AN IMAGE OF SHAKESPEARE

I HAVE now given you a clear mirror of my mind : use it therefore like a mirror—and take heed how you let it fall or how you soil it with your breath.

—King James the First (in Bacon's *Apophthegms*).

Ben Jonson wrote of the only authenticated portrait of Shakespeare, the Droeshout Engraving in the Folio of 1623 :

> This Figure, that thou here seest put,
> It was for gentle Shakespeare cut ;
> Wherein the Graver had a strife
> With Nature, to outdo the life :
> O, could he but have drawn his wit
> As well in brass, as he hath hit
> His face, the Print would then surpass
> All that was ever writ in brass.
> But, since he cannot, Reader, look
> Not on his Picture, but his Book.

Though this praise is conventional it is backed by the certainty that Heminge and Condell, who had known Shakespeare intimately so many years, would not have disfigured their Folio of 1623 with a portrait which could not claim resemblance to him.

If the Droeshout Engraving was like him, this cannot be said of the Bust on his Monument at Stratford-on-Avon. The man drawn in the Droeshout Engraving watches Life wanly with a rueful attention, he has an exhausted face and sensual lips and a doomed look as if he is conscious of a mortal disease. This man lived apart and looked on and showed the World a face like a mask. The other shown in the Bust at Stratford-on-Avon seems stolid and prosperous ; his nose is much shorter, his mouth is not sensual and it is twisted as if he had suffered a stroke. This man might have lived a bustling life and amassed money in trade.

The Bust was made by the tombmakers, Garret or Gerard Johnson the younger and his brother Nicholas (sons of Gheeraart Jannsen of Amsterdam, who settled in Southwark in 1567 and was known there as Garret Johnson and died in 1611), and the effigies produced in their trade were often inaccurate. Still, we could suppose that Shakespeare's widow and children accepted it as a likeness of him if we could be sure that it had not suffered a change; but this is open to doubt.

Sir William Dugdale visited Stratford in 1634 and sketched it then or from memory, and the Engraving of it published in his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656 bears little resemblance to the Bust as we have it. Sir Sidney Lee says of it: "The countenance is emaciated instead of plump, and, while the forehead is bald, the face is bearded with drooping moustache." If Dugdale sketched it from memory he may have been wrong, but Nicholas Rowe reproduced his version of it in 1709 and it is probable that Thomas Betterton, who had visited Stratford for him, would have warned him if there had been a mistake. And William Fulman seems to have approved Dugdale's Engraving in a note written before 1688: "William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire about 1563–4. From an actor of Plays he became a composer. He died April, twenty-third, 1616, ætat 53, probably at Stratford, for there he is buried and hath a monument (Dugdale, p. 520)." And Richard Davies, who was Vicar of the neighbouring parish of Sapperton, did not disagree with this when he added some statements before 1708.

Thirty-seven years after Rowe published his Engraving the Monument was said to be much decayed, and a Stratford limner named Hall was employed to "beautify" and repair it. We have no means of knowing how much he did; but the length of the upper lip and the shortness of the nose have been cited as proving that the nose was repaired by shortening it. And Hall may have changed the former emaciation to plumpness in an attempt to "beautify" this likeness of Shakespeare. In 1793 Malone persuaded a Vicar of Stratford to have the Bust whitewashed; but there was an attempt to restore its first colours in 1861.

Some sculptors believe that the Bust was made from a death-mask, and this would account for the flatness of the back of the head which is not in accordance with the face and forehead. Shakespeare's children may have procured a mask for this purpose, and this would have been the more likely if there had been no recent portrait of him. And it may be that this death-mask was employed as a model for the Droeshout Engraving. That Engraving shows a face like a mask, and the rest of it is carelessly sketched ; the hair looks like a wig, the left ear is impossible and so is the body. The face has a ghostly look, and if its eyes were shut it would be dead. Only the part of it which might have been drawn from a mask is skilful, and even this has the fault that the sensual mouth contradicts the rest of the face. It may be that Martin Droeshout (who was only fifteen when Shakespeare died and may not have known him) wished to replace the twisted mouth of the death-mask, which may have been deformed by paralysis or the rigour of death, and had recourse to an early portrait of him. It so happens that the mouth, as he drew it, resembles the one shown in the painting called the Ely House Portrait.

There is no proof that the Ely House Portrait is a genuine one, for all we know of it is that it was bought in 1846 by Thomas Turton, who was a Bishop of Ely. Still, if it is fraudulent, the artist who painted it from the Droeshout Engraving was able to guess what the tired face might have been like before it was ravaged, and he was eccentric enough to jeopardy his chances of profit by contradicting all the usual notions. My impression is that the Ely House Portrait is either genuine or a copy of one painted about the date which it bears, 1603. Mr. Spielmann, who in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* ranked the Droeshout Engraving as the only portrait certainly genuine, wrote of this one that " it is very far from being a proved fraud." If Shakespeare left his work for the Stage in 1603 a portrait of him might have been painted for his Company then. In that case, and if the painting now called " the Droeshout Original Portrait " (of which we know nothing before 1892) is genuine and truthfully dated 1609, we would have portraits of him as he was before he turned to his Tragedies, and in the

year in which the *Sonnets* were printed. But the so-called Original Portrait is one which a painter who knew nothing of Shakespeare as he is seen in his Works might have copied from the Droeshout Engraving. It is painted over another and appears to resemble the Fourth Folio's version of the Droeshout Engraving: it is more skilfully painted than the admitted frauds by Holder and Zincke, but Holder, when he confessed one of his forgeries, said, "I afterwards made another Shakespeare worth a score such as above," and this may be the one he admired.

If Martin Droeshout relied partly on the Ely House Portrait, this would explain why the collar or ruff drawn by him resembles the one shown in it and is of a kind which was already old-fashioned in England in 1603. It is a plain ruff of the kind worn in France by the Huguenots. The Bust shows a collar which might have been worn in 1616 without eccentricity, but no man in his senses could have worn its rich scarlet doublet in everyday life in Stratford-on-Avon. The costume of the Bust may represent the scarlet one worn by the Players when they were summoned to walk among other servants in the Royal processions. The importance of such details was proved, for instance, when Mr. Mabie produced in his *Life of William Shakespeare* a portrait of the third Earl of Essex as one of the second Earl though the collar in it could have warned him of his mistake.

The Droeshout Engraving has the effect of representing a mask and a wig and a tabard instead of a man in everyday clothes, and though this may have been unintentional it happens to be appropriate in depicting a Player. The man shown in it could be described as the child was in Lady Southampton's gossiping letter about some one called Falstaff as "all head and very little body," and this too is appropriate in a picture of Shakespeare whose writings were often as unsubstantial as dreams. In the Ely House Portrait, too, the shoulders are sloping, though this has been disguised by the doublet, and while the man seems to be of average height or over it he appears to be fragile.

The man shown in the Ely House Portrait has the quiet attention of the Droeshout Engraving and the same baldness,

but his face is still smooth and he has a gentle and effeminate look. In it the mouth which seems sensual in the Droeshout Engraving is only sensuous because it is governed by the placidity which dwells in the eyes. This is a man conscious of weakness, standing apart. This man, whose grave comeliness is only the sunset of the charm of his Youth, could have said with Lyly's Endimion, " Am I that Endimion who was wont in Court to lead my life ? " and with him when Eumenides answered, " Thou art that Endimion, and I Eumenides : wilt thou not yet call me to remembrance ? " could have replied, " Ah, sweet Eumenides, I now perceive that thou art he and that myself have the name of Endimion, but that this should be my body I doubt : for how could my curled locks be turned to grey hairs and my strong body to a dying weakness, having waxed old and not knowing it ? "

If we could be certain that the Ely House Portrait is genuine we would need no other proof that some of the tales recorded of Shakespeare on the authority of gossip are false. The Droeshout Engraving would go far to prove this, if it was not made from a death-mask ; but if it was, the argument fails, because a man's face may be ennobled by Death, and he may be, like Polonius,

> Most still, most secret and most grave,
> Who was in life a foolish prating knave.

If the Ely House Portrait is genuine it proves that the secrecy and stillness and gravity of the Droeshout Engraving were all to be seen in Shakespeare's face while it retained the fading light of his Youth. And because that light lingers in it this likeness is made more valuable (if it is true), for it enables us to imagine how he had looked when he was younger. We could infer from it that he had an effeminate charm when he was young,

> A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted.

Such a man might have drawn his own character in the Poems of Love and in the fantastic youths of the Italianate Comedies and would have attracted the effeminate young Earl of Southampton. This might have been a picture of Jaques remembering the time when he shared the mirth of

Mercutio. The man shown in it could have said with Lorenzo de' Medici,

> Quant' e bella giovinezza
> Che si fugge tuttavia :
> Chi vuol' esser lieto sia ;
> Di doman' non c'è certezza.

Shakespeare's countrymen began by accepting a foreign notion of him, since the Droeshout Engraving and the Bust were the work of Dutchmen who may never have seen him. The most trustworthy Portrait of him is an English one to be found in his own Poems and Plays. He did not attempt to draw himself as Hamlet or Caliban ; but he showed us his nature because a man is known by his dreams and by the way in which he understands others. All the Characters he drew were his children and we know him from them. We can say of him as Ben Jonson did in the Verses prefixed to the Folio of 1623,

> Look how the father's face
> Lives in his issue ; even so, the race
> Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
> In his well-turned and true-filed lines.

While he was writing he acted every part in his Plays, and so he is visible as if he had been tempted by many kinds of temptation, and we can know him better by this than if we knew his behaviour in the ordinary chances of life.

Of course, in looking for him as he is drawn in his Plays we have to remember that the path of Imagination is contrary to the everyday one : the crippled child dreams of heroic triumphs in War and the kitchen-maid sighs for the impossible Prince. Still, the crippled child's dreams may tell us more than his doings.

We can know Shakespeare because nobody ever drew himself in so many disguises. Indeed, it may be that his real nature is shown more plainly because our understanding of it is not confused by a fragmentary knowledge of his private affairs. This understanding should assist us to judge the truth of the tales told of him long after his time by people

who had not read his Plays or his Poems. He spent his life playing with fire, and no one could simulate so many passions without exciting his own : exhaustion may have made him weak-willed, and perhaps he had errors of his own to repent and sufferings of his own to remember ; but we know nothing of this, and there is no obligation to defame him by guesses.

If we knew what Characters he took in his Plays this would help us to know him since he would have written them to suit his own nature. But we have only the legends that he acted Mercutio and the Ghost in *Hamlet* and Old Adam in *As You Like It*, and Davies' assertion that he played some kingly parts—which may have been King Richard the Second in the second half of that Play and King Henry the Sixth and King Henry the Fourth, for this would help to explain why those dissimilar Kings were drawn so much alike.

One of these legends may help us to see him as he was in his Youth. One young man appears with different names in several Plays, as Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and as the honey-tongued Boyet in *Love's Labour's Lost* and as Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice* and as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* and as Sebastian in *The Tempest*, for instance ; he is always a youth with a shining face, eager and friendly, high-spirited and exceedingly talkative, " sufflaminandus," and he is frequently snubbed, as when Romeo says to Mercutio,

> Peace ! peace ! Mercutio, peace !
> Thou talkest of nothing,

and Bassanio says, " Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice," and Alonzo says to Sebastian, " Prithee no more : thou dost talk nothing to me." In one of these Plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, this young man was the only important Character added to those in the original story. Since Shakespeare was writing for a particular Company it is safe to conclude that he had a particular Player in mind when he provided those parts. And if we accept Dryden's statement as proving that he acted Mercutio we can infer that he wrote them all for himself.

Dryden wrote in an Essay printed in 1672 that Shakespeare " showed the best of his skill as a delineator of gentle-

men in his Mercutio," and that he said that he was forced to kill him in the third Act to prevent being killed by him. He added, "But for my part, I cannot find he was so dangerous a person: I see nothing in him but what was so exceedingly harmless, that he might have lived to the end of the Play, and died in his bed, without offence to any man." This alleged saying of Shakespeare's would be explained only if he had acted Mercutio and had killed him because he found the effort exhausting. It so happens that the other varieties of Proteus-Mercutio demand less exertion; they are all minor parts, even Proteus, for he is drawn without passion. And this is true also of the two other parts ascribed to him by legends, the Ghost in *Hamlet* and the Servant Old Adam in *As You Like It*, while the three Kings, whose parts he may have taken, were pathetic spectators.

It is natural that a young man beginning to write Fiction of any kind should draw himself often (even if he has no such intention) because he knows less about others than his elders have learnt and because his own nature is still the most important to him. So Shakespeare may have drawn himself oftenest when he was beginning to write, and above all in his Comedies, since he was too young to know how he would bear himself in a Tragical moment. I think that he drew himself as Mercutio, though with the difference that Mercutio would not have been easily tired. If he did, he was content with his singing (as Crispinus was), for Mercutio sings the only song in the Play.

This picture seems the more likely since this Character governs the Italianate Comedies: Mercutio might have written them all.

If, like Mercutio, Shakespeare exhibited a gay affectation when he was young, he imitated the prevalent mode: for instance, Philip Sidney surpassed the other courtiers in this, and Richard Topcliffe, the Priest-hunter, in a letter which seems to have been written about 1597 (though the *Calendar of State Papers* sets it in 1583) wrote of Father John Gerard that he was "Kewyroos in Speetche, if he do now continue his custom, and in his Speetche he flowerethe and smyles much and a faltering and lisping and doubling his Tonge in his Speetche." This affectation did not imply that a

man's heart was unmanly: Sidney died gallantly and Gerard endured Torture heroically and Southampton and many more who had affected an effeminate grace when they were young ended as soldiers. Even if Shakespeare shared Mercutio's grace when he was young, we know from his Tragedies that he was great-hearted (as Mercutio was) for no one can write nobly if his life is ignoble.

If we can conclude that he resembled Mercutio we have the more reason to trust the Ely House Portrait and the less to believe the stories which seem to have been current at Stratford after his time. These may have been invented when strangers began to show curiosity. John Dowdall's visit to Stratford, the first of which we have any record, was paid a hundred years after Shakespeare became prominent as a poet in London.

In any case few of these stories have any claim to be trusted. They are all based on gossip recorded by Aubrey in his *Lives of Eminent Men*, completed in 1680, and by Nicholas Rowe in his *Account of the Life of Mr. William Shakespeare*, printed in 1709, and in some notes written by men of whom so little is known that it is impossible to judge their veracity. John Aubrey's account has most weight, though this is not saying much, for he was often wildly inaccurate. He professed to rely on some old men who may have seen Shakespeare and on two Actors, one of whom, William Beeston, was the son of a man who must have known him when he worked on the Stage.

John Aubrey wrote: "Mr. William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon in the County of Warwick: his father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of his neighbours that, when he was a boy, he exercised his father's trade, but when he killed a calf he would do it in a high style and make a speech. . . . This William, being naturally inclined to Poetry and Acting, came to London, I guess about eighteen, and was an Actor at one of the Playhouses and did act exceedingly well. . . . He began early to make essays at Dramatic Poetry, which at that time was very low, and his Plays took well. He was a handsome, well-shaped man, very good company and of a very ready

and pleasant smooth wit. . . . He was wont to go to his native country once a year. . . . Though Ben Jonson says of him, that he had little Latin and less Greek, he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger days a school-master in the country. From Mr. Beeston."

About thirty years later Nicholas Rowe published his *Account*, which was compiled mainly from gossip collected by Thomas Betterton, of whom he wrote, "I must own a particular obligation to him for the most considerable part of the passages relating to the life, which I have transmitted to the Public; his veneration for the memory of Shakespeare having engaged him to make a journey into Warwickshire, on purpose to gather up what remains he could of a name for which he had so great a veneration." Thomas Betterton, who seems to have been aged seventy-four in 1709, showed his veneration by trusting all the gossip he heard.

Nicholas Rowe recorded of Shakespeare: "He had by a misfortune, common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company; and, amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlcote near Stratford." And Richard Davies, who was Vicar of Sapperton in Gloucestershire and therefore in touch with local traditions, added some notes before 1708 to others written by William Fulman before 1688, "much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits from Sir —— Lucy, who had him oft whipped and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native county to his great advancement, but his revenge was so great that he is his Justice Clodpate and calls him a great man and that in allusion to his name bore three louces rampant for his Arms. . . . He died a Papist." The Vicar of Sapperton seems to have known as little of Shakespeare's Works as did John Ward, the Vicar of Stratford from 1662 to 1668, who added to his gossip the note: "Remember to peruse Shakespeare's Plays, and be versed in them, that I may not be found ignorant in that matter."

John Dowdall did not mention the poaching when he wrote of his visit to Stratford in 1693: "The Clerk that showed me over this church is over eighty years old; he

says that this Shakespeare was formerly in this town bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he ran from his master to London and there was received into the Playhouse as a servitor, and by this means had an opportunity to be what he afterwards proved." If this old Clerk was William Castle, who died in 1701, the tale of the poaching cannot be traced to him unless Thomas Betterton visited Stratford eight years at least before Nicholas Rowe published it. In any case Castle would have been speaking of things which happened long before he was born in 1614, according to Sir Sidney Lee, or in 1628, according to Mr. Halliwell-Phillips. This would account for his forgetting the fact that there was no park at Charlcote House in those days.

This story may have been founded on the notion that Shakespeare caricatured the Sir Thomas Lucy who died in 1600 as Shallow. A note probably written by William Towers in 1657 says of him and Ben Jonson, "They wrote in their neighbours' dialect and brought their birth-place on the Stage. They gathered humours from all kinds of people. Dogberry was a constable at Hendon. Shallow was Lucy with additions and variations." This note does not seem accurate, for the statement that Dogberry was drawn from a Constable at Hendon near London may be a hazy remembrance of the tradition that the Constable lived at Grendon in Buckinghamshire. And that story is doubtful since Ben Jonson's assertion in *Bartholomew Fair* that the Watch with mistaking words was a Stage-practice seems to show that the Watchman was a traditional Butt, like the Policeman in the Harlequinade of a modern Pantomime. The Watchmen were constantly derided in books, for instance in William Bullein's account of them in a *Dialogue against the Pestilence*, printed in 1564, and in Dekker's *Gull's Horn Book*, printed in 1609.

During Shakespeare's life Charlcote House near Stratford-on-Avon was owned by three Justices named Sir Thomas Lucy: the first of them died in 1600, aged sixty-eight; the second died in 1605, aged fifty-four; and the third was nineteen years younger than Shakespeare. The third bought the park at Fulbrooke in Gloucestershire in which (according to the local tradition) Shakespeare went poaching. And the

third made a Star-chamber matter of stealing deer from this Park in 1608.

The only possible link between the first of these three Lucys and Shallow is the stale jest about the dozen white louces. According to Fernes' *Blazon of Gentry*, printed in 1586, the Arms of the Lucys were " *Gules*, three Lucies hauriant, argent." If this jest referred to him it must have been meant to amuse the people of Stratford in a local performance, for the Londoners could not have known a country Justice's Arms and might have thought that this mocked some better-known man, such as the Earl of Northumberland, who bore the White Luces, if they had given any meaning to it. This jest is not to be found in the Quarto of 1602 which was reprinted in 1619 though that form begins with the words, " Ne'er tell me. I'll make a Star-chamber matter of it. The Council shall hear of it." This would be explained if it was omitted in London because it had no point there. Or it may show that this jest was added after the third Sir Thomas Lucy had followed Shallow's example about the Star-chamber matter.

None of the stories explains which Sir Thomas Lucy was meant. Perhaps the men who had recorded them thought (like some modern students) that there had only been one Knight of this name. The first Sir Thomas was mainly renowned in Warwickshire, where he busied himself in persecuting his neighbours ; the second did little and only owned Charlcote for five years ; the third was well known in London and was a Member of Parliament for Warwickshire for seven years, including the one in which he died, 1640. The note ascribed to William Towers was written about seventeen years after the third Sir Thomas had died, and the man who wrote it may have only known him by name and may have referred to him, not to his forgotten grandfather. And this may have been right if the jest about the Luces was added after 1608, or if the Quarto ought to be dated 1619.

There may be a clue in the fact that Shallow's young cousin Slender had " a little yellow beard—a cane-coloured beard." The third Sir Thomas is shown in his two portraits at Charlcote with a peaked yellow beard, and Slender resembles the other Falstaff's account of the other old Justice

Shallow as he had been in his Youth. It might be argued from this that the Lucys resembled Slender in Youth and Shallow when they were old, but their effigies are not like Justice Shallow. The first Sir Thomas is shown in Charlcote Church resembling the Justice described in *As You Like It*,

With eyes severe and beard of formal cut.

If it shows him as he was when he died, he had no resemblance to Shallow when *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written.

Even if Shakespeare had meant to depict this Sir Thomas Lucy with a good-humoured ridicule (not of the kind which would have been inspired by old beatings) there might have been other reasons for this, for instance, the fact that this Sir Thomas had prosecuted Arden of Parkhall in 1583 and had been one of the Justices who presented John Shakespeare in the Recusant List of 1592. If this Sir Thomas drove Shakespeare from Stratford it might have been for rash words in defence of Arden of Parkhall in 1583, and a vague remembrance of this (combined with the jest about the White Luces and the Star-chamber matter) might have led to the tradition about the poaching recorded by visitors a century afterwards.

The amount of the value which we ought to attach to family traditions is shown by the story recorded in Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott* as related by the owners of Charlcote and by a recent version of this, according to which Shakespeare was imprisoned at Charlcote for poaching in 1593 and delivered by Leicester. In 1593 Shakespeare was aged twenty-nine and was successful in London as a playwright and poet and Leicester had been dead for five years. And local traditions must be even less trustworthy than family ones.

I think that the first Justice Shallow (who may have been called Clodpate when the Play was first written) was the silly old man of the Traditional Stage who survives as the Pantaloon with the Policeman and the Clown and the Harlequin in Pantomimes still. This was the old Justice described in *As You Like It*:

The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound.

And no one has suggested that Jaques was jeering at Lucy.

Our Harlequinades are the oldest form of the Drama to be seen in our time. The Harlequin, whose name has been traced through the jesting Arlecchino of Italy to the French Hierlechin (who seems to have begun as a demon, Harlequinus) resembles the humorous Devils of the Mummers and the Morality Plays. Our comic Policeman is the traditional Constable and our Pantaloon the silly old man who were always natural butts. Our Clown is (as his name shows) the Rustic who began as a butt, like Falstaff's recruits, and then grew facetious; and he still wears the clothes described by Ben Jonson in his *Particular Entertainment of the Queen and the Prince*, acted at Althorp in 1603 and printed in 1616. In that *Entertainment* Ben Jonson wrote: "There was a speech suddenly thought on to induce a Morrice of the clowns thereabout, who most officiously presented themselves, but by reason of the throng of the country that came in, their speaker could not be heard, who was in the person of Nobody, to deliver the following speech, and attired in a pair of breeches which were made to come to his neck with his arms out at his pockets and a cap drowning his face."

The Harlequinades seem to have sprung from the Fabulæ Atellanæ of Rome in which there were four conventional Characters, Pappus, the old father, Maccus, the fool, Bucco, the fat man, and Dossenus, the glutton. And whether our Harlequinade came from Italy or not it combines four of England's Comical figures. Shakespeare used at least three of them, the Pantaloon, the Clown and the Constable, making them living men in the same way as (I think) he took the fat old man of usual Comedies and transformed him to Falstaff, and he may have employed another, the Harlequin, in a form of *Othello* if it is true that Iago was acted by a Comedian,

for in that case Iago must have resembled the old mocking Devils of the Morality Plays. But we cannot infer that he drew Dogberry because he was arrested for some crime in his Youth. He may have drawn him and Shallow to suit Kemp, who succeeded as Dogberry and was represented in the *Return from Parnassus*, offering to teach Studioso how to act " a foolish Mayor or a foolish Justice of the Peace."

The question whether he drew the first Sir Thomas Lucy as Shallow is only of interest because it denotes the worth of local traditions. Another story (which may have been invented in London long after his time and then adopted as a local tradition) is a still better instance of them. According to this one, which was first told in 1762 in the *British Magazine* and appears to have been developed by Ireland, whose Confessions were printed in 1805, " Our Poet " (according to Ireland's version) " was extremely fond of drinking hearty draughts of English Ale and gloried in being thought a person of superior eminence in that profession," and the topers of Bidford, " hearing the fame of our Bard, challenged him and his companions to drink, . . . in little time our Bard and his companions got so intolerably intoxicated that they were not able to contend any longer, and accordingly set out on their return to Stratford, but had not got above half a mile on the road e'er they found themselves unable to proceed any farther and were obliged to lie under a Crab-tree, which is still growing by the side of the road, where they took up their repose till morning, when some of the Company roused the Poet and entreated him to return to Bidford and renew the contest, he declined it, saying I have drank with Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston, Haunted Hillborough, Hungry Grafton, Dadging Exhill, Papist Wicksford, Beggarly Broom and Drunken Bidford." When this story was published, one hundred and forty-two years after Shakespeare's death, there was an old Crab-tree by the side of the road near Bidford. And though there were Crab-trees by every road in the neighbourhood in that county of orchards, Malone and many other students accepted that as sufficient ground for believing this ridiculous lie.

If there had been any truth in this tale it is probable

that others resembling it would have been told of Shakespeare's doings in London; but neither Greene nor anyone else accused him of drunkenness or rioting there, and if we could be certain that he was caricatured as Crispinus this would prove that his faults were of a different kind.

The students who have accepted these stories may have been misled by the Bust at Stratford-on-Avon. The man shown in the Bust might have fallen into ill company when he was young (as Rowe says that Shakespeare did "by a misfortune common enough to young fellows"), he might have begun life as a butcher and, indeed, might have ended it prospering in that useful employment, and he might have indulged in drinking-bouts with his equals, though not with the Rustics, in his elderly days.

The man shown in the Ely House Portrait and the Droeshout Engraving could have been guilty of many faults in his time, but not of vulgar offences. He could have left Stratford-on-Avon (as Aubrey recorded that Shakespeare did) because he was naturally inclined to Poetry and Acting and also because that quiet place appeared too dull in his Youth and because the Stage afforded a scope for his young vanity, but not because he had been often beaten for poaching. He could have begun as a schoolmaster (as Aubrey recorded that Shakespeare did), but he could not have enjoyed killing a calf. And all this can be said of the man visible in the Poems and Plays.

A boy who had the makings of Mercutio in him would have been unfit for the stolid life of Stratford-on-Avon, and if he had been accustomed to find pleasure in thinking that he had a right to assert a fallen gentility, he would have been the more eager to escape from the prospect of earning a livelihood by shopkeeping there. Shakespeare wrote in his *Sonnets* as a man who had been lamed by misfortune and condemned to a trade which was humiliating to him:

Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear. . . .

O, for my sake, do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty Goddess of my harmful deeds,

That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand :
Pity me then and wish I were renewed.

This recognition that his employment degraded him is supported by the Verses inscribed *To Our English Terence, Mr. Will Shakespeare*, which John Davies printed in 1610 in his *Scourge of Folly* :

> Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,
> Hadst thou not played some kingly parts in sport,
> Thou hadst been a companion for a King
> And been a King among the meaner sort ;
> Some others rail, but rail as they think fit,
> Thou hadst no railing but a reigning wit.

Ben Jonson was one of those who railed if he mocked Shakespeare when he wrote his description of the Arms of Crispinus. Such mockery would have been natural to Londoners who remembered that Shakespeare was a son of a yeoman, but if they had known more about Warwickshire they would have discovered that this could not disprove a claim to Knightly descent.

In those days the yeomen of England kept their old rank. Sir Thomas Smith wrote in *De Republica Anglorum*, printed in 1583 but written in 1565 : " Those whom we call yeomen, next under the nobility, knights and squires have the greatest charge and doings in the Commonwealth, or rather are more travailed to serve it than all the rest ; as shall appear hereafter. I call him a yeoman whom our Laws do call *legalem hominem*, a word familiar in Writs and Inquests, which is a freeman born English and may dispend of his own free land in yearly revenue to the sum of forty Shillings sterling : this maketh (if the just value were taken now to the proportion of monies) six Pounds of our current money at this present." He adds that these yeomen " confess themselves to be no gentlemen," but often " come to such wealth that they are able and daily do buy the lands of

unthrifty gentlemen, and after setting their sons to the school at the Universities, to the Laws of the Realm, or otherwise leaving them sufficient lands whereon they may live without labour, do make their said sons by those means gentlemen." And he ranks them above the fourth sort or class, which included "day-labourers, poor husbandmen, yea, merchants and retailers which have no free land."

A Grant of Arms by the Heralds was merely a recognition of rank; and all who studied (or pretended to study) at Oxford or Cambridge or the Inns of Court could call themselves gentlemen without paying for one. Sir Thomas Smith wrote: "As for gentlemen they be made good cheap in England. For whosoever studieth the Laws of the Realm, who studieth in the Universities, who professeth liberal Sciences, and to be short, who can live idly and without manual labour, and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be called Master, for that is the title which men give to Esquires and other gentlemen, and shall be taken for a gentleman, for true it is with us, as is said, *Tanti eris aliis quanti tibi feceris.* And (if need be) a King of Heralds shall also give him for money Arms newly-made and invented, the title whereof shall pretend to have been found by the said Herald in perusing and viewing of old Registers."

Sir Thomas Overbury wrote of a Franklin in his *Characters*, printed in 1614: "His outside is an ancient yeoman of England, though his inside may give Arms with the best gentlemen and ne'er see the Herald." And John Stephens wrote of a Farmer in his *Essays and Characters*, printed in 1616: "To purchase Arms (if he emulates gentry) sits upon him like an ague; it breaks his sleep, takes away his stomach, and he can never be quiet till the Herald hath given him the harrow, the cuckoo, or some ridiculous emblem for his Armoury."

The Arms borne by the yeomen were not always new-fangled, for several of these families claimed Knightly descent though they had inherited a dwindled estate or a younger son's portion. We know that several families of yeomen in Warwickshire bore Arms in those days. Though we do not know whether Robert Arden of Wilmcote, Shakespeare's maternal grandfather, bore Arms, it is probable that he had

a right to them, for he seems to have been descended from a brother of Sir John Arden, the ancestor of the Ardens of Parkhall. For all we know, the many Shakespeares who lived as yeomen in Warwickshire may have sprung from a family which had borne Arms, " non sans droict." In any case Shakespeare may have thought that his descent from the Ardens of the Forest of Arden gave him many proud Ancestors, including the mythical Guy of Warwick. And it may be that a claim to an illustrious Ancestry, or a belief in one, did more to control his life than anything else. This seems borne out if we recall our knowledge of his private affairs apart from the tales which may have been invented at random after his time. And it would go far to prove that some of those tales must have been false.

Stratford-on-Avon was then a little town in the fields (emporiolum non inelegans, according to Camden) beside the slow Avon, a narrow river winding in reeds. The people who lived in it were woodlanders still, for their stock had been moulded by the Forest of Arden, which had been a British haven of refuge in the days of the Romans and a stronghold of the Danes when these parts were in the Kingdom of Mercia. In those days many who lived in the quiet places of England never strayed more than a few miles from the houses in which they had been born. Stratford-on-Avon was one of the quietest of those quiet places and the home of a stock which had been permanent there from time immemorial. There may have been a Danish strain in it still, and this would account for the use of the name Hamnet or Hamlet. Even to-day the ancient strains can often be traced in England; for instance, in Beer, a seaside village in Devon which was called Beor by the Danes, most of the fishermen still seem to be Danish while in the neighbouring town of Lyme Regis in Dorset the old stock is patently Celtic. If Shakespeare had reddish hair and a high colour, as the Bust seems to show, these may have been signs of a Scandinavian descent. His martial name cannot help us to guess the source of his stock, for it may have meant Hawkspur first, which would explain why his crest was a Falcon holding a spear.

Stratford-on-Avon stood apart, as the other towns of

England did then : its inhabitants all knew one another and cared little about anyone whose days were not spent within sound of the chimes of Holy Trinity Church. That stately Church standing in the elms by the Avon was a token of Stratford's ancient renown for piety in the Catholic times. And though that renown had passed away when the Guild of the Holy Cross was broken, the townsmen were still proud of their home. There a man who owned a prosperous shop or a few acres of land was much more respected than any neighbouring Squire and quite as aware of his own importance and worth.

Nicholas Rowe recorded of Shakespeare : " He was the son of Mr. John Shakespeare, and was born at Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire, in April, 1564. His family, as appears by the Register and public writings relating to that town, were of good figure and fashion there, and are mentioned as gentlemen. His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that though he was his eldest son he could give him no better education than his own employment. He had bred him, it is true, for some time at a free-school, where it is probable he acquired what Latin he was master of ; but the narrowness of his circumstances and the want of his assistance at home forced his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language."

We do not know when Shakespeare was born, but his baptism was registered at Stratford-on-Avon on April the twenty-sixth, 1564. It is probable that he had his teaching at the Grammar-School there, and this might have been short if he was idle at lessons or was never robust. He seems to have learnt little from books then or at any time : the ways of the living were always much more to him than the thoughts of the dead. Indeed, there is no sign that he ever paid attention to books, except to Ovid's and Chaucer's Works and some of the English Plays and Poems and Stories and some Italian Novels when he was young, and some English Chronicles later, and to Plutarch's Lives in North's version, and perhaps to the younger Seneca's Tragedies and Philosophical Works, when he was elderly. And all these happened to be books which he used when he was writing his own.

He must have learnt some Latin in boyhood, and he may have increased his knowledge of it afterwards because it was still the International language and so commonly used that some of the townsmen of Stratford corresponded in it. That knowledge may have helped him to learn a smattering of French and Italian. Though he had a weakness for using legal phrases at random he had no knowledge of Law. (Since some lawyers have held an opposite view I ought, perhaps, to explain that I do not differ from them in ignorance, for their trade has been mine.) He did not prove a profound knowledge of Law when he wrote in a Sonnet,

> And Summer's lease hath all too short a date.

When he needed any knowledge of History he copied the Chronicles, and when he dealt with Geography he preferred to invent it. Perhaps he could have said with Biron,

> Study is like the Heaven's glorious Sun
> That will not be deep searched with saucy looks :
> Small have continual plodders ever won
> Save base authority from others' books.

Dryden wrote of him in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, " He was naturally learned : he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature : he looked inwards and found her there."

If Shakespeare had cared for books it is probable that he would have gathered a few and that these would have been treasured in remembrance of him after his time, but there is no mention of any in his Will and no sign that any of his were in the " study of books " left by his son-in-law. The man seen in the Plays looked on the World with an insatiate curiosity always—delighting most in the things which were the most alien to him. Such a man might have begun as a boy who was glad to escape from School as soon as he could.

There were times when the tranquillity of Stratford was broken by glimpses of a different life. Kenilworth Castle and Warwick Castle were near, and there was apt to be a going and coming of strangers who were bound for their Revels or returning from them. He was eleven when Queen Elizabeth saw the famous Revels at Kenilworth in 1575, and since most of the people of the neighbouring parts assembled

there it is probable that he, who was destined to attempt to amuse her among the least of her servants, gaped at her then as a little boy in the crowd. And he had glimpses, too, of the Players and their similar world of sham glory and pretended delight. He was about four when they were welcomed to Stratford while John Shakespeare was Bailiff; and after this they performed there, for instance, in 1573, 1576, 1577, 1579, and the four following years.

We can be certain that many little boys in such towns were dazzled when the Players from London rode up the narrow streets in the splendour of their second-hand finery, breaking the habitual somnolence with their trumpets and drums, and that they believed that there could not be a happier lot than to travel thus, admired and applauded, and with the power to excite laughter or tears. Many such boys must have felt that this happiness was out of their reach, for they could not emulate the wit of the Clowns or the stateliness of the Lovers and Kings. If Shakespeare had been a dull little boy and had known that his family had been always content tilling the fields or plying homely trades connected with farming, he too might have sighed and returned to an inherited obscurity sadly. But he was never dull, and if he believed (rightly or wrongly) that he was descended from illustrious people he might have felt himself too fine for the usual ambitions of Stratford: he would have valued their former eminence more because he did not inherit it, and it may be that when he dealt in his Plays with fallen Dukes he was echoing that boyish belief. It may be that when he sat in the Grammar-School he was haunted by visions of the Plays witnessed there or in a neighbouring room, which was the Guildhall, and of future ones when his eloquence and wit would astonish the wisest men in Stratford-on-Avon. And it may be that the Players were his teachers of History.

If so, they were helped by other teachers, the venerable persons who told tales of the Past. When he was aged six, people aged fifty could remember the days before the change called the Reformation began, and others aged seventy or more could describe the times when England was governed by King Henry the Seventh, and there were many whose

grandfathers had seen the Wars of the Roses. Perhaps the old people talking of the days of their Youth taught him to think of England's Catholic Past as a better and a happier time. If they did, they could have cited the testimony of King Henry the Eighth, who said when he opened his last Parliament in 1545 : " Of this I am sure that Charity was never so faint among you ; and God Himself, among Christians, was never less reverenced, honoured and served " ; and of Bishop Hugh Latimer, who said in 1548 in his Sermon of the Plough : " In times past, men were full of pity and compassion, but now there is no pity ; for in London their brother shall die in the streets for cold, he shall lie sick at the door, between stock and stock, I cannot tell what to call it, and perish there for hunger : was there ever more unmercifulness in Nebo ? . . . Now Charity is waxen cold, none helpeth the scholar nor yet the poor."

Such lessons may have taught him to write as he did in the *Sonnets* of " the holy antique days," and as he did when in *As You Like It* he made Orlando say of Old Adam,

> O good old man, how well in thee appears
> The constant service of the antique world,

or when in the same Play he made Charles report that in the Forest of Arden the Duke and his merry men " fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden World."

The old Forest of Arden had dwindled to the Woodland of Arden in a neighbouring parish. Camden wrote of it in *Britannia*, printed in 1582 : " Sylvestrem regionem nunc perlustremus, quæ trans Avonam flumen ad Septentriones expanditur spatio multi maiori, maximam partem nemoribus infessa, nec tamen sine pascuis, arvis et variis ferri venis. Hæc ut hodie Woodland, id est, Regio Sylvestris, ita etiam Arden antiquiori nomine olim dicebatur."

This Woodland of Arden must have been one of Shakespeare's haunts in his boyhood. There he could have played truant or devoted his holidays to delightful adventures in the dusk of the trees. These imaginary adventures were echoed in the terrible doings of *Titus Andronicus* and in the happiness and merriment marked by the melancholy Jaques in the

pleasant Forest of Arden, a home of outlaws, "nec tamen sine pascuis, arvis."

Shakespeare must have been always of imagination all compact, like the Lunatics and Lovers and Poets of whom he wrote in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and this would have made him restless and excited by glimpses of the wonderful World beyond the bounds of his home. He must have been always given to dreams, and it may be that one of them was inspired by the sight of an old ruinous house close to the Grammar-School and built by Sir Hugh Clopton, who had returned to these parts after he had been Lord Mayor of London. If, when he should have been at work in the School, he had a vision of escaping from Stratford and of earning money and fame not to be found there and of buying that house and of ending his days in it and of being commemorated by a tomb as admired as Hugh Clopton's, it was a natural dream and one which was destined to come true. And indeed it appears safe to infer that dream from his story. He may have always held as he did when he wrote *The Rape of Lucrece*:

> The aim of all is but to nurse this life
> With honour, wealth and ease in waning age.

It might be well if students would agree to conclude that like most other people he often did the natural thing. For instance, his wish to secure the modest rank of a gentleman was a natural one, particularly if he believed that he was descended from Knights; and if he took pride in it (as seems to be shown by his bequest of his sword, the sign of that rank) he behaved in this as everyone else would have done then. And for a boy who was fond of Acting and Poetry (as he must have been and as Aubrey wrote that he was), there could have been nothing more natural than joining the Players. He may have tried the part of an usher in a neighbouring school first (as Aubrey recorded), but this could have brought him neither money nor fame. A Player's life, transfigured to him as it must have been in his happy glimpses of it, offered him a chance of becoming rich and admired and of meanwhile observing the strange ways of the Londoners or riding at ease all over England in Summer-time, heralded

by trumpets and drums. He had in his heart the stuff of which Kings and heroes ought to be made, but he could only wear the Crown of his dreams in the imaginary Realm of the Theatre.

It would have been natural to begin this delightful life as soon as he could. Dowdall's assertion that he had been a butcher's apprentice and ran from his master to London and there was received into the Play-House as a servitor seems to indicate a local belief that he was very young when he went. Such a belief would be supported by Rowe's statement, that " he was received into the Company then in being in a very mean rank," and by the tradition preserved by Edmund Malone in 1780, according to which " his first office in the theatre was that of a prompter's attendant."

It would be supported, too, by the story recorded by Johnson, according to which he began as a horse-boy at the door of the theatre, if we could accept it, but this is plainly untrue. The education received at the Grammar-School, though it may have been scant, would have secured him better-paid work in those illiterate days, and he could have made friends with the Players when they visited Stratford, and so have obtained employment more to his mind. Besides, his claim to gentility would have turned him from this. If the horse-boys were called " Shakespeare's boys," as Johnson alleged, this may have been because he employed them when he worked for the Stage, making money by this as Burbage did when he provided the horses. It may be that he was thinking of himself when he wrote in *As You Like It*,

> At seventeen many their fortunes seek.

This would agree with Aubrey's account that " he came to London, I guess, about eighteen."

The only other things known about him before 1592, when Greene attacked Shake-scene in *A Groat'sworth of Wit*, are that in May, 1583, the baptism of his daughter Susanna was registered in Holy Trinity Church, and that the baptisms of his two other children, the twins Hamnet and Judith, were registered there in February, 1585, and that he joined his father in a legal conveyance in 1587. We do not know when or where he was married; but if a marriage-bond, dated

November the twenty-fifth, 1582, is genuine and connected with him, this may mean that he had been married illegally (as, for instance, the Catholics often were), for his daughter Susanna was probably born in May, 1583.

There is nothing to show that he did not begin to work with the Players before he was married. If he joined them first he showed common sense in postponing his marriage till he was earning a livelihood. In any case his age when he married was the usual one for marriages then. And he showed common sense, too, if he left his wife and children in Stratford, where they could live cheaply among friends and relations, instead of making them share his London life or his wanderings when his Company travelled. We have no proof that he took this natural course, and if he did we have no reason to doubt that he often visited them. The journey was easy : a couple of days' jogging ride through the open fields, with a rest in the seclusion of Oxford, would have brought him to Clopton's low bridge over the Avon and the tall wooden spire of Holy Trinity Church. A person so insignificant could have been there constantly without any mention of the fact in the Records, and Aubrey asserted that " he was wont to go to his native country once a year." Such visits would have been natural if he had shown an average fondness for his wife and his children, and he is seen in his Plays as one who could have said with Macduff,

> I cannot but remember such things were
> That were most precious to me.

When he joined the Players he may well have begun in some mean employment, as a call-boy, for instance (as the tradition recorded by Malone asserts), while he was learning his trade, but there must have been scope for a youth who was fit to act the part of a gentleman. And if the Ely House Portrait is genuine he probably looked girlish enough to take the feminine parts. Such a recruit must have been valuable, for few of the Players had any claim to refinement.

He was about twenty-eight when Robert Greene attacked Shake-scene in his *Groat'sworth of Wit*. Henry Chettle wrote in his *Kind Heart's Dream*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register on the eighth of December, 1592 : " About three

months since died M. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry booksellers' hands, among other his *Groat'sworth of Wit*, in which a letter written to divers Playmakers is offensively by one or two of them taken; and because on the dead they cannot be avenged, they wilfully forge in their conceits a living author; and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy but it must light on me. . . . With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that, as I have moderated the heat of living writers and might have used my own discretion—especially in such a case, the author being dead—that I did not I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself I have seen his demeanour no less civil, than he excellent in the quality he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his wit." Though Shakespeare was not one of the Play-makers to whom the *Groat'sworth of Wit* was addressed this apology may have been offered to him.

The insults to Shake-scene may prove that Shakespeare succeeded first as a Player and afterwards as a writer of Plays of every variety before 1592, and may assert that he considered himself the best of the dramatists and the allusions to buckram gentlemen and peasants may mean that the upstart crow was a Rustic who affected gentility. If the apology was intended for him it proves that he was apt to resent insults and punish them.

Apart from this we have no means of knowing what anyone thought of Shakespeare while he was living in London. The notion that he was considered unusually gentle and sweet seems based on the fact that Ben Jonson wrote in the Verses prefixed to the First Folio:

> Thy art,
> My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part,

and called him "Sweet Swan of Avon," and said in *Discoveries* that he had "brave notions and gentle expressions." He may have used the word "gentle" in its old meaning "courteous," employed, for instance, by Chaucer in his account of his Knight, and when he made his Host say to the Shipman,

Now long may thou sail by the coast
Sir, gentil master, gentil mariner.

He seems to have used " brave " in a sense nearer its French origin than it conveys to us now when he applied it to notions. In any case, " gentle " and " sweet " were common terms of address used with no particular meaning. When, for instance, in the third Act of *Poetaster* Crispinus addressed Horace as " Sweet Horace " and " Gentle Horace," he did not assert that the obstreperous Jonson-Horace was either gentle or sweet. Jonson would have been the last to apply these terms to himself or to consider them praise. So, too, when Shakespeare was called " sweet " in the *Return from Parnassus* the epithet was not intended for praise, and it referred to his Poems as when Weever called him " honey-tongued Shakespeare," in 1597. If he had always been gentle, Greene would not have called him a Tiger wrapped in a Player's hide, neither would Chettle have made haste to apologize when offence had been taken, nor would Thomas Heywood have written in the Postcript to his *Apology for Actors*, printed in 1612, about some of the Poems in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, " the author, I know, was much offended with Mr. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name."

The only epithet which seems to be personal is the term " friendly," applied to him when Anthony Scoloker wrote, with some condescension, of " the vulgar's element, friendly Shakespeare's Tragedies." Friendliness is not so uncommon that there is any need to attach importance to this : it does not tell us so much as we are told when we learn that Marlowe was called haughty and kind. And even if we could take this as a sign that Shakespeare showed a particular friendliness we have no proof that he ever had a particular friend. In those days devoted friendships were common, but no one ever professed friendship with him except Heminge and Condell, who were his partners for many years, and Ben Jonson, whose tardy claim is open to doubt. No one seems to have called Fletcher friendly, but he lived on such terms with Beaumont that they had all things in common, even their clothes, and, after that beloved friend died, clung to

Massinger with so much affection that (according to Sir Aston Cockayne) they were not divided in death, for they share the same grave. The fact that Shakespeare left the usual legacies to three of the Players and five of his townsmen and one man, Thomas Russell (who may have been a merchant in London), cannot be taken as showing that they were close friends of his. And if it was interpreted in that way it would prove that he did not count Jonson or any other author of those days as a friend dear enough to deserve such remembrance. The only other man named as a friend of his was John Davenant, a Vintner and Innkeeper at Oxford, of whom Antony à Wood recorded that he " was an admirer and lover of Plays and Play-makers," and was " of a melancholy disposition and was seldom or never seen to laugh." Shakespeare seems to have stopped at Davenant's Inn on his journeys between London and Stratford, and there is no sign that they met anywhere else.

We know very little about his London abodes. He seems to have lived for some years before 1596 in one of the houses built from the ruins of a Priory in St. Helens in Bishopsgate, and we only know this because he did his best to avoid paying his taxes. In 1596 he moved to the sinful Suburb of Southwark, near the Bear Garden. If he was living alone it is probable that these homes were in lodgings. The first one was not far from the Theatre in Shoreditch, and the other was near the Swan and Rose theatres and the field which was chosen for the site of the Globe in 1599. There is evidence that in 1604 he " lay in the house " of a wigmaker named Mount-joy, who had a shop in Silver Street in the City. Since there is no sign that he lodged there at any other time and no further evidence of his living in Southwark, this may mean that he only visited London in 1604, perhaps to walk in the King's Procession that year as one of his Servants.

It may be that while he was living in London he wrote his Plays in the hours which he could snatch from the Stage or from his chief pleasure, a delighted perusal of the ways of Mankind. Most of the English lived then by daylight. For instance, we read in William Harrison's *Description of England*, printed in 1577, that most people rose at dawn, dined about noon and had supper at five or six; and

forty years later Nicholas Breton gave a similar account in *Fantastikes*. We know from Shakespeare's Poems and Plays that (like Dante) he was a lover of Dawn from the time when he wrote the beginning of *Venus and Adonis* in Youth till the night came when he could have echoed Antony's cry,

> Oh Sun, thy uprise shall I see no more.

And he could have found no better time for his writing than in the early hours of the morning before the street-cries and interruptions began.

It is probable that he was described in one of Aubrey's notes : " The more to be admired q. he was not a company-keeper, lived in Shoreditch, would not be debauched, and if invited to writ he was in pain." Though this note is followed by the name W. Shakespeare, Sir Sidney Lee argues that it cannot refer to him, saying : " If Shakespeare were intended the words would mean that he avoided social dissipation, that he resided in Shoreditch and that the practice of writing caused him pain. None of these statements have any coherence with better attested information." We have no evidence that Shakespeare indulged in social dissipation in London ; he seems to have lived near Shoreditch first, and the words, " when invited to writ he was in pain," cannot mean that this man did not write with facility—they only assert that he was accustomed to write that he was in pain when he was invited to take part in debauchery.

This answer may have been humorous like the others recorded when he mocked Burbage, calling himself William the Conqueror, and referred to Ben Jonson's many translations from the writers of Rome, advising him to translate latten spoons, and when (if he was the poet described in *Nine Days' Wonder*) he sent Kemp to annoy him. And the vanity of which he was accused if he was drawn as Crispinus or as the author attacked in *Cynthia's Revels* or as Poet-Ape or as Shake-scene may have been also humorous and intended to mock duller companions, as Mercutio's was. It may have been like the apish humour ascribed to the penny poet by Kemp and equally apt to alienate its victims from him. Perhaps he could have said of himself with Chaucer in the *Rime of Sir Thopas* :

He seemeth elvish by his countenance.

But if he was painted in the Ely House Portrait the elfishness which may have been visible in him when he was younger, making him different from his stolid associates, and the vanity which may have repelled them had been hidden by weariness.

If he replied that he was in pain when he was invited to be debauched, this may show that he was often ailing in health and so could plead that excuse. This was probably true if we can trust the Ely House Portrait or the Droeshout Engraving, and it would help to account for the attitude to be seen in his Plays.

He wrote in them as if he was standing apart. In the Plays of his Youth and in his Midsummer Dreams he remembered the lost glamour of boyhood and of Rustical wonder, and in his darker Plays he looked on the World (as he confessed in the *Sonnets*) askance and strangely. He wrote of battles as if he had only seen them fought on the Stage, and of the Chase as if he had watched it pass by,

Much marked by the melancholy Jaques,

not as one who had ever found happiness in killing a rabbit: his heart went with the hunted hare and the wounded stag and the calf dragged to the slaughter. He wrote of the Sea with an instinctive alarm (natural enough in a woodlander from the middle of England), and when his people ventured on it they were almost sure to be wrecked. There is no sign that he had rivalled their courage, for his pictures of France and Italy are full of mistakes. He drew his sailors as ruffians (like the billows they sailed), and frequently drunk, which they probably were when he met them in the haunts of Iniquity where the theatres stood or tried to amuse them while they fought in the Pit. If he had known more of their life he would not have thought that the ship-boys were accustomed to sleep on the high and giddy masts (as he seems to do in the *Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*), or that the masts were high and giddy in days when few ships were as big as the *Golden Hind*, of a hundred tons.

He could not have observed everything, as we know that

he did, if he had been prominent in action himself. Perhaps he could have said with Romeo,

> I'll be a candle-holder and look on,

because the man who is looking on sees most of the game.

This aloof attitude may also denote that he bore himself with an air of fallen gentility, for this was a thing which would have kept him apart. And it may be that an outer inactivity made his imagination more restless. Sidney's life was adventurous, but in the *Arcadia* we find the inimitable note of serenity. Shakespeare's Plays were only serene when he rested in three quieter dreams, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, and the fourth Act of *The Winter's Tale*: the others are throbbing with an excited vitality.

Ill-health would also help to account for his retirement to Stratford and for his death before he was old. In 1596 he suffered a blow which must have darkened his life when his son Hamnet died, aged eleven. We know nothing of Hamnet, but a boy prematurely wise (as sickly boys often are) and doomed to premature death lives in some of the Plays; for instance, as a Prince in *King John* and in *King Richard the Third*, and as Macduff's son in *Macbeth*, and as Mamilius in *The Winter's Tale*. While the boy lived Shakespeare may have wanted more money because it would enable him to establish his stock in a position which Fortune had not granted to him. Now he had only to obtain a provision for himself and his wife and for the dowers of a couple of daughters, and this change may have lessened his interest in his work on the Stage. This seems to be indicated by the fact that he bought the old house in Stratford-on-Avon in the following year.

We do not know when he returned to make his home in Stratford-on-Avon. John Ward's statement that "he frequented the Plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived in Stratford and supplied the Stage with two Plays every year," does not support the common belief that he only returned to his home when he had finished his Plays. And that belief does not account for the change seen in his Plays after 1603. Gervinus, seeing that change, compromised by suggesting that he forsook his trade as a Player in 1603 but still lived in London till he had finished his Plays and then

returned to Stratford to rest. Nicholas Rowe said that "the latter part of his life was spent, as all men of good sense will wish theirs may be, in ease and retirement and the conversation of his friends." This is one of the questions which we can only decide in accordance with our ideas of Shakespeare. I think that he is shown in his Plays as a man who would have valued the love of his family and the peace of his home. It is recorded that his family loved him, for, according to Dowdall, "his wife and daughters did earnestly desire to be laid in the same grave with him," and we have no reason to doubt that he returned their affection.

New Place, his last home at Stratford, seems to have been a rambling house of dim rooms with a long garden running down to the Avon. He bought stone for repairing it in 1598, and was described in that year in a local inventory as a householder in Chapel Street, owning a large stock of corn and malt, and in 1602 he bought about a hundred acres of arable land near Stratford. Though a lawyer named Greene, alias Shakespeare, who may have been a cousin of his, seems to have lived in the house in 1609, this cannot prove that Shakespeare had not made it his home, for the foundations show that there was plenty of room for hospitality in it.

There is nothing to show that he preferred to live in lodgings over a shop in London for many years after this pleasant home was ready for him in the kind air of Warwickshire and in the quiet which his fathers had loved and among men who had been children there when he was a child. Perhaps he could have said with Camoens :

> Mas se o sereno ceo me concedera
> Quelquer quieto, humilde e dolce estado,
> Onde com minhas Musas so vivera
> Sem ver-me em terra alheia degradado.

And he may have returned to the country in 1603, like Drayton, partly because the new King had brought changes which were not to his mind.

It is certain that he could have devoted himself to Tragical Work better if he was living away from the noises and interruptions of London and all the petty feuds of the men who jangled in the pot-houses there and delivered at last from the

humiliating trade of the Stage. And it may be that the dignity and the burning emotion of his Tragical Work after 1603 are signs that he was living in peace.

We know little of Shakespeare's life at Stratford-on-Avon in his elderly days. John Ward's account of it, written between 1661 and 1663, must be inaccurate : he wrote : " He supplied the Stage with two Plays every year, and for this had an allowance so large that he spent at the rate of a thousand a year, as I have heard." We can be certain that Plays were never bought at this price then, and though it is probable that Shakespeare was drawing an income from his share in his Company during " his elder days " and we know that he had other investments, he could not have spent a thousand a year in Stratford-on-Avon unless he had thrown his money out of the window.

This sum would have been equal to six thousand Pounds, at least, of our money, and we can be sure that Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlcote did not live at this rate. If a townsman with only a narrow garden behind his house had done it he must have been exceedingly generous, and there is no trace that Shakespeare made benefactions beyond his bequest of ten Pounds to the Poor of Stratford-on-Avon.

We can infer from some lawsuits that when he lent money (which was probably seldom) he took good care that it was repaid, and we know that the Corporation of Stratford had the pleasure of paying twenty pence for wine for a preacher who was entertained in his house in 1614. These things do not suggest a lavish manner of life. All we know of his investments appears to indicate a thriftiness natural in a man of his class, and this is also suggested by the letter about a loan from him, written by Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney in 1598, and by Adrian Quiney's message to his son at that time : " If you bargain with William Shakespeare or receive money therefor, bring your money home that you may."

Shakespeare could not have worn rich clothes in Stratford, a little town which looked like a straggling farm and mainly consisted of two modest streets with streams running through them. Food was cheap there because it was the produce of

the neighbouring farms. Even wine was not dear, and the bill for the preacher's entertainment may mean that no wine was kept in New Place. A man living at Stratford in a natural way could have spent little ; but Ward's legend may show that Shakespeare was thought rich (as the little town reckoned wealth), and we can infer from this that he was respected.

His trade and his father's must have debarred him from any equality with the Warwickshire Squires ; but he seems to have lived with the men of the highest rank in Stratford-on-Avon, and we can be sure that in those days (as in these) such men, who were shopkeepers in a prosperous way, did not consort with their less fortunate neighbours. But he may have been eccentric in this. He may have grown tired of their talk and dignity sometimes and found it pleasant to sit on a bench in front of an Inn in some woodland village, when he needed repose, and hear the slow wisdom of the neighbouring Rustics (what a relief after Ben Jonson's violent scholarship !), and he may even have drunk some of the honest Ale of those days in their delightful society. Such an outrage against the rigid conventions of an English market-town would explain the tales of drunken exploits with the rustical topers, if they were current before they were recorded in London in 1762. Stratford seems to have been as given to gossip as such places commonly are, for in 1613 his daughter Susanna brought an action for slander against one of her neighbours. While it is true that there is no smoke without fire, it is also true that a little fire may cause a great smoke when all the substance is rubbish. Apart from this eccentricity, which cannot be proved, we have no reason to doubt that he lived in the dignity which he always desired.

It may be that he turned more to books, such as the younger Seneca's Philosophical Works, in these days because there was so little to do when he was not writing, and that he found a natural pleasure in the society of his wife and his children and after February, 1607–1608, of his grandchild, Elizabeth.

If he resembled Jaques more than Mercutio when he began to be elderly, or if the Ely House Portrait is genuine, he would have found the ancient tranquillity of Stratford delightful and would have haunted the old Woodland of

Arden, seeking quietness there instead of imagining adventures in it, saying with Surrey,

> And when I saw the World so pleasant all about,
> Lord! to myself how glad I was that I had gotten out.

Warwickshire must have been pleasant to an exile returning, who had always remembered the dusk of the woody lanes by his home and the light on the many orchards in Spring and the scent of the bean-fields when the Summer was there. We can be sure that he could have said in these years with Abraham Cowley:

> Ah! wretched and most solitary he
> Who loves not his own company,

for he could not have lived in his Plays unless he had been often alone, and the talk of his neighbours would have been wasted on him when (though they did not see any change) he was Cleopatra, exclaiming,

> I am again for Cydnus
> To meet Mark Antony.

If he had no intimate friends this may have been partly due to the fact that his imagination provided him with greater companions. In that case his loss was our gain, and so was his ill-health, if indeed he suffered from it, because it made him live in his dreams, and so was the ill-luck which condemned him to the trade of a mountebank. It may be that in the end he owed most to the things which must have seemed disadvantages. Because his education was scant his mind was not moulded by other men in his boyhood and his eyes were not dimmed and he did not learn to look on the World through the spectacles of the dead. Because he was debarred from other ambitions he was led to become his Country's proudest claim to remembrance, though this must have been hidden from him when he made himself a motley in London or in the Suburbs, or rode into country towns, heralded by trumpets and drums, to sue to their proud Mayors for permission to show Plays in the Town-halls. If he believed himself entitled by birth to a more dignified life, this was fortunate also, though it must have embittered his daily

paths, for it helped him to live loftily, disdaining the Mob, without affectation, in the World of his Plays, and to speak greatly when he was illustrious there.

He was fortunate in other things, too. He began to write for the Stage when Lyly's and Peele's delightful Comedies had opened one path for him and Marlowe and Kyd had taught him how to write Tragedies, and in times when the Drama was still the literature of the illiterate, thrilling with England's national life. He was the last writer in touch with Chaucer and dealing, as Chaucer did, mainly with tales of an immemorial antiquity; and his was the last voice of the Strolling Players of England. He was fortunate, too, in growing to manhood at England's proudest time and in watching the coloured and vivid life of those days. England was still musical then—even the Rustics had their part-songs and Madrigals, and Peele could introduce Harvest-men in his *Old Wives' Tale*, singing,

> All ye, that lovely lovers be,
> Pray you for me,
> Lo, here we come a sowing, a sowing, a sowing,
> And sow sweet fruits of love.

But the musical and mirth-loving England which Chaucer had known was passing away when Shakespeare turned to his Tragedies in the beginning of a different time. And it may be that in his last years at Stratford he had the more need to take refuge in the World of his Plays because, though his own lot was more pleasant, England was passing from the pride he had known to shame and calamity.

In those days (as in these) many Englishmen were apt to be neutral in Religious affairs or to be reticent about their beliefs. It may be that this national reticence is enough to explain why we cannot be sure whether he professed any Religion. It was then very common because there were many who had no wish to be martyrs. We cannot guess his Creed by debating whether his father was a Catholic Recusant or by concluding that his mother remained a Catholic because she was an Arden, for he would have decided such a thing for himself. Neither can we be guided by the fact that

his baptism was registered in Holy Trinity Church or by the fact that he was buried in it, for these things could have happened in any case.

The Catholics were accustomed to register baptisms in the neighbouring Churches because it was compelled by the Law and they had no other Register. And if no Priest could be had in days when Priests were few and in hiding, Baptism there was valid to them. They buried their dead in the old Churches or Cemeteries (which were still consecrated ground in their eyes), because they had no others. Indeed, after 1610 they were liable to a fine if they buried their dead anywhere else. No Catholic would have been reluctant to choose a grave in Holy Trinity Church at the foot of the Altar where the Mass had been said for hundreds of years.

Shakespeare had a right to a grave in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church because in 1605 he bought a share in the leasehold of the tithes. It is probable that this place was renowned for a particular holiness, for it was the custom to bury the dead there for a time and then remove their bones to a Charnel-house, and this seems to have been only done when a church had some unusual privilege, as when it was believed that some of the earth in it had been brought from Jerusalem. This custom may explain why he protected his last rest with those Verses,

> Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
> To dig the dust enclosed here:
> Blest be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.

And it may be that the curse had more effect than he wished when (according to Dowdall) it prevented the burial of his widow and his two daughters with him, for the depth of the grave, seventeen feet, suggests that room was left for them there.

If we knew nothing about his private affairs it would be easy to infer from his Plays that he began as a Catholic. He wrote in them not merely with reverence for Friars and Nuns in a time when they were banned by the Law, but also with an intimate knowledge of the Catholic Church, which can only be recognised by students who share it. Some of his

Catholic phrases have been misinterpreted, as, for instance, when Schmidt in his *Shakespeare Lexicon* said that Julia's words in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, "I see you have a month's mind to them," referred to a woman's longing for a particular food. The "month's mind" was merely the name first used for the month of remembrance during which daily Masses were offered for the souls of the dead, and now applied to the Mass said for them a month after death. Because the phrase meant a short remembrance it came to mean a passing affection, as when (according to the State Papers) John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton in 1613: "There is whispered that Count Henry of Nassau hath a month's mind for my lord of Northumberland's daughter."

Even when Shakespeare has been commonly taken as showing ignorance of Catholic ways he was correct, as when he wrote of Evening Mass in Verona, for Mass was sometimes said in the evening (as is recorded in Martene's *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus*, printed in 1699), though this custom had been disapproved by Pope Pius the Fifth, who died in 1572.

This knowledge and attitude are all the more notable because they are not seen in the writings of other men who were Catholics during part of their lives, such as Lodge and Donne and Ben Jonson. This knowledge may be partly explained by the fact that his mind dwelt in the Past. Though he mirrored his times he never set his stories in them, unless we can take *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (in spite of its use of Falstaff's name) and the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* as intended to belong to his day. If nearly all his Plays sprang from the Traditional Stage they were rooted in the Catholic times.

Froude wrote in his *History of England*: "Shakespeare's Plays were as much the offspring of the long generations who had pioneered his road for him as the discoveries of Newton were the offspring of those of Copernicus." And Carlyle wrote in his *Lectures on Heroes*: "In some sense it may be said that this glorious Elizabethan Era with its Shakespeare, as the outcome and flowerage of all which had preceded it, is itself attributable to the Catholicism of the Middle Ages. The Christian Faith, which was the theme of Dante's song,

had produced the Practical Age which Shakespeare was to sing. For Religion then, as it now and always is, was the soul of Practice, the primary vital fact in men's life. And remark here, as rather curious, that Middle Age Catholicism was abolished, so far as Acts of Parliament could abolish it, before Shakespeare, the noblest product of it, made his appearance."

It was easy then to dwell in the Past, since London was little changed and Stratford was less. London Bridge was still garnished with grinning heads, pecked by the crows, prisoners still went to the Tower, and the gabled houses stooping above the cobbled streets were the same; while in Stratford-on-Avon the people lived mainly as their fathers had done for hundreds of years, spreading rushes on the floors of their rooms and using no forks (according to Coryat) and disliking all changes and very little affected by the invention of printed books, which few ever opened. Thirty years before Shakespeare was born the Pilgrims were still riding to Canterbury as they had done in Chaucer's Catholic days. So he could have learnt all about the Catholic customs in his boyhood at Stratford without adopting that Creed.

It is probable that Stratford, like many other country places, remained Catholic for several years after Queen Elizabeth ceased to profess that Religion in 1558. The Vestments kept in Holy Trinity Church were not destroyed till 1571; John Brethgirdle, who succeeded a Marian Priest as Vicar in 1560, had no licence to preach and was unmarried, and after his death in 1565 there seems to have been no Vicar till 1569. And Simon Hunt, who was the master at the Grammar-School from 1571 to 1577, became a Jesuit in 1578. Sir Sidney Lee thinks that Shakespeare "probably made his entry in 1571," and probably left the Grammar-School in 1577, when he was thirteen. If this is right, Shakespeare was taught only by Hunt.

Though we have no trace that he was named in any Recusant List this can prove nothing, for a great many Catholics escaped or avoided that unpleasant distinction. Ben Jonson, for instance, though he professed the Catholic Creed so publicly that he appointed himself to represent the rest of the Catholics when he denounced the Gunpowder Plot in

Westminster Hall in 1605, does not seem to have figured in a Recusant List or to have been troubled in any way except when the Wicked Earl of Northampton (who died a Catholic) threatened to prosecute him for Popery in revenge for a thrashing administered to one of his servants.

We know that Shakespeare's two daughters had Biblical names which were not often used in Catholic families, and that both married men who seem to have been inclined to be Puritans. Susanna, the elder, married John Hall, a physician, who if he was a Puritan was a tolerant one, for he had many Catholic patients; and Judith married Thomas Quiney without a licence in Lent, and was excommunicated for this soon after Shakespeare's death. Still, his daughters' probable Creed cannot prove Shakespeare's since, for instance, the third Earl of Southampton brought his sons up as Protestants though he did not become one till 1609. But it may show that if he was a Catholic at all he was tepid, like the Earl of Southampton.

When his daughter Susanna died in 1643 somebody wrote in her epitaph, which is still to be seen in Holy Trinity Church,

> Witty above her sex, but that's not all,
> Wise to Salvation, was good Mistress Hall:
> Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
> Wholly of him with whom she's now in bliss.

This seems to assert that Shakespeare had not been wise to Salvation, and it probably means that he had not professed his son-in-law's Creed. This may mean that he stood apart from all the Religions or that the Vicar of Sapperton was right when he recorded of him in a note written before 1708, that "he died a Papist." It does not seem probable that the Vicar of Sapperton would have asserted this unless he believed it; but we do not know what evidence would have satisfied him. Even if this statement was true it would not prove that Shakespeare lived as a Catholic, since in those days many people (including some, such as Penelope Devereux and the Earl of Northampton, who were never remarkably religious) became Catholics at the end, when the risk of persecution was over.

If his daughters both married men who were inclined to

be Puritans, we can infer that he was not hostile to the Puritan Creed, and this seems borne out by the fact that a preacher was entertained at his house in 1614. Since the Corporation of Stratford was mainly Puritan then, this preacher was probably a Puritan one.

Sir Sidney Lee writes, " Shakespeare's references to Puritans in the Plays of his middle and later life are so uniformly discourteous that they must be judged to reflect his personal feelings " ; but this is a mistake. In the fourth Act of *The Winter's Tale* the Clown says that the shearers are " Three-man song-men all, and very good ones ; but they are most of them means and bases ; but one Puritan amongst them and he sings psalms to a hornpipe." In the first Act of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Mrs. Quickly says of John Rugby, " An honest, willing, kind fellow, as ever servant shall come in house withal, and I warrant you no tell-tale nor no breed-bate ; his worst fault is that he is given to prayer ; he is something peevish that way : but nobody but has his fault ; but let that pass." In the first Act of *All's Well that Ends Well* the Clown says, " If men could be contented to be what they are, there were no fear in marriage ; for young Charbon the Puritan and old Poysam the Papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in Religion, their heads are both one." And in the second Act of *Twelfth Night* Maria says of Malvolio, " Marry, Sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan " ; Sir Andrew Aguecheek says, " Oh, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog " ; Sir Toby Belch says, " What, for being a Puritan ? Thy exquisite reason, dear Knight " ; and Sir Andrew replies, " I have no exquisite reason for it ; but I have reason good enough " ; and Maria rejoins, " The devil the Puritan that he is, or anything constantly, but a time-pleaser."

The details about John Rugby suggest that he was probably drawn from some one at Stratford for a local performance since they have no effect in the Play, and there is nothing to show that he was a Puritan ; John Marston, for instance, called the Catholics " Peevish Papists." The three allusions to Puritans are put in the mouths of two Clowns and an idiot. Even Sir Andrew cannot furnish a reason, and he says later, " It must be with valour, for Policy I hate : I had as lief be a Brownist as a Politician."

The Brownists were Separatist Puritans called after Robert Browne, who was imprisoned in England in 1581 and 1584 and in Scotland in 1583 and excommunicated in 1586 but then submitted and became Rector of Achurch in 1591. The Politicians were the time-pleasers who were indifferent in Religious affairs. Their name was borrowed from France (where it was first used about 1568, and applied to the men who were neither Huguenots nor opposed to them), and they were described by Thomas Stapleton in his *Sermo Contra Politicos* as " polite and civil, elegant and gentleman-like, prudent and wise, turning Religion into Policy and making a mock at zeal." Shakespeare may have been thinking of them when in the fourth Act of *King Lear* he made the King say,

> Get thee glass eyes,
> And like a scurvy politician, seem
> To see the thing thou dost not.

Elsewhere in his Plays, as when in the *First Part of King Henry the Fourth* he made Hotspur say,

> Never did bare and rotten policy
> Colour her working with such deadly wounds,

and in the first Act of *Troilus and Cressida* he made Ulysses say,

> They tax our policy and call it cowardice,

Policy meant crafty discretion. If it was safe to deduce his private opinions from the talk of his Characters we could conclude that he liked the old zeal of the Catholics and the young zeal of the Puritans, who suffered with them, better than the time-serving indifference of the wise Politicians. In those days the Catholic and the Puritan martyrs rivalled one another in courage and the devout men of those Creeds had a great deal in common ; for instance, no Puritan surpassed the austerity of the Monks of the Charter-House. The Penal Laws which harried them both were mainly the work of Politicians, such as Lord Burghley, who had professed three Creeds, King Henry the Eighth's and King Edward the Sixth's and Queen Mary's (with a particular

zeal because he was terrified) before he decided to establish a Compromise.

If, as I think, the later Tragedies show that Shakespeare was then attracted by the Stoic Philosophy (which may be why Ben Jonson's Crispinus proclaimed that he was a Stoic), this would have brought him in touch with the Catholic and Protestant Puritans. But there is no sign of this mood in the Poems written by him when he was young. Susanna Hall's Epitaph and the apparent note of doubt in his Tragedies are the sole signs that he was not a Catholic first and a Puritan afterwards, for Davies' tradition only dealt with his death-bed.

There were many such changes then. The Recusant Lists of 1592 (which included some Puritans) prove that there were prominent Catholics in Warwickshire then, but do not give us the number. All the Lists of this kind omit many who were certainly Catholic : for instance, the *English Protestant's Plea* stated that none of the leaders of the Gunpowder Plot had ever been included in them. We know that in 1596 Worcestershire was more notably Catholic and the Puritans were increasing in Warwickshire. In that year Thomas Bilson, who was Bishop of Worcester then, wrote to Sir Robert Cecil : "I have viewed the state of Worcester Diocese, and find it, as may somewhat appear by the particulars here enclosed, of the quantity as dangerous as any place that I know. In that small circuit there are nine score Recusants of note, besides retainers, wanderers and secret lurkers dispersed in forty several parishes, and six score and ten households. . . . Besides, Warwick and the parts thereabout are freighted with a number of men precisely conceited against Her Majesty's Government Ecclesiastical." The Catholics had been increasing in Worcestershire because Father Edward Oldcorne (who was executed in 1605 and was called by them the Apostle of Worcestershire) had been living at Hindlip near Worcester since 1588 ; and their numbers had grown in Warwickshire between 1588 and 1592 because Father Henry Garnet had been hidden there then. In 1605 Warwickshire was a Catholic stronghold, and was a centre of the Gunpowder Plot for that reason and because it was near Catholic Wales. Father John

Gerard said that Sir Everard Digby had retired into Warwickshire "as into a place of most safety." And when Shakespeare died Warwickshire was notoriously Puritan. It may be that the independence which made the people there cling to the old Creed or return to it made them prefer Puritanism after the tragedy of the Gunpowder Plot in the same way as the Welsh remained Catholic for a long time and turned to Dissent.

In those days the bigotry which afterwards sundered Englishmen had not become prevalent. For instance, about 1618 John Donne, who was then one of the King's Chaplains though he had begun as a Catholic, wrote to Sir Toby Mathew, who was one of the sons of a Welsh Archbishop of York but had become a Catholic when he was aged thirty: "That we differ in our ways, I hope we pardon one another. Men go to China both by the Straits and by the Cape. I never misinterpreted your way, nor suffered it to be so, wheresoever I found it in discourse. . . . This letter doth therefore only ask your safe-conduct for these others of mine, which are to follow, as the most constant testimonies of my love." And Toby Mathew remained Francis Bacon's dearest friend and companion, his "alter ego," after his change. Neither did his change keep him from being Strafford's intimate friend, nor did it make him a bigot, for in the Preface to his *Collection of Letters*, edited by Donne's son in 1660, he wrote: "There are not to be seen in the whole World either better Catholics or better Protestants than in England."

Shakespeare may have thought with John Donne that men go to China both by the Straits and by the Cape, or he may not have been concerned with such things because he lived in his dreams till (if Davies was right) he called for a hidden Priest on his death-bed. In either case he could have lived amicably with Puritan neighbours. If he was ever a Puritan or inclined to be one and yet ended a Catholic he was imitated in this by John Milton, according to Milton's brother Sir Christopher, whose word has been doubted by Mr. Mark Pattison and others because he made the same change though this does not seem a good reason for refusing to trust a statement made by a Judge. If he was a Catholic in the troubled days after the Gunpowder Plot, these would

have given him reasons for keeping his belief to himself, and this may account for his later hesitation or reticence. But there is no proof that he ever shared the Religion of Montaigne and Cervantes.

If he was ever a Catholic, this would explain, for instance, what caused the marriage-bond of 1582 (if it is genuine and connected with him) and how he came in touch with the young Earl of Southampton, and why he was godfather to one of Ben Jonson's children in Jonson's Catholic days, and why he incurred blame for his silence when other Poets lamented Queen Elizabeth, as from Chettle, who wrote in his *England's Mourning Garment* in 1603,

> Shepherd, remember our Elizabeth
> And mourn her Rape done by our Tarquin, Death,

and why he wrote in one of his *Sonnets*,

> My body being dead,
> The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,

for only Catholics and Rebels could see a chance of the executioner's knife, the penalty of Treason, and why he took the Catholic view of Oldcastle, and why three Acts of *King Henry the Eighth* were written from the Catholic standpoint, and why he wrote the last lines of the Epilogue to *The Tempest*, which may refer to the Catholic doctrine of Indulgences, and if they mean anything must be a plea for prayers after Death,—

> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so, that it assaults
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
> As you from crimes would pardoned be,
> Let your indulgence set me free.

Also this would help to explain his darker mood in the times after the Gunpowder Plot when so many Catholics abandoned their Creed, some in shame, some in despair, as is recorded for instance in a private report sent to Rome in 1614 by Father Richard Blount, who was the Superior of the Jesuits then, "I suppose you are informed of our

occurrents here: the state of Catholics most miserable: many fall away; those that stand ruined in their temporalities."

He had other reasons for darkness at the end of his life if he cared anything at all about England. Year by year all the prospects of his Country were darkened. In 1614, one of the years in which he visited London, the Addled Parliament gave the signal for the contest which caused the Great Civil War and in the next year, the last he was to finish, Somerset and his wife were arrested for the murder of Overbury. It may be that he could have written with Drayton,

> I find this age of ours marked with this fate
> That honest men are still precipitate
> Under base villains. . . .
> To tell my Country's shame I not delight,
> But do bemoan it I am no Democrite.

There were other things which may have prevented his finding an unusual happiness at the close of his days. Life had been dear and it was passing away, and he was about to leave his wife and his children. Cervantes died on the same date as he did, the twenty-third of April, 1616 (though not on the same day since England kept the old style), and wrote from his death-bed to the Conde de Lemos: "Ayer me dieron la Extrema Uncion, y hoy escribo esta: el tiempo es breve, las ansias crecen, las esperanzas menguan, y con todo esto llevo la vida sobre el deseo que tengo de vivir." And it may be that Shakespeare found no greater cause to be glad in those April days when he knew that never again would he watch the Spring come to the winding shores of the Avon.

Besides, the work to which he had given his life seemed to be fruitless, for much of it had not even been printed, and in these altered times the Stage was degraded and the Puritans, who were rising to power, hoped to destroy it. Even in Stratford the Corporation which met in the Guildhall close to his house declared that Plays were unlawful and tried to discourage Players from visiting their respectable town in February, 1611–1612. In the year of his death a

neighbouring town, Henley in Arden, disobeyed the King's licence by forbidding the Players to perform in its Town-hall. If Shakespeare was honoured in his home when he died, it was in spite of the fact that he had been a writer of Plays. It is improbable that he ever imagined what renown he had earned or that he would have valued it much, for what is the use of laurels when one is dead? And if the Droeshout Engraving resembles him he looked on the World pallidly without consolation.

When Heminge and Condell dedicated the Folio of 1623 to their official patron, the third Earl of Pembroke, who was then the Lord Chamberlain, and to his brother, the first Earl of Montgomery (of whom Clarendon stated, "He pretended to no other qualifications than to understand Horses and Dogs very well") they wrote: "When we value the places your Highnesses sustain we cannot but know their dignity greater than to descend to the reading of these trifles; and while we have named them trifles we have deprived ourselves of the defence of our Dedication." We have no reason to doubt that this expressed their opinion of the Plays in the Folio.

Except Francis Meres' tribute in *Palladis Tamia*, which meant little for he was lavish in praise, we have no record that anyone of any importance took Shakespeare's Tragedies seriously while he was alive. And apart from the Laudatory Verses prefixed to the Folio of 1623 or printed in John Benson's edition of the Poems of 1640, which meant little because they were usual, we have no record that anyone who knew him imagined that they were more than entertainments adapted to the taste of the Pit, "the vulgar's element" as Scoloker called them. It is probable that Beaumont referred to them when he wrote to Ben Jonson,

> If thou hadst itched after the wild applause
> Of common people, and hadst made thy laws
> In writing such as catcht at present voice,
> I should commend the thing, but not thy choice.

Coleridge wrote, "Beaumont and Fletcher sneer at Shakespeare with a spite far more malignant than Jonson."

John Webster in his Address to the Reader prefixed to the *White Divel*, printed in 1612, named Shakespeare after Chapman and Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher and merely praised "the right happy and copious industry of M. Shakespeare, M. Dekker and M. Heywood." Camden said nothing of him in his *Britannia*, and in his *Remains concerning Britain* mentioned him at the end of a list of ten Authors. John Ford never praised him, even when he tried to revive the Chronicle Histories in his *Perkin Warbeck*, printed in 1634, and the Prologue to that Play seems to blame Shakespeare's way in such Histories as *King Henry the Fourth* when it says,

> nor is here
> Unnecessary mirth forced to endear
> A multitude.

John Davies, when he wanted to praise him, called him "our English Terence." Even Milton, though he paid him a tribute in a Sonnet in 1630, wrote two years later in *L'Allegro*,

> Then to the well-trod Stage anon,
> If Jonson's learned Sock be on,
> Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
> Warble his native woodnotes wild.

Since the scantness of Drayton's praise and the arrogance of Ben Jonson's opinion may be partly explained by quarrels with Shakespeare, these other verdicts deserve greater attention and they help to explain why Heminge and Condell called the Plays trifles.

We have no means of knowing whether Shakespeare agreed with them. We might infer that he did if we could conclude that he never thought of printing his Plays, for this might show that he thought little of them or that he left their publication to chance and could have said with Macbeth,

> If Chance will have me King, why, Chance may crown me
> Without my stir.

The odds are that he did not think that there was any question of Kingship. He alone knew how far the Plays he had written were inferior to the Plays he had planned. He saw how the