

spere's natural son], and belongs in some form to the earlier half of the seventeenth century, cannot reasonably be doubted," says Mr. Phillipps, who points out that the anecdote being founded upon the practice of gentlemen riding to the theatres, which custom became obsolete after the Restoration, is sufficient to establish the antiquity of the story. "It is important to observe that all the early traditions to which any value can be attached, concur in the belief that Shakespeare did not leave his native town with histrionic intention." (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 71.) It is said, however, that he was promoted from the position of horseholder to that of "call-boy" in the theatre, and so subsequently gained a footing on the boards. "The best authority on this point," says Mr. H.-Phillipps, "is one William Castle, who was the parish clerk of Stratford-on-Avon during nearly all the latter part of the seventeenth century,¹ and used to tell visitors that the poet 'was received into the playhouse as a servitude,' in other words, an attendant on the performers. A later account is somewhat more explicit. We are informed by Malone, writing in 1780, that there was 'a stage tradition that his first office in the theatre was that of prompter's attendant, whose employment it is to give the performers notice to be ready to enter as often as the business of the play requires their appearance on the stage' [a delightful periphrasis for "call-boy"]; nor can the future eminence of Shakespeare be considered to be opposed to the reception of the tradition." (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 74.)

"In the interval between the end of 1587, when the young countryman disappeared from Stratford, and the end of 1592, when he reappeared in London, some half-dozen Shakespearean dramas had been written. Accord-

¹ But this seems to be a mistake, for, as Mr. Elton has pointed out, William Castle was born in 1628, and therefore could not have been the clerk "above 80 years old" who showed the church to Dowdall. See chap. VII on "The Traditional Shakspeare."

ing to that eminent Shakesperean expert Dr. Furnivall *Love's Labour's Lost* was composed in 1588-9; *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-1; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1590-1; and *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3. *Hamlet* was well known in 1589; *Titus Andronicus* must have been written before 1590; *King John* was printed in 1591; the Three Plays that composed the Trilogy of *Henry Sixth* must have been studied, completed, and performed before 1592; and *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was published in 1594, and had been 'sundry times acted,' must have been written before Shakespeare, who, like a wild mallard, had plunged into the pond, had finally emerged to view." So writes Judge Webb (*The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 40). Some of the dates are disputable,¹ and for reasons to be explained later on I would omit *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* from this list, and possibly also *The Taming of the Shrew*. The reference to *Hamlet* also is, as I have elsewhere shown, of very doubtful force. But even so we have sufficient to "give us pause," especially when we remember *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention," published in 1593, but presumably composed earlier than any of the above-mentioned dramas.

The learned judge continues as follows: "According to a tradition traced to Davenant, who was his godson and was anxious to be regarded as his son, his [Shakspeare's] first employment in London was that of a horseboy, and according to the tradition which has descended to us from a Parish Clerk of his native place, his first connexion with the theatre was in the capacity of a servitor or servant. It is not likely he rose from a horseboy to a servitor at a

¹ *The Comedy of Errors*, says Mr. Gollancz, "may safely be dated 1589-91." The same authority gives 1591 as the date of the composition of *Romeo and Juliet*—"at least in its first form." The *Dream* is generally dated 1591-2, but many critics refer the composition to an earlier date; and to *Love's Labour's Lost* Mr. Lee assigns "priority in point of time of all Shakespeare's dramatic productions." *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* may be safely dated at 1590-2.

bound; and it is certain that he could not have been raised from a servitor to an actor by a stroke of magic. The histrionic art, as Mr. Phillipps observes, is not learnt in a day, but requires a severe preliminary training (H.-P., I, 68), and the facts agree with this conclusion. It is not till September 1592 that we hear of him as an actor, as late as May 1593 his name is not included in the official list of players (H.-P., II, 329); and the first record of his acting which we possess is that which informs us that in Christmas 1594 he had attained sufficient excellence in his profession to play before the Queen (H.-P., I, 107)."

Shakspeare, says Mr. Lee, "remained a prominent member of the actor's profession till near the end of his life." Though "prominent," it would not seem that he was exactly "eminent," as Mr. Phillipps suggests, if credence is to be given to Rowe's story that his "top performance" was the ghost in *Hamlet*; but it is, of course, possible that Shakspeare reached a somewhat higher histrionic level than this.

And now a word more as to Shakspeare's handwriting. I have already alluded to the very remarkable fact that no scrap of that handwriting has come down to us except his five signatures (*Ante*, p. 17). What says Mr. Lee as to this? "As in the case of Edmund Spenser, and of almost all the great authors who were contemporary with Shakespeare, no fragment of Shakespeare's handwriting outside his signatures—no letter nor any scrap of his literary work—is known to be in existence" (p. 231). This citation of Spenser is curious. Is it true, then, that we have no scrap of *his* handwriting? Why, we read in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, above the initials "S. L.," as well as those of Professor Hales, that "eight documents among the Irish State Papers, dating between 1581 and 1589, bear Spenser's signature, and one . . . is a holograph." Nay, Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, in their *Illustrated History of English Literature* (Vol. 2, p. 121), are so kind as to

provide us with a facsimile of a "document in the handwriting of Edmund Spenser." How should we rejoice if only we could have something of the kind in Shakspeare's case! Meantime Mr. Lee's remarkable statement seems to call for some explanation. But to what an instructive comparison are we led by this allusion to Spenser! Here is a poet who predeceased Shakspeare by seventeen years, yet how much better do we know him than we know the Stratford player! We read of his education at the Merchant Taylors School, and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. We see him with his friends, Gabriel Harvey, Edward Kirke, and others. We have not to assume, or invent, for him an intimacy with the great people of his time, for we find him closely associated with men like Leicester, and Raleigh, and Philip Sidney, and Sir Edward Dyer, the two last-named being members of the literary society which he formed, and called "the Areopagus." If we have not very much of his manuscript we have at least in print numbers of letters written by him and to him. His portraits are not suspect as are those of "Shakespeare"; and when he died we are told by Camden that contemporary poets thronged to his funeral and cast their elegies and the pens that wrote them into the tomb. Look upon this picture—and on *that*! What a contrast!

CHAPTER III

SHAKSPERE AND "GENIUS"

LET us now consider the result to which our investigations have carried us. So-called biographers of Shakspeare, evolving out of their imagination fancy portraits of what the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* ought to have been, have presented us with the vision of a romantic boy wandering, Nature's votary, by the sweet stream of Avon, and learning his "native wood-notes wild" from the song of birds, the whisper of leaves, the murmur of bees. What is the reality to which, if we discard theories and prepossessions and seek for truth alone as it is revealed by evidence, we are inexorably brought? A boy born of illiterate parents in a squalid commonplace provincial town, passing his early years among commonplace illiterate people, possibly for a short time at a Free School, withdrawn thence at an exceptionally early age; a butcher's apprentice, according to the best evidence that we have, a draper's apprentice, if you will; "fallen into ill company" and a confirmed deer poacher, if we are to believe Rowe's narrative; frequently whipt and imprisoned, if we are to accept the story told by the Rev. Davies; one who has been drawn at the age of eighteen into an improvident and uncongenial marriage, and who flies from (surely "deserts" would not be too strong a word) wife and children about the age of two-and-twenty, coming to London "a needy adventurer," and living for a time "by very mean employments." "Removed prematurely from school, residing with illiter-

ate relatives in a bookless neighbourhood,¹ thrown into the midst of occupations adverse to scholastic progress—it is difficult to believe that when he first left Stratford he was not all but destitute of polished accomplishments. He could not, at all events, under the circumstances in which

¹ Exception has been taken to this phrase, "a bookless neighbourhood" (see articles by Mrs. Stopes and Mr. Sidney Lee in the *Athenæum* of February 23rd and March 2nd, 1907), and it must be admitted that it is one of those general propositions which it is very dangerous to advance, inasmuch as, in the words of Mrs. Stopes, they are "liable to be proved untrue by a very limited opposite." That this description of the "neighbourhood" of Stratford is not literally true, and stands in need of considerable qualification, is obvious on the face of it. It is equally obvious that all Mr. Phillipps meant was that the possession of books among the good people of that place was a very exceptional distinction indeed; and this is fully borne out by the fact that so many of the townsmen, "aldermen and burgesses" included, are shown to have been illiterate. It is to no purpose to show that certain distinguished persons (peers and baronets are cited amongst others) were the owners of books, and, in some cases, of fine libraries, for nobody has ever denied it. It is interesting, for instance, to know, on the authority of Mr. Lee, that George Carew, afterwards Earl of Totnes, owned John Florio's *World of Wordes* and passed it on to his son; but I fear these "grand possessors" did little to enlighten the honest "marksmen" of Stratford-on-Avon. Among the clergy, too, we naturally expect to find books, for they were always taught at least two of "the three R's"; indeed, if a man could read and write he might, when confronted with a criminal charge, claim "the benefit of clergy," for if not actually in holy orders he was at least qualified to become "a learned clerk." Mrs. Stopes instances the case of one John Marshall, curate of Bishopton, who died, in 1607, possessed of a large number of books of sorts, whereof an inventory is set forth; so that if we are to include Bishopton in Mr. Phillipps's "neighbourhood," evidently it was not literally "bookless" in the fourth year of James I. All which we may admit with equanimity. But that the great majority of the good people of Stratford, in Shakspeare's time, were altogether illiterate may be (and doubtless is) perfectly true nevertheless. It is indisputable too that "the attorneys would have their law books, the doctors their medical books." Mrs. Stopes cites the case of John Hall, Shakspeare's son-in-law, to which I have alluded elsewhere. She specially calls attention to the fact that Doctor Hall made mention of his books by his will. So too the Rev. John Marshall made specific bequests of some of his books by his will. Sir Thomas Lucy's library also was "remembered in his will." But Shakspeare made a will, and a long one, prepared by the local attorney, in which he made mention of many things, but no mention whatever of books. Apparently there was no library at New Place, Stratford-on-Avon. Yet surely *Shakspeare* was not "bookless"! That is a much more important question than whether or not Mr. Phillipps was guilty of "a terminological inexactitude."

he had then so long been placed, have had the opportunity for acquiring a refined style of composition." Such is the opinion of Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps.

It is not to be accepted merely on Mr. Phillipps's authority, but is it not the conclusion to which all the evidence inevitably forces us? Is it not the only conclusion which reason and common sense will allow us to form?

There is another consideration which must here be taken into account. "It was only in London," says Mr. Grant White, "that those plays could have been written. London had but just before Shakespeare's day made its metropolitan supremacy felt as well as acknowledged throughout England. As long as two hundred years after that time the county of each Member of Parliament was betrayed by his tongue." Yes, and at the present day, as we all know, Northumberland, Lancashire, Cornwall, Devon, Sussex, Hampshire (to give a few examples) have each its own peculiar, well-marked dialect and pronunciation, and not even the cultivated man of the upper classes will be entirely free from its influence if he receives his education and passes his life in his own county. That the young Shakspeare when he came to London spoke the Warwickshire dialect or *patois* is, then, as certain as anything can be that is incapable of mathematical proof. "His language," says Mr. Grant White, "would have been a dialect which must needs have been translated to be understood by modern English ears."

At this point I would ask the thinking reader who does not take his opinions, on literary or historical questions, ready-made from the *ex-cathedra* pronouncement of some *soi-disant* infallible High Pontiff of Literature, to consider a few facts and dates. The twins Hamnet and Judith were baptised at Stratford-on-Avon on February 2nd, 1585, and it is conjectured by Mr. Phillipps and Mr. Lee that Shakspeare shortly after this took his departure for London. Whether it was *propter hoc* as well as *post hoc*

we do not know, but unless he was obliged to fly his native village, it would not seem that he was a very affectionate father. It is possible, however, that this *Hegira* was somewhat later. Mr. Fleay, well known for his great labours in the Shakespearean field, puts it in 1587. For all we know it may have been even later than that. Now, as already mentioned, according to Dr. Furnivall and others, *Love's Labour's Lost* was composed in 1588-9; *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-91; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1590-1; *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3; and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1590-2. These dates are, of course, more or less hypothetical,¹ like everything else in the life of Shakespeare, but, at any rate, as Mr. Lee says, "his first essays have been with confidence allotted to 1591," and there is cogent evidence for an earlier date than that. And in 1593 was published that wonderful poem *Venus and Adonis*, which the poet described as "the first heir of my invention."

Let us take the poem first. It opens with a dedicatory address, signed "William Shakespeare," to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, a young gallant then in his twentieth year, a man of vast possessions, in the front ranks of society, and reckoned the handsomest man at Court. No little audacity this on the part of Player Shakspeare! Actors at that time were classed with rogues and vagabonds, unless they had obtained a licence from some great personage. "It must be borne in mind," says Mr. Phillipps, "that actors occupied an inferior position in society, and that even the vocation of a dramatic author was considered scarcely respectable." "At this day," writes Dr. Ingleby, "we can scarcely realize the scorn which was thrown on all sides upon those who made acting a means of livelihood." Yet here is Player Shakspeare dedicating "the first heir of his invention" to one of the greatest and most fashionable nobles at the great

¹ See *ante*, p. 51, and *post*, p. 515.

Queen's Court! To the Earl of Southampton, says Mr. Grant White, Shakspeare dedicated his *Venus and Adonis*, "although he had not asked permission to do so, as the dedication shows, and in those days and long after, without some knowledge of his man, and some opportunity of judging how he would receive the compliment, a player would not have ventured to take such a liberty with the name of a nobleman." Have we, then, any evidence that Shakspeare, the actor, was intimate with Southampton, or patronised by him? Not a scrap of such evidence exists. We only know that "Shakespeare" dedicated his poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to this great personage.

On the title-page of *Venus and Adonis* appear these lines from Ovid's *Amores*:—

Vilia miretur vulgus : mihi flavus Apollo
Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ,

i.e., "Let the common herd admire common things, so long as to *me* Apollo's self hands goblets brimming with the waters of Castaly." Of a truth the young Player, at his first literary venture, was not troubled with any superfluous modesty! Two years afterwards Sir Philip Sidney published his *Apology for Poetry*, and inscribed upon the title-page a similar haughty motto:—

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.

In Sidney's case this sort of thing seems natural enough; but we should hardly have expected it in a young unknown provincial, *nullis majoribus ortus!*¹

¹ "The tone of its dedication to the Earl of Southampton, if somewhat egotistical, is that of one well-bred man addressing another. Besides taking for granted that it was in his power to 'honour' his noble friend, the author (who is commonly supposed to have begun and ended his earthly career as one of the bourgeoisie of a petty market town in the Midlands) goes out of his way to proclaim his aversion to vulgar ideals, for he adopts as his motto the verses of Ovid," quoted above. Jonson in his *Poetaster* translates these as follows:—

"Kneel hinds to trash—me let bright Phœbus swell
With cups full flowing from the Muses' well."

(See "Shakespeare-Bacon." An Essay by E. W. S.)

We now turn to the poem itself, and our wonder increases at every step. Here is the young Warwickshire provincial writing, "as his first essay in English composition, the most elegant verses the age produced, and which for polish and care surpass his very latest works."¹ Polished indeed, and scholarly, is this extraordinary poem, and, above all, it is impressed throughout with that which we now call *Culture*. It is, in fact, imbued with the spirit of the highest culture of the age in which it was written. The author, as Mr. Churton Collins tells us, "draws on Ovid, the material, profusely and superbly embroidered and expanded with original imagery and detail, being derived from the story as told in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, with much which is borrowed from the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the fourth book, and from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt in the eighth book." The *Metamorphoses*, indeed, had been translated by Golding, but Mr. Collins, for reasons to which I will allude later on, thinks it "just as likely that he followed the original as that he followed the translation." A courtly, scholarly poet, in fact, saturated with Ovid. Then for his description of "the ideal horse" he goes to Virgil as imitated and expanded by Du Bartas. Here he would seem to have followed Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's work, but if so he must apparently have seen it in manuscript, since Sylvester's translation of this part of the *Divine Weeks and Works* was not published till 1598.² The resemblance is so close that I will give Sylvester's lines, taken from "the second week":

With round high hollow smooth brown jetty hoof,
With pasterns short, upright (but yet in mean),

¹ Appleton Morgan, *The Shakespearian Myth*, p. 219. "The *Venus and Adonis*," writes Mr. Morgan, "is the most carefully polished production that William Shakespeare's name was ever signed to, and, moreover, as polished, elegant, and sumptuous a piece of rhetoric as English letters have ever produced."

² See further as to this chap. XIV, p. 423.

Dry sinewy shanks, strong fleshless knees, and lean,
 With Hart-like legs, broad breast and large behinde,
 With body large, smooth flanks and double chin'd.
 A crested neck bow'd like a half bent bow,
 Whereon a long thin curled mane doth flow.
 A firm full tail, touching the lowly ground,
 With dock between two fair fat buttocks drown'd ;
 A prickéd ear that rests as little space
 As his light foot ; a lean, bare bonny face,
 Thin joule and head, but of a middle size.
 Full lively flaming quickly rowling eyes,
 Great foaming mouth, hot fuming nostrils wide, etc.

The reader will find that nearly all these expressions are reproduced in Shakespeare's picture.¹

¹ We may thus tabulate the resemblances between Sylvester and Shakespeare in this description :—

SYLVESTER'S "DU BARTAS."

SHAKESPEARE

Round . . . hoof.	Round hoof'd.
Pasterns short.	Short-jointed.
Hart-like legs.	Straight legs and passing strong.
Broad breast.	Broad breast.
Long thin mane.	Thin mane.
Full tail.	Thick tail.
Fat buttocks.	Broad buttock.
Pricked ear.	Short ears.
Thin head.	Small head.
Full eyes.	Full eye.
Nostril wide.	Nostril wide.
A crested neck.	High crest.

In an earlier stanza Shakespeare has :—

" His ears up prick'd, his braided hanging mane
 Upon his compass'd crest now stand on end ;
 His nostrils drink the air, and forth again,
 As from a furnace vapours he doth send."

With which we may compare Sylvester quoted above. ("Compass'd" of course = arch'd).

Ben Jonson in his *Bartholomew Fair* (Act IV, Scene 3) parodies this description of "the ideal horse" by making it applicable with some little change to the ideal woman ! "My delicate dark chestnut here, with the fine lean head, large forehead, round eyes," etc. I must refer the reader to the original for the rest of the quotation.

There is, by the way, a rather curious slip in the life of Joshua Sylvester in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where we read, "Ben Jonson in his

Then, too, the author of *Venus and Adonis* appears as a humanitarian, full of tender compassion for the poor hunted hare; as witness those beautiful lines commencing:—

By this poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear.

We are reminded here of the melancholy Jacques, and his sympathy with "the poor dappled fools" of the forest. Mr. Lee (p. 66) seems to think that Shakespeare had read the *Ode de la Chasse* in Estienne Jodelle's *Ouvres et Meslanges Poétiques* (where, he says, there are "curious resemblances" to the "minute description" of the hare-hunt in *Venus and Adonis*), and it may well be so, for evidently the author of the poem was a wide reader both of the classics and of the literature of his day.

Then we have a curious and, it must be confessed, a very unpoetical legal allusion. "The Queen of Love proposes to 'sell herself' to the young Adonis, the consideration is to be a 'thousand kisses,' the number to be doubled in default of immediate payment: the deed is to be executed without delay, and the purchaser is to 'set his sign manual on her wax-red lips.'" (Judge Webb, *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 167.) Then exclaims Venus:—

Say, for non-payment, that the debt should double,
Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?

conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden complained that 'Sylvester wrote his verses before he understood to confer,' referring apparently to the verbal inaccuracy of the rendering." What Jonson really said was, "that Sylvester's translation was not well done, and that he wrote his verses before it [i.e. prefixed to it] before he understood to confer," i.e. before he, Jonson, understood French sufficiently to judge of the merits of the translation. The epigram itself makes this quite clear.

"But as it is (the child of Ignorance
And utter stranger to all air of France)
How can I speak of thy great pains but err?
Since they can only judge who can confer."

This is an allusion to the penalty for non-payment which, as every lawyer knows, formed the condition of a "common money-bond"—rather out of place, it must be admitted, in such a collocation.

Taking, then, all the circumstances together—the time of publication of this "first heir" of the poet's "invention," the dedication to the Earl of Southampton, the haughty claim advanced by the prefixed quotation from Ovid, and, above all, the character and contents of the poem, and all to which they bear witness; bearing in mind, also, that there is really no evidence identifying the Player with the Poet, or showing that he ever claimed the authorship of the poem, is it conceivable that this was the work of the Stratford Player of whom we know so little, yet of whom we know so much too much? If so, we have here a veritable sixteenth-century miracle. But on the assumption that miracles had ceased before that date the belief appears to me as preposterous as any of those illusions which, being consecrated by time, are dear to the credulity of the human heart.¹

Yet there are to be found worshippers at the Stratford shrine infatuated enough to believe that this wonderful, polished, scholarly, and elaborate poem was composed by the young provincial while still consorting with the butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers of his native Stratford. Sir Theodore Martin is quite inclined to accept this absurd supposition. "It might be so," he says, "for Shakespeare

¹ *Venus and Adonis* was printed by Richard Field, and Field was a native of Stratford, but there is absolutely nothing to show that Field had any acquaintance with, or any knowledge of Shakspeare. Mrs. Stopes (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, ch. 1) has collected everything that can be found with reference to this printer, but there is no link to connect him with Shakspeare, except the assumption that "Shakespeare" of the dedication is Shakspeare of Stratford. Mrs. Stopes assumes that Shakspeare acquired his learning, classical and other (including, e.g., his knowledge of Giordano Bruno, whose influence so clearly appears in the Sonnets), by reading at Field's shop. Reason and probability seem to count for little in the Stratfordian creed.

was twenty-one when he was forced to leave Stratford, and weighted although the *Venus and Adonis* is with thought as well as passion, the genius which produced the dramas might even at that early age have conceived and written it"! This seems to me extravagant infatuation rather than critical judgment. Yet Mr. Churton Collins is quite prepared to fall into line. Confronted with Shakespeare's own assertion that the *Venus and Adonis* was the first heir of his invention, yet desirous of ascribing a much earlier date to some of the Shakespearean dramas, and particularly to *Titus Andronicus*, which he violently contends is Shakespeare's work, and composed between 1586 and 1591, Mr. Collins is driven to insist "either that *Venus and Adonis* was written long before it was printed . . . or that for some reason he did not regard his early dramas as heirs of his invention." "I do not wish to indulge in conjecture," says Mr. Collins, "but it seems to me highly probable that it [*V. and A.*] was composed at Stratford before he came up to London, as early perhaps as 1585."¹ This proves a little too much for such a highly-trained critic and powerful reasoner as Mr. J. M. Robertson, who thus comments upon the passage I have quoted: "It is thus put as equally highly probable that 'for some reason' Shakespeare thought his poems were his inventions, while his original plays were not; and that he had produced at Stratford an elaborate poem, carefully calculated for popularity, which he kept in manuscript through eight years of struggle for existence. Both propositions are improbable to the last degree. That Shakespeare wrote *Venus and Adonis* before he came to London is a hypothesis which would never have been broached but for the need of serving the presupposition that he wrote plays as early as 1589. What should have induced him to withhold from the press for all those years so readily saleable a poem, when he was actually in need of

¹ *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 108.

whatever money he could come by? The surmise will not bear a moment's investigation."¹ But this is not all. Mr. Collins tells us further (p. 120) that "*Venus and Adonis* is plainly modelled on Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*," forgetting, apparently, that Lodge's poem was not published till 1589. According to this critic, therefore, Shakspeare at Stratford, "as early perhaps as 1585," models the first heir of his invention on a poem by Lodge which did not see the light in print till four years afterwards! We shall be told next that Lodge visited the young provincial and invited him to peruse his manuscript! "Mr. Collins," says Mr. Robertson (p. 22), "has not even taken the trouble to reconcile his assertions—and this in an essay in which he imputes to his gainsayers perversity, paradox, sophistry, and illegitimate criticism!"²

Another consideration must not be omitted. Before

¹ *Did Shakespeare write 'Titus Andronicus'?* pp. 22, 23. The real absurdity, in my judgment, is in the belief that the "Stratford rustic" could have written such a poem at all. What are the probabilities of a butcher's or draper's apprentice at Stratford-on-Avon at the present time, born in illiterate surroundings, and brought up as Shakspeare was brought up, writing, say at the age of twenty-one, a polished, cultured, elaborate, and scholarly poem, such as *Venus and Adonis*, and of the same high degree of excellence? Should we not look upon it as an almost miraculous performance? In Shakspeare's time, and for a youth in Shakspeare's environment, it would have been a miracle of tenfold marvel. The truth is that we do not gather figs from thistles, nor can we make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Even "Genius" cannot do this.

² Some critics, including Charles Knight and Mr. Swinburne, have maintained that *Arden of Feversham*, published anonymously in 1592, was written by Shakespeare. How they could possibly have come to that conclusion is to me a mystery. The Rev. Ronald Bayne, who has recently edited the play for Messrs. Dent, finds difficulties in the way of the supposed authorship which are worth quoting as illustrating the kind of assumptions which have to be made in support of the Stratfordian theory: "Unless Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] wrote this play as soon as he reached London, and then for a year or two wrote nothing else, it is impossible to fit it into his work. And if he wrote the play as soon as he reached London *and then took up the studies which resulted in Venus and Adonis and Lucrece*, would he have written *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Comedy of Errors* on his way back to work like *Arden*?" I must leave it to the Stratfordians to answer this and similar conundrums.

Venus and Adonis could be published a licence to that effect had to be obtained. The Stationers' Company's Charter of Philip and Mary, confirmed by Elizabeth in 1559, forbade anybody to print "any book or anything for sale or traffic," unless he were a member of the Company, or a royal licence had been granted to him. Elizabeth's Injunctions of 1559 provided that every book should be licensed by Her Majesty, or by six of the Privy Council, or perused and licensed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London, the Chancellors of both Universities, the Bishop being ordinary, and the Archdeacon also of the place where the book was to be printed, or by two of them, the ordinary of the place being always one; and the names of the allowing Commissioners were to be added at the end of the work. Pamphlets, plays, and ballads were to be licensed by any three of the Commissioners.¹

Now *Venus and Adonis* is certainly not a Puritan's poem, being full of voluptuous images such as might well find favour with the young Earl of Southampton, who was well known as a gallant gay Lothario. It is somewhat surprising, then, to find, not only that the young actor has, apparently, no difficulty in obtaining a licence for his poem, but that one of the guarantors of its fitness for publication is Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury. I am aware that to mention the name of Bacon in this connection is to the Stratfordians as a red rag to a bull, but, nevertheless, it may here be recalled that Bacon and Southampton were intimate (they had been at Gray's Inn together) and that Whitgift had been Bacon's tutor. But *favete linguis*. I have no desire to embark upon the stormy sea of Baconian controversy.

note this.

Let us now turn to *Love's Labour's Lost*, to which, says Mr. Lee, p. 48, "may reasonably be assigned priority in

¹ See also the Decree of the Star Chamber, June 23, 1586, cited *infra*, p. 304.

point of time of all Shakespeare's dramatic productions." If *Venus and Adonis* is an extraordinary poem, so also is *Love's Labour's Lost* an extraordinary play. It is something *sui generis* among the Shakespearean dramas, and he would be a bold manager who should venture to put it upon a modern stage. But, besides containing some beautiful poetry, it coruscates with ingenious wit, and is full of quips and quiddities, quibbling, repartee, and word-play. Its author must have been not only a man of high intellectual culture, but one who was intimately acquainted with the ways of the Court, and the fashionable society of his time, as also with contemporary foreign politics. "The subject matter," writes Mr. Lee, "suggests that its author had already enjoyed extended opportunities of surveying London life and manners, such as were hardly open to him in the very first years of his settlement in the Metropolis. 'Love's Labour's Lost' embodies keen observation of contemporary life in many ranks of society, both in town and country, while the speeches of the hero Biron clothe much sound philosophy in masterly rhetoric. Its slender plot stands almost alone among Shakespeare's plots in that it is not known to have been borrowed, and stands quite alone in openly travestying known traits and incidents of current social and political life. The names of the chief characters are drawn from the leaders in the civil war in France, which was in progress between 1589 and 1594, and was anxiously watched by the English public. Contemporary projects of academies for disciplining young men; fashions of speech and dress current in fashionable circles; recent attempts on the part of Elizabeth's government to negotiate with the Tsar of Russia; the inefficiency of rural constables and the pedantry of village schoolmasters and curates are all satirised with good humour." "The hero is the King of Navarre, in whose dominions the scene is laid. The two chief lords in attendance on him in the play, Biron and Longaville,

Note.

bear the actual names of the two most strenuous supporters of the real King of Navarre. The name of the Lord Dumain is a common anglicised version of that Duc de Maine or Mayenne whose name was so frequently mentioned in popular accounts of French affairs in connection with Navarre's movements that Shakespeare was led to number him also among his supporters. Mothe or La Mothe, the name of the pretty ingenious page, was that of a French ambassador who was long popular in London," though he left England in 1583.

The case as to this very remarkable play is well summed up by the late Judge Webb in his *Mystery of William Shakespeare* (p. 44): "Ignoring the imperfect education, the sordid surroundings, the mean employments, and the wild adventures of the young man (Shakspeare), Mr. Coleridge is of opinion that the diction and allusions of the play afford a strong presumption that 'his habits had been scholastic.' The principal characters of the play, according to Mr. Marshall, were persons who had figured prominently in the recent politics of France. . . . The habits of the author could not have been more scholastic if, like Bacon, he had spent three years in the University of Cambridge; he could not have been more familiar with French politics if, like Bacon, he had spent three years in the train of an Ambassador to France; he could not have been more thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of fashionable life in London if, like Bacon, he had been the friend of Essex and Southampton; and he could not have been more familiar with all the gossip of the Court if, like Bacon, he had, from his earliest youth, been dancing attendance on the Virgin Queen. It may be added that he could not have shown a greater knowledge of Spanish and Italian proverbs if, like Bacon, he had formed a collection of them, and entered them in a common-place book such as *Promus*. Like Bacon, too, the author of the play must

Note this

have had a large command of books; he must have had his 'Horace,' his 'Ovidius Naso,' and his 'good old Mantuan.' He must have had access to the *Chronicles* of Monstrelet to know the conflicting claims of France and Navarre and Aquitaine. The style of narration, according to Mr. Coleridge, who thinks that the play was planned before Shakspeare had left Stratford, seems imitated from the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney [not published till 1590]. Sir Piercie Shafton could not have been better read in the *Euphues* of Lyly. The treatment of Don Armado and his boy, Moth, reminds Mr. Lee of Sir Thopas and his boy, Epiton, in Lyly's *Endymion*. It is not too much to say that the author of *Love's Labour's Lost* was the embodiment of all the accomplishments and all the culture of his age. In the purity and plenitude of his English he was unrivalled, in the 'elegance, facility, and golden cadence' of his verse, he was unsurpassed; he eclipsed Lyly; he outshone Sidney; his blank verse, in the opinion of Mr. Coleridge, has nothing equal to it but that of Milton; and Mr. Swinburne recognises in it 'the speech of Gods.' How the young countryman could have acquired the speech of Gods, when even country gentlemen, according to Macaulay, spoke the dialect of clowns; how he could have acquired the book-learning which is conspicuous in the play, when even the country clergy, according to Macaulay, found the utmost difficulty in procuring books; how he could have become acquainted with the fashions of speech and dress current in the fashionable circles of London while residing in a country town such as that described by Garrick—these are questions to which everyone would like to receive an answer, but they are questions which are left unanswered, nay, unasked, by Mr. Lee."

We have already seen¹ that, according to eminent Shakespearean experts, *Love's Labour's Lost* was com-

¹ *Ante*, p. 51, and see *post*, p. 515-6.

*an excellent
summary.*

posed in 1588-9, *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-91, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1590-1, *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3, and *The Two Gentlemen* in 1590-2. We have seen, too, that *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention," was composed at any rate before 1593, and some critics (Professor Baynes among them) maintain that it had been written before Shakspeare left Stratford—an assumption in which Sir Theodore Martin sees no improbability.¹

Now, putting aside for the moment the other plays above-mentioned, and fixing our attention only on *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Venus and Adonis* (which the reader who has not already done so should "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest"), how is it possible to conceive that these works, which proclaim in every line that their author was a cultured and courtly aristocrat, were composed by William Shakspeare of Stratford?

I know, of course, what the answer of the Stratfordian will be. He will ingeminate "Genius! Genius!" Has not Sir Theodore Martin written that the difficulty has arisen with "certain people to whom the ways of genius

¹ "It is extremely improbable," writes Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, "that an epic, so highly finished *and so completely devoid of patois*, could have been produced under the circumstances of his then domestic surroundings, while, moreover, the notion is opposed to the best and earliest traditional opinions." Yet Mr. Churton Collins (*Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 108) thinks it "highly probable" that the poem "was composed at Stratford before he [Shakspeare] came up to London"! As the epithet "absurd" is one of the mildest of those so plentifully showered by Mr. Collins on such as venture to disagree with him, I need not scruple to characterise the opinion that this extraordinary poem was written by "a Stratford rustic" (to use an expression now sanctioned by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse) as simply fatuous. This is the faith that removes mountains by swallowing them. It is quite in the nature of things that a high priest of this credulous order should rail at those who will not accept all the articles of his creed on account of "their indifference to evidence, to probability, to reason"! Being *omnium capax*, he is, like Habakkuk, *capable de tout*. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, it may be remarked, say that "the indebtedness of *Venus and Adonis* to Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla* proves that it cannot have been written before the publication of that poem, in the autumn of 1589." They would fix the date at 1590. There are many tabernacles in the Stratfordian camp!

are a stumbling-block"? Of Sir Theodore Martin I can only write in terms of unfeigned respect, and I regret that he should have entertained such contempt for those who would examine the claims of genius rather strictly when it is appealed to as a Thaumaturgus. It is as if he had written, "These poor people,—these poor dolts,—they cannot understand the ways of genius. 'But *we* are Spirits of another sort'!" Well, if by "Genius" is meant the Genius of the *Arabian Nights* who can bring into being an Aladdin's Palace by a mere word, then no doubt Genius can do all that these complacent critics claim for it. But if human genius be intended, then I venture to think that they have greatly misconceived the functions and potentialities of genius, and that, for all their fancied superiority, they will haply be found to be but wise in their own conceits. Genius may give the power of acquiring knowledge, but genius is not knowledge. Genius never taught a man to conjugate *τύπτω* who had never had a lesson in Greek nor seen a Greek grammar.¹ Many a "mute inglorious Milton" rests in many a country churchyard. And why? Because

Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll.

And though genius may prompt one to sing sweetly without much knowledge, it would require not genius but

¹ "Il y a des choses de métier que le genie ne révèle pas. Il faut les apprendre." Balzac, *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, p. 193. Take, for example, Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of law, with which I deal elsewhere (chap. XIII). As Mr. Castle, K.C., truly says, "Law is a comparatively dry subject, only to be acquired by a large amount of experience and trouble; there is no intuitive knowledge of the forms of pleading and the use of technical words and phrases, and therefore if these are to be found in some of the plays, we have a knowledge that must have been acquired." Ardent Shakesperiolaters, however, seem to think that Shakspeare might have acquired an accurate knowledge of the doctrine of Uses, (e.g.) by the mere force of *genius*. They would, in his case at all events, doubtless subscribe to Dogberry's *dictum* that "to write and read comes by nature!"

divine inspiration to enable a young provincial apprentice, who had passed through call-boy to play-actor, and who had but picked up a few crumbs of education at the Stratford Free School (where by the way he had, it would seem, given no indications of genius whatever)—in a word, Shakspeare as we know him to have been—not only to wake to ecstasy the living lyre, but to write of all things under heaven as never man wrote before or since. "All the commentators on Shakespeare," writes Mr. Ellacombe, "are agreed that he was the most wonderfully many-sided writer that the world has yet seen. Every art and science are more or less noticed by him so far as they were known in his day, every business and profession are more or less accurately described; and so it has come to pass that, though the main circumstances of his life are pretty well known, yet the students of every art and science, and the members of every business and profession, have delighted to claim him as their fellow-labourer. Books have been written at various times by various writers which have proved (to the complete satisfaction of the writers) that he was a soldier, a sailor, a lawyer, an astronomer, a physician, a divine, a printer, an actor, a courtier, a sportsman, an angler, and I know not what else beside." Mr. Ellacombe himself, quoting *Richard II*, Act III, scene 4, is almost tempted to say that he was "a gardener by profession." We know, too, that he is so accurate in his topographical details that books have been written to prove that he had visited not only Scotland but also Germany and Italy.

But genius alone cannot do all this. Genius is a gift of nature, but nature alone never yet gave knowledge and culture. The diamond is a natural product, but, however fine its quality, it will not sparkle like the Koh-i-nûr unless it be subjected to the process of cutting at the hands of a skilful artificer. No; the genius of Shakespeare was genius in conjunction with wide reading,¹ and the best

¹ He was "an omnivorous reader," says Anders. *Shakespeare's Books*.

certainly; the reading may have been desultory, but it was certainly wide.

culture that the age could provide. "Genius," writes Mr. Edwards, "will do wonders with material once gathered, but genius does not provide or originate facts on which to work. No man ever became learned out of his own consciousness. The verdict of mankind, based on all experience, is that knowledge comes neither by inspiration nor accident, and that there is no royal or other than the common road to learning." "Genius," says Macaulay, "will not furnish the poet with a vocabulary. . . . Information and experience are necessary, not for the purpose of strengthening the imagination, which is never so strong as in people incapable of reasoning—savages, children, etc.; but for the purpose of enabling the artist to communicate his conceptions to others. . . . Should a man, gifted by nature with all the genius of Canova, attempt to carve a statue without instruction as to the management of his chisel or attention to the anatomy of the human body, he would produce something compared with which the Highlander at the door of the snuff-shop would deserve admiration. If an uninitiated Raphael were to attempt a painting it would be a mere daub."

"Mr. Coleridge," as Judge Webb writes, "has endowed the young man who came up from Stratford with a superhuman genius, and undoubtedly, if we assume the young man to have been the author of the plays, we must grant him the possession of a genius which, making allowance for poetic licence, we may describe as superhuman. But, unfortunately, in the absence of evidence that the young man possessed a superhuman genius, we have no right to assume that he was the author of the plays, and most assuredly he had given no signs of the possession of a superhuman genius while he remained at Stratford. Enthusiasts more *ultrafidian* than Mr. Coleridge have carried the theory of superhuman genius into a theory of actual inspiration. Admitting his humble origin, his

defective education, his mean employments, and his want of all opportunities of culture, they have venerated him as a miraculous birth of time, to whom the whole world of being was revealed by a sort of apocalyptic vision, and who was endowed with the gift of tongues by a species of Pentecostal fire. This is Shakesperiolatry run mad. When we venerate Shakespeare, we venerate him not as a miracle, but as a man; and the ordinary laws of nature are not suspended in the case of extraordinary men. It is here that the difficulty of the Shakesperean lies. Though poetry, as Bacon says, is a plant that cometh of the lust of the earth, the intuitions of genius cannot supply a knowledge of material facts."

To the same effect Dr. Elze: "The poetic imagination may be ever so lively and creative, and the power of intuition ever so highly developed, one thing cannot be disputed, namely, that it bestows upon no one a knowledge of facts, but that such a knowledge can only be acquired either by experience or must be imparted by others.¹ Dr. Johnson very correctly observes that 'Shakespeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned.'" The writer then goes on to speak of Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of certain "positive facts respecting Italy," to which I will refer later on.

Sir Theodore Martin, in order, I suppose, to assist those poor people to whom the ways of genius are a stumbling-block, cites certain cases which he appears to consider analogous to that of Shakespeare. "Kindred manifestations of genius in men as lowly born, and as little favoured in point of education as he, of which biographical records furnish countless instances." Among these he names "Leonardo da Vinci, the illegitimate son of a common notary; Marlowe, the son of a shoemaker; Ben Jonson, posthumous son of a clergyman, but brought up by a

¹ *Sic.*

bricklayer stepfather; Burns, the son of a small farmer; Keats, an apothecary's apprentice, and the son of a livery-stable keeper."

This really seems to me to display an *ignoratio elenchi* much greater than that of Dr. Johnson when he kicked a large stone in order to refute Berkeley. It shows, in my humble judgment, that the writer had not the faintest conception of the real difficulties of the problem which he affects to decide in such a light and airy manner. Let us briefly consider the examples which he would have us look upon as "kindred manifestations." We will take Marlowe first. "Marlowe, the son of a shoemaker," says Sir Theodore, as though that were quite sufficient to make the case analogous to that of Shakespeare. Yes, Marlowe's father was, certainly, a member of the Shoemakers' and Tanners' Guild of Canterbury. He was also clerk of St. Mary's, and married the daughter of the rector of St. Peter's. His son Christopher, the poet, was educated at the famous King's School, of Canterbury, where he gained an Exhibition. Thence he proceeded to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he graduated B.A. in 1583, and M.A. in 1587. He studied the classics with enthusiasm, and, amongst other things, it may be mentioned that he translated Ovid's *Amores* into English heroic verse, though the translation was not published till after his death. Would Sir Theodore, who is so familiar with the ways of genius, really have us think—does he himself think—that there is an analogy between this case and that of Shakspeare, if Shakspeare and Shakespeare are to be looked upon as identical? Where is the difficulty in reconciling Marlowe's works with his birth and education? There is, of course, none whatever.

Next take the case of Ben Jonson. On this I need not expatiate, because we have already considered his education at the best school that existed in England in his time, where he became, moreover, the special protégé

of the great and learned Camden. "During the years he spent at Westminster," wrote John Addington Symonds, "we must imagine him absorbing all the new learning of the Greeks and Romans which England had derived from Italian humanism, drinking in knowledge at every sense, and, after books were cast aside, indulging his leisure in studying the humours of the town which lay around him. . . . This raw observant boy, his head crammed with Tacitus and Livy, Aristophanes and Thucydides, sallied forth from the class-room, when the hours of study were over, into the slums of suburban London, lounged around the water-stairs of the Thames, threaded the purlieus of Cheapside and Smithfield, and drank with 'prentices and boxed with porters, learned the slang of the streets, and picked up insensibly that inexhaustible repertory of contemporary manners which makes his comedies our most prolific source of information on the life of London in the sixteenth century." Thus Westminster and London made him what he was, but it may be added that he "finished his education" by the military service which he saw and the experience which he gained in the Low Countries.

Here, again, where does the analogy come in? Sir Theodore would seem to find it in the fact that Jonson's mother married a master mason or bricklayer. Never was greater nonsense. Jonson's stepfather did his duty well by the poet that was to be, for "he put his little stepson Benjamin to school, providing for the first stage of a training which was destined to produce one of the wisest scholars and most learned poets whom English annals can boast." As to the stories of his working with a trowel in one hand and a *Horace* in the other, they are mere inventions. Mr. Symonds dismisses them with contempt. No; everything is plain in Jonson's case, as in Marlowe's. Jonson had just the kind of education and training which was calculated to give his genius the power to produce

those fruits which it did produce. Sir Theodore must try again.

Take, then, the case of Burns, "the son of a small farmer." Here is, indeed, an instructive comparison for our purpose. It will not much assist Sir Theodore, but none could be better to illustrate the argument. If ever man was born with poetic genius it was the Ayrshire ploughman, and scanty enough was the schooling he received. Happily, however, he was born in a land where there has long been an enthusiasm for education which the Southron would do well to imitate. So the young Burns was taught by his father, and taught at the Dalrymple parish school. Then he was handed over to John Murdoch, who gave him some training both in English and French. We hear of his reading, while still a boy, the *Life of Hannibal* and the *Life of Wallace*, Locke's famous *Essay*, Pope's *Homer*, the *Spectator*, Smollett, Allan Ramsay, Ferguson, and other works. In French he reads *Télémaque*, and picks up a little Latin. A little later he reads Thomson, Shenstone, *Tristram Shandy*, *The Man of Feeling*, Ossian, etc, and he studies surveying under the schoolmaster of Kirkoswald. Not a very great literary equipment certainly, but he is fortunate in his inheritance of a traditional lyric literature, which he makes the material of his immortal songs. And what was the poetic output? There is the point. The Ayrshire ploughman sings of the scenes in which he has been bred: of the burn and the heather, of the sweeping Nith and the banks and braes of bonny Doon. He sings of the Scotch peasantry, of their customs as in "Halloween," and, above all, of the sweet Scotch lassies, whom he loved not wisely but too well. And all this in his own homely dialect. The very genius of lyrical poetry speaks from his mouth, but speaks in that Scottish language for the interpretation of which the English reader requires a glossary. "He is only insipid when he tries to adopt the conventional English of

his time," says a writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. When he essayed to write in metropolitan English, says Principal Shairp, "he was seldom more than a third-rate—a common, clever versifier." Had Burns, say at the age of twenty-five, written highly polished and cultured English, abounding with classical allusions, showing intimate knowledge of Court life and fashionable society, and dealing in such a lifelike manner with foreign countries as to lead readers to suppose that he must have paid a visit to their shores; had he discussed divine philosophy for all the ages and for every phase of human life; had he held the mirror for mankind—had the Ayrshire ploughman done all this and a great deal more, then indeed there might have been some analogy between his case and that of Shakespeare.

"But in the case of Robert Burns, this heaven-born genius did not set him straightway on so lofty a pinnacle that he could circumspect the past and forecast the future, or guide his untaught pen to write of Troy and Egypt, of Athens and Cyprus, or to reproduce the very counterfeit civilizations and manners of nations born and buried and passed into history a thousand years before he had been begotten . . . of the most unusual and hidden details of forgotten politics and commercial customs, such as, for instance, the exceptional usage of a certain trade in Mitylene, the anomalous status of a Moorish mercenary in command of a Venetian army, of a savage queen of Britain led captive by Rome, or a thane of Scotland under one of its primitive kings,—matters of curious and occult research for antiquaries or dilettanti to dig out of old romances or treatises or statutes, rather than for historians to treat of or schools to teach! In the case of Robert Burns we are content not to ask too much even of genius. Let us be content if the genius of Robert Burns could glorify the goodwives' fables of his wonted fireside and set in aureole the homeliest cipher of his vicinage, until a

field-mouse became a poem or a milkmaid a Venus! It were unreasonable to demand that this genius, this fire from heaven, at once and on the instant invest a letterless peasant-lad with all the love and law which the ages behind him had shut up in clasped books and buried and forgotten,—with all the learning that the past had gathered into great tomes and piled away in libraries.”¹ And yet Shakespeare who did all this might with greater truth than Burns be described as a letterless peasant-lad—that is, if Shakspeare be Shakespeare!

What, then, of John Keats, whom Sir Theodore, in order to belittle his origin as much as possible, describes as an apothecary’s apprentice and the son of a livery-stable keeper? Well, it is true that his father did keep a livery-stable, but both his parents are known to have been, as they were described by one who knew them, “people of no everyday character.” At the age of eight John Keats was put to a school of excellent repute kept by John Clarke at Enfield, where he secured the friendship of the master’s son, John Cowden Clarke, not unknown to fame, who was usher in the school. After three or four years we learn that the boy Keats could hardly be torn from his books, that he won all the literature prizes at the school; and that during play hours he devoured all he could lay hands on of literary criticism and especially of classical mythology. He received a good education in Latin,² French,

¹ Morgan’s *Shakespearian Myth*, p. 162.

² A friend has pointed out to me, what has hitherto passed unnoticed, viz., that some of the ideas at the commencement of the “Ode to a Nightingale” are undoubtedly taken from Horace. Cf.

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains,
One moment past, and Lethe-wards had sunk,”

with Epod. 14:—

“Mollis inertia cur tantam diffuderit imis
Oblivionem sensibus,
Pocula Letheos ut si ducentia somnos
Arente fauce traxerim.”

and general history. He studied English literature, and especially the Elizabethan dramatists and poets under the excellent direction of John Cowden Clarke. He became intimate with many men of letters, he made the acquaintance of Shelley, he became the close friend of Leigh Hunt. He was, it is true, for a time articled to a surgeon, whom Sir Theodore Martin, for obvious reasons, prefers to call an apothecary, but unless we are to conclude that that fact constitutes an insuperable bar to poetic inspiration it is difficult to perceive its relevancy. It is true, also, that though he had not learned the Greek language, his genius enabled him to absorb the true Greek spirit from books about the old Hellenes, and from translations of their works such as Chapman's *Homer*. But to compare this possibility of genius with Shakespearean achievements (again supposing that Shakspere = Shakespeare) would be about as sensible as to compare a conjuring trick with a miracle.

One great name still remains to be considered. It is the name of one who may, indeed, be fitly compared with Shakespeare, for, if we are to believe Mr. Sidney Colvin,¹ he was "the man whose genius has the best right to be called universal of any that have ever lived"—one to whom a recent biographer has deservedly applied Coleridge's description of Shakespeare—"a myriad-minded man." Sir Theodore Martin, still pursuing his depreciatory tactics, calls him "the illegitimate son of a common notary." Well, Leonardo da Vinci was certainly not born in wedlock, but unless Sir Theodore, who is so familiar with "the ways of genius," can assure us that great intellectual powers are never to be found in association with "the bend sinister," he has obtruded the epithet to no purpose. Leonardo's father, the so-called "common notary," was notary to the Signory of Florence, a landed proprietor, a man in excellent circumstances, and no mean

¹ In the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

position of life. The son, to whom our perverse and pernicious conventions would affix the stigma of "illegitimacy," was at once acknowledged, and was brought up in his father's house. As a boy he was put to study under Andrea del Verrocchio, a "thoroughly capable and spirited craftsman alike as goldsmith, sculptor, and painter."¹ He was enrolled in the list of the Painters' Guild of Florence. Under Verrocchio he studied till his twenty-fifth year. Subsequently he was taken into the special favour of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and readers of Florentine history will not need to be told what this would mean, or the immense advantages which it would confer on a student of literature, science, and art. From his earliest days, we are told, Leonardo "flung himself into the study of nature with unprecedented delight and curiosity." He "toiled among bats and wasps and lizards, forgetful of rest and food." He worked hard at anatomy, geometry, and optics. He enlarged his experiences by travels to Egypt, Cyprus, Constantinople, Armenia, and the coast of Asia Minor. He was endowed by a genius so extraordinary and so universal that he seems, as it were by intuition, to have anticipated some of the greatest discoveries of later ages, and as such we render him the homage of our wonder, and our admiration. But there is no miracle here, no mystery, no irreconcilable *non sequitur*, such as make the alleged Shakspeare-Shakespeare identity something which seems to shock us as even monstrous because contrary to the whole world's experience. Richly gifted as was Leonardo, writes Mr. John Addington Symonds, he did not trust his natural facility. "His patience was no less marvellous than the quickness of his insight. He lived to illustrate the definition of genius as the capacity for taking infinite pains." What analogy is there here with the case of the unlettered provincial, Player Shakspeare, the easy-going, jovial boon-companion, writing *currente calamo*, by

¹ Verrocchio was a woodcarver and musician as well.

plenary inspiration, (according to the hypothesis), unblotted pages of immortal poetry and equally immortal philosophy, for the instruction, delight, and wonder of all time? No analogy at all, but a sharp and most instructive contrast for which our thanks are due to Sir Theodore Martin. No, truly, we may ransack history where we will, from the dawn of civilisation to the present time, in the vain search for a parallel, but no parallel can be found. Sir Theodore Martin's supposed analogies prove upon examination merely to illustrate and enforce our argument, and to bring into stronger light the obstinate prejudice of those blind leaders of the blind who can darken counsel by such futilities. Even the case of Charles Dickens has been cited as affording some analogy to that of the supposed Shakspeare-Shakespeare, because, forsooth, Dickens during his boyhood was for a time employed at a blacking factory! The unhappy writer, who, of course, lectured us on our want of imagination and our utter inability to comprehend "the ways of genius," forgot that it was just those experiences of childhood and boyhood which supplied to the genius of Dickens the very *pabulum* upon which it thrived, and which enabled him to create and immortalise the characters of Oliver Twist and David Copperfield. Thus this critic actually cites those very circumstances which genius was able to use to its advantage, in order to impress upon us the marvellous results which genius may produce though working under every possible disadvantage! He points to the tools which genius has used for its work in order to fortify his contention that genius may produce the most stupendous of works with no tools at all! If this be wisdom, I can only say *Malo cum Bacone errare!*¹

¹ It was, I think, Buffon who said "Le génie c'est une longue patience." The saying, doubtless, contains a large measure of truth, but it is an incomplete statement. It is more true to say, as did Disraeli in *Contarini Fleming*, "Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius"; or, with Carlyle, "Genius

NOTE TO CHAPTER III

A WORD ON THE *SONNETS*

I have not embarked upon the tremendous question of the *Sonnets* generally, but I must take this opportunity of saying one word upon that vexed subject. Infinite labour and time without end has been bestowed upon them, but no Shakespearean critic has yet succeeded in explaining them satisfactorily, and I venture to say that such success will never be obtained on the assumption that they were written by Shakspeare of Stratford. The idea that Will Shakspeare, the young provincial, was, about the year 1593, or soon after that date, writing a succession of impassioned odes to the young Earl of Southampton, urging him to marry at once, and become a father "for love of me," appears to me, in the absence of anything like cogent evidence to that effect, simply preposterous. Mr. Gerald Massey has written, very ably, to show that these Sonnets were written at a time when there was a proposal on foot that Southampton should marry the granddaughter of his guardian, the great Lord Burleigh. But, as Mr. Begley well asks (p. 136), "What can Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare], who has only been in London three or four years, and has hardly yet shaken off his dialect or the manners of the stableyard — what can he possibly have to do with such matters of high statecraft and political influence? Why should he, of all possible people, write a series of elaborate 'Procreation Sonnets' in order to induce a young nobleman of high prospects to marry the granddaughter of the highest dignitary in the

means the transcendent capacity of taking trouble, first of all." (*Frederick the Great*, Bk. IV, chap. II.) Genius is a potentiality, and whether it will ever become an actuality, and what it will produce, depends upon the moral qualities with which it is associated, and the opportunities that are open to it—in a word, on the circumstances of its environment.

no supposition whatever
has yet explained
them.

But was Southamp-
ton W. H.?

kingdom? What was Burghley to Will Shakespeare or he to Burghley? And how on earth could the Warwickshire husband of Anne Hathaway, as yet only a rising supernumerary among a company of actors, 'vagrants by law' and mostly out at elbows whether on the stage or off—how on earth, I say, could he *dare* to make love to such a blooming scion of the aristocracy, and dare to make such a seventeen-fold suggestion, that he should marry at once and get a child 'for love of *me*' (Sonnet X), the *me* being in so extremely different a social position?" Questions and comments of a similar character arise upon all the Sonnets from first to last. But there is nothing at all to connect Will Shakspeare, the young "Stratford rustic," with these extraordinary poems, unless the fact that, like so many other works, they were published in the name of "Shake-speare" be so regarded. *He*, certainly, had nothing to do with their publication by the adventurer "T. T.," nor did he ever lay claim to any right or title to them. The real problem of the *Sonnets* is to find out who "Shake-speare" was. That done, it might be possible to make the crooked straight and the rough places plane—but not till then. That he would be found among cultured Elizabethan courtiers of high position, I can entertain no doubt. (See further on the *Sonnets*, chap. XII, p. 369 n., and as to the last two Sonnets, which are versions of a Greek epigram, see p. 127.)¹

the central problem,
rather.

¹ Canon Beeching, adverting to the grotesque theory that the earlier sonnets were addressed to Southampton not as an adored friend but merely as a patron, very sensibly remarks: "If it is remembered that Shakespeare's patron, Lord Southampton, was one of the greatest peers in England, at a time when all social degrees, even that between peer and gentleman, were very clearly marked; and that Shakespeare belonged to a profession which, by public opinion, was held to be degrading, it will hardly need saying that such addresses from a player, however fashionable, to a patron, however complaisant, were simply impossible." I venture to think that from the player to the peer they were "simply impossible" in any case.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEARNING OF "SHAKESPEARE"

WE have now seen how much learning we are warranted to assume for Shakspeare, and what probability there is that he could have written such poems as *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*, and such plays as *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Comedy of Errors*, to take as examples the two which are generally supposed to be earliest of those wondrous dramas.

But many Stratfordians solve all difficulties by a very simple expedient. They say "Shakspeare" wrote "Shakespeare"; therefore Shakspeare must, by some means or another, have acquired all the learning which was obviously possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*.

Let us consider, therefore, with as much brevity as may be, the vexed question of "the learning of Shakespeare."

Now, until quite recently this question was generally supposed to have been finally disposed of by Dr. Farmer's famous Essay, which able, learned, and ingenious production may be found in *Malone's Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II.¹ Farmer's contention was that Shakespeare had no classical knowledge at all, that "if he remembered enough of his schoolboy learning to put 'Hig, hag, hog' into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans, it was as far as he could go"; and that in all cases where he had drawn on the classics, imitated, or referred to them, he had had

¹ It has been reprinted in Mr. Nichol Smith's *Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare*.

recourse to English versions and second-hand information. And so completely was this matter supposed to be settled, that Canon Beeching, who is, I believe, reckoned one of our Shakespearean "experts," wrote in the *Guardian* (January 8th, 1902): "Every literary critic knows that the Shakespearian plays reveal precisely that small Latin and less Greek which Jonson, who did know his classics, attributed to Shakespeare." I smile with great content, and perhaps a little maliciously, as I read that sentence. "Every literary critic knows" is quite in the style of the Shakespearean expert. It implies, of course, that any one who does not know this has no claim to call himself a literary critic. Yet, little more than a year after that confident pronouncement was made, we find Mr. Churton Collins, a strong—nay, a violent Stratfordian, publishing three articles in the *Fortnightly Review* (April, May, and July, 1903) to prove that Shakespeare must have had a very large knowledge of Latin, and in all probability a considerable knowledge of Greek as well.¹

Is not, then, Mr. Churton Collins entitled to call himself a "literary critic"? We may be well content to leave this question to be settled between these two doughty but contradictory Stratfordians. Far be it from me to attempt *tantas componere lites*!

But let us see how Mr. Collins makes out his case. The opening words of his first article are interesting and suggestive. "There are certain traditions which the world appears to have made up its mind to accept without

¹ As already mentioned, these and other articles have now been republished in Mr. Collins's *Studies in Shakespeare*. In the preface he states his argument to be "in favour of the extended hypothesis that the poet was not merely a fair Latin scholar, but that his knowledge of the classics both of Greece and Rome was remarkably extensive," and he speaks of the evidence which he has produced "as a proof, or at least a presumption, that Shakespeare was acquainted with the Greek dramas." Reading between the lines, I come to the conclusion that Mr. Collins himself believes that Shakespeare had a fair knowledge of Greek, as well as a very considerable knowledge of Latin—but hesitates to say so.

enquiry. Their source or sources may be suspicious, their intrinsic improbability may be great, but no one dreams of seriously questioning them. Whatever else becomes the subject of dispute, of doubt, or of dissent, a strange superstition seems to exempt them even from debate. If here and there a note of scepticism should be struck, it finds no response. A very striking illustration of this is the tradition that Shakespeare's knowledge of the Greek and Roman classics was confined to translations, that he had scarcely enough Latin to spell out a passage in *Virgil* or *Cicero*, and that in Greek it is doubtful whether he went beyond the alphabet."

I would suggest that a still more "striking illustration" of this obstinate acceptance of "a strange superstition" without questioning, in spite of its "intrinsic improbability," is the tradition that Shakspeare, the Stratford Player, wrote the play of *Hamlet*! But this only in passing. Mr. Collins goes on to formulate the propositions which he intends to prove. "I purpose to show, and I hope to prove, that so far from Shakespeare having no pretension to classical scholarship, he could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French, that with some at least of the principal Latin classics, he was intimately acquainted, that through the Latin language he had access to the Greek classics, and that of the Greek classics in the Latin versions he had, in all probability, a remarkably extensive knowledge."

Let us consider what this means. "Shakespeare," says Mr. Collins, "could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French," and he goes on to suggest that Shakespeare must have been able to read Latin authors "*ad sensum* with facility and pleasure." Now any one who has studied the classics will appreciate what a large knowledge of Latin is thus postulated for Shakespeare by Mr. Collins.

The genius of one modern European language is so much akin to that of another, that it is easy for an Englishman, with but a moderate turn for languages, to learn in a very short time a sufficient amount of French to read, say, Daudet and Maupassant, with facility. But with Latin it is quite different. Many a man who has taken a high classical degree at one of our Universities, after many years of schooling, finds himself unable to read "unseen passages" of Cicero, or Tacitus, or Virgil, or Ovid, or Plautus, "*ad sensum* with facility and pleasure," as he can read French authors after but a few months' application. In fact, to be able to read the classics in this way, shows quite an exceptional degree of scholarship. Yet this amount of learning is claimed by Mr. Collins for Shakespeare, and I think every impartial reader must admit that he conclusively makes out his case, at any rate to this extent, viz., that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have had a large knowledge of the Latin language and an extensive acquaintance with Latin authors.¹

"Farmer," says Mr. Collins, "showed conclusively that in the Roman plays Shakespeare had followed North's *Plutarch* without consulting either the original, or the Latin version; that, for some of his Latin quotations, he had gone no further than Lilly's *Grammar*; that in the celebrated passage in the *Tempest*, 'Ye elves of hills, woods, standing lakes, etc.,' which had been cited as proof positive of his acquaintance with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he had followed not the Latin text but Golding's English version, and that many other allusions, parallels, and parodies, adduced as testimony of his classical scholarship, could be traced to works in his own language. But Farmer, though he demolished Upton and Whalley, is

¹ That Shakespeare's "knowledge of the classics both of Greece and Rome was remarkably extensive," (as Mr. Collins writes in his preface) is, I think, shown by his works, and must now, surely, be taken as proved.

very far from making out his own case. The really crucial tests in the question he either evades or defaces. Thus he makes no reference to the fact that the *Rape of Lucrece* is derived directly from the *Fasti* of Ovid, of which at that time there appears to have been no English version. He admits that the *Comedy of Errors* was modelled on the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, and that the author of it must have been minutely acquainted with the *Menaechmi*, but asserts that Shakespeare read it in Warner's English version, the publication of which was subsequent, and probably long subsequent, to the composition of the play. To the Latin lesson in the *Taming of the Shrew* he does not even refer. On almost all the classical parallels which are really worth considering, he is silent. Of the very few which he is obliged to notice he disposes by assuming that Shakespeare had been raking in Ronsard, mediæval homilies, and the uncouth Scotch jargon of Douglas's *Virgil*. That a sensible man like Farmer should not see that if Shakespeare recalls the *Æneid* and the *Fasti*, the balance of probability is much more in favour of his having gone to the Latin than of his having troubled himself to spell out mediæval homilies and archaic Scotch is indeed strange. But Farmer's essay was supposed to settle the question, to 'put an end for ever,' as Warton emphatically expressed it, to the dispute concerning the learning of Shakespeare. Colman, indeed, protested, and Johnson, Capell, and Malone faintly demurred, but all was of no avail, and Farmer carried the day. Ben Jonson's 'small Latin and less Greek,' and Farmer's corroborating conclusion became henceforth inseparable from Shakespeare's reputation. So matters rested till 1837, when Dr. Maginn, in two articles in *Blackwood's Magazine*, pleaded for some modification of Farmer's contentions. He pointed out the *a priori* improbability of Shakespeare having no curiosity about the classics, and

no desire to read them in the original. He drew attention to the evidence which Farmer had either ignored or misrepresented. He showed that if in the crucial passage from the *Tempest* Shakespeare had followed Golding's version, he followed it only so far as it suited his purpose, that he had the original in his hands or in his memory, and had introduced touches from it. But Maginn, who had neither leisure nor taste for minute investigation, went no further."

But here Mr. Collins takes the matter up again:—

"His familiarity with the Latin language is evident: first, from the fact that he has, with minute particularity of detail, based a poem and a play on a poem of Ovid and on a comedy of Plautus, which he must have read in the original, as no English translations, so far as we know, existed at the time; secondly, from the fact that he has adapted and borrowed many passages from the classics, which were almost certainly only accessible to him in the Latin language; and thirdly, from the fact that when he may have followed English translations, it is often quite evident that he had the original either by him or in his memory. Let us first take the case of the *Rape of Lucrece*. The story, as told by Shakespeare, follows the story as told by Ovid in the second book of the *Fasti* (*Fasti*, II, 721–852). It had also been told in English by four writers, who had likewise modelled their narratives on Ovid—by Chaucer in the *Legende of Goode Women*, by Lydgate in his *Falls of Princes*, by Gower in his *Confessio Amantis*, and, in prose, by Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure*; but a careful comparison of these narratives with Shakespeare's, which cannot be given in detail here, will conclusively show that Shakespeare has followed none of them. That Ovid and Ovid only is his original. The details given in Ovid, which neither Chaucer nor any of the other narrators reproduce, but which are reproduced

by Shakespeare, place this beyond question. Thus Shakespeare alone represents the

Nunc primum externâ pectora tacta manu (746) :

Her breasts, . . .

A pair of maiden worlds unconquered

Save of their lord, no bearing yoke they knew (407-9) ;

the fine touch

Quid, victor, gaudes ? haec te victoria perdet (811) ;

A captive victor that hath lost in gain (730).

Nor has the 'ter conata loqui, ter destitit' (823) been noticed by Chaucer or the others, though it is reproduced by Shakespeare. . . . In Ovid and Shakespeare, though not in Chaucer, or in the others, Lucretia's father and husband throw themselves on her corpse. . . . One touch, indeed, not only proves the scrupulous care with which Shakespeare follows Ovid, but his scholarship too—for the Latin is obscure and difficult. 'Brutus adest, tandemque animo sua nomina fallit,' that is stultifies his name (*brutus*, stupid) by the courage he shows. This Shakespeare *interprets* in the stanza beginning, 'Brutus, who plucked the knife,' etc. . . . In a word, a comparison of Chaucer's and Shakespeare's narratives will show that each represents an independent study of the Latin original, and that Shakespeare has followed Ovid with scrupulous care. When this poem was written there was no English translation of the *Fasti*, and Shakespeare must therefore have read it in the original. . . . In *Venus and Adonis* he again draws on Ovid, the material, profusely and superbly embroidered and expanded with original imagery and detail, being derived from the story as told in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, with much which is borrowed from the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the fourth book, and from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt, in the

eighth book.¹ But the *Metamorphoses* had been translated by Arthur Golding in 1575, and republished in a second edition in 1587. That Shakespeare was acquainted with Golding's translation is certain, and as he may possibly have followed Golding and not Ovid in *Venus and Adonis*, this poem cannot be cited as evidence of his Latin scholarship." But, says Mr. Collins, "it is just as likely that he followed the original, as that he followed the translation," and when he comes to deal with the celebrated passage in the *Tempest* (Act V, sc. 1): "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves," etc., Mr. Collins proves that Farmer was wrong in supposing that Shakespeare merely followed Golding's version without reference to the original (*Metamorphoses*, VII, 197-206.) Take, for instance, the lines of Ovid:—

ventos abigoque, vocoque :
Vivaque saxa, suâ convulsaque robora terrâ,
Et silvas moveo; jubeoque tremiscere montes,
Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulcris.

Shakespeare has:—

. . . I have bedimmed
The noon-tide sun, *call'd forth* the mutinous winds.
. . . To the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and *rifted Jove's stout oak*
With his own bolt: . . .
. . . graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers, *op'd and let them forth*.

Now, as Mr. Collins points out, Golding has not, as Shakespeare has, translated the words I have put in italics. "From this it will be clear that if Shakespeare used Golding's version—and this seems likely from the opening line—he used also the original. There is nothing in

¹ In a *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act IV, sc. 1) Hippolyta says, "I was with Hercules and Cadmus once, when in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear with hounds of Sparta." Here we have a reminiscence of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 208. "*Gnosius Ichnobates Spartana gente Malampus*." These were two of Actæon's hounds, one of Crete the other of Sparta. Actæon was the grandson of Cadmus.

Golding corresponding to the original in 'suâ convulsaque robora terrâ,' which he omits entirely, but Shakespeare accurately recalls it in 'rifted Jove's stout oak'; while the touch in 'op'd and *let them forth*' unfolds the meaning of 'exire,' which Golding does not; so again Shakespeare represents 'voco'—'call'd forth,' which Golding altogether misses. How admirably, it may be added, has Shakespeare caught the colour, ring, and rhythm of the original, and how utterly are they missed in the lumbering homeliness of Golding."

Mr. Collins goes on to cite other typical passages from *Cymbeline* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, showing Shakespeare's knowledge of Ovid in the original.¹ He tells us also that "there are in the dramas many apparent reminiscences of the Epistles from Pontus, and of these Epistles there was no English version in Shakespeare's time." (One example is in *Lear*, IV, 1, 2-5 taken from Lib. II. Ep. 2. 31-2.)

Of the *Comedy of Errors* Mr. Collins writes:—

"This, as everyone knows, is an adaptation, with addi-

¹ "Take Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on which he is habitually drawing. Mr. Spencer Baynes was the first to point out that Shakespeare derived the name Titania from his knowledge of the Latin original, where it is always used as an Epithet, and an epithet which Golding invariably translates by a periphrasis, the word itself nowhere occurring in Golding's version."

A writer in *The Times Literary Supplement* (September 16th, 1904) says in a review of *Shakespeare's Ovid* (being Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses*, edited by W. H. D. Rouse, LITT. D.), "The finale of the *Metamorphoses* is certainly imitated or reproduced in Sonnet 55." But this, I think, is an error. That sonnet is based upon Horace (*Odes*, Bk. III, 30). Compare

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme,"

with

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius
Regalique situ pyramidum altius, etc.*

"Your praise shall still find room, even in the eyes of all posterity," says Shakespeare. Compare Horace's *usque ego postera crescā laude recens, etc.* It is quite clear that Shakespeare was familiar with the *Odes* of Horace; no doubt he was equally familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the final verses may have been in his mind at the same time.

tions and modifications, of the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, while the first scene of the third act is directly imitated from the *Amphitruo* of the same poet (*Amphitruo*, Act I, Sc. 1, and Act IV, Sc. 1-6). Now it is all but certain that the *Comedy of Errors* was written between 1589 and 1592, and it is quite certain that it was written before the end of 1594. At that date there were no known English translations of those plays in existence, for Warner's version of the *Menaechmi* did not appear till 1595. It is therefore probable almost to certainty that Shakespeare must have read Plautus in the original. Of his familiarity, indeed, with Plautus there can be no question. In the *Taming of the Shrew* he borrows the names of two of the characters, Tranio and Grumio, from the *Mostellaria*. The scene in the same play where the Pedant, assuming the form of Vincentio, is confronted with the real Vincentio, is plainly borrowed from the scene in the *Trinummus*. The character, position, and fate of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* are so analogous to those of Pyrgopolinices in the *Miles Gloriosus*, that we cannot but suspect reminiscence. Parolles and Pistol are plainly studies from Plautus. It is curious, too, that we find the same puns and plays on words in the two poets." Whereof Mr. Collins gives some very interesting examples. He further suggests that many other passages of Shakespeare (including the lines "neither a borrower nor a lender be") are taken from Plautus, and "in any case," he writes, "of Shakespeare's familiarity with Plautus there can be no doubt—I have only given a few typical illustrations, the subject, if treated in detail, would require a monograph—and that he read him in the Latin is all but certain."

But this by no means exhausts the proofs of Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin, for Mr. Collins brings forward evidence to show that he must have been acquainted also with Seneca, Horace (there was no translation of the *Odes* in Shakespeare's time, "yet his plays abound in what

certainly appear to be reminiscences of them"), Lucretius, Juvenal, Cicero, and Virgil. For all this, I must refer to Mr. Collins's able and, as they seem to me, very conclusive articles. These passages, says Mr. Collins, "are typical, and the impression which they and scores of other passages make is, that Shakespeare was writing not with any direct or perhaps conscious intention of imitating or even with the original before him, but with reminiscences of it floating more or less vividly in his memory." If this be so then Shakespeare must have been saturated with classical reading so far at least as the Latin authors are concerned.

As to Seneca, Mr. E. A. Sonnenschein has recently brought forward a striking proof that Shakespeare was acquainted with that writer. "No one, I think," he writes, "has ever suspected that the central speech of the *Merchant of Venice* was anything but a wholly original creation of the poet." Yet, as he points out, all the leading ideas of Portia's great speech will be found in Seneca's treatise "On Mercy," addressed to the reigning emperor, Nero. Thus Seneca writes: *Nullum Clementia ex omnibus magis quam regem aut principem decet* (I, 3, 3), which Lodge thus translates: "But of all others Clemencie [Mercy] becometh no man more than it doth a Prince." Again, *Excogitare nemo quicquam poterit quod magis decorum regenti sit quam clementia . . . eo scilicet formosius id esse magnificentiusque fatebitur quo in majori praestabitur potestate* (I, 19, 1), where the rendering is, "There is no man that can bethink him of anything that is more seemly for him that is in authority [*regenti*="the throned monarch"] than Clemencie. . . . And the more higher his dignitie is that is indued with this vertue the more noble shall we confess his ornament to be."

Compare with this Shakespeare's lines:—

It becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown,
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest.

Seneca writes : *Quod si placabiles et aequi delicta potentium non statim fulminibus persequuntur, quanto aequius est hominem hominibus praepositum miti animo exercere imperium?* (I, 7, 2), where Lodge translates : "But if the merciful and just gods punish not the faults of mighty men by confounding them by lightning, how much more just is it that a man who hath the charge over men should exercise his empire with merciful mind!" Seneca writes : *Quid autem? Non proximum illis (dis) locum tenet is, qui se ex deorum natura gerit beneficus ac largus et in melius potens?* Where we may translate : "Again; Is not he second only to the gods who, bearing himself after their nature, is gracious and generous and powerful in all good works?" (Lodge has "And why doth not he that followeth the nature of the gods, which is to be gracious, liberal, and powerful to do good, become a second to them?")

Shakespeare has—

But mercy is above this sceptred sway.
It is enthroned in the heart of kings;
It is an attribute of God himself.
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

Again, Seneca wrote *Cogita . . . quanta (Romae) solitudo et vastitas futura sit si nihil relinquatur nisi quod iudex severus absolverit* (I, 6. 1). ("Think what solitude and desolation there would be in this City . . . if a man should leave none but such as a severe judge would absolve.")

Compare

Consider this,
That in the course of Justice none of us
Should see salvation.

It can hardly, I think, be doubted that the author of Portia's great speech was familiar with these passages of Seneca. As Mr. Sonnenschein writes : "It is only the inimitable form of expression that is Shakespeare's." As

usual the great magician turns all that he touches into purest gold.¹

I have thought well to give Lodge's translation, but, as Mr. Sonnenschein points out, that translation was not published till ten years after the *Merchant of Venice*. "But that," says he, "is no difficulty to those who believe, as Mr. Churton Collins and others do, that Shakespeare had not forgotten the Latin which he had learnt at Stratford Grammar School." The amount of reading which the lad Shakspeare must have done, and assimilated, during his brief sojourn at the Free School is positively amazing! There would really seem to be no limit to it. And yet, alas, there is no record or tradition of all this prodigious industry—not a word to suggest the indication of a more than ordinarily active intelligence on the part of the young "Stratford rustic"!

As to Shakespeare's knowledge of Virgil, Mr. Collins has not, I think, made out much of a case; yet we have strong evidence of it in the *Plays* and *Poems*. Take *The Tempest*, for example. Here we not only have much talk about Dido and Æneas (which of itself, of course, proves nothing), but also, as it seems to me, at any rate one passage founded upon a Virgilian model. When Ferdinand first sees Miranda he exclaims (Act I, Scene 2, 420):

Most sure the goddess
On whom these airs attend!

It can hardly be doubted that this is a reminiscence of the "O, dea certe," of *Æneid* I, 328.

¹ Mr. Sonnenschein thinks that the story of Augustus pardoning Cinna (Seneca; *De Clementiâ*, I, 9) may have suggested:

"It is twice blessed.
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

Such was certainly the case in this instance, if Seneca's story be true. (See *The Times Literary Supplement*, September 16th, 1904.)

Ferdinand continues :—

My prime request,
Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder !
If you be maid or no ?

This corresponds to Virgil's

O—quam te memorem, virgo ! namque haud tibi vultus
Mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat.

Miranda replies :—

No wonder, sir :
But certainly a maid.

With which may be compared Venus's reply :—

Haud equidem tali me dignor honore ;
Virginibus Tyriis mos est, etc.

Like Miranda, Venus makes answer that she is a maid (*virgo*), a somewhat bold assertion on her part ; but, then, she is speaking in a feigned character. It is not till later that

Vera incessu patuit dea.

There is a less striking reminiscence of Virgil in Act I, Scene 2, line 485, where Ferdinand says :—

My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.

We are reminded of *Æneid*, XII, 908 :—

Ac velut in somnis, oculos ubi languida pressit
Nocte quies, etc.

But here it must be confessed that we are on more doubtful ground.¹) true .

So much, then, as to Latin. What of Greek ? Here Mr. Collins seems to be struggling between a reluctance to proclaim a theory so startling to Stratfordian minds as that Shakespeare was able to read the Greek classic authors in the original, and an inward conviction that so it must have been. It seems clear from what he writes that

¹ Mr. Anders points out that the figure of the Harpy introduced in *The Tempest*, III, 3, is apparently taken from *Æneid*, III, 234 ff. *Shakespeare's Books*, p. 31.

he holds it quite probable that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* could read and understand the Greek originals, at any rate with the help of a Latin translation. In his first article,¹ as he tells us, he "endeavoured to prove that Shakespeare was familiar with the Latin language and with many of the Latin classics; that this knowledge gave him access to the Greek classics, nearly all of which had been popularised through Latin versions, and that the evidence for concluding that he availed himself of what was thus accessible to him is so ample and precise that it can scarcely fail to carry conviction." Here, indeed, Mr. Collins speaks only of knowledge gained through Latin versions; but he proceeds to give us parallelism after parallelism, illustration after illustration, leaving us, as it seems to me, no alternative, unless we put aside all these extraordinary resemblances as mere coincidences, but to believe that Shakespeare must have been familiar with the very Greek passages which with such wealth of learning he sets before the readers of the *Fortnightly Review*. In the first place he shows that the writer of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have been well acquainted with the epigrams of the Greek Anthology, which were so popular among scholars in the sixteenth century. Here "parallels swarm; and, even if we resolve two-thirds of them into mere coincidences, are collectively too remarkable to be the result of accident." He then deals at length with "Shakespeare's probable obligations to the Greek dramatists," and after quoting a large number of passages in support of this proposition, he adds: "Nor must we forget the many curious parallels between his play on words, his studied use of paronomasia, of asyndeton, of onomatopœia, of elaborate antithesis, of compound epithets, of subtle periphrasis, and above all his metaphors—with those so peculiarly characteristic of the Attic dramas. I have not

¹ I allude to the articles in the *Fortnightly Review* subsequently reprinted in *Studies in Shakespeare*.

space to illustrate, but it is the extraordinary analogies—
 analogies in sources, in particularity of detail and point,
 and in relative frequency of employment, presented by his
 metaphors to the metaphors of the Attic tragedians, that
 I find the most convincing testimony of his familiarity
 with their writings." This surely does not suggest a writer
 with no knowledge or merely a smattering of Greek, and
 working with Latin translations, but rather points to a
 scholar who could himself read the originals. Mr. Collins,
 however, opens his third article with the words, "It is not
 likely that Shakespeare could read Greek *with facility, but*
if he possessed enough of it to follow the original in the Latin
*version, as he probably did,*¹ he would not only be able to
 enrich his diction with its idioms and phraseology, but
 would acquire that timbre in style of which in the last
 instalment of this essay I gave illustrations." Then refer-
 ring to the "general and miscellaneous parallels between
 the Shakespearean drama and Greek tragedies—parallels
in reflection, sentiment, and expression," of which he has
 given such copious examples—he writes: "They may be
 mere coincidences. But if, on the other hand, further and
 more satisfactory evidence of Shakespeare's acquaintance
 with the Greek dramatists can be adduced, then surely
 such parallels will not be without importance as corrobo-
 rative testimony. Let us now, therefore, narrow the area
 to a single drama, the *Ajax*. If Shakespeare had not read
 the *Ajax* and been influentially impressed by it, there is an
 end to all evidence founded on reference and parallelism."

For the evidence in support of this assertion, I must
 refer the reader to the article in question, where Mr.
 Collins goes on to argue that Shakespeare must have been
 profoundly under Greek influence. "Equally remarkable
 is the perfect correspondence between the attitude of
 Shakespeare and that of the Greek dramatists, though we
must except Æschylus, towards the great problems of

¹ The italics are mine.

death and of man's future beyond it." "Not less Greek is his profound respect for the conventional symbols in which religious conceptions embody themselves, but his practical resolution of formal theology into the moral law." "And if he is Greek in his metaphysic he is equally Greek in his ethic, though in important respects his ethic is tempered with Christian ideals."

Either, then, he was familiar with the Greek writers, or "we must assume that instinct led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy, and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy."

Finally, Mr. Collins claims to have demonstrated "that Shakespeare could read Latin, that in the Latin original he most certainly read Plautus, Ovid, and Seneca," and as to "the Greek dramatists, and all those Greek authors besides Plutarch, who appear to have influenced him," that he had at least read them in Latin versions, and very probably was with such help able to follow them in the originals.

I think the literary world is much indebted to Mr. Collins for these scholarly articles. Never again, let us hope, shall we hear the amazing proposition put forward that Shakespeare had no knowledge of the classics. Canon Beeching must remodel his ideas of what "every literary critic" is supposed to know.¹ But especially it may be hoped that we shall be spared such entire fatuity as the following, culled from a letter in the *Westminster*

¹ Quite in the same style Mr. Andrew Lang wrote to Mr. Edwin Reed (1891): "I am indeed surprised that you should think the author of the Plays was a scholar. The reverse is patent, I think, to any one acquainted with classical literature." Mr. Reed's comment is: "The personal implication in the last sentence is quite characteristic of this writer." It is indeed. And poor Mr. Churton Collins! To think of his being set down as one not "acquainted with classical literature"! But, thank Heaven, "non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites."

Gazette of January 4th, 1902. "There is an argument," says this writer, "in favour of Shakespeare's authorship of the plays stronger than any I have seen advanced, and one altogether convincing to anyone of ordinary classical attainments—*Shakespeare is wholly wanting in classical culture. . . .* If Bacon was the most erudite, *Shakespeare was the least cultivated writer of his time.*" It is really painful to set down on paper such nonsense as this. How any man who has read and studied those marvellous dramas (not to mention *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*) and who lays claim to "ordinary classical attainments," can write of Shakespeare that he was "wholly wanting in classical culture" and that he was "the least cultivated writer of his time," fairly passes my comprehension. If the Stratfordian theory brings men to such abysmal depths as these, we may be well content to seek salvation with the Baconians. The truth is, of course, precisely the reverse, and, as one who may at least make this claim to ordinary classical attainments, I venture to assert with absolute confidence that Shakespeare, so far from being the *least*, was the *most* cultivated writer of his time. Should the advocates of the ignorant uncultivated Shakespeare theory make a cheap retort as to the limits of my comprehension, or of my classical knowledge, I will not vex myself, for I need only refer them to Mr. Churton Collins's illuminating articles. Meantime, we have to note that the Stratfordians who assail us with such a choice variety of epithets to indicate the obtuseness and perversity of our understandings, are themselves as hopelessly divided over this primary question of the learning of Shakespeare as even Churchmen could be concerning a question of theological orthodoxy.

I think, then, it must be admitted that Mr. Collins has made out his case, that Shakespeare had undoubtedly

the knowledge of Latin claimed for him, and very probably some knowledge of Greek as well.¹

But here two questions arise. In the first place, we ask (on the assumption that Shakspeare = Shakespeare), where, when, and how did Shakspeare acquire all this learning? I have already to some extent anticipated this question in the preceding chapter. Mr. Collins would have us believe that the boy Shakspeare acquired this power of reading and actually did read these Latin authors—Ovid, Horace, Lucretius, Plautus, Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal, and

¹ Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, who accept the tradition that Shakespeare was withdrawn from school at twelve or thirteen ("when he would be old enough to assist his father in his business, and, considering the growing embarrassments of the elder Shakespeare, would almost certainly be withdrawn from school for that purpose"), believe that in his hypothetical five years of schooling Shakspeare "would have read in the ordinary course Valerius, Cato, Æsop, Mantuan, a considerable part of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and something of Cicero, Terence, and Virgil." This, they say, "would be a fair Latin outfit, and there is no good reason to believe that Shakespeare materially augmented it in after life." As to Greek, they write, "Mr. Churton Collins has endeavoured with much ingenuity to establish Shakespeare's acquaintance with Greek literature, but when it is considered that he could only have acquired Greek in mature life by solitary study or private instruction, and that Latin translations would be difficult and uninviting, the initial improbability must be held to outweigh the precarious evidence of apparent coincidences which may be otherwise accounted for." We may leave these *literati* to fight this question out between them. I have already stated my reasons for thinking that all this assumption of *Shakspeare's* Latin learning at the Stratford Free School is "a fond thing vainly invented" to suit the now recognised exigencies of the case. The traditional Shakspeare had no learning, but these critics make no scruple of throwing over tradition when it does not suit them, though they are intensely conservative of it when it seems to support their case. The simple truth, as I hold, is that "Shakespeare" had abundant Latin, and a very fair amount of Greek, while "Shakspeare" had none of either, except perhaps a few crumbs of Latin. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse recognise that "the initial improbability" of *Shakspeare's* having a knowledge of Greek is, of course, enormous. Therefore Mr. Collins's demonstration that *Shakespeare* had this knowledge must be summarily dismissed. But the proof that *Shakespeare* had a large knowledge of Latin is so cogent that it cannot be disputed, therefore it must be assumed that somehow or another *Shakspeare* acquired this knowledge, though obviously it is wise to cut it down as much as possible. So Plautus among other Latin authors is quietly ignored, yet, as Mr. Collins shows, "it is probable almost to certainty that Shakespeare must have read Plautus in the original. Of his familiarity indeed with Plautus there can be no question."

the rest—"ad sensum with facility and pleasure"—at the little Stratford Grammar School, where we assume he spent some time between the ages of eight and thirteen. I have already referred to Mr. Collins's quiet assumption that the education there provided was on a par with that afforded or supposed to be afforded by the celebrated school at Ipswich. Mr. Collins, further, thinks that Greek might have been taught at Stratford, but admits that "when taught it was only taught in the highest forms." He tells us that Shakspeare "would enter the school some time between his eighth and ninth year," but he somehow forgets to mention that according to all tradition, and all available evidence, he was removed from school at an exceptionally early age, so that in spite of the unbounded assumption of the biographers none have ventured to keep him at the Free School beyond the age of thirteen. If, then, the young Shakspeare had attained to all this knowledge of Latin—knowledge which many a first-class classic might look upon with envy—at the Stratford Grammar School, between the ages of eight or nine and twelve or thirteen, surely it is a very extraordinary thing that all the early tradition is not only silent concerning these remarkable attainments of the poet who had become so famous as "Shakespeare," but, on the contrary, is unanimous in affirming, as did good old Thomas Fuller, that "his learning was very little"! As to Greek we may be quite sure that poor Shakspeare never reached those "higher forms" in which alone it was taught. In fine, it appears to me that this wondrous theory of Shakspeare's learning acquired at the hypothetical Grammar School can only be accepted by those whose faith is such as not only to be able to remove mountains but also to swallow them. Mere reason is clamorous on the other side. *Credo quia impossibile* must be the Stratfordian maxim.¹

¹ It is important to remember the dates. According to that distinguished Shakespearean, Mr. Fleay, Shakespeare came to London in 1587. In 1588-9,

Here, then, we come back to the old dilemma. If Shakspeare had no learning he could not have written the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare. On the other hand, if it can be demonstrated from the *Poems* and *Plays* (as Mr. Collins claims to demonstrate) that their author was a highly cultured man, learned at least in Latin, and profoundly under the influence of the old classical writers of both Greece and Rome, then Shakespeare and Shakspeare are different persons. All tradition, all evidence, positive and negative, all reason and all probability go to show that Shakspeare had no learning beyond, possibly, a little Latin. The works show that Shakespeare was a man of the highest culture, of wide reading, much learning, and of remarkable classical attainments.

But it may be asked, "Why should we not assume that Shakspeare was diligently studying the classics during that period, of which we know little or nothing, between his leaving Stratford and his first appearance as a writer?" Well, those who are prepared to assume anything and everything to satisfy the requirements of the Stratfordian hypothesis, may very well assume this also, and we, too, may be content to assume it just so long as we are prepared to disregard reason and common sense. We may be perfectly sure that the young provincial Shakspeare when he first came to town, leaving wife and children to look after themselves, had quite enough to do to find such employment as would enable him to keep the wolf from the door.¹ Tradition asserts, with much probability, that he found such employment in holding horses at the door

according to Dr. Furnivall and others, *Love's Labour's Lost* was composed; *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-91; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* about 1590-1; *The Two Gentlemen* in 1590-92; *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3; and in 1593 *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention," was published. If therefore Shakspeare wrote these works, he must surely have acquired his classical knowledge before he came to town. Moreover, the actor's art is not exactly learnt in a day!

¹ I deal with Messrs. Garnett and Gosse's remarkable theory later on.

of the theatres or, subsequently, in learning the rudiments of his future profession in the capacity of call-boy. But why should we accept tradition when it is distasteful to us? Why not follow the good old rule, the simple plan, that tradition shall be accepted when it harmonises with our theories and preconceived ideas, and not otherwise? Why not draw a picture of Shakspeare, the pale-faced student in some Chattertonian garret, assiduously turning over the leaves of Plautus, Seneca, Juvenal, Ovid, and the rest, perhaps the Greek tragedians also, to say nothing of French, Italian, and Spanish authors, all lent to him by his intimate friends, Ben Jonson or the Earl of Southampton, and then suddenly taking the stage as an accomplished actor, without any of that preliminary study and apprenticeship to the art so necessary to all other mortals? Why, indeed, should we not make this and all other necessary assumptions, since, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps tells us, "there is not a single particle of evidence respecting his career during the next five years, that is to say, from the time of the Lambert negotiation, in 1587, until he is discovered as a rising actor and dramatist in 1592," and since the only reason that can be suggested against such assumptions is their flagrant and self-evident absurdity—a reason which in Shakspeare's case is not usually accepted as having any force whatever?

This brings us to the second of the two questions which arise on Mr. Collins's articles. He has not only to get over the testimony of the old writers, such as Fuller, Aubrey,¹ Rowe, and others, but he has somehow to explain

¹ Aubrey, who wrote more than sixty years after Shakspeare's death, but who quotes Beeston, a seventeenth-century actor, as his authority, writes "though as Ben Jonson says of him that he had but little Latin and less Greek, he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country." This schoolmaster story is caught at by the Stratfordians as drowning men catch at a straw. But Aubrey is indeed a broken reed to lean upon. His "little biographies," says Mr. H.-Phillipps, are "disfigured by palpable or ascertained blunders." In fact, he was a

away Ben Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek." How is this to be done? We must remember that Jonson's utterances are of the highest importance to the Stratfordians. Had it not been for the poem prefixed to the Folio of 1623, in which these words occur, I verily believe that the Stratfordian hypothesis would long ago have been given up as an exploded myth, or rather would never have obtained foothold at all. The Stratfordians, therefore, must either trust Jonson "all in all or not at all." They cannot discredit their own witness. Once let them admit that Jonson when he penned the words "thou hadst small Latin and less Greek" was really writing "with his tongue in his cheek," knowing that, as a fact, *Shakespeare* had remarkable classical attainments, and they, of course, open the door to the suggestion that the entire poem is capable of an ironical construction and esoteric interpretation. It is necessary, therefore, for Mr. Collins to attach a serious meaning to the "small Latin and less Greek" and yet to reconcile the words with his demonstration of Shakespeare's large knowledge of the Latin language, and of Latin authors, knowledge of which Jonson, of course, could not have been ignorant.

How does he attempt to do this? In the first place, he says, we must remember that Jonson "was a scholar and posed ostentatiously as a scholar in the technical sense of the term. . . . To him 'small Latin' and 'less Greek' would connote what it would connote to Casaubon or Lipsius. A literary acquaintance with Greek and Latin, the power, that is to say, of reading them *ad sensum* with facility and pleasure, is an accomplishment very different from a critical acquaintance with them or from the power of composing in them." But this, really, "won't do." If Shakespeare had this power of reading Latin "*ad sensum*

"foolish" and inaccurate gossip. It is indeed a pity that he did not tell us where that country school was situated, and that not a single author besides him has ever heard of it. Fancy Will Shakspeare as a country pedagogue!

with facility and pleasure," if "so far from Shakespeare having no pretension to classical scholarship he could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French," if "with some at least of the principal Latin classics he was intimately acquainted," and if "of the Greek classics in the Latin version he had," as Mr. Collins suggests, "a remarkably extensive knowledge," then we may be quite sure that Ben Jonson, pedant though he may have been, would not have made such an absurd statement as to say that Shakespeare had "small Latin." No, if old Ben used these words seriously, we may be confident that he intended to imply a very much smaller knowledge of Latin than Mr. Collins attributes to Shakespeare. This attempted explanation "won't hold water."

But Mr. Collins has another string to his argumentative bow. "We know," he says, "from Harrison and others that in the Elizabethan age an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics was assumed to be the monopoly of those who had been educated at Oxford and Cambridge, and that a man who was not associated with the Universities was at once set down as no scholar. Shakespeare stood almost alone among the prominent poets and dramatists of his time as having belonged to neither of the Universities. This not only excluded him from the ranks of the University wits as they were called, but from any acknowledged claim to the accomplishment which they absurdly regarded as their exclusive privilege and distinction."

This is singularly unfortunate because it is quite clear that Jonson was never at either University himself as a student. It is true that Fuller says he was at St. John's College, Cambridge, but Fuller, who was not born till nearly twenty years after Jonson left school, cannot be accepted as a trustworthy authority. Aubrey says he was at Trinity College, but this is certainly erroneous. Indeed,

both are wrong, having probably been misled by the fact that Jonson, in later life, received honorary degrees. Jonson himself told Drummond that he was "taken from school and put to a trade," and that the degree which he held at each University was "by their favour not his study." It is incredible that such a man as Jonson, who was not given to keeping his light under a bushel, and who would have been proud of his university education if he had had one, would have made no allusion to the fact of his having been a student at Cambridge, if such had been the truth, either in his conversation with Drummond, or in his voluminous correspondence.¹ No, it was to Westminster, and not to either University, that he owed his learning, as he himself records:—

Camden! most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know.

Jonson, therefore, would have been the very last man to deny the distinction of scholarship to all but those who had been to a university. That would have been to admit that he had no title himself to such distinction, while allowing it to his opponent Marston. Of a truth Mr. Collins's second attempted explanation of Jonson's celebrated phrase seems even worse than his first. If, then, we accept (as I think we must) his estimate of Shakespeare's scholarship, it surely follows, as it appears to me, that old Ben, for some reason of his own, was guilty of a *suggestio falsi* in the lines prefixed to the Folio of 1623; in fact, that he was laughing in his sleeve when he wrote them. The explanation, I take it, is that the description was perfectly true of Shakspeare, but had no application

¹ Jonson dedicated his comedy *Volpone* to "the most noble and most equal sisters, the two famous Universities." Had he been specially indebted to one of the two, i.e. had he been a student at either of them, there can, I think, hardly be a doubt that he would have mentioned it. His statement that he held his degrees "by their favour not his study" means, of course, that the Universities conferred honorary degrees upon him without any solicitation on his part. See p. 322 n. and 323 n.

to the real author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. But the further consideration of Jonson's remarkable utterances must be reserved for a later chapter.¹

Before passing on I must deal with the convenient and quite unsupported, though not altogether novel, theory adopted by the very latest critics of Shakespearean biography. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse recognise, as, surely, all unprejudiced men *must* recognise, that the idea of Shakspeare coming a raw provincial from Stratford to London, adopting the player's profession, after many shifts and vicissitudes, and thereupon writing such a drama as *Love's Labour's Lost* and such a poem as *Venus and Adonis*, is, to say the least of it, wildly improbable. "Nothing," they write, "is more remarkable in his earliest productions than their perfect polish and urbanity. The principal characters in *Love's Labour's Lost* are princes and nobles, true to the models which he might have found in contemporary society. The young patricians in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* have in every respect the ideas and manners of their class. The creator of such personages must have been in better company and enjoyed a wider outlook upon society than can easily be believed attainable by an actor or a resident in a single city. Had this been otherwise, Shakespeare must have winced when he wrote in what perhaps was his first play, 'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits,' but we feel confident that he had 'seen the wonders of the world abroad.'" They note "that knowledge of good society" and "that easy and confident attitude towards mankind which appears in Shakespeare's plays from the first and which (we must concede this much to the Baconians) are so unlike what might have been expected from a *Stratford rustic*² or a London actor."

At last! We have waited long for it, but it has come

¹ See chapter xv. where I refer to Dr. Konrad Meier's recent interpretation of Jonson's well-known lines (see p. 465 n.)

² My italics.

at last—the recognition by literary critics of this obvious and elementary proposition. But how is the difficulty to be surmounted? How can it be suggested that Shakspeare (“Stratford rustic or London actor”) had before he composed his marvellously cultured *Plays* and *Poems*—those models of “perfect polish and urbanity”—“seen the wonders of the world abroad”? Well, the operation is perfectly simple. Between the Hegira from Stratford and the year before the publication of the *Venus and Adonis* the life of Shakspeare is “an absolute blank for the biographer. Except for one mention of his name in a legal document there is no trace of him from 1585 to 1592.” That being so, and all tradition being a *quantité négligeable* except when it is helpful to our own theories, why should not we make any assumption we please as to the manner in which Shakspeare occupied his time during these years? Why should we not quietly throw over the stories of Shakspeare’s holding, or forming a brigade of boys to hold, horses at the theatre door, the gaining admission to the theatre as a “servitor,” the apprenticeship to the actor’s profession, etc.? Shakespeare, as his works proclaim, was a man “qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes.” Why not, then, send Shakspeare to foreign climes, “to see the wonders of the world abroad”? Why, “in December, 1585, Leicester sailed from Harwich at the head of a great force to assume the government of the United Provinces in their war with Spain.” Some Warwickshire youths were of the party. What more natural than that Shakspeare should have been one of them? “Without question the new scene which would open upon him, the magnificent shows and triumphs with which Leicester was received, the view of tented fields and leaguers, the daily talk of war and statecraft, the association with all sorts and conditions of men, would go far to bestow that knowledge of good society, and create that easy and confident atti-

tude towards mankind which appears in Shakespeare's plays from the first, and which (we must concede this much to the Baconians) are so unlike what might have been expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor."

This is, indeed, a remarkable theory.¹ We observe in the first place that this dark interval in Shakspeare's life (though after all it is not much darker than the other periods of his unknown life history) is devoted, not as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps would have it to the "completion of his education" by a course of reading, but to sending him to the Low Countries, whether as a private soldier or an actor, or in some other capacity, is not definitely suggested.² Now I have no special knowledge of the manners and customs of the Elizabethan "Tommy Atkins," but it strikes me that the notion of converting Shakspeare into an attendant upon a sixteenth-century fighting man (if not a fighting man himself) in order to equip him with the culture and polish required for the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is about the oddest of all the eccentric ideas which owe their origin to the excited

¹ It is not, of course, enunciated for the first time by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse. "Mr. Thoms and Mr. Cohn, to some extent, account for Shakespeare on the Continent by believing that instead of going at once to London when fleeing from Stratford before Sir Thomas Lucy, he enlisted under Leicester for the Netherlands in 1585, but left the ranks for the more lucrative career of an actor. But these theories only crowd still more thickly the brief years in which the great works appeared." Appleton Morgan (p. 216) referring to *Shakespeare in Germany*, by Albert Cohn, and *Shakespeare's Autographical Poems*, by C. A. Brown.

² "A band of youths from Warwickshire did, we know, follow Leicester, and few Warwickshire youths can have had more cogent reasons for making one of their number than William Shakespeare. . . . *Certain it is*, at all events [this is going one better than Mr. Lee's "doubtless"], that Shakespeare would have eagerly embraced the opportunity of accompanying Leicester's expedition if it had presented itself, and there is good reason to think that it actually may have done so. Leicester took a company of actors with him to the Low Countries, and Shakespeare may have been a member of it, but it is quite as likely that he served in some other capacity"! (*Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, Vol. II, p. 199.) Alas for "those fanciful might-have-beens"!

imagination of Stratfordian critics. One might as well make Matthew Arnold enlist in a marching regiment as a preparation for the composition of *Thyrsis*. Jonson, we know, served for a short time in the Low Countries, and the experience was, no doubt, of great value to him, but it would have been a poor substitute for his education at Westminster! "Perhaps it was in the Low Countries," says Mr. Addington Symonds, "that he learned to drink deep and swear"!

But let us examine a little further into the probabilities of the case. And first let us note that the Stratfordians are here again as hopelessly divided as they are over the vexed question of "the learning of Shakespeare." Here, for example, is what Mr. Sidney Lee writes: "The suggestion that he joined at the end of 1585 a band of youths of the district in serving in the Low Countries under the Earl of Leicester, whose castle of Kenilworth was within easy reach of Stratford, is based on an obvious confusion between him and others of his name. The knowledge of a soldier's life which Shakespeare exhibited in his plays is no greater and no less than that which he displayed of almost all other spheres of human activity, and to assume that he wrote of all or of any from practical experience, unless the evidence be conclusive, is to under-rate his intuitive power of realising life under almost every aspect by force of his imagination."

The only comment we need make on this is that Messrs. Garnett and Gosse do not send Shakspeare to the Low Countries in order that he may gain knowledge of a soldier's life (as to which such an experience would, no doubt, be of the most valuable assistance), but in order that he may acquire that culture which is so obviously necessary for the author of those "earliest productions" which are so remarkable for "their perfect polish and urbanity," and "so unlike what might have been expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor." The literary

idea of the sort of training which is likely to bestow culture of this sort appears to me to be quite unique.

But now let us once more examine the dates. Leicester sailed from Harwich in December, 1585. According to Mr. Lee, Shakspeare came to London in 1586. "To London Shakespeare naturally drifted, doubtless trudging thither on foot during 1586, by way of Oxford and High Wycombe." According to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, Shakspeare visited Stratford in 1587, in order to concur with his parents in a proposed settlement between them and one Lambert, the mortgagee of the Asbies estate (his mother's property), whereby it was to be arranged that on Lambert's cancelling the mortgage and paying the sum of twenty pounds, the Shaksperes should convey to him all their title to the estate.¹ These dates hardly seem to square with Shakspeare's hypothetical visit to the Low Countries. But in any case this supposed visit is mere imagination. If it had any foundation in fact, is it to be supposed that none of the old writers should have heard of it? But tradition is absolutely silent as to anything of the kind, and there is nothing in the works of Shakespeare which can be cited in confirmation of the hypothesis. "It is," says Mr. Lee, "unlikely that Shakespeare ever set foot on the continent of Europe in either a private or professional capacity. He repeatedly ridicules the craze for foreign travel."²

In a word, it appears to me that the hypothesis adopted by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse in order to explain in some measure the writing by the "Stratford rustic and London

¹ This is the "legal document" alluded to by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse.

² I cite this, of course, to show how these Stratfordian critics are at loggerheads. That "Shakespeare," in spite of his ridicule for the craze of foreign travel, had visited the Continent there can, surely, be very little doubt. Of Shakspeare, on the other hand, it is in all probability quite true that he never left the shores of his native island. The Baconians are charged with casuistical argument and inability to weigh evidence, but what are we to say of biographers who invent imaginary incidents to bolster up their theories without even the shade of a shadow of evidence to support them?

actor" of such a play as *Love's Labour's Lost*, and such a poem as *Venus and Adonis*, is, though doubtless "mighty convenient," a singularly infelicitous one. Still, that some hypothesis of the kind is recognised as necessary, shows at least an appreciation of the exigencies of the case, and as such is a great advance on those "whole hogger" Stratfordians who, like Professor Baynes and Mr. Churton Collins, maintained that Shakspeare had actually written *Venus and Adonis* before he left Stratford! This is the "plenary inspiration" theory with a vengeance.

But why should we stop with the Low Countries? "The idiomatic ease of the French scenes in *Henry V*" are said by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse to "indicate that he [viz. Shakespeare] had acquired the language where it was habitually spoken." Many passages prove "his familiarity with the moods and aspects of the sea," surely gained by sailing over it to foreign lands. It has been proved, in the judgment of Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, "that Shakespeare before writing *Hamlet* had obtained from some source an intimate knowledge of the Castle of Elsinore," and though they do not think the hypothesis of a personal visit is necessary, because Leicester sent actors to Copenhagen in 1585, nevertheless that fact "does not demonstrate that it never took place; and nothing would so well fit in *with the long voyage which he certainly must have made at some time or other of his life.*"¹ Then, as we know, a book has been written to show that Shakespeare must have been in Germany.

And what are we to say of his accurate knowledge of the towns of Northern Italy—of Padua, Verona, Milan, Mantua, and especially of Venice? On this subject the reader should by all means consult Professor Elze's Essay on "The Supposed Travels of Shakespeare."²

¹ *History of English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 198. My italics.

² *Essays on Shakespeare*, by Karl Elze, PH.D. Translated by L. Dora Schmitz.

Here he will find, to begin with, some very pertinent remarks as to the silly theory of Shakespeare having enlisted as a private soldier in Leicester's force, which hypothesis the Professor points out has no legs to stand upon. I can only refer the reader to the Professor's arguments, which Messrs. Garnett and Gosse seem to have forgotten. But as to Italy the case is different. The argument is here cumulative to show that Shakespeare must have had personal knowledge of some of the towns of which he presents us with such vivid and accurate portraiture. "As to Venice, it would be difficult to say which play transfers us more completely to the city of the lagunes, the *Merchant of Venice* or *Othello*, although it is only the first act of the latter that is acted at Venice." Dr. Elze, whom I should like to quote at length if space permitted, says very truly: "The poetic imagination may be ever so lively and creative, and the power of intuition ever so highly developed, one thing cannot be disputed, namely, that it bestows upon no one a knowledge of facts, but that such a knowledge can only be acquired either by experience or must be imparted by others." Dr. Johnson very correctly observes that "Shakespeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned," and, says Dr. Elze, "Should we therefore succeed in pointing out in the *Merchant of Venice* or elsewhere any knowledge of positive facts respecting Italy, which the poet could have obtained only in one of these two ways, and could it then be proved that he did not acquire it from books or oral communication, his journey to Italy would be established." With this proof Dr. Elze claims to have provided us in his very interesting pages. I can here only glance at his arguments.

Take, for instance, the description of Belmont in the *Merchant of Venice*. The Belmont of Shakespeare (unlike that of the Pecorone) "has its prototype unquestionably in one of those splendid summer residences, surrounded with

well-kept gardens and adorned with treasures of art, which the merchant princes of Venice possessed even in Shakespeare's day. . . . From the context it appears with certainty that Shakespeare possessed a perfectly accurate knowledge of this locality." Portia sends her servant Balthazar to Padua to fetch the "notes and garments" of her learned cousin Bellario and then to meet his mistress at the "common ferry" trading to Venice. "The ferry to Venice was at that time at Fusine, at the mouth of the Brenta." Portia's words are ;—

Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed,
Unto the *tranect*, to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice.

"The nonsensical word 'tranect,' which is found in all the quartos and folios, and has been retained even by the Cambridge editors, proves that copyists and compositors possessed no knowledge of this word, and still less of the thing itself. Even the word 'traject,' which Theobald has correctly restored, is not a genuine English word, otherwise the poet would not have added the apposition 'to the common ferry,' which he surely did only to make the meaning clear to his readers and hearers. What visitor to Venice does not here directly recognise the Venetian *traghetto* (*tragetto*)? And whence did the poet get a knowledge of the *traghetto*? The ferry takes us across the 'laguna morta,' and up the great canal to the city, where we in spirit land at the Rialto. Shakespeare displays a no less accurate knowledge of this locality than of the villas along the Brenta, as he does not confound the *Isola di Rialto* with the *Ponte di Rialto*. He knows that the exchange 'where merchants most do congregate' is upon the former; nay, he appears to have been better acquainted with the *Isola di Rialto* than Coryat, fifteen years afterwards, for the name of Gobbo, which he has bestowed on the clown, reminds us vividly of the Gobbo

di Rialto, a stone figure which serves as a supporter to that granite pillar of about a man's height, from which the laws of the Republic were proclaimed," etc.

Shakespeare, as Dr. Elze truly says, "transfers us, without our being aware of it, into an Italian atmosphere, and in the fifth act makes us enjoy the charms of an Italian night as they could scarcely be felt more lively on the spot itself. The moonlight scene at Belmont is indeed a masterpiece which defies all rivalry, and is far above any that has proceeded from an Italian pen." He well compares Shakespeare's Italian pictures with those presented by Jonson in his *Volpone*. "Jonson not only exhibits a profound knowledge of the Italian language, but shows himself conversant with Venetian institutions, customs, and localities; he, so to say, lays the local colouring on inches thick; but it is everywhere the work of a book-worm whose object it is to display with self-sufficiency his own learning compiled *ad hoc* from other books." Shakespeare, on the contrary, writing from personal knowledge, as Dr. Elze believes, gives his characters "Italian souls, Italian passions, and Southern joyousness of life."

I repeat that I must refer to the essay itself for Dr. Elze's arguments, of the nature of which I have only given some slight indication. There is one, however, of such interest that I cannot omit to mention it. All readers of the *Winter's Tale* will remember how Shakespeare speaks of Julio Romano with enthusiastic praise and describes the statue of Hermione as his work. Julio Romano was well known as a painter. "The Palazzo de T. in Mantua built by Romano and fitted with his paintings and drawings was one of the wonders of the age." But Shakespeare makes Romano a sculptor! "Does not this prove complete ignorance, and could he have committed such an unpardonable mistake if he himself had been at Mantua?"

It seems, however, that this supposed error unexpectedly

serves to confirm Dr. Elze's hypothesis that Shakespeare had himself visited Mantua. In the first edition of Vasari (1550) are given two Latin epitaphs of Romano which were, it appears, inscribed on his tombstone in the church of San Barnaba at Mantua.¹ The epitaphs testify to the fact that Julio Romano was celebrated in his time for three arts—painting, architecture, and *sculpture*. Shakespeare is right! "He has made no blunder. And more than this, his praise of Romano wonderfully agrees with the second epitaph, in which truth to nature and life is likewise praised as being Julio's chief excellence."

Videbat Jupiter corpora *sculpta* pictaque
Spirare, aedes mortalium aequarier coelo
 Julii virtute Romani . . .

So runs the second inscription.

Either then, says Dr. Elze, Shakespeare must have studied Vasari, or he had been in Mantua and had there seen Romano's works and read his epitaphs. "Vasari's work was first published in 1550, and a second edition in 1568, but it was not translated into English till three hundred years afterwards (1850); the (unfinished) French translation also was not published till 1803. Shakespeare must therefore have been a perfect master both of the Italian and Latin languages, to have made use of the work and the epitaphs, moreover he must have used the first edition of it, for that alone contains the inscription which we have placed second."²

In much the same way Shakespeare was charged with ignorance "because in *Hamlet* he has used the name Baptista for a woman, after having employed it correctly in the *Taming of the Shrew*, till Von Reumont pointed

¹ The tombstone "has completely disappeared since the renovation of the church." (Elze.)

² "Greene's *Dorastus and Fawnia*, from which Shakespeare drew his story, contains no mention of Julio Romano, and, in fact, knows nothing of a statue of Hermione (there called Bellaria)." (Elze.)

out that in Italy Baptista is used like Maria as the name of a woman as well as of a man." "The charge of ignorance is thus," says Dr. Elze, "turned into its opposite and becomes a proof of the thoroughness of Shakespeare's knowledge."

It has been objected to the theory maintained by Professor Elze that Shakespeare "repeatedly ridicules the fashion of travelling and foolish travellers." Mr. Lee attaches importance to this objection. "It is," he says, "unlikely that Shakespeare ever set foot on the continent of Europe in either a private or professional capacity. He repeatedly ridicules the craze for foreign travel." The argument does not seem to me to have any weight, and I think Dr. Elze effectually disposes of it. Shakespeare's sarcasm was directed at foolish travellers, "fops of the stamp of Gabriel Harvey or Tom Coryat, who, after their return home, dressed and behaved like Italians, as if they had forgotten their English ways, a folly against which the poet's healthy mind and his patriotism must have alike revolted. That such reproofs on the part of the poet would be quite compatible with his having travelled himself is proved by the example of Nash, whom we know positively to have been in Italy, and who, notwithstanding, is no less sharp than Shakespeare in rebuking travelling fools and braggarts." It is indeed, *a priori*, in the highest degree improbable that such a man as Shakespeare would not have felt, and strongly felt, that desire, of which I imagine no great man has been destitute, "to see the wonders of the world abroad." He, if anybody, must surely have understood the advantages, and appreciated the delights, of foreign travel. And well did he know that "homekeeping youth have ever homely wits." Does Mr. Lee really suppose that the poet who could write of Italy as though he had been born under Italian skies would have ridiculed the longing to "swim in a gondola" in the city of lagoons?

"Ah, good old Mantuan! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice:—

Venetia, Venetia,
Chi non te vede not te pretia."¹

This does not seem like the sentiment of a "home-keeping youth."

But Mr. Lee has yet another objection to the belief in a travelled Shakespeare. "The fact that he represents Valentine in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (I, 1, 71) as travelling from Verona to Milan by sea, and Prospero in the *Tempest* as embarking on a ship at the gates of Milan (I, 2, 129-44), renders it almost impossible that he could have gathered his knowledge of Northern Italy from personal observation." Curiously enough, there is appended to this pronouncement, as though in support of it, a note making reference to the very essay of Dr. Elze from which I have been quoting, and which so vigorously maintains the very hypothesis which Mr. Lee so scornfully rejects. Here, again, his argument appears to me to be of very little weight. As to the passage in the *Tempest*, we have only to turn to it to see that there is no necessary implication to the effect that Prospero embarked on a ship at the gates of Milan. He and Miranda are evidently supposed to be hurried overland to the sea (or possibly to a river), whence they are placed "aboard a bark." As Dr. Elze says: "The account given in the *Tempest* of Prospero's and Miranda's expulsion from Milan, though of a some-

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, 2. In *The Two Gentlemen* (Act IV, sc. 1, 33) when the outlaw asks Valentine "Have you the tongues?" he replies—

"My youthful travel therein made me happy,
Or else I often had been miserable."

Mr. Lee writes (p. 14): "Several of the books in French and Italian whence Shakespeare derived the plots of his dramas—Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, and Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, for example—were not accessible to him in English translations; and on more general grounds the theory of his ignorance is adequately confuted." See also p. 59, n. 5.

what loose nature, yet proves nothing against the poet's knowledge, as it is clear from the context that the two were first taken across a portion of land before they reached the bark." (He then quotes the passage.)

As to the passage in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it is clear enough from the conversation of Launce and Panthino that the party is supposed to embark on a vessel in the river, and Dr. Elze makes a suggestion which seems at least plausible. "The question," he says, "might gain a different aspect if we consider that Upper Italy as early as the sixteenth century was intersected by canals, a fact which Shakespeare must have been aware of had he visited the country, so that the looseness of his descriptions would at least be reduced to comparatively small measure. There appears, indeed, to have been a regular system of communication by these watercourses; the barks which were employed for the purpose were called 'corriere' by the Venetians." Whether it was possible to go by water from Verona to Milan may be doubtful, but at any rate there seems no reason to suppose that a large portion of the journey might not have been so accomplished. It is well known that in this country, before the days of railroads, much travelling was accomplished by means of canals, of which interesting old pictures may still be met with.¹

But, however this may be, I think most people will agree with Dr. Elze when he writes: "This much is certain—whether Shakespeare was in Italy or not—he knew

¹ Sir Edward Sullivan, who has made out a very good case in favour of the proposition that Shakespeare must have been acquainted with Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*, "written first in Italian," and "translated out of French by George Pettie" (1581), says: "One of the difficulties upon which they [the admirers of Shakespeare] lay peculiar stress is that connected with his references to the water communication between places in North Italy, which is now known to have been in existence in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This difficulty is, however, to some extent, disposed of by a reference to the *Civile Conversation*, where we find mention of persons, 'bounde from Padua to Venice,' embarking in a vessel for the purpose of

as well that Milan and Verona are no maritime towns, as it was not unknown to him that Bohemia is an inland country and that the forest of Arden breeds no lions." In the case of the supposed Bohemian coast, he found it "ready made" in Greene's *Dorastus and Fawnia* and was content to borrow it.

That Shakespeare had some knowledge of foreign languages cannot be doubted, and is, indeed, asserted by Mr. Lee, from whose work I extract the following: "Dr. Farmer enunciated in his *Essay on Shakespeare's Learning* (1767) the theory that Shakespeare knew no language but his own, and owed whatever knowledge he displayed of the classics and of Italian and French literature to English translations. But several of the books in French and Italian, whence Shakespeare derived the plots of his dramas—Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, and Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* for example, were not accessible to him in English translations, and on more general grounds the theory of his ignorance is adequately refuted. With the Latin and French languages, indeed, and with many Latin poets of the school curriculum, Shakespeare, in his writings, openly acknowledged his acquaintance. In *Henry V*, the dialogue in many scenes is carried on in French, which is grammatically accurate, if not idiomatic. His knowledge of French may be

getting to their destination—a means of communication between these places which is obviously alluded to in *The Taming of the Shrew*:

Tranio. 'Tis death for anyone in Mantua
To come to Padua. . . .
Your ships are stay'd at Venice."—(IV, 2.)

See "A Forgotten Shakespearian Volume," *Nineteenth Century*, Feb. 1904. Recent investigations have, as I learn on good authority, proved that in Shakespeare's time it was possible to go by water from Turin through Milan to the sea. The practice of travelling by canal boat, of which we have an amusing description in Horace's account of his journey to Brundisium, was popular in Italy in the sixteenth century, when so many of the roads were impassable.

estimated to have equalled his knowledge of Latin, while he doubtless possessed just sufficient acquaintance with Italian to enable him to discern the drift of an Italian poem or novel."¹

I hold, then, that it is as reasonably certain as anything can be for which actual proof cannot be adduced that Shakespeare (*Zeús ὅστις ἢ Zeús*) had sailed the seas and visited foreign countries, as Professor Elze so ably maintains. To Mr. Churton Collins we are indebted for having demonstrated that instead of Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek" Shakespeare had, in truth, large Latin, and probably not a little Greek also.² To Messrs. Garnett and Gosse we are beholden for having frankly admitted that some assumption must be made in order to explain the "perfect polish and urbanity" of Shakespeare's earliest productions, "so unlike what might have been expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor." And we have it further admitted that Shakespeare had a large knowledge of French and no little knowledge of Italian and Spanish also.

Now the truth of all these propositions is really self-evident to the unprejudiced reader from a study of the

¹ Concerning *Hamlet*, Mr. Lee writes: "No English translation of Belleforest's *Historie of Hamblet* appeared before 1608; Shakespeare *doubtless* read it in the French." (p. 178). The italics are mine, but I do not object to the adverb here.

² This chapter was written before the publication of *Shakespeare's Books* by H. R. D. Anders (Berlin, George Reimer). Mr. Anders has no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Shakespeare did not require translations for his knowledge of Latin authors, but went directly to the originals. The old idea of the unlearned Shakespeare and Farmer's famous essay seem now to be altogether abandoned. The early critics found no difficulty in postulating an unlearned Shakespeare, because he was assumed to have written by plenary inspiration, and the blessed word "Genius" was the "open Sesame" which unlocked the door to all his knowledge. Our modern critics get over all difficulty in postulating a learned Shakespeare by the simple process of cramming William Shakspeare with all manner of classical learning at the Stratford Free School. The argument is simplicity itself and very simple natures may accept it. Mr. Anders, by the way, makes what I think to be a great error in citing *Henry VI* and *Titus* as genuine plays of Shakespeare.

works themselves. Such a man (and a vast deal more besides) was Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. That Shakspeare the "Stratford rustic and London actor" should have acquired this learning, this culture, and this polish; that *he* should have travelled into foreign lands, studied the life and topography of foreign cities, and the manners and customs of all sorts and conditions of men (all this *sub silentio*); that *he* should have written some half-dozen dramas, besides the *Venus and Adonis*, dedicated in high-sounding language to a great earl of Elizabeth's Court, besides qualifying himself as a professional actor (to say nothing of performing the functions of horse-holder and call-boy); that *he* should have done all this and a good deal more between 1587 and 1592 is a supposition so wild that it can only be entertained by those who are prepared to accept it as a miracle. "And miracles do not happen"!

No; Shakspeare of Stratford cannot, by any possibility, be made to equal Shakespeare of the Universe. Reason denies it.

*Non si te ruperis, inquit,
Par eris!*

NOTE TO CHAPTER IV

Hallam, though, as he tells us, he shrank from reopening the *vexata quaestio* of the learning of Shakespeare, does not conceal his belief that the great poet had very much more Latin than was commonly supposed. Speaking of "the phrases unintelligible and improper, except in the case of their primitive roots which occur so copiously in the plays," he writes: "In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* these are much less frequent than in his later dramas, but here we find several instances, thus: 'Things base and vile, holding no *quantity*,' for value; rivers

'that have overborne their *continents*,' the *continente ripâ* of Horace; '*compact* of imagination'; 'something of great *constancy*,' for *consistency*; 'sweet Pyramus *translated* there'; 'the laws of Athens, which by no means we may *extenuate*.' I have considerable doubt whether any of these expressions would be found in any of the contemporary prose of Elizabeth's reign; but could authority be produced for Latinisms so forced, it is still not very likely that one who did not understand their proper meaning would have introduced them into poetry." Mr. William Willis, in his *Baconian Mint*, denies that this use of the word *continent* indicates classic learning. He cites passages from North's *Plutarch* and others to show that the word in Shakespeare's time was used for "that which contained" as opposed to the contents. So North: "The continent exceedeth the thing contained." But this is not the point. The point is that Shakespeare uses "*continents* of rivers" in the sense of "banks of rivers," which is exactly Horace's *continente ripâ*. Moreover, as Hallam points out, he introduces such words into poetry. Charles Knight, speaking of Shakespeare's use of the word *expedient*, says: "The word properly means 'that disengages itself from all entanglements.' To set at liberty the foot which was held fast is *exped-ire*. Shakespeare always uses this word in strict accordance with its derivation, as, in truth, he does most words which may be called learned." Judge Holmes says: "Upon the word *premised* Theobald made the observation that Shakespeare is very peculiar in his adjectives; and it is much in his manner to use the words borrowed from the Latin closer to their original signification than they were vulgarly used in; so here, he uses *premised* in the sense of the word from which it is derived, *præmissus*; that is, sent before. This is the use of a writer whose mind is so thoroughly imbued with the Latin language, that he unconsciously incorporates it into his English." Dr. Baynes says of Touchstone's words to Audrey, "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most *capricious* poet, Ovid, was among the Goths" (Ovid was among the Goths, Gotes, the Getae, a Thracian tribe, among whom, in his banishment, he dwelt), that "the epithet 'capricious' (*caper*, a goat) in this speech is a good example of the subtle playing with words, the skilful

suggestion of double meanings of which Shakespeare, in common with Ovid, is so fond." (Note the double pun on "Goths" and "*caper*.") Dr. W. Theobald says: "When the author of the Shakespeare plays wrote

While that the coulter rusts
That should deracinate such savagery—

the coining of the new word *deracinate* (to tear up by the roots) is evidence of his thorough familiarity with the Latin tongue. And there are hundreds and hundreds of words like that coined by him."

I have taken the above extracts from *Shaksper not Shakespeare*, by W. H. Edwards, who, citing Trench, *On the Study of Words*, writes: "The habitual coining of words from the Latin by an English writer, according to this author, is the evidence of a thorough knowledge of, and familiarity with, Latin. He has 'to work on already given materials to evolve what is latent therein,' etc. How could Shakespeare (who continually coins new words) have compared his language with the other and richer one, had he not been profoundly acquainted with the latter through study of books?"

A great deal more might be written to the above effect; but, happily, Mr. Churton Collins's illuminating essays have rendered it less necessary to pursue this line of argument (cogent though it be) at greater length. It really seems to me that the "fanaticism" lies with those who deny the learning of Shakespeare, because they see the enormous difficulty—I would rather say the impossibility—of associating it with Shakspere of Stratford.

I would here add that the argument for the learning of Shakespeare, like most other arguments in this controversy, has suffered from the *trop de zèle* of some of its supporters. Thus, in *Bacon versus Shakspere*, by Edwin Reed, we find it suggested that "To be or not to be; that is the question," is taken from the philosopher Parmenides—"To be or not to be, that is the alternative." But Parmenides said οὕτως ἢ πάνπαν πελέναι χρέων ἐστὶν ἢ οὐχί, which means that there is no intermediate state of existence between Being and Not-Being, or, in other words,

there is nothing between Existence and Non-Existence. But Hamlet puts a different question, which was correctly rendered in a Greek iambic by that celebrated Cambridge scholar Richard Shilleto: τὸ ζῆν ἄμεινον ἢ τὸ μὴ ζητῶ πάλαι, viz. "Is it better to live, or not to live? That is what I keep asking myself." Obviously, there is no real parallelism here.

There is, however, no little food for reflection in Shakespeare's two last sonnets. These are but versions of a fine Greek epigram, whether founded on the original, or on a Latin rendering of it. It is not a little remarkable, as Mr. Begley observes (*Is it Shakespeare?*, p. 71), to find William Shakespeare figuring in company with Grotius, Thomas Gray, Pagnini, Herder, and Bacon, for a version of a Greek epigram; but he so appears in Dr. Wellesley's *Anthologia Polyglotta*, published in 1849. The Greek epigram is by the Byzantine Marianus, and is quoted by Mr. Gollancz in the "Temple" edition of the *Sonnets*. A Latin rendering is to be found in *Selecta Epigrammata*, Basel, 1529. Here, then, is scholar Shakespeare, like Francis Bacon ("The world's a bubble, etc.") trying his hand at an English paraphrase of an epigram in Greek anthology! These sonnets are alternative versions of the same epigram—not translations but adaptations. Sonnet No. 154 begins thus:—

The little Love-god lying once asleep
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vow'd 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 warm'd;
And so the general of hot desire
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.

In the Greek original the slumbering Love had given his torch to the nymphs' keeping, and they, to quench it, dip it into the waters, but the torch kindles the waters, and "the amorous nymphs pour hot water thence into the bathing pool." In Shakespeare's version it is not "amorous nymphs," but "nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep," and it is not the nymphs generally, but one of them that is said to take up the "heart-inflaming brand." This nymph is described as "the fairest votary," and in