakspeare and what he OWED TO HIM.

It was from the character of Essex, I think, that Shakspeare largely drew in portraying one of his most perplexing personages—the character of Hamlet. There is nothing Norsk about the Hamlet of Shakspeare’s tragely. Whereas, the puzzle of history, called “Essex,” was well calculated to become that problem of the critic called “Hamlet.” The characters and circumstances of both have much in common. The father of Essex was popularly believed to have been poisoned by the man who afterwards married the widow. Then the burden of action imposed on a nature divided against itself, the restlessness of spirit, the wayward melancholy, the fantastic sadness, the disposition to look on life as a sucked orange,—all point to such a possibility. We can match Hamlet’s shifting moods of mind with those of the “weary

knight," heart-sore and fancy-sick, as revealed in letters to his sister Lady Rich. In one of these he writes—

"This lady hath entreated me to write a fantastical . . . but I am so ill with my pains, and some other secret causes, as I will rather choose to dispraise those affections with which none but women, apes, and lovers are delighted. To hope for that which I have not is a vain expectation; to delight in that which I have is a deceiving pleasure; to wish the return of that which is gone from me is womanish inconstancy. Those things which fly me I will not lose labour to follow. Those that meet me I esteem as they are worth, and leave when they are nought worth. I will neither brag of my good-hap nor complain of my ill; for secrecy makes joys more sweet, and I am then most unhappy, when another knows that I am unhappy. I do not envy, because I will do no man that honour to think he hath that which I want; nor yet am I not contented, because I know some things that I have not. Love, I confess to be a blind god. Ambition, fit for hearts that already confess themselves to be base. Envy is the humour of him that will be glad of the reversion of another man's fortune; and revenge the remedy of such fools as in injuries know not how to keep themselves aforehand. Jealous I am not, for I will be glad to lose that which I am not sure to keep. If to be of this mind be to be fantastical, then join me with the three that I first reckoned, but if they be young and handsome, with the first.

"Your brother that loves you dearly."<sup>1</sup>

Again he writes to his "dear sister"—

"I am melancholy-merry; sometimes happy and often discontented. The Court is of as many humours as the rainbow hath colours. The time wherein we live is more inconstant than women's thoughts, more miserable than old age itself, and breedeth both people and occasions like itself, that is, violent, desperate, and fantastical. Myself, for wondering at other men's strange adventures, have not leisure to follow the ways of mine own heart, but by still resolving not to be proud of any good that can come, because it is but the favour of chance; nor do I throw down my mind a whit for any ill that shall happen, because I see that all fortunes are good or evil as they are esteemed."<sup>2</sup>

These read exactly like expressions of Hamlet's weariness, indifference, and doubt, as, for example, this sighing utterance, "How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world!" And this—

"Indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me as a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire; why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. . . . Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither."

There is the same worm at the root, the same fatal fracture running through the character, the same vacillation and glancing aside the mark, that tendency to zigzag which made Coleridge swerve from side to side of his walk in the Garden, because he never could make up his mind to go direct. It strikes me that the subject of *Hamlet* was forced on Shakspeare as a curious study from the life of his own time, rather than chosen from a rude remote age for its dramatic aptitude. For the character is undramatic in its very nature; a passive, contemplative part, rather than an acting one. It has no native hue of Norse resolution, but is sicklied over with the "pale cast" of more modern thought. As with Essex, the life is hollow at heart, dramatic only in externals. The

<sup>1</sup> *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne*, vol. i. pp. 297-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 297.

Drama does not solve any riddle of life for us, it is the represented riddle of a life that to this day remains unread. Doubtless, it would be the death of many fine-spun theories and rare subtleties of insight regarding Shakspeare's *intentions*, if we could oftener see how contented he was to let Nature have her way, how he trusted the realities which she had provided; steadily keeping to his *terra firma*, and letting his followers seek after him all through their cloudland.

When the Poet put these words into the mouth of Ophelia—"Bonnie Sweet Robin is all my joy," they were not meant, I think, to refer merely to the tune of that name. "Sweet Robin" was the pet name by which the Mother of Essex addressed him in her letters. One wonders whether either of the Court ladies—Elizabeth Southwell, Mary Howard, Mrs. Russell, or the "fairest Brydges"—whose names have been coupled with that of Essex—as when Rowland White says, February 12, 1598, "It is spied out by Envy that 1000 (Essex) is again fallen in love with his fairest B."—whether either of these gave any hint to Shakspeare for the character of Ophelia?

In adducing evidence that Essex was one of Shakspeare's Private Friends, we see that the Poet lent his pen on two occasions for the Earl's service. I have now to suggest another instance. There is a copy of verses in *England's Helicon* (1600), reprinted from John Douland's *First Book of Songs; or, Ayres of four parts, with a Tableture for the Lute*.<sup>1</sup> It is an address to "Cynthia."

"My thoughts are winged with hopes, my hopes with love :  
Mount love unto the Moon in clearest night ;  
And say as she doth in the heavens move,  
In earth so wanes and waxeth my delight.  
And whisper this—but softly—in her ears,  
How oft Doubt hangs the head and Trust sheds tears.

And you, my thoughts that seem mistrust to carry,  
If for mistrust my Mistress you do blame ;  
Say, though you alter, yet, you do not vary,  
As she doth change, and yet remain the same.  
Distrust doth enter hearts, but not infect,  
And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect.

If she for this with clouds do mask her eyes,  
And make the heavens dark with her disdain ;  
With *windy sighs* disperse them in the skies,  
Or with *thy tears* derobe<sup>2</sup> them into rain.  
Thoughts, hopes, and love return to me no more,  
Till Cynthia shine as she hath shone before."

These verses have been ascribed to Shakspeare on the authority of a commonplace book, which is preserved in the Hamburg city library. In this the lines are subscribed W. S., and the copy is dated 1606. The little poem is quite worthy of Shakspeare's sonnetting pen. And the internal evidence is sufficient to stamp it as Shakspeare's, for the manner and the music, with their respective felicities, are essentially Shakspearean, of the earlier time. The alliteration in sound and sense; the aerial fancy moving with such a gravity of motion; the peculiar

<sup>1</sup> *Peter Short*, 1597, folio. In Oldys' MS. notes to Langbain, Douland and Morley are said to have set various of Shakspeare's songs to music.

<sup>2</sup> "*Derobe*." This fine expression, so illustrative of Shakspeare's art of saying a thing in the happiest way at a word, Mr. Collier suspects ought to be "*dissolve*"!! Even so, if they were allowed, would some of his Critics *dissolve* Shakspeare out of his poetry.

coruscation that makes it hard to determine whether the flash be a sparkle of fancy or the twinkle of wit, are all characteristic proofs of its authorship. I judge the lyric to be Shakspeare's, and would suggest that it may have been written for Essex to serve him with the Queen, at a time when Cynthia had withdrawn the smile of her favour, and that he had it set to music by Douland to be sung at Court.

"Of all Shakspeare's historical plays," says Coleridge, "*Antony and Cleopatra* is the most wonderful. Not one in which he has followed history so minutely, and yet there are few in which he impresses the notion of angelic strength so much—perhaps none in which he impresses it more strongly. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, owing to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction."

There were reasons for this vivid look of life and warmth of colour unknown to Coleridge. It is not merely life-like, but real life itself. The model from which Shakspeare drew his Cleopatra was, like his statue of Hermione, a very real woman all a-thrill with life: "The fixure of her eye hath motion in't!" Ripe life is ruddy on the lip; life stirs in the breath. A little closer, and we exclaim with Leonatus, "*Oh, she's warm!*"

There was a woman in the North, whom Shakspeare had known, quite ready to become his life-figure for this siren of the East; her name was Lady Rich, the sister of Essex. A few touches to make the hair dark, and give the cheek a browner tint, and the change was wrought. The soul was already there, apparelled in befitting bodily splendour. She had the tropical exuberance, the rich passionate life, and reckless, impetuous spirit; the towering audacity of will, and breakings-out of wilfulness; the sudden change from stillness to storm, from storm to calm, which kept her life in billowy motion, on which her spirit loved to ride triumphing, while others went to wreck; the cunning—past man's thought—to play as she pleased upon man's pulses; the infinite variety that custom could not stale; the freshness of feeling that age could not wither; the magic to turn the heads of young and old, the wanton and the wise. Her "flashes of nature" were lightning-flashes! A fitting type for the witch-woman, who kissed away kingdoms, and melted down those immortal pearls of price—the souls of men—to enrich the wine of her luxurious life. The very "model for the devil to build mischief on," or for Shakspeare to work by, when setting that "historic abstraction" all aglow with a conflagration of passionate life, and making old Nile's swart image of beauty in bronze breathe in flesh and blood and sensuous shape once more to personify eternal torment in the most voluptuous guise. The hand of the Englishwoman flashes its whiteness, too, in witness, when she offers to give her "bluest veins to kiss," forgetful that it was black with "Phœbus' amorous pinches." The "lascivious Grace, in whom all ill will shows," Sonnet 40, is that "serpent of old Nile," who was "cunning past man's thought." She who is asked in Sonnet 150,

"Whence hast thou *this becoming of things ill,*  
That in the very refuse of thy deeds,  
There is such strength and warrantise of skill  
That in my mind thy worst all best exceeds!"

is the same person, of whom it is said in the tragedy, "*the vilest things become themselves in her;*" that



"Wrangling Queen,  
Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,  
To weep: whose every passion fully strives  
To make itself, in thee, fair, and admired!"

This veri-similitude is not casual, it comes from no inadvertence of expression, but goes to the life-roots of a personal character, so unique, that the Poet on various occasions drew from one original—the Lady Rich.

I think it also exceedingly probable that the same unique original, with her ambition, her power of will, her devilish audacity, her mournful mental breakdown when wrecked at last, supplied much of the life-likeness for Lady Macbeth.

It would be a folly to try and measure off Shakspeare and his work in four periods, after the fashion of Mr. Furnivall. It would be like trying to tie up Samson over again. We should need a period for every play or two. But, as already shown, he did have his "Sidney Period," which is reflected in the early Sonnets, and in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Next we can identify a "Southampton Period," more especially in the trials and tragedies of thwarted love (*Romeo and Juliet*); the tiffs and jealousies of the two cousins (Hermia and Helena), and the glory of the warrior, Harry, personally reflected for Shakspeare by Henry Wriothesley, his first, foremost, best and dearest friend. Then followed his "Herbert Period." Herbert, as Heminge and Condell tell us, pursued the Poet with great favour; which from their point of view meant that he had countenanced, commanded, and paid for the performance of his own favourite Plays and characters. This period (1599) is one of pure comedy. *Much Ado About Nothing*, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night* come crowding after each other so closely as to exclude all tragedy for a time. Herbert is himself portrayed as Benedick, the lover whose name began with H.

The period of these four comedies is the most prolific and marked in Shakspeare's mental career. The external stimulus was quite in consonance with his own natural bent. Stupendous and unparalleled as are his Tragedies of *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, I think we get more of *himself* when his powers were all at play in these great comedies. He is indefinitely more original in his merry moods than in the utterly serious ones; and so are his humorous characters, from Costard to Autolycus. Again and again he takes his tragic characters from old Chronicles or sources pre-extant, outside himself. But his humorous ones are originals, all his own, and of himself.

And here, it may be noticed, in relation to the Herbert Period of the Latter Sonnets, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the subject of Lust in Love, that there is a very curious letter extant in p. 148 of the Appendix to 3rd Report of the Historical MSS. Commission, which letter was unearthed by Mr. Richard Simpson. It has no date beyond that of "Chartley, 8th July," but was written about 1601. It was written by Lady Southampton, at the house of her cousin, Lady Rich, to the Earl of Southampton. In her postscript the Countess says—

"All the news I can send you that I think will make you merry is that I read in a letter from London that Sir John Falstaff is by his Mrs. Dame Pintpot made father of a godly Miller's Thumb, a boy that is all head and very little body. But this is a secret."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Centurie of Prayse*, p. 40.

A "Miller's Thumb," it may be remarked, is the Bullhead, a kind of Codfish. In his comment on this letter (*Academy*, February 6th, 1875), Mr. Richard Simpson expressed his belief that the writer referred to *Shakspeare himself under the name of Falstaff*, as if he kept his own Dame Quickly or Doll Tear-sheet for his "Dark Lady." To my mind nothing could be more unwarranted or wanton than this suggestion. Why should it be Shakspeare, seeing that the Countess of Southampton is quoting from the Falstaff in the play? When Dame Quickly exclaims, "Oh, rare! he doeth it as like one of these harlotry players as I ever see," Falstaff turns on her with his "Peace, good Pint-pot!" Those who have taken the Latter Sonnets seriously, and assumed that Shakspeare wrote them for himself, of himself, and to himself, seem to think they can also take any liberties they like with his personal character. As they do.

My reading of the matter is, that one of the Private Friends had been identified with Sir John by some trait of likeness in character. This may have been lechery, as the subject of the postscript itself suggests. Sir John I take to be a known nickname for the private friend, and I hold it to be indefinitely more probable that the "secret" may have been in relation to the Earl of Pembroke and Mistress Mary Fytton. Lady Southampton seems to echo the statement of Tobie Matthew, who says in his letter to Dudley Carlton—"The Earl of Pembroke is committed to the Fleet; his Cause is delivered of a boy who is dead." "Mrs. Dame Pintpot" also answers to the character already given of Mary Fytton in relation to the Earl of Pembroke, for whom she played the Amazonian trull when she marched out of Court to meet him with her clothes tucked up (p. 13). It is not necessary to assume that "Mrs. Dame Pintpot," or Mary Fytton, was the original of Mrs. Quickly, or that Herbert supplied the model or life-likeness for Falstaff. The language is allusive, and the allusions are made personal by means of the two Shakspearean characters! It may be that Herbert's weakness for women, as described by Clarendon, was the source of a comparison with Falstaff. It may well be that the two cousins, Lady Southampton and Lady Rich, were the living originals of the two "Merry Wives" of Windsor. As previously pointed out, there appears to be some link of connection betwixt Herbert and Falstaff in the *Merry Wives*, in relation to the printing of love-letters or the Sonnets. "He will print them, out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press." Be this as it may, the allusion made by Lady Southampton to Falstaff, Mrs. Dame Pintpot and the boy-child, is a thousand-fold more likely to be aimed at Herbert and Mary Fytton than at Shakspeare and—nobody knows who, as the "Dark Lady" can hardly be identified with Dame Quickly.

Shakspeare's next period we may call the "Essex Period." If we class *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth* as belonging to a time peculiarly tragic which followed that overflow of humour in the Herbert phase, when he had laughed freely because his first dear friend was married at last and his own heart was all the lighter, we shall find it circling around the Earl of Essex. We have the character of the "Weary Knight," the man unequal to the occasion, in *Hamlet*. No one like Shakspeare ever saw or showed so profoundly that *weakness* and not strength of character was the unfathomable source of tragedy; and that after all the nature of evil is essentially negative. He saw the difference betwixt the strong and the headstrong. *Hamlet* is weak as water, and wavering as an image in it. *Lear's* tempests of temper arise from his weakness. *Macbeth* for

all his bluster is betrayed by his weakness. It was the weakness of Essex that made him one of the "Fools of Time," and caused his fall. And it is the fall of Essex with its effects on Shakspeare and his Private Friends that may be seen reflected in our Poet's darkest, deepest tragedy. The awful pall that looms so dreadfully over these representations of human life was not spread from any gloom of guilt that darkened from within. The insurrection he had passed through was outside of himself.

Above that of all other writers Shakspeare's mind begets upon matter external to himself and not upon himself, as do the introspective and subjective self-reproducers. If he shows in his deeper, darker tragedy that he had passed through a period of convulsion and earthquake, with signs of wreck and ruin, there is no warrant for assuming that these were personal. Besides which, they are written and may be read in the world around him. He had seen the headstrong Essex diverted to the "Course of altering things"—had felt the throne rock in the suppressed throes of revolution. He had seen the head of Essex fall from the block with the black velvet of the scaffold for his pall of tragedy. He had stood in the shadow of death beside his dearest friend Southampton with the headsman's axe in sight. He had greeted his "dear Boy" when he emerged once more into daylight from the Tower. He had lived in tragic times, and witnessed fierce events. He had peered into the abysses that opened at his feet, and found their reflection in the deepest depths and gulfs unfathomable of his dramatic tragedies. The Personal Theory of interpretation is as false and inadequate here in the Plays as it is in the Sonnets. If unhappy at this time, it was not for self but on behalf of others. After the fall of Essex, the imprisonment for life of Southampton, with the shadow of doom darkening over himself, he may have suffered a "Hell of time" (distinguished, you see, from the orthodox eternal Hell!), but that was a far different matter from suffering it because somebody had been "once unkind" to him in a quarrel about a harlot.

It was said by Hallam, and the Echoes will go on repeating it in defiance of all the opposing facts, that "there seems to have been a period of Shakspeare's life when his heart was ill-at-ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience: the memory of hours mis-spent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worsen nature, which intercourse with ill-chosen associates, by choice or circumstance, peculiarly teaches—these, as they sank down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of *Lear* and *Timon*, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind." So it may have seemed, but so it is not in reality. This is but an illusion of those who have accepted the Sonnets as autobiographic revelations. All that is observable is, that the great stream of his expanding power runs darker with depth, and if the searchings into the human heart grow more curious and profound, and the tragedy is palled in more awful sombreness, and the poetry draws our pleasure with approving tears out of deeper soundings of pain, the comedy is also richer and more real, the humour is as smiling as the terror is sublime; there is no unhappy laughter in it, no jesting with a sad brow; whilst the tender images of grace and purity are bodied forth more movingly attired than ever, as in Perdita, Miranda, and Imogen.

It was the fall of Essex and other of the Private Friends that was so greatly tragic, not any fall of his own. He has left us the proof. The fall of Essex is not only represented or glanced at in *King Henry VIII.*, we also find the last

words of Essex worked up by the dramatist, with great fulness of detail. The speech of Buckingham on his way to execution includes almost every point of Essex's address on the scaffold, as the comparative process will show—

ESSEX.  
"I pray you all to pray with me and for me."

ESSEX.  
"I beseech you and the world to have a charitable opinion of me, for my intention towards her Majesty, whose death, *upon my salvation*, and *before God*, I protest I never meant, nor violence to her person."

ESSEX.  
"Yet I confess I have received an honourable trial, and am justly condemned."

ESSEX.  
"I beseech you all to join yourselves with me in prayer, not with eyes and lips only, but with lifted up hearts and minds to the Lord for me . . . O God, grant me the inward comfort of Thy Spirit. *Lift my soul* above all earthly cogitations, *and when my soul and body shall part*, send Thy blessed angels to be near unto me, which may convey it to the joys of heaven."

ESSEX.  
"I desire all the world to forgive me, even as I do freely and from my heart forgive all the world."

ESSEX.  
"The Lord grant her Majesty a prosperous reign, and a long, if it be His will. O Lord, grant her a wise and understanding head! O Lord, bless Her!"

Act II. sc. i.

In the present instance, the identification of the fact in the fiction is easy, for not only has the Poet used the thoughts and expressions of Essex and dramatized his death-scene, but he has also rendered the very incidents of Essex's trial, his bearing before his Peers, and given an estimate of persons and circumstances exact in application. Obvious reference is made to the brutal vehemence of Coke, the Attorney-General, to the private examinations of the confederates, whose depositions were taken the day before the trial of Essex and Southampton; to the confession of Sir Christopher Blount, who had been Essex' right-hand man in his fatal affair; to the treachery of Mr. Ashton, Essex' confessor; and a most marked and underlined allusion to Cuffe, the Jesuitical

BUCKINGHAM.  
"All good people, pray for me."

BUCKINGHAM.  
"I have this day received a Traitor's judgment,  
And by that name must die: yet *heaven*  
*bear witness*;  
And, if I have a conscience, let it sink me,  
Even as the axe falls, *if I be not faithful*."

BUCKINGHAM.  
"I had my trial, and must needs say a noble one."

BUCKINGHAM.  
"You few that loved me,  
And dare be bold to weep for Buckingham,  
His noble friends and fellows, whom to leave  
Is only bitter to him; the only dying;  
Go with me like good angels to the end;  
*And as the long divorce of steel falls on me*,  
Make of your prayers one sweet sacrifice,  
And *lift my soul* to heaven."

BUCKINGHAM.  
"I as free forgive you,  
As I would be forgiven: I forgive all."

BUCKINGHAM.  
"Commend me to his grace. My vows and prayers  
Yet are the King's; and, till my soul for-  
sake,  
Shall cry for blessings on him! may he  
live,  
Longer than I have time to tell his years!  
Ever beloved and loving may his rule be."

plotter, the man that "made the mischief." Various other allusions to the circumstances of the time can be identified, *e. g.*

"Plague of your policy!  
You sent me deputy for Ireland;  
Far from his succour."

Now this play reflects and the prologue intimates the mental change in the so-called "Unhappy Period."

"I come no more to make you laugh. Things now  
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,  
Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe."

And that mood is continued through four acts of the Play, but the fifth act manifests a festive spirit. This "strange inconsistency" may be accounted for if Shakspeare wrote the first four acts during the tragic time, and then the Play was retouched and finished by the "other hand" after the accession of James. Even so did he who held that the Players were the "abstract and brief chronicles of the time," and that the dramatist should show the "very age and body of the time, its form and pressure," reflect the realities around him; the men whom he knew, the scenes which he saw, the events as they occurred; although these, when seen through the luminous ether of his poetry, and heard in his larger utterance, are often so changed in their translated shape, that they are difficult to identify.

One great cause of Shakspeare's contemporaries telling us no more about him is still operant against our making him out in his works. He was one of the least self-conscious men, and so he is the least personally visible in his writings. This was the condition of his greatness. He was to be so unconscious of self as to be purely reflective of all passing forms. If he had been a lesser man, he would have shown us more of himself. If more limited, he would have revealed more idiosyncrasy. We should have caught him taking a peep at himself in the dramatic mirror. But Shakspeare's nature is all mirror to the world around him. A more conscious man would have managed to make the darkness that hides him from us a sort of lamp-shade which should concentrate the light on his own features, when he looked up in some self-complacent pause. Not so Shakspeare: he throws all the light on his work, and bends over it so intently that it is most difficult for us to get a glimpse of his face. Our main chance is to watch him at his work, and note his human leanings and personal relationships.

There is a psychological condition in which the reading of a book will place us *en rapport* with the nature of the writer, as if by an interior mode of converse, mind to mind, we could divine the personality of the man behind the mask. The experience I speak and wot of may be substratal, but it is none the less actual, and it is especially necessary in the reading of Shakspeare. Also any true representation of the man demands something of the spirit that is akin to his own, whatsoever may be the degree of relationship; the mental mirror that is clear enough from the subjective mists of self for him to reflect himself. We cannot portray Shakspeare by reading our own selves into his works. There are pigmies who would confine Shakspeare within their own limitations, would outline their own size on his body, or try to pass off a reflected likeness of themselves as a portrait of him. The less grip they have

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of the true data, or the total facts which go to make up that other self, the more they are compelled to draw on their own likeness for their ideal, which is the glorified shadow of themselves. Many a false ideal of Shakspeare has been thus begotten through making love to their own likeness in the mirror of Shakspeare's Sonnets. Thus, if one of the most impulsive men of our time should portray Shakspeare, he will become one of the most impulsive men of his time, and the exact opposite of the man we know. "He *must* have been impulsive," says Mr. Furnivall. "This was a note of the time." But what a gauge to apply to Shakspeare, who was the ripened result of ages of heredity! He must have followed the fashion of his time, and *therefore* been impulsive! "He *must* have been impulsive," is meant to imply that he was false in friendship and fickle in love; a blind fool in the snares of a wanton Woman; a Bavarian fool in drivelling about it to make fun for his Private Friends. But no true conception nor authentic likeness of the man ever was or ever will be possible to those who read the Sonnets as entirely personal to himself. Such a reading reverses all that we otherwise learn of him. The happy soul delighting in his wealth of work and "well-contented day" becomes a moody, disappointed, discontented man, envious of this one's art and that one's scope; dissatisfied with his own face, and disgusted with his work, which brought him friends and made his fortune; disgraced by writing for the stage; bearing the name of player as a brand; miserable in his lot; an outcast in his life; blotted and stained in his character; meanly immoral in his friendship; a hypocrite, a knave, and a fool. Also, impulsiveness and precipitancy are the dominant characteristics of his youthful lovers, and therefore not of himself in his maturity of manhood or ripened age.

He approves of those who are the "Lords and owners of their faces," who "husband Nature's riches from expense," they who are "to temptation slow" (Sonnet 94). He says in person—

"So is it *not* with me as with that Muse," &c. (Sonnet 21),

which is exaggerative and intemperate. He constantly inculcates and practises moderation, as when he schools the actors in *Hamlet* in a character that is the more like his own the less it is like Hamlet's. For a writer who wields such forces his temperance is immense. As in his humour. What temptations to rollick and roll in the mire—to break out of bounds. Yet see how little he takes advantage of the latitude and liberty. He brims the cup, but carries it full with a steady hand without spilling. He seldom caricatures, and never grossly. He certainly attained the large tolerance, the philosophic equanimity, the serenity of soul that are only to be reached at the lofty altitude where the human touches the divine. The greatest power of genius is manifested by the most perfect mastery. It is not shown in the impulse beyond law; not in the flood of gush or overflow of spilth; not in the whirlwind, but in the power that rides and reigns; not in the whip and spur, but in the seat and hand and proof of complete possession!

Shakspeare was not a Shelley to be measured by the Shelleyites. He was neither a child nor a seraph, nor a mixture of both that never blended, but a sound-hearted, sanely-conscionable, and thoroughly made-out man. Matthew Arnold describes him as being "Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honoured, self-secure." Perhaps that poses him a little too stiffly in his self-erectness, but it renders the

likeness far truer than that of the autobiographists, who see in the Sonnets the proofs of an impulsive, irresolute, and erring nature, who can renounce all self-respect and abdicate the common rights of humanity in cringing and fawning; a man "too weak to tread the paths of truth." These are no nearer the mark than Sir Walter Scott was when he introduced Shakspeare into *Kenilworth* merely to call him a "halting fellow," or a cripple, because the speaker of Sonnet 37 has been "made lame by Fortune's dearest spite;" and in Sonnet 89 he says,

"Speak of my lameness and I straight will halt."

It is instructive to observe the lasting effect of the Personal Theory of the Sonnets. After it has been given up perforce, it will infect the mind and break out again like some hereditary disease. For instance, Karl Elze affirms that "no importance can be attached to any attempt made to form an idea of Shakspeare's disposition from the Sonnets, and least of all can they serve as a foundation, or as evidence for the delineation of the Poet's character."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere (pp. 326-7) he declares the autobiographic reading "absolutely untenable." And yet this same writer assumes that the Latter Sonnets must be personal to Shakspeare when he says, "What determines our judgment of the case is, that *the whole story of the friendship, even the seduction of the beloved lady by the friend, and the subsequent reconciliation of the friends, is met with in Lilly's 'Euphues,' and that it is ridiculed by Ben Jonson in his 'Bartholomew Fair'*" (V. iii.); then he asks, "What spectator in watching a performance of *Bartholomew Fair* would be likely to think of the *Euphues*, which was thirty years old at the time, and not of the Sonnets, which had appeared only five years previously?" "I say, between you both you have both but one drab!" says the puppet, and so says Mr. Tyler, and so say all the autobiographists of Shakspeare and Will Herbert. But we must not allow a story that is found in Lilly's *Euphues*, years earlier, to be imported into Shakspeare's life by the readers of his Sonnets, and then have the story thus told against him thought to be corroborated by Ben Jonson. If Jonson was not too blind-drunk to take any aim at all in that scene, his mark would be Beaumont and Fletcher, who were such fast friends that they were notoriously reputed to keep one mistress between the two.

In regretfully giving up the personal reading, this same writer puts in a saving clause, and says, "But, in any case, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare's nature was one of an impulsive and strongly developed sensuousness, such as is peculiar to great geniuses, and he *must* have had his love-affairs in London." But what has that to do with the matter? If the Latter Sonnets are not personal, such a gratuitous assertion is an impertinent and impotent speculation. It comes to this finally. When the supposed diamond has been demonstrated to be nothing more than charcoal that has soiled the holder's hand, its blackness is made use of to give one last dirty daub to the character or the portrait of Shakspeare!

I am not called upon to swear that he was an immaculate man; that would be equally impertinent. But it is my work to clear his statue from the mud-stains of the autobiographists. Whosoever accepts the present reading of the Sonnets will also have done for ever with the false notion that Shakspeare was a moody, melancholy kind of man, like Hamlet or Jacques. He was essentially

<sup>1</sup> *William Shakspeare*, p. 436.

a man of mirth and Master of the Revels for all humanity. We may claim him to have been the world's greatest Merriman; not in the sense of a Motley, a Merry-Andrew, or the Fool, but a man who was of the blithest and most happy soul. I know no truer gauge or measure that we can apply to the nature of Shakspeare than this—whereas in creating such characters as Hamlet, Lear, Othello, Iago, Romeo, and Macbeth, he wrought from types that were pre-existent in their outlines and groundwork, his Costard, Parolles, Dogberry, Benedick, and Autolycus are pure Shakspeare without prototype; original, all of himself! He was the sprightliest but soundest and least fantastical of all Elizabethan Wits, a man who was religious in his mirth as others may be in their melancholy. Indeed the Shakspearean religion of joy is an antidote for ever to the orthodox religion of sorrow. He associates melancholy with the Mask, with duplicity, imposture, and hypocrisy. "My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam," says the deceiver Edmund in *Lear*. He makes fun of the fantastical sadness of the melancholy Jacques, and has no sympathy with a pensive pretender.

Many of his wisest things are said in a playful mood. He could be most profoundly in earnest in a humorous manner. He does not sweat and agonize to show that he is in earnest, but often expresses double the meaning with a smile. He can make us feel the gravest when he smiles; such a weight of wisdom is so lightly uttered. Indeed when we think of the smiling mood and the seriousness of the thing said we sometimes wonder whether he laughed at us the while.

The delusion has not quite died out that the truly poetic temperament is Byronian with a tragic touch of the blighted being in it, such as was once rendered to the life by the actor Robson. But nothing could be falser to fact or more entirely confuted than it was by Shakspeare himself. Instead of the corners of his mouth being turned down with depressing thought, they curl upward, as if with the merry quip just caught in them. What says Wordsworth—

"A cheerful spirit is what the Muses love."

The dramatic mood could be troubled, contemplative, melancholy, according to his purpose, but the man himself was of a happy temperament. A melancholy man would have been more self-conscious, and shut up within limits indefinitely narrower.

We may depend upon it that such sunny smiling fruits of living as his works offer to us did not spring out of any root of bitterness in his own experience; they are ripe on the lower branches as well as on the highest; are sound and sweet to the core, and show no least sign of having been pierced by a worm that never dies. Had he felt sad for himself it would have broken out, if at all, not lugubriously, but in a very humorous sadness—the diamond-point of wit pricking the gathering tear before it was fairly formed, or the drops would have been shaken down in a sun-shower. The true Shakspearean sadness is more nearly expressed in Mercutio and some of the clowns, like the "fool" in *Lear*. Hence the humour is just sadness grown honey-ripe! Beside which, we get no suggestion from his contemporaries of a melancholy man. They never saw him in the dumps like John Ford. So far as he left any impression on them it was that of a gracious and pleasant man, full of good spirits, equable at a cheerful height. They certainly saw nothing of the social "outcast," or the friendless,



melancholy man. They caught no writhing of the face that indicated the devouring secret within his breast ! They never suspected that he had gone about "frantic-mad with evermore unrest."

The sadness of the early Sonnets is on behalf of the friend for whom he utters so many complaints against unkindly Fortune.

The true personal application of the Latter Sonnets is, not that Shakspeare was gloomy and guilty enough to write them for himself, but that he had the exuberant jollity, the lax gaiety to write them for the young gallant, Herbert.

He must have been an eminently healthy man. He must have had the moral health that resists infection ; the health that breathes like all spring within the theatre. As Coleridge says, there is not one really vicious passage in all Shakspeare. There are coarse things ; for the customs and the language of the time were coarse. Plenty of common clay, but no mental dirt—he does not offer us entertainment for man *and* beast. There is nothing rotten at the root ; nothing insidious in the suggestion. Vice never walks forth in the mental twilight wearing the garb of virtue. You hear the voices of right and wrong, truth and error, in his works, but there is no confusion of tongues for confounding of the sense. Not from any sediment of vice and folly did he gather all those precious grains of golden wisdom ; nor did he reap the rich harvest of his works through sowing a bountiful crop of wild oats.

In his life he left the gracious, happy impress of a cheery, healthful nature, a catholic and jocund soul, on all who came near him. All the traditions tell of a radiating genius that ripened in content, and gave forth of its abundance joyfully. His art is dedicated to joy. It was out of his own sportive, beneficent, genial nature that he endowed all his beautiful fairy beings, which could only have been begotten by one of the blithe powers of nature. It is true he never took sides with any religious sect or system, puritan or papist, and did not look upon the eternal welfare of humanity as being bound up with the little orthodoxies of his day. He was not the man to be fretting and fussing about the salvation of his soul. Indeed, we are by no means sure that he knew of his own soul being lost. He was a world too wide for any or all of those theologies, which are but a birth or abortion of misinterpreted mythology. Certainly Shakspeare did not accept the scheme of salvation and tenets of Historic Christianity, for all his characters put together could not drag it out of him. As Dean Piumpstre admits, the Philosophy of Shakspeare is "not a Christian view of life and death. The Ethics of Shakspeare are no more Christian, in any real sense of the word, than those of Sophocles or Goëthe." That is the true confession of a devout Christian.

We can apply the test in this way. Shakspeare's own sense of atonement is certainly personal and not vicarious. Repentance for the doing of wrong must be wrought out and made objective in life and deed. Redemption must come from within. This is as definitely opposed to the doctrine of vicarious atonement as anything can be. He teaches the sacrifice of self and not the sacrifice of another for the salvation of self. He sets up the standard in conscience, and the law given from within through a living relationship with the divine, instead of preaching and imposing it from without. His test lies in what we are, not in what we believe. No such immoral plea on behalf of irrational faith, as this of Bacon's, can be found in Shakspeare's works. "The more irrational and incredible any divine mystery is, the greater the honour we do God in believing

it, and so much the more noble is the victory of faith!" He did not found on faith but on knowledge, as when he says—

" Ignorance is the curse of God ;  
Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven."

There was not ground enough in the Christian "hope of immortality" founded upon a physical resurrection for the dramatist to build upon. His Christians can die unconscious of continuity. It is the pre-Christian characters, Antony and Cleopatra, only who look forward to the meeting hereafter. Historic Christianity had reduced the heathen doctrine of immortality which was founded upon facts in nature, such as abnormal vision and the veritability of spiritual apparition, to a matter of belief. Shakspeare reverts to the original grounds of belief in the ghost, the *revenant*, as a fact in nature.

We find in Shakspeare an active sense of the so-called supernatural, and the nearness of the spirit-world. He has a profound recognition of its immediate influence, and its power to break in on the world of flesh when nature prays for its help or darkly conspires to let it in. His province was the daylight world of human life; his work as a dramatist was to give that life a palpable embodiment in flesh and blood; endow it with speech and action; and make it mirror the common round of human experience in our visible world. But he knew that human nature was composed of spirit as well as flesh and blood, and that we are under the "skiey influences" of a world not realized. Indeed, it is in this direction that he looks for the solution of his subtlest dramatic problems. In *Macbeth*, for example, you see the visible tragedy is also being enacted in spirit-world. And one reason why *Hamlet* will always remain so perplexing a study to those who seek to divine Shakspeare's intentions, is because his characters are so much a part of nature as to include the commonly called supernatural; and whatsoever Hamlet proposes, you see that it is Fate which disposes. It is not Hamlet who finds the solution of his problem of life and death. It is Fate and its ministers that catch him up in their swifter execution and surer working, and when the final crash comes, Hamlet is just one of the most weak and helpless victims in the omnipotent hands. Natural laws override all human prayers or wishes. The innocent suffer alike with the guilty. And only that is sure to happen which was the most unforeseen. Thus it is in life; and so it is with Shakspeare. His teaching is that we have to face the facts of life and death in time, and not whine over them when it is too late. "The use we make of time is fate!"

The life lived here and now must be the basis of the life hereafter. We each of us prepare our own pathway, and must follow it in our own projected Light or Shadow. In death we carry our own very selves and our own heaven or hell with us, and no false belief will alter the laws of cause and effect. With the Buddhist he teaches that we all of us make our own *Karma*, good or bad. Here, as elsewhere, he holds on fast by nature, and takes his stand on a footing with her that is for ever. He was religious without professing it; this is shown by his saying so little about it. He does not proclaim his piety, but manifests his reverence by his reticence. He has no set teaching or system for saving or reforming the world, and makes no crusade for any temporary cause. If he taught anything, he inculcated sincerity, toleration, mercy, and charity. Look for the good, he says, even in things evil, make the good better.

and work for the best. For himself, he sees a germ of good in things that look all evil to the careless eye—his eyes being large with love. If there is only the least little redeeming touch he is sure to point it out. If there be only one word to be said for some abandoned nature he pleads it, to arrest the harsh judgment and awake the kindly thought. If there be only one solitary spark of virture in some dark heart, what a sigh of gentle pity he breathes over it, trying to kindle it into clearer life. He has infinite pity for the suffering and struggling and wounded by the way. He takes to his warm heart much that the world has cast out to perish in the cold. There is nothing too poor or mean to be embraced within the circle of his sympathies. One of his characters says, "I am one of those gentle ones that will use the devil himself with courtesy" (*Twelfth Night*, IV. ii.). And of such was the Gentle Shakspeare.

Then what an all-embracing charity! what an all-including kindness he shows toward many things that are apt to put us out! He never flies into a passion with stupidity. He divines how Conservative a makeweight it is in this world; knows that it gets largely represented in Parliament; is the father of a good many families, and altogether too respectable a thing to be ignored. He shows how a fool like Cloten in the play of *Cymbeline* may be a person of consequence and consideration in the Council of State. The humours of the obtusely ignorant, the unfathomably conceited, the hopelessly dull, were for the first time adequately translated out of dumb nature into our English tongue by him. And the revelations thus made at times are as if the animals were suddenly endowed with human speech. They grow garrulous with the wine of his wit.

How he listens to the simplicities or pretentious pomp of ignorance! Pearls might be dropping from its lips! He does not say, "Let no dog bark or donkey bray in my presence!" On the contrary, he likes to hear what they have to say for themselves, and delights in drawing them out for a portrait full-length! He seems to smile and say, "If God can put up with all these fools and ignoramuses, why should I fume and fret and denounce them? No doubt they serve some great purposes in His scheme of creation. I shall put them into mine." And no botanist ever culled his *simples* with more loving care than Shakspeare his samples of what we might pharisaically call the God-help-them sort or species of human beings; or God's own unaccountables. It is as though he thought Nature had her precious secret hidden here as elsewhere, and with sufficient patience we should find it all out, if we only watched and waited. See the generous encouragement he gives to Dogberry! How he draws him out, and makes much of him. You would say he was "enamoured of an ass." But perhaps the glory of all his large toleration shines out in his treatment of that "sweet bully" Bottom. Observe how he heaps the choicest gifts and showers the rarest freaks of Fortune around that ass's head. All the wonders of fairy-land are revealed, all that is most exquisitely dainty and sweet in poetry is scattered about his feet. Airy spirits of the most delicate loveliness are his ministers. The Queen of Fairy is in love with him. He is told how beautiful he is in person, how angelic is his voice. And Bottom accepts it all with the most sublime stolidity of conceit. There is a self-possession of ignorance that Shakspeare himself could not upset, although he seems to delight in seeing how far it can go. Nick Bottom has no start of surprise, no misgiving of sensitiveness, no gush of gratitude, no burst of praise. He is as calm in his Ass-head as Jove in his Godhead. Shakspeare knew how often blind Fortune

will play the part of Titania, and lavish all her treasures and graces on some poor conceited fool, some Lord Rich, and feed him with the honey-bag of the bee, and fan him with the wings of butterflies, and light him to bed with glow-worm lamps, and the Ass will still be true to his nature, and require his "peck of provender."

Instead of fretting and fuming at folly, or arguing with pig-headedness, and losing his temper, he laughed and showed them how they looked in the magic mirror of his mirth. One often thinks with a longing sigh of that beatitude of Shakspeare's in the domain of his humour, and the great delight he must have had in being a Showman.

As all intelligent actors will testify, the Plays were written and *managed* by an actor. It was an essential condition for the production of Shakspeare—a feat that Nature herself in conjunction with Art could only perform once—that the supreme dramatist should also be a born actor, a working actor, and have a theatre all to himself for the mould of his mind, for the trying on of his work, and the fitting out of his characters. In this unique combination it was of the first necessity that the playwright should be the Player as well as the great Poet.

He shows no scorn for actors in his plays. His disgust for bad acting proves his relish for the good. No critic has ever bettered his criticism in *Hamlet*. He bespeaks kindly treatment for his fellows in the *Taming of the Shrew*, when the Lord commands a servant to take them to the buttery—

"And give them friendly welcome every one,  
Let them want nothing that my house affords."

Nor does he overlook them in his will. And when all is said, the one character adequate to express the Man Shakspeare at work is that of the *Showman*. He held up the mirror to Nature as the showman of the world. It is as showman for the human race that he takes them all off with his impartial representations and gives them all a show.

Goëthe has said that Shakspeare's characters are mere incarnate Englishmen. But how should they be only that when he was the incarnation of all humanity? Are we to say that his women are mere Britishers? It is true the national spirit was most Englishly embodied in his works, but he himself cannot be considered insular. He bids us remember that there are "livers out of England"! We know, of course, where his nationality lies. He was a dear lover of this dear land of ours. He loved her homely face, and took to his heart her "tight little" form; that is so embraceable! He loved her tender glory of green grass, her gray skies, her miles on miles of rosy apple-bloom in spring-time, her valleys brimful of the rich harvest gold in autumn; her leafy lanes and field-paths, and lazy, loitering river-reaches; her hamlets nestling in the quiet heart of rural life; her scarred old Gothic towers and mellow red-bricked chimneys with their Tudor twist, and white cottages peeping through the jasmine and roses. We know how he loved his own native woods and wild flowers, the daisy, the primrose, the wild honeysuckle, the cowslip, and most of all, the violet. This was his darling of our field flowers. And most lovingly has he distilled or expressed the spirit of the violet into one of his sweetest women, and called her Viola! His favourite birds also are the common homely English singing birds, the lark and nightingale, the cuckoo and blackbird that sang to him in his childhood and st'ill

sing to-day in the pleasant woods of Warwickshire. He loved all that we call and prize as "so English." He loved the heroes whom he saw round him in every-day life, the hardy, bronzed mariners that went sailing "Westward Ho." Indeed, the mention of England's name offers one of our best opportunities for a personal recognition; when an English thought has struck him, how he brands the "mark of the lion" on his lines! We may see also in his early plays what were his personal relations to the England of that memorable time which helped to mould him: see how the war stirred his nature to its roots, and made them clasp England with all their fibres: we may see how he fought the Spaniard in feeling, and helped to shatter their "invincible" armadas. We learn how these things made him turn to teach his country's history, portray its past, and exalt its heroes in the eyes of all the world. How often does he show the curse of civil strife, and read the lesson that England is safe so long as she is united. Thus he lets us know how true an Englishman he was.

There are times when he quite overruns the speech of a character with the fulness of his own English feeling. In one or two instances this is very striking; for example, in that speech of old Gaunt's in *Richard II.*, at the name of England the writer is off, and cannot stop. His own blood leaps along the shrunken veins of grave and aged Gaunt; Shakspeare's own heart throbs through the whole speech; the dramatic mask grows transparent with the light of his own kindled countenance, and you know it is Shakspeare's own face behind; his own voice that is speaking; a fact that he had forgotten for the moment, because Nature was at times too strong for his art. Again, we have but to read the speech of King Harry V., on the night, or rather the dawn, of Agincourt, to feel how keen was the thrill of Shakspeare's patriotism. Harry was a hero after our Poet's own English heart, and he takes great delight in such a character. His thoughts grow proud and jolly; his eyes fill, his soul overflows, and there is a riot of life which takes a large number of lines to quell! That "little touch of Harry in the night" gives us a flash of Shakspeare in the light.

Shakspeare's starting-point for his victorious career had been the vantage-ground that England won when she had broken the strength of the Spaniard, and sat enthroned in her sea-sovereignty, breathing an ampler air of liberty, glowing with the sense of a lustier life, and glad in the great dawn of a future new and limitless. He had an eye very keenly alive to the least movement of the national life. When the fresh map of England is published he takes immediate note of it. Maria, in *Twelfth Night*, says, "He does smile his face into more lines than are in the new map with the *augmentation of the Indies*." And when the two crowns of England and Scotland are united in the person of James, Shakspeare alters the old doggerel,—

"Fi, fo! fum!  
I smell the blood of an Englishman,"

into

"I smell the blood of a *British* man."

for which the Scotch take him closer to heart, and give him a hug of additional delight.

The tradition is that Shakspeare in person was a handsome, well-made man, and that the parts he play'd were those demanding dignity of presence and nobility of bearing. Such a man is roug ly rendered by the Droeshout etching

and the Stratford bust. These two are sufficient for us to re-create our Shakspeare as a man of sturdy build, with large lineaments; with a coronal region to his head as royal as the intellectual. The hair of a warm brown, and the beard somewhat more golden; a man, not made out of cheese-parings and heeltaps, but full of ripe life and cordial spirits and concentrated energy; with eyes to be felt by those on whom they looked; such eyes as see most things without the head turning about; a full mouth, frank and brave, and richly humorous, capable of giving free utterance to the laugh that would ring out of the manly chest with all his heart in it. Mr. Dyce observed that the bust exhibits the Poet in the act of composition, and enjoying, as it were, the richness of his own conceptions.

A happy remark in illustration of Shakspeare's smile was likewise made by R. B. Haydon the painter, in a note of his written June 13th, 1828, in the album kept at Stratford Church. Speaking of the bust, he says, "The forehead is fine as Raphael's or Bacon's, and the form of the nose and exquisite refinement of the mouth, with its amiable, genial hilarity of wit and good-nature, so characteristic, *unideal*, bearing truth in every curve, with a *little bit of the teeth showing at the moment of smiling, which must have been often seen by those who had the happiness to know Shakspeare, and must have been pointed out to the sculptor as necessary to likeness when he was dead.*"<sup>1</sup>

These outward presentments of the man are a sufficient warrant for what we feel in communing with the spirit of his works. In these we apprehend him as having been essentially a cheerful man, full to overflowing with healthy gladness. This is manifest from the first, in his poems written at an age when most youngsters are wanton with sadness. There is no sadness in his first song; he sustains a merry note lustily; the *Venus and Adonis*, the *Lover's Complaint*, are brimful of health; they bespeak the ruddy English heart, the sunbrowned mirth, "country quicksilver," and country cheer. The royal blood of his happy health runs and riots in their rural vein. It is shown in his hearty and continuous way of working. It is proved by his great delight in common human nature, and his full satisfaction with the world as he found it. It is supremely shown in the nature of his whole work. A reigning cheerfulness was the sovereign quality of the man. And no one ever did so much in the poetic sphere to delight and make men nobly happy. The Shakspeare of the present version of the Sonnets is one in personality with the writer of the Poems and Plays, the Etching and the Bust.

The Kesselstadt Mask, weak, thin-lipped, consumptive-looking, and lacking in the backbone of character, is a likeness good enough for the Shakspeare evolved by a wrong reading of the Sonnets. But these two are as opposite as substance and shadow, different as life from death. The bust is a gloriously real if a rough embodiment of the man. The Mask is a fitting representative of the diseased Ideal of Shakspeare.

It is pleasant to think of our great Poet so amply reaping the fruits of his industry and prudence early in life, and spending his calm latter days in the old home of his boyhood which he had left a-foot and come back to in the saddle. The date of his retirement from London cannot be determined. I am decidedly of opinion that it was before the publication of the Sonnets in 1609, and other circumstances seem to indicate that he was living at Stratford in 1608, in the August of which year he sued Addenbroke; on the 6th of September, his

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare Society's Papers*, vol. ii. p. 10.

Mother was buried ; and, on the 16th of October, he was sponsor at the baptism of Henry Walker's son.

He had the feeling, inexpressibly strong with Englishmen, for owning a bit of this dear land of ours and living in one's own house ; paying rent to no man. We know how he clung to his native place all through his London life, strengthening his rootage there all the while. We learn how he went back once a year to the field-flowers of his childhood, to hear in the leaves the whispers of Long-Ago and "get some green"—as Chaucer says—where the overflowing treasure of youth had, dew-like, given its glory to the grass, its freshness to the flower, and climb the hills up which the boy had run, and loiter along the lanes where he had courted his wife as they two went slowly on the way to Shottery, and the boy thought Anne Hathaway fair whilst lingering in the tender twilight, and the honeysuckles smelled sweet in the dusk, and the star of love shone over them, and shook with tremulous splendour, and Willie's arm was round her, and in their eyes would glisten the dews of that most balmy time.

We might fancy, too, that on the stage, when he was playing some comparatively silent part, his heart would steal away and the audience melt from before his face, as he wandered back to where the reeds were sighing by Avon stream, and the nightingale was singing in the Wier-brake just below Stratford Church, and the fond fatherly heart took another look at the grave of little Hamnet—patting it, as it were, with an affectionate "*Come to you, little one, by and by,*" and the play was like an unsubstantial pageant faded in the presence of that scenery of his soul.

Only we know what a practical fellow he was, and if any such thought came into his mind, it would be put back with a "lie thou there, Sweetheart," and he would have addressed himself more sturdily than ever to the business in hand.

At last he had come back to live and write ; die and be buried at home. He had returned to the old place laden with honours and bearing his sheaves with him ; wearing the crown invisible to most of his neighbours, but having also such possessions as they could appreciate. They looked up to him now, for the son of poor John Shakspeare, the despised deer-stealer and player, had become a most respectable man, able to spend £500 or so a year amongst them. He could sit under his own vine, and watch the ongoings of country life whilst waiting for the sunset of his own ; nestle in the bosom of his own family, walk forth in his own fields, plant his mulberry-tree, compose several of his noblest dramas, and ripen for his rest in the place where he had climbed for birds'-nests, and, as they say, poached for deer by moonlight. I think he must have enjoyed it all vastly. He entered into local plans, listened to the tongue of Tradition babbling in the mouth of the old folks, "Time's doting chronicles ;" and astonished his fellow-townsmen by his business habits. And they would like him too, if only because he was so practical by habit, so English in feeling. We know that he fought on their side in resisting an encroachment upon Welcomb Common. He "could not bear the enclosing of Welcomb," he said. We feel, however, that as he moved amongst these honest, unsuspecting folk, with so grave and douce a face, he must have had internal ticklings at times, and quite enough to do to keep quiet those sprites of mirth and mischief lurking in the corners of his mouth and in the twinkle of his eyes as he thought how much capital he had made out of them, and how he had taken their traits of character to market, and turned them into the very money to which his fellow-townsmen were so respectful now.

The few facts that we get of Shakspeare's life at Stratford are very homely, and one or two of his footprints there are very earthy; but they tell us it was the foot of a sturdy, upright, thrifty, matter-of-fact Englishman, such as will find a firm standing-place even in the dirt, and it corresponds to the bust in the Church at Stratford. Both represent, though coarsely, that yeoman side of his nature which would be most visible in his everyday dealings. For example, we learn that in August, 1608, he brought an action against John Addenbroke for the recovery of a debt. The verdict was in his favour, but the defendant had no effects. Shakspeare then proceeded against Thomas Horneby, who had been bail for Addenbroke. We cannot judge of the humanity of the case. The law says the Poet was right. But, by this we may infer that Shakspeare had learned to look on the world in too practical a way to stand any nonsense. He would be abused, no doubt, for making anybody cash up that owed him money. There would be people who had come to argue that a player had no prescriptive or natural right to be prudent and thrifty, or exact in money transactions. Shakspeare thought differently. He had to deal with many coarse and pitiful facts of human life; and this he had learned to do in a strong, effectual way. There would be a good deal of coarse, honest prose even in Shakspeare, but no sham poetry of false sentimentality.

The Epitaph said to have been written by himself was evidently composed by some pious friend of Susannah's, from a Scriptural text taken from the Second Book of Kings (ch. xxiii.). When Josiah was desecrating the sepulchres and removing the bones of the dead to burn them, he came to "the sepulchre of the Man of God," and Josiah spared his bones and said, "*Let him alone! Let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone.*"

Ben Jonson, in his tribute to Shakspeare, his "*Book and his fame,*" uttered the very one word once for all, when he said—"Thou wert not of an age, but for all time." He has nothing merely Elizabethan or Archaic in his work; his language never gets obsolete; in spirit he is modern up to the latest minute; other writers may be outgrown by their readers, as they ripen with age, or lose the glory of their youth, but not Shakspeare; at every age he is still mature, and still ahead of his readers, just as he always overtops his actors; here also he is *not* of an age, but abides for all time.

Shakspeare not only does not recede, he is for ever dawning into view. We never do come up with him. He is always ahead of us. Whatsoever new thought is proclaimed in the human domain, whether it be the doctrine of Evolution, or the laws of Heredity, we find Shakspeare still abreast and in line with the latest demonstration of a natural fact or scientific truth!

There is a tradition that our gentle Willie died after a grand merry-making and a bout of drinking. It is said that Ben Jonson and some other of his poet playfellows called on Shakspeare, who was ill in bed, and that he rose and joined them in their jovial endeavours to make a night of it, and that his death was the sad result. This story may illustrate his warm heart and generous hospitality, but I think it is not a true account of his end. I do not for one moment believe that he died of hard drinking. We shall find no touch of *delirium tremens* in his last signature. Nothing in his life corroborates such a death.

I have no doubt that he would be unselfish enough to get out of bed when ill, to give a greeting to his old friends if they called. He must have had the very



soul of hospitality. He kept open house and open heart for troops of friends, and loved to enfranchise and set flying the "dear prisoned spirits of the impassioned grape;" many a time was his broad silver and gilt bowl set steaming; his smile of welcome beamed like the sun through mist; his large heart welled with humanity, and overflowed with good fellowship; his talk brightened the social circle with ripple after ripple of radiant humour as he presided at his own board, Good Will in visible presence and in very person.

We learn from his last Will and Testament that he was in sound health a month before his death; and his sudden decease after so recent a record of his "perfect health" is quite in keeping with our idea of the man Shakspeare, who was the image of life incarnate. Such a death best re-embodies such a life! It leaves us an image of him in the mortal sphere almost as consummate and imperishable as is the shape of immortality he wears forever in the world of mind!

Measured by years and the wealth of work crowded into them, his time was brief; "*Small time, but in that small most greatly lived this star of England!*" He went before the fall of leaf, and escaped our winter and the snows of age. We see him in the picture of his life and the season of his maturity just as

"Smiling down the distance, Autumn stands,  
The ripened fruitage glowing in his hands,"

with no signs of weakness that make us sigh for the waning vitality. He passed on with his powers full-summed, his faculties in their fullest flower, his fires unquenched, his sympathies unsubdued. There was no returning tide of an ebbing manhood, but the great ocean of his life—which had gathered its wealth from a myriad springs—rose to the perfect height, touched the complete circle, and in its spacious fulness stood divinely still.



Our Prince of Peace in glory hath gone  
With no Spear Shaken, no Sword drawn,  
No Cannon fired, no Flag unfurled,  
To make his conquest of the World.

For him no Martyr-fires have blazed,  
No limbs been racked, no scaffolds raised ;  
For him no life was ever shed  
To make the Victor's pathway red.

And for all time he wears the Crown  
Of lasting, limitless renown :  
He reigns, whatever Monarchs fall ;  
His Throne is at the heart of all.



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