THE YOUTH OF SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM HENTY

1882

PHOTOGRAPHED BY C.W SMARTT

The autotype taken by Mr. C. W. Smartt of Leamington and Stratford-on-Avon is a reduced facsimile of the original portrait of Shakespeare now in his birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon. The photographer could not obtain permission to remove the glass from the picture; and this circumstance, coupled with the fact that the photograph was taken under exceptionally unfavourable conditions as to light and position, has produced a result not quite so perfect as would otherwise have been the case.

SHAKESPEARE

WITH SOME NOTES

ON HIS

EARLY BIOGRAPHY

AND AN

IDENTIFICATION OF THE CHARACTERS OF
WILLIAM FENTON AND ANN PAGE

WITH

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND ANNE HATHAWAY

BY

WILLIAM HENTY

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MEMOIR.

MR. WILLIAM HENTY, the author of the following ingenious speculations on the early personal career of Shakespeare, was one of a family that will ever be memorable in the history of Australian colonization. Half a century ago three of his brothers, under direction of their father, Thomas Henty, quitted a valuable homestead at Tarring, in Sussex, for the settlement of Swan River, in Western Australia. Allured by the splendid grant of well-nigh 80,000 acres of land, they took with them, in patriarchal fashion, oxen and sheep, "pure merinos from the flocks of George III.; blood horses from Lord Egremont's stud; dogs and poultry of the purest breed," accompanied by serving men, with implements of agriculture of various kinds and value. The venture was a bold one, but was not fortunate. As is well known the Swan River Settlement proved a failure. Mr. Henty's cattle died, and finding themselves losers of some ten thousand pounds, his sons quitted the unlucky region and migrated to Launceston, in Van Diemen's Land. There they were joined by their father from

England. The story of three of the sons of Thomas Henty—namely, of Stephen, Edward, and John; of their explorations and discoveries in the Gambier country, is told in Labillière's *Early History of Victoria*, where it is recorded that Stephen Henty was the first white man known to have stood on the shore of the Blue Lake. It was Edward who, with great propriety, was chosen in 1869 as the earliest settler in the colony then living, to present an address to the Duke of Edinburgh, on his first landing at Melbourne. The plough with which Edward turned the first sod at Portland, Victoria, in 1834, is preserved in Melbourne, as an historical implement and valuable relic. The portrait of this gentleman is in the possession of the Colonial Institute of London.

Mr. William Henty did not follow his relatives till seven years after their departure for Australia. He sailed in August, 1836, in the ship which had on board the celebrated Sir John Franklin, going out as Governor of Van Diemen's Land. A friendship was then formed between the two gentlemen which proved to be of lifelong duration. In a letter dated Government House, Van Diemen's Land, December 6, 1842, introducing Mr. Henty to Sir George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales, Franklin writes :—"Mr. W. Henty having been a fellow passenger of mine from England by the *Fairlie*, I had the opportunity of forming a knowledge of him, and of entertaining a

regard for his character, which I have ever since preserved. I know not a more highly respected person than he is." In January, 1837, he reached Launceston, and began to practise his profession as a solicitor, giving his whole attention to it for a period of twenty years. His ability, integrity, and geniality of disposition having acquired for him the esteem and confidence of his fellow citizens, he was, in 1857, when the colony received its new and free constitution, elected Member of the Upper Chamber for Tamar district, and shortly afterwards was appointed Secretary of State for the Colony. For six years he discharged the responsible duties of this office, giving special and characteristic attention to the subject of education. He zealously supported the foundation by the State of Tasmanian scholarships, an endowment of £200 a year tenable for four years, which is bestowed upon the pupil of any school in the colony who may gain the first place in a test examination which takes place every year, he having previously obtained the degree of Associate of Arts. The successful student is thus enabled to pursue his studies in one of the Universities in England.

A glimpse of the Tasmanian politics of the period is to be caught in Mr. Henty's speech to his constituents on his re-election, after accepting office (May 5, 1857). The business of the legislature was greatly in arrear, and retrenchment of the public ex-

penditure was sorely needed. The question of waste lands, of police, and of the electric telegraph, all had to be settled. Especially the predominance in influence of the people of Hobart Town had to be met by the formation of a country party, and by a proposal even to remove the seat of government from Hobart Town to Launceston or Campbell Town. Here was work enough cut out for the new secretary. How he performed his task during his six years of office is written in the annals of the colony. On a question of capital importance to the well-being of the colony, that of transportation of criminals from the mother country, Mr. Henty had taken a prominent position as an anti-transportationist.

On the reconstruction of the Colonial Cabinet in November, 1862, Mr. Henty seized the opportunity of announcing his intention to withdraw from office and from the Council, as he was desirous of revisiting Europe with his family. His farewell address to his constituents, the electors of the district of Tamar, contains allusions to the improvement brought about in the political condition of the colonists by the introduction of free institutions among them, at the outset of his ministerial career. "A thorough knowledge," he says, "of the principles of free government is now infinitely more extended through the community than could have been the case if an Imperial rule and system had con-

tinued among us." Awise adaptation of the principle of local self-government both to the towns and to the country districts had been brought into operation throughout nearly the whole country, Post offices, hospitals, asylums, had been built to meet the public necessities. To use the words of a writer in the Tasmanian press on the occasion of his departure for England, Mr. Henty had "won the highest respect of the public for his honour and integrity of character, and of the house of which he was leader, for the moderation and courtesy he uniformly displayed in conducting the business of the Government, and in dealing with an opposition not always of the most temperate character." In the Legislative Council speeches were made by members of both parties on the occasion of Mr. Henty's farewell, expressing the cordial feelings of respect and kindness entertained for him by all members of the Legislature.

After travelling about Europe and in his native country for three or four years, Mr. Henty, in 1867, made Brighton his permanent home. Here he busied himself in good works, contributing aid to all genuine charities, assisting them by his labours as well as with his purse. His active mind was continually at work on schemes of benevolence and enlightened philanthropy. He testified his interest in matters ecclesiastical by serving for two years as churchwarden in the parish

of Hove. He was an extensive reader, and it was his love and reverence for Shakespeare that made him inwardly protest against the charges of wild dissoluteness brought against the poet. He felt convinced, on the contrary, that influences of an elevating nature must have surrounded Shakespeare in his youth, and that they helped to form those exalted conceptions of human character, and especially of womanly character, which dignify the plays of our great dramatist. Hence the inquiries made at Stratford and elsewhere, which resulted in the following essays—essays that would no doubt have been more fully developed and illustrated had the writer's life been a little longer spared. Mr. Henty died on Monday, July 11th, 1881, at his house in West Brighton, in his 73rd year. He left an only child, Mary, born in Tasmania, who is married to the Rev. Edgar Summers, Head Master of Abingdon School, Berks.

ROB. HARRISON.

LONDON LIBRARY,

March 25, 1882.

Shakespeare,

WITH SOME NOTES ON HIS EARLY BIOGRAPHY.

WHILST so much attention of late has been directed to detect indications of real characters in Shakespeare's works, especially all allusions to his own personal experiences, and, amongst others, of references to his own son, I believe there is a much larger field than has been yet traced for such discoveries. It seems strange how those I am about to indicate have been overlooked, so plain as they appear, and of such direct bearing and importance in the elucidation of Shakespeare's early career, and so of his whole life and character.

Dyce, who ought to have been the guardian of his fame, gives a contemptuous summary of his career, speaks in discourteous terms of his wife, and shows no love for his family. Had he looked back into the records of his mother's family in the Heralds' Office, he would have found undoubted testimonials of a family of worship in the stock from which Shakespeare sprung.

Students of Shakespeare's life are surrounded by so many shapeless rumours that they find it difficult to conceive anything

like a consistent biography. When they hear of his mixing with the shopkeeping class of Stratford, of his being even a leader amongst the low classes there, their interest is not raised above the level of tradesmen and their surroundings. Even Rowe, who tried to gain him a position by styling his father a woolbroker, rather lowered it than otherwise by dwelling so much upon that good man's debts and short payments. Shakespeare's father must have been a man immersed in commerce, maintaining a high position among the councillors and officials of the town. Amongst these we find no notice of Shakespeare. His pursuits lay amongst the students and schoolfellows of the College and the companions which his mother, and her well-born relations, brought around him. He would be engaged with the delightful farm pursuits which her own estate found for him, and he would be a sportsman on his own ground, with the freedom of a proprietor. Such a life would separate him from the more vulgar associations of the town. Marrying at eighteen, the career of himself and his wife, hitherto misunderstood, would be opened altogether to new and higher influences, the moment his marriage placed him in a new world. Books and his associates in college would also break open, as it were, the great storehouse of his original mind.

Shakespeare's "Deer Adventure."

THAT Shakespeare was a leader in the town of Stratford during his youth in all the great sports and festivities we can readily believe. But the biographers, especially Oldys and Rowe, who came so late as 1709 into the field, found his name attached by report to the old squabble and riots that had taken place between the Stratford people and the Lucys. It was, therefore, not unnatural that when a dispute occurred about a stray deer which Shakespeare had shot on the adjoining estate of Fulbrooke (though he did not succeed in recovering his game), the event was, from these mixed reports, converted into a charge of stealing deer out of Sir Thomas Lucy's Park of Charlcote. Then it was magnified into an alleged habit or frequent practice of deer stealing, for which he was stated to have been prosecuted by that knight, and so severely that he was obliged to leave his family and take shelter in London.

Happily the facts, as now explained, enable us to eliminate tolerably well the whole of the falsehood from these worse than exaggerations.

Before Shakespeare's birth the Stratford

people had resorted to the estate of Fulbrooke as a sort of "no man's land," which had been sequestered to the Queen on forfeiture by Sir Thomas Englefield on the Queen's accession in 1558.

In the year 1564, on a document happily traced by Mr. Halliwell Phillipps in the State Paper Office, we find it recorded that thirty-five Stratford people had been charged by Thomas "Lucy, *Esquier*," for a riot in hunting, &c.; but as Shakespeare was only born in that year his name could not appear. The year is proved by the fact that Lucy was an *Esquier*, therefore not then knighted, an event which took place in 1565.

Here then is proof of an astounding exaggeration, from lapse of time, which requires to be duly analyzed. First as to the estate, the *locus in quo*, it was not Charlcote Park, for it cannot be proved that Shakespeare ever even visited the Park.

The incident occurred on the estate of Fulbrooke, adjoining Charlcote, where deer from thence might naturally escape and take refuge, there being to this day many outlying deer in the neighbourhood as in other parts of England.

Fulbrooke was of course a neglected place from having been in the hands of the Crown for nearly thirty years. It was probably all the more beautiful. At a much earlier time, when it had been also under forfeiture, it was, says Dugdale, the haunt of idle vagabonds, robbers, and murderers. It was, of course, open to passing visitors, and one may imagine it a famous resort for poachers, wood-stealers, and sportsmen, in search of hawks' nests, rabbits, and stray fawns, or even deer.

The number of wandering persons about England, called "broken men," at this time was remarkable, many of them, it is stated, former recipients at the abbeys and monasteries, who had not then become part of the settled population. So much trouble did they give, that on one occasion the magistrates of Somersetshire captured a gang of 100 at a stroke, and hanged fifty on the spot, and the remainder at the next assizes. (See Green's *England*, vol. ii. p. 384.)

Shakespeare himself confirms the general account:

> The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary,
> And with this horrible object, from low farms
> * * * * * * * *
> Enforce their charity.
>
> *King Lear*, act ii. sc. 3.

This trouble was only finally subdued by the masterly and efficient machinery of Elizabeth's Poor-law (43 Elizabeth). Unhappily Ireland was left without such a law, and has been a sufferer ever since.

The estate of Fulbrooke was given to Sir Francis Englefield in 4 & 5 Philip and Mary, but next year, on the accession of Elizabeth, was sequestered by her on his refusing to swear allegiance. It was not regranted, after being seized, till 1607, Elizabeth probably having hopes that Englefield would acknowledge her as Queen. Instead of doing this, he consorted and plotted with recusants both in Belgium and in Spain. In 1576, from some attempts apparently to obtain authority over his property, he was

formally attainted and convicted of high treason. And in 1592 the verdict was confirmed by an Act of Parliament.

It seems possible that this conviction for treason and attainder gave to Shakespeare the feeling that, in the absence of authority expressly deputed by the Crown, the estate was more than ever free for sport to all comers. It appears that Lucy assumed charge or rangership over the estate, but no State authority for his doing so can be found. It was clearly his interest to have some such charge, if only for protecting his own stray deer. He might have done this without authority, by virtue merely of his magisterial office, and as one of the quorum, for the powers of a justice were then very great.

The property did not come into the Lucy family till it was purchased by the grandson, in the year 1615. Lucy, in addition to taking possession, had erected a hut, which he called a lodge. I speak from testimony on the spot, in saying it was a very slender affair. It was known as "Daisy Hill," and was used as a residence for his keeper. It has been recently rebuilt and converted into a handsome farm-house.

This estate, then a most beautiful spot of wood, and hill, and dale, was the attraction for such lovers of Nature as Shakespeare, "a desert place" (meaning deserted), as he styled it. Being part of the great Ardennes Forest, it strongly bears out our belief in the rumour which assigns this as the site of the play, *As You Like It.*

That great forest extended so far that towns for a distance of many miles took their names from being included within its pre-

cincts, such as "Henley in Arden," "Hampton in Arden," "Weston in Arden," &c. Perhaps a proud feeling, that his own mother's early home was also within its borders, would give significance to the expression put by him into the mouth of Touchstone, "Now am I in Arden."

Here then, was the inducement for him, as a true lover of sport, to ride through the covert alone, or with friends, and, having found a deer, what should prevent him from exercising his right of killing it with his crossbow? No longer in a park, it was no longer known to the law nor to be styled game, but open to any one to make it a prize who could secure it. A deer in a legal, that is, in a properly enclosed, park was protected by Act of Parliament, but, escaped from its enclosure, it returned to its condition of "fera natura," a fact that no doubt Shakespeare and all sporting friends knew quite well.

Then all we have to account for is the assault on the lodge with which Shakespeare was charged, and which he openly admitted. The keepers, it seems natural to suppose, seized his game and secured it in the lodge. There Shakespeare would come with his friends, and with force try to overcome those in charge to regain his own, as he might think he had a right to do; but in the contest would be overpowered and lose the prize.

It is not necessary to accept the statement, current on the spot to this day, that Shakespeare was not only overpowered but strapped to the bedpost, and yet, as he had the satisfaction of breaking poor Slender's head, there must have been a sharp conflict. (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, i. 1.)

The bedstead is so far a reality that good Mr. Cook, the tenant-farmer, received it from "Daisy Hill," within a short distance of his own residence; he being one of a family of farmers of that name who have occupied farms immediately on the spot for many generations. The bedstead is now converted into a handsome sideboard, and has carved on it the year 1606, a date, as will be seen, at least twenty years later than the incident; but a Stratford antiquary assures me that such a date is no guide, as it was a usual thing for an owner to have the date of the year inscribed on any such furniture when he himself became possessed of it.

As Shakespeare openly admits his part in breaking open the lodge, we are bound to accept the remaining part of the statement, that the offence charged was that of killing only, so that he never got the deer.

Shallow. Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.
Falstaff. . . . . . I have done all this.

But Lucy himself obtained it, as is evidently implied by the conversation between the latter and Page to the effect that the venison of which they were about to partake was a gift from Lucy, and that it was the very deer in question, as he pointedly remarks it had been "ill-killed."

This, then, disposes of any supposed intention on the part of Lucy to arraign Shakespeare for stealing. As to stealing, indeed, the deer was Shakespeare's own property rather than Lucy's, and was doubtless so regarded by him. No doubt the knight fumed and threatened, and as regards the breaking open the lodge, deemed

it a mighty offence against his position and dignity.

The authority of magistrates being so great and despotic, he would doubtless bring forward the words "riot and council," as having been running in his thoughts from the time of the previous disturbance by the Stratford tradesmen twenty odd years before; but Shakespeare's bringing up these terms before the Queen's Court itself shows how slightly, if not contemptuously, he regarded them. As a magistrate, Lucy was a person of much self-importance, a magnate in Stratford town, where his services were often engaged as a justice to dispose of frequently occurring cases. The aldermen eagerly sought his attendance, and, according to the town records (still in existence, from which the following is an extract), rewarded him often for his services, and doubtless others also, by dinners and wine. For instance, "Paid at the Swanne for a quart of sack and a quartern of sugar burned for Sir Thomas Lucie," &c. &c. Sack was always drunk with sugar, and sugar was an expensive article—viz., 16*d.*, equal now to 13*s.* 4*d.* per lb.

Naturally some feeling of disgust would arise in Shakespeare's mind against such a justice, and he may have had him in his eye when he pictured the justice

> In fair round belly with good capon lined,
> With eyes severe, &c.

Shakespeare could well afford to ridicule his talk about the Council and Riots. It should be borne in mind throughout that Shakespeare's play was not an after-production. The Knight was alive, and did not die till 1600, so that Shakespeare's boldness

of assertion was open to criticism. Being performed at Windsor, it is quite within belief that the story of the fat Knight and his deer conflict with Shallow would be carried about the country and become public talk.

Shakespeare could hardly have found any medium of showing up the story and his own adventures equal to the introduction of it in connection with "Fat Jack," whose history and doings everybody connected with the Court probably knew and followed.

Sir Thomas Lucy, dying in 1600, was buried with all pomp on the 7th of August. The illustrious Camden, then Clarencieux King at Arms, whose written account is here followed, came from the Heralds' Office, to uphold the coat of arms at the funeral. Four other gentlemen and heralds carried in the procession the standard, the pennon, the helm, and crest, &c. This was followed by the erection of recumbent statues and effigies, from which we are able now to observe the figures of the Knight and others of his family in the Church at Charlcote.

One other conclusion we must draw from the information now available—viz., that the dispute of Shakespeare with the Lucys arose solely from this one instance, for when Sir Walter Scott visited at Charlcote in 1828, as recorded by him, the then owner (Mr. Lucy) assured him it was not on that estate, but at Fulbrooke, that "*the buck*" was stolen. The vivid impressions still alive at Fulbrooke confirm this, and make one wonder how the squabbles and paper squibs which had been floating around for a whole generation be-

tween the people of Stratford and the Lucy family should have settled upon the name and fame of one individual—that of Shakespeare alone.

Not only does the transaction, as now ascertained, free Shakespeare from participation in previous disputes (it may be for twenty, nay thirty years), and so reduce his share to the limits of one upstanding contest for the deer which he shot and claimed as his own, but it has, by the discovery of the twenty or thirty year old disputes of the Stratford people with the owners of Charlcote, virtually shown that the verses, the satirical odes, and what else they may be termed, would naturally begin their career at the same early period; and that if all those which had their probable origin before Shakespeare was born, and during the following twenty years, should be dismissed from all connection with him, there are no grounds (and certainly no proof whatever) for imputing a connection of any one with his name.

We may therefore hope that in future biographies they will be left out, and his name be freed from all such injurious and worthless associations.

Shakespeare's Autobiography in "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

IT is held by some critics that the first rough sketch of this play was made as early as 1592. If so it seems inconsistent with the report of its being prepared under the direction of Queen Elizabeth, and of its being then finished in a few weeks. May this be reconciled by the supposition that the autobiographical part was prepared at the above early period and then afterwards made use of with the addition as ordered by the Queen and fitted together in its full shape?

The play of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written, it is said, in the year 1599, when the author would be thirty-five years old, seventeen years after his marriage. In this he has introduced more of the colour of Stratford life than in any other play. The beginning of it concerns his own personal biography, as a party in the deer adventure. The locality is evidently Stratford, though disguised as Windsor, with the addition of some of its surroundings. The characters, or at least their names, may be assumed to be all from Stratford. Shallow and his cousin

Slender are at once identified, as real personages, with the events connected with Shakespeare in which they took a part hitherto little understood, but which it is believed will now be made plain.

Dr. Caius (the apothecary, doubtless of Stratford) and Dr. Evans, the Master of the College are readily distinguished. It is evidently intended by Shakespeare that we should find his own early life in this play. Mistress Anne is brought in, and our interest is raised by her beauty, her fortune, and her simplicity of manners. Then Fenton, her lover, narrates his courtship, which is carried through and completed. As all these circumstances exemplify and tally with Shakespeare's character in his own early career, there seemed to be little wanting except some partially concealed key by means of which we were to perceive that William Fenton and sweet Anne Page were designed to be the representatives of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. From that discovery it followed that the plot in which they are made to take part is almost wholly autobiographical. The proofs are both direct and circumstantial. The direct proof is that Shakespeare put palpably his own statement, and I suppose we may call it his defence, into the mouth of Falstaff respecting the deer story. In this he shows no compunction or concealment, in replying to Shallow, but exhibits perfect freedom in style of address consistent as that is with his part in the affair as now fully known, and has already been detailed at length. The introduction of the scene of the lad William, when put under examination by his Stratford schoolmaster, the name of Page

being of course imaginary, points directly to the identification of himself to bring him in *propria persona* before the reader. The episode is beside the action of the play and can have no other object but this.

One main suggestion of the identification of the characters came of course from the identity of the Christian names William and Anne. Then the mention of Anne's fortune, a suggestion which I remembered was made by Theobald, seemed to be an allusion to a special bequest from her grandfather, and the thought arose that that would prove a clue on the chance of finding such a will, but the search has unfortunately not proved successful, as the name of the maternal grandfather cannot be ascertained. The date of such a will, if it exists, would be somewhere after the year 1556, the year of Anne's birth. The next great point was the particularity with which the wart on the eye was dwelt on as indicating some special purpose.

Quickly.—Troth, sir, all is in his hands above: but, notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be swore on a book she loves you—have not your worship a wart above your eye?

Fenton.—Yes, marry, have I; what of that?

Quickly.—Well, thereby hangs a tale,—good faith it is such another Nan; but I detest an honest maid as ever broke bread: We had an hour's talk of that wart. I shall never laugh but in that maid's company. But indeed she is given too much to allicholy and musing. . . .

Fenton.—. . . Hold, there's money for thee—let me have thy voice in my behalf—if thou seest her before me, commend me.

Quickly.—Will I? i' faith, that we will, and I will tell your worship more of the wart the next time we have confidence, and of other wooers.

Resorting, as my best resource, to a photograph of the Chandos portrait by the Stereoscopic Company, I found it led to a disappointment, inasmuch as, though there was a mark on the right eye, it did not indicate sufficiently a wart. On consulting an artist photographer, he decided that this mark on the right eye was a defect of the photograph, resulting from a speck of dirt, or other matter, on the negative. This point would perhaps be hardly worth notice here, except to prevent disappointment and prejudice to others, as the reader might think that a photograph must necessarily be a correct representation of the original.

Having then learnt that the picture itself was in the National Portrait Gallery, I was confirmed on examining it in the opinion given that there was nothing to warrant the projection shown in the photograph on the right eye, but that on the left eye there was a perceptible mark or wart, although from the unfinished work of the painter—a fact first pointed out by Sir Joshua Reynolds—it was not very distinct. I leave this to speak for itself, as many critics will of course be sure to make their observations. It then came to the great correcting test—the portrait in the Stratford Museum (which I had not then seen), which may be regarded as a recent proof from the comparatively short time it has been placed before the world as an authentic work. Its history is most curious. It came from the family of the late Mr. Hunt, the well-known solicitor and antiquary of Stratford, whose ancestors were doubtless contemporaneous with the friends of Shakespeare's family. Mr. Hunt could personally

trace or prove its possession in his ancestor's family for above one hundred years. When brought to light amongst a large collection of old pictures and lumber in Mr. Hunt's house in the year 1860, it was found to have been painted over and evidently disguised at some early period, a circumstance recalling the dark times of Stratford, when plays were absolutely prohibited, and practices of extreme severity against the profession prevailed, during a time in which so many memorials of Shakespeare's life, perhaps his own manuscripts and correspondence, in all probability disappeared. The portrait was cleaned and restored, and has since been in the custody of the Stratford authorities, a most liberal present from Mr. Hunt. It bears every mark of authenticity—its dress the same as that of the monumental bust and the contour of the face resembling it, as if, as I cannot but believe, it was used by Johnson, the sculptor, to help in the preparation of the bust as we now see it. Forbearing further detail, I now ask attention to the great test of its faithfulness—viz., the wart on the eye. It is not a case of accident or probability—it is a coincidence of the most decided character. It could not have been fabricated, and it is reasonable to think that its position could only have been pointed to and enforced on the painter's notice by the poet as a memento to prove the biographical allusions in the play.

Of the identification of Shakespeare and his wife with William Fenton and Anne Page other proofs suggest themselves. The Stratford names Herne and Brome (the latter the assumed name of Ford in the first folio);

Page (he lived in Henley Street), Ford, Dr. Caius, Bardolph, the Grammar School, and Sir Hugh Evans (the master). Fenton's practice also as a versifier, mentioned by mine Host of the Garter, his assertion of righteous, or as we should now say, honourable, intentions towards his bride to repel insinuations, which doubtless had been thrown out by some—the consent of the mother, but not of the father, who had died before their marriage — his asserted gentle manners — the statement put, too, into the mouth of Anne, "gentle master Fenton," all confirm the impression which gathers strength till it becomes irresistible.

It would be hardly right to pass over the mention of this newly-discovered portrait without further reference to its history, which is of a peculiar and romantic character. It has been by the critics both praised and condemned, and been the subject of much surmise as to its origin, its character, and value. The description of it, when first discovered, and put under examination by the picture dealer, Mr. Collins, of Bond Street, in 1860, states that "the face was then covered with hair, having a large beard, and being otherwise disfigured," but Mr. Collins strongly suspected that underneath the surface paint there was another picture. He therefore removed the covering part in the presence of many witnesses, Mr. Hunt himself, the vicar of Stratford and others, and discovered beneath "an admirable portrait of Shakespeare." It was afterwards by request publicly exhibited by Mr. Collins, in London, with the following announcement:—

Portrait of Shakespeare.—"A portrait of

Shakespeare, painted on canvas, three-quarter life-size, which has been in the family of W. O. Hunt, Esq., town clerk of Stratford-upon-Avon, for a century, has recently been put into the hands of Mr. Simon Collins, of Somerset Street, Portman Square, London, who, after removing the dirt, damp, and re-paint, by which it was obscured, has brought to light what he pronounces to be a 'genuine portrait of the immortal bard.'"

The picture bears a remarkable resemblance to the bust in the chancel of Stratford Church, according to the description of it before it was painted white, at the request of Malone, in 1793—viz., the eyes being of a light hazel, and the head and beard auburn; the dress consisted of a scarlet doublet, over which was a loose black gown without sleeves. This dress calls to mind the remark made by Mr. Wheler, in his *History of Stratford-upon-Avon*, of the probability of a picture being in existence from which the monumental bust was taken, which suggestion Mr. Wivell quotes and appears to adopt. This picture came into the hands of its late owner, W. O. Hunt, Esq., through his father from his grandfather, William Hunt, Esq., to whom it probably passed with some other old paintings in the purchase of his house from the Clopton family in 1758. The house had then been uninhabited for several years, after the death of its former owner and occupier, Edward Clopton, Esq. (nephew of Sir Hugh Clopton), which took place in 1753. The following is a description of the house by another hand:—

"A large house somewhat modernized on the outside, but containing within numerous

rooms that not only retain their ancient character, but some in the upper stories filled with what has been supposed to be lumber, untouched for considerably more than a century. This house is the residence of W. O. Hunt, Esq., whose family have possessed it for nearly a century and a half, having originally purchased it from the Cloptons' lineal descendants, some of whom were contemporaneous with Shakespeare."

This writer, however, disputes the authenticity of this portrait—which was one found amongst the supposed lumber above described—and in the vaguest manner "hazards the conjecture" that it was a painting made "in some way or other" for the procession in 1769.

Another critic (whose name I will not mention) adds as follows:—"The picture, as I think, has no merit of any kind, not even that of age. It is a modern daub—possibly a tavern sign—a 'Shakespeare's head,' probably made up for a freak or some purpose connected with the Jubilee." In opposition to these objectors, I will begin by quoting the remarks of a favourable character. In this respect some have exalted and some depreciated its merits as a painting; but its artistic merit or want of merit adds little to the proof of its authenticity, except we adopt the suggestion made by some that it might have been painted by Richard Burbage, Shakespeare's greatest friend, who it is known painted portraits of other actors, one of which is now at Dulwich. One writer observes, that "the artist has succeeded in making the most pleasing portrait of Shakespeare extant." Another says "it is a very

good suggestion of the face of Shakespeare, save for the want of power or indeed its vacuity."

What this critic refers to is probably the steady almost drooping eyelids, but in that respect it might be compared to the Chandos portrait, or rather to the steady fixed gaze in other contemporary portraits now in the National Gallery, such as Raleigh, &c. But beside these criticisms, the testimony of Mr. Collins, the professional picture restorer, should weigh much in its favour, who, on discovering the under painting, exclaimed in the words before mentioned that it was "a genuine portrait of the immortal bard."

The other objections which it is necessary to dispose of are, first—

"That it is a copy made from the bust." I have already mentioned the anticipation of Messrs. Wheler and Wivell, that there would be found another picture which Gerald Johnson would stand in need of, to enable him to complete his bust, made seven years after death.

Presuming, as I do, that he had before him a cast of the poet's face, and, as I have elsewhere mentioned, taken so long after death as almost to amount to disfigurement, the colours of the features, the beard, the hair, and the dress, which he endeavoured to imitate, must still be supplied from another source, and a portrait would be the best means. The scarlet colour of the dress of the portrait was till then without precedent, and Johnson adopted it, but did not surely invent it. If the painter did really make out his picture by taking the bust as his model he must have been a person of no mean talent, not-

withstanding what some of the critics have thought. The mouth, instead of being open as in the bust, is well formed, with a pleasing expression, the eyes are mild and gentle, not, as in the bust, open and staring; and (in the language of another critic), "In the face lies the main evidence. Shakespeare has in the portrait a nose in good harmony with the rest of the face, not short and insignificant as in the bust." The next imaginary objection made is, that it was painted for some performance or figure in the great Jubilee of 1769. The statement of the late Mr. Hunt was that it had been in his family's possession for above a century, which would take back the ownership beyond the Jubilee. Of course the disguised covering of paint must have been done (if these critics are correct) after, and not before, that event, says the critic, for a "freak." But what possible reason could there be for hiding an "admirable portrait of Shakespeare," or an admirable portrait of any one. If acquired by Mr. Hunt in that state it would have been known to him as Shakespeare's portrait, and the name could not well be lost, and yet he stated that his family had so disregarded the subject of the painting that it had been used as a target by the juveniles of the family. Surely, then, we may disregard such futile inventions. I hold, as I have already said, that it was painted from the life. That after the poet's death, and after Gerald Johnson had finished his bust, it was disguised in the manner indicated to avoid remarks on the part of Stratford friends, who were opposed to the drama and its adjuncts. But I think I have added the most striking affirmative

proof of its genuineness in the existence of the wart on the eye, a most happy discovery, which will surely dispose of all adverse criticism.

It is a rather singular incident that, after my paper was written out, I found on looking over an anonymous work styled, *Footsteps of Shakespeare*, a detection of the identity of Fenton and Anne Page with Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. But the writer passes it over briefly, whilst hurrying on to his argument to show by a multitude of proofs that Shakespeare was put apprentice to a doctor. His opinion, therefore, would not be likely to attract attention. He had, of course, not noticed the allusions to the wart in the eye, without the discovery of which I should certainly not have prosecuted my inquiries.

It is a disappointment to myself, as well as to my readers, that I am unable to insert or refer to a photograph of the Stratford painting. The one known as Bedford's, which circulates largely at Stratford, could not well have been correctly taken. It is erroneous in two respects; it omits the wart on the eye, and the folding of the hair is different. I hope he may give us a renewed one. My own difficulties have been great in my efforts to obtain a good photograph; but I need not allude further to them.* I will here summarize the important incidents which the discovery appears to denote and authenticate :—

1st. The prominent position in neighbouring society held by Anne Hathaway and her family.

*An autotype of the portrait is given with this pamphlet.

2nd. Her attractiveness, from her beauty, and her sweet voice and character.

3rd. Her fortune and property, asserted by her father (Page), and confirmed by Anne and Fenton (Shakespeare), with explicitness and candour.

4th. Shakespeare's own high position by his birth ("as I am a gentleman") advanced impliedly as superior to that of Anne.

5th. His gay life and spirits up to his eighteenth year.

6th. His impecuniosity at the time of his courtship ("a man of no having.")

7th. His talents for verse-making.

8th. His righteous suit—*i.e.*, their betrothal and subsequent marriage.

9th. An express consent given by the mother to the engagement.

10th. The happy life of the pair after their marriage.

There may be noticed an argument against the assumption that Shakespeare was lame, implied by some critics, since he is credited here with the accomplishments of "capering" and "dancing."

Youth of Shakespeare.

[The following is a condensation of Mr. Henty's discursive treatise on the still obscure question of Shakespeare's early life. It is the result of much painstaking research, and brings into prominence various interesting points, to wit:—

The distinction of his birth and lineage;

The refined and cultivated influences mid which his youth was passed;

His training and instruction, and his connection with the Grammar School and College;

His honourable marriage into the family of Hathaway, and his married life at Shottery;

His friendship with the Burbages; his departure for London; and the love of home and its associations, which brought him back to Stratford, and led him to the purchase of "New Place."

All this is illustrated and enforced by the theory that the *Merry Wives of Windsor* is a piece of autobiography.—*Editor.*]

The circumstance that most strikes the attention on considering Shakespeare's early life is that almost all ordinary biographers have written of him as the son of a tradesman, brought up in the ranks of tradesmen

or husbandmen. I could not but believe that as on the mother's side he was immediately descended from ancestors of gentle blood, being styled at the Heralds' Office "a family of worship," he was entitled to be, and really was, regarded by those amongst whom he resided as belonging to the ranks of the gentry, and that his mother, being also an heiress, jealously guarded this position and imbued her son with the same feeling.

The biographers, from Aubrey and Rowe downwards, have alluded only to Stratford anecdotes from hints and stories circulating amongst the townsfolk, who would know him but slightly. His large circle of relatives, apparently but little known to Knight, lived not in Stratford, but in the neighbouring parishes, and as they—at least those six on the female side, the sisters of his mother—would offer to him not less than as many homes where the high tone and breeding were probably the same as that of his own mother, his opportunities of an elevated tone of society would be unusually great, giving him means of witnessing in their company that refined and noble character and manners by which he abundantly profited, and which he afterwards exalted and immortalized in his dramas.

His mother was Mary, the seventh daughter of Robert Arden of Wilmcote, in the parish of Aston Cantlowe, about two miles from Stratford. Robert Arden's grandfather was groom of the bedchamber to Henry VII., and his uncle had been squire of the body to that monarch. The history of this family, as it appears in Dugdale, spreads over not less than six

centuries, and its earliest named member had been the possessor of forty-seven manors. There were wealthy cousins of the name in Shakespeare's time in the country around. The chief or head of the house was Edward Arden, then recently High Sheriff of Warwick, who died innocently on the scaffold, falsely condemned as a traitor in 1584, when Shakespeare was twenty years old. He was prosecuted at the instance of the noted Earl of Leicester and his perjured witness, Hall, a Jesuit, owing to information supposed to have been given by Edward Arden to the Queen respecting Leicester's connection with the Countess of Essex.

Robert Arden of Wilmcote was the grandson and a lineal descendant of the Walter Arden who married Eleanor Hampden, daughter of John Hampden of Bucks, and died at the beginning of the century (August 1502), which Walter Arden was the heir and the lineal descendant of the family from the time of Edward the Confessor. This is now so satisfactorily established by Mr. French, in his most laborious work, *Shakespeareana Genealogica*, page 430, that I think it sufficient to quote his authority.

I adopt also Mr. French's description of the furniture left in Robert Arden's house at his death. The eleven painted cloths or tapestries—the hall, the parlour—the kitchen —as a sufficient indication that the style in which he lived was that of a country gentleman.

Who was Robert Arden's first wife, and the mother of his seven daughters, is not known. His second wife, Agnes Hill, *née* Webbe, bore him no issue. It is believed she did not

maintain any friendly intimacy with her step-daughters after her husband's death.

Robert Arden, having no son, made, prior to his second marriage, a settlement of lands on each of his seven daughters.

By his will, dated 24th Nov. 1556, he bequeathed to his youngest daughter Mary all his "land in Wilmcote called Asbyes," and the crop upon the ground, sown and tilled as it was. And £6 13*s.* 4*d.* of money to be "paid o'er ere my goods be divided."

His executors were Alice and Mary, the only daughters then unmarried. It is believed by some that Mary Arden had resided on this property called Asbies with her grandfather, Thomas Arden, who had died nine years before.

It is noticeable that in the Inventory attached to his will the name of the testator is spelt Robert "Ardennes." And in the inventory of his widow's goods the same spelling appears (omitting the final s).

The estate of Asbies, with considerable rights of common and some other property at Snitterfield gave to Mary Arden the title of an heiress.

The house of "Asbies" at Wilmcote now stands precisely as of yore, and deeply interesting as it is as the property and residence of Mary Arden before she gave her hand to John Shakespeare, it has greater claims to notice as being, doubtless, with its farm, the very spot (and not Charlcote, as too often supposed) where Shakespeare planned his holiday excursions, drew his observations of country life and pastimes, and made his loved companionship with Nature during at least the first fourteen years of his life,

whilst the estate was cultivated by his father.

A portion of Robert Arden's Snitterfield estate (adjoining Wilmcote) was tenanted by Richard Shakespeare, a husbandman, who also had property of his own. He had two sons, Henry and John, the latter of whom married Mary Arden, and was the father of our poet. The farming operations of two adjoining estates will always be likely to induce an intimacy between such neighbours, so that John Shakespeare and Mary Arden might presumably have ample opportunities of social meetings in the occupation of rural life. The result was that, Robert Arden having died in December, 1556, Mary became the wife of John Shakespeare a few months later, though the exact date is wanting.

John Shakespeare was a tradesman in Stratford, carrying on a manufacturing business and wholesale trade as a glover, woolstapler, and wool merchant, in Henley Street. At the time of his marriage, he removed to the spot, and, we may believe, to the very house in which the poet was born. Here he passed the remainder of his days, though the date of his earliest occupation is not quite certain, for the freehold of the property was not purchased by him until the year 1575.

The house, or rather houses, indicate a large business. The front has a length of not less than 62 ft. 4 in. On the first floor the large back room goes (traditionally) by the name of the "wool store," and the one adjoining, semi-divided from it, as "the combing room." It is very probable that the

subsequent depression of this manufacture or trade had much to do with the decline in prosperity which overtook the town, and in which John Shakespeare was involved. That he was a person of high standing there cannot be doubted. He was first appointed to the office of Ale-taster under the Municipality in the year 1557, gradually rose to be Constable, Chamberlain, and Alderman, and attained the highest Office of High Bailiff in 1576, which gave to him the title of "magistrate" or "master." During this year he made application to the Herald Office for the Shakespeare Coat of Arms, which was duly granted.

During a period of twenty-one years John Shakespeare, as has been mentioned, cultivated the farm of Asbies, but in the year 1578 he was under the necessity of raising money on loan, and mortgaged it to E. Lambert for £40 = £400. In two years afterwards he tendered payment of the sum, but on Lambert's demanding at the same time payment of another debt of £5, which was denied, the matter remained in abeyance for some years.

During this the middle part of his life John Shakespeare fulfilled the duties of Alderman and Magistrate, paying the various rates levied for the poor . . . . till his position had evidently in a pecuniary sense declined. His amount of rating was then lowered, and difficulty was experienced in getting payment of his dues; and the fact must be considered established that at one time in the year 1587 he was placed in the custody of the Sheriff, though for a brief period.

He, however, was still occupied in trade

of various kinds, and was often engaged in suits in the Courts of Requests, sometimes as plaintiff, but oftener, we may regret to see, as defendant. It is rather remarkable that more than once he was sued for a debt on account of his brother, Henry Shakespeare—a circumstance hardly yet accounted for.

To what extent his fortunes suffered is by no means clear. There appears nothing to justify the implication which some have suggested of real poverty. Mr. Knight argues that the family were possessed of good and sufficient property through life. He continued to live on the property he had purchased in 1575 up to his death, and his descendants owned it till the year 1800, when it was sold by John Hart's widow. He had also certainly some other possession, for in 1597 he sold a piece of land (part of the Henley Street property). His larger house—that in which the poet was born—descended by heirship, as he made no will, to his eldest son, the poet, though the fact of making no will almost implies that his widow and other children would be willingly confided to the charge of his eldest son. The widow would have a legal claim to dower. He died in 1601, and was buried the 8th of September in that year.

The family which his father left comprised eight in all. Two died in infancy; Gilbert lived till 1612; Anne died early. The poet's baptism is thus entered in the parish register, "1564: April 26, Gulielmus, filius Johannes Shakspere." After him came Joan, born 1569, who married William Hart, a hatter of Stratford in 1599; then followed Richard,

born 1573, who died 1613; and Edmund, born 1580, who died 1607.

I have already given an outline of the position of the family at the time of marriage. There can be little doubt that they regarded themselves as a family of some distinction from the connections of the mother and the amount of her landed property. An estate in land, with a substantial residence, will amongst a city population add much to the position of its owner, especially at a time when the landowners were the real rulers of affairs national and provincial.

This claim to high birth is indicated by the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of his representative in the play of *The Merry Wives.* And it seems quite natural. A mother with such claims would aim to preserve the high position she inherited. The circle of her family was large enough to afford scope for society, and she would probably eschew any free intermixture of her children with those of the town. No country gentleman's name would be more familiar in the mouths of Stratford people than that of Arden. The son would naturally inherit or imbibe the mother's feeling, and this, though it had its good side, may in great likelihood have led him to some expensive habits and gaieties which are plainly avowed in his confessions, if it did not even go beyond and bring on expensive habits in the household of the parents themselves.

The tragic event which overtook the eldest branch of the Ardens in the punishment for imputed treason at the instance of the powerful Earl of Leicester, the first favourite of the Queen, would create an

excitement and exalt the pride in every one who bore his name and could claim a family connection.

The accounts of Shakespeare's education have been derived from very vague sources. It is believed that he went at about seven years of age to the Collegiate Grammar School at Stratford, but stayed there only till his fourteenth or fifteenth year, after which time his father required his services in his affairs at home.

Aubrey reports that he had been at some time of his youth engaged as a schoolmaster in the country. This, if it meant that Shakespeare had been an assistant at the grammar school, would be not inconsistent with Rowe's account of giving assistance to his father, if interpreted as helping to economise his father's home expenditure.

Whether Shakespeare made no more than an ordinary school acquaintance with Latin and less with Greek, as Ben Jonson said, I shall not stay to argue. Translations of nearly all the Latin classics were abundant at the time. Cicero and Ovid were well thumbed in the original in most grammar schools. Plutarch had been translated in the reign even of Henry VIII. The enthusiasm for the "new learning" was immense, and Roger Ascham's works were influential everywhere.

From which parent the talent of the poet descended cannot be discussed now. Probably both had mental capacity of the highest order. It is of more consequence to learn to whom he was indebted for the early cultivation of his faculty of observation and the development of his mental and moral nature, and it appears most probable that the largest

share of this fostering care must be attributed to his mother.

From whom but the mother could Shakespeare have derived his insight and appreciation of those refined and exalted qualities of the female character which he has portrayed in his works? They must have been implanted in early life, and have come from a mother's society and training, supported too, as she happily was, by a large circle of females, her own sisters—all descended alike from the same stock of gentle blood, to whom high and even courtly manners had doubtless descended, and by them were transmitted to the gentle Shakespeare and her other children.

No allusion has been made to this circumstance by the biographers, doubtless from the fact that her having so many sisters has only recently become known. Knight even surmised that Shakespeare had no elevated society amongst females in his youth nor became acquainted with any such until after his residence in London. The imagination now can trace his happy and spirited youth passed in the home circle where amidst the hilarity of his father's sports and humour he witnessed at the fireside the teaching of a discriminating gentlewoman, and the manners and delicacy of the most refined life. To give indulgence to this thought we may picture to ourselves his mother (afterwards portrayed by him, as I think in his noble character of Volumnia), surrounded by and presiding over a varied family that represented to him in spirit, though in outline only, such after-creations as Miranda, Beatrice, Juliet, Isabella, and others.

Such associations would teach him to

know the manners of a Court, and how to play well his part when he had to present himself amidst the members of Queen Elizabeth's Household, and to become, as we are told, a favourite there as well for his wit and humour as for his gentle manners.

I have mentioned the idea that the character of Volumnia was intended for his own mother. I have founded this surmise on the knowledge that (as it is thought) she had just died before or at the time of his writing his play of *Coriolanus*, when he had returned to Stratford to find rest in the society of his family and widowed mother and the home of his early youth.

It was his acquaintance with the style and manner of Court life that first suggested to me the germ of my inquiry, how he could have been in a position to attain that experience, until I traced its origin to his connection with the stream of noble and courtly blood that flowed to him in direct descent through the veins of the ancient family of Arden.

It is thought, I believe, by some, that the character of Menenius in the play of *Coriolanus* was designed to represent his father, and I well believe it. The ardent friend of the Roman General, with his strong judgment, his gay and buoyant humour and elastic spirits, is a fair image of the man who might be supposed to have accompanied his son in his out-door life, and to have initiated him into all the characteristic pursuits so elaborately defined by Roger Ascham, in his *Guide for the Country Gentleman*. Ascham's *Schoolmaster*, be it remembered, was published in 1571, when Shakespeare was seven years old.

In referring now to the misunderstood subject of Shakespeare's marriage, we have to wade through much ill-natured criticism and darkness. Shakespeare, at the age of eighteen years and six months, was married to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of Richard and Joan Hathaway, residing at Shottery in the parish of Stratford, about a mile distant from the town. Her age exceeded his own by eight years and some months. Her father had died about a year previously (September, 1581). He was a man of property, a substantial yeoman. His house, still standing, generally styled a cottage, is certainly deserving a much higher designation, for it is now divided into three residences, and in point of size and capacity may be compared to the house of Asbies, the property of Shakespeare's mother, though there is nothing in it characteristic of a grade so high as that of a country gentleman's house like that of Robert Arden. Hathaway had a family of four sons and five daughters, Anne being the eldest daughter. The eldest son was Bartholomew, upon whom the family estate was entailed by settlement, made (apparently) at the time of the father's marriage, and which also included a jointure for the wife. Bartholomew became subsequently High Bailiff of the town of Stratford, denoting that the family held a good position. In great probability he was a pupil at the college with Shakespeare; but I think Knight's remark, that the two families were of equal degree, is misleading. In Anne Page's interview with Fenton, the latter alludes to his birth (meaning his higher birth) as a probable obstruction to their marriage in the mind of her father.

There is, nevertheless, proof that Richard Hathaway and John Shakespeare were on intimate terms, having business and family transactions with each other.

Tradition, in the mouth of the present family, says that Anne was very beautiful, and "Oldys" reports the same; and though in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* there is no ostentatious description of such a fact, the allusions where she is twice called "pretty," are sufficiently in its favour.

It is remarked that in her father's will her name does not appear—a fact for which it seemed difficult to account, although another sister was also omitted; but Theobald made a guess that she had independent property, and by the identification of her character with Anne Page, the fact is fully disclosed. In the play her property is mentioned as being derived under the will of a grandfather; but no will, from either paternal or maternal grandfather, has been found. That, however, is not necessary, seeing that the fact is mentioned personally by Shakespeare, and so pointedly stated and charged against him as the foundation of his suit, that he admits it as being the origin of his attachment, but the origin only for that his discovery of her qualities of mind and disposition had inspired him with feelings of regard and devotion of a more exalted character.

The marriage took place in November, 1582, the Bishop of Worcester's license being dated in that month, which had been granted with the special permission to be performed after only one publication of banns. For this license a bond was entered into, with sureties, for its legal and due performance, the

bondsmen being two of the respectable neighbours of Shottery, and one of them, Fulke Sandells, an executor under the will of Richard Hathaway, the father, whose seal was made use of on the occasion. Many other licenses and bonds of similar character are found amongst the archives of the Bishop's registry. On the 26th of May following . . . . a daughter was born of the marriage, christened Susanna, though no family relationship has been found for adopting that name. According to a tradition existing there, the marriage is believed to have been performed at Luddington, an adjoining village to Shottery, by the curate, the Rev. Mr. Hunt, who had been a master for many years at the Collegiate School, and was, no doubt, an old friend of Shakespeare's. Unfortunately, the parochial registers of Luddington have been destroyed by fire. The circumstances of Shakespeare's marriage at so early an age, and the birth of a daughter so soon after marriage, have formed the subject of much conjectural and unfavourable criticism. For a long period it was not known that this marriage was preceded by a formal betrothal* —a fact first brought forward by C. Knight,

* *Fenton.* Hear the truth of it.
You would have married her most shamefully,
Where there was no proportion held in love.
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure, that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed;
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, or unduteous title;
Since therein she doth evitate and shun
A thousand irreligious cursed hours
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act iv. Sc. 1.

and now sufficiently established. The practice, overlooked amidst the darkness of our acquaintance with the social life of the sixteenth century, was a not uncommon one. Shakespeare has himself pointed out in one of his plays the form and proceedings of the attending ceremony.* The disparity of age in this celebrated wedded pair has sometimes been made a subject of reproach. Let it be remembered that the mind of Shakespeare at eighteen must have been more matured than the minds of most men at thirty, and that his wife Anne at twenty-six would, in all probability, appreciate more truly his intellectual and moral qualities, and have a deeper sympathy with him, than a woman of his own years. Look at young Byron and Mary Chaworth.

The married life of the happy pair has not been spared by the critics. Because the wife was no penwoman, she has been styled ignorant, and has further been charged with being a Puritan of a morose type. Because Shakespeare left Stratford to join the great world of mind in London, he is charged with voluntary desertion, either from supposed poverty,

* *Shepherd.* Take hands, a bargain;
And friends unknown, you shall bear witness to 't.
I give my daughter to him, and will make
Her portion equal his.
Florizel. O, that must be
I' the virtue of your daughter: one being dead,
I shall have more than you can dream of yet.
But, come on,
Contract us 'fore these witnesses.
Shepherd. Come, your hand;
And, daughter, yours.
Winter's Tale.

Witnesses were absolutely necessary, but a priest was not.

or to escape a prosecution respecting the deer. All things seem to have been perverted; and, to crown all, his married life is imputed to him as a disappointed and unhappy life, uncheered by home or domestic affection. The latter portion of this accusation is, however, disregarded by the best of our writers, except Mr. Dyce. At least, Messrs. Knight and Halliwell Phillips think the allusions to this subject too vague to be listened to against the whole tenour of Shakespeare's life, exhibited by his periodical visits to his native home, his building up there a property for retirement in the time of age, with the steady persistence and ultimate success of a most careful provider. But the evidence already existing as to his wife's virtues should have restrained such ungenerous thoughts. She spent her whole life in the company and tutelage of her daughters and young son; and the testimony of affection inscribed on her memorial stone by her daughter Susanna and her husband, Dr. Hall (a man of high standing and culture), should have hushed all envious tongues. Seldom, indeed, do we meet with more touching, devout expressions of filial regard than in this inscription :—

Ubera tu mater, tu lac, vitamq : dedisti :
Væ mihi : pro tanto munere Saxa dabo !
Quam mallem amoveat lapidem bonus Angelus ore
Exeat ut Christi Corpus, imago tua.
Sed nil vota valent ; venias cito Christe, resurget
Clausa licet tumulo mater, et astra petet.

(Translation.)

Thou, dear mother, gavest me from thy breast the milk and nourishment of life :
Woe's me ! for such a gift I return only a monument of stone.

How I could wish some good angel's breath might
roll away this marble,
That the body of Christ might come forth in thy re-
newed and heavenly form!
But our prayers and offerings avail naught.
Thou, O Christ, wilt soon come; my mother will
rise again;
Then will she leave her closed tomb,
And seek her heavenly home.

At the death of the daughter Susanna, in 1649, the tablet erected to her own worth and memory affords an additional proof of the training she had herself received :—

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.
Then, passenger, hast ne'er a tear
To weep with her that wept with all?
That wept, yet set herself to cheer
Them up with comforts cordial.
Her love shall live, her mercy spread,
When thou hast ne'er a tear to shed.

The Christian tone of these monuments indicated clearly that mother and daughter were both exemplars of a pure and exalted character, which might put to shame all cold-hearted inferences and detraction.

What better test of character can any of us point to than to be judged by the training of our children, and strong instead of superficial evidence must there be to countervail those indications of desert and maternal care. The tradition also, that "both mother and daughters did both desire earnestly to be buried with him in his grave," helps deeply the impression of the feeling and affection for the poet's memory.

It was the injunction yet standing above his tomb, not "to disturb his bones," that forbade this solemn request.

The disclosures which we now find presented by the poet in his *Merry Wives of Windsor*, light up the domestic life of Shakespeare and his wife with a vivid and brilliant picture. There was evidently a design in this step: doubtless the early marriage had been the subject of remark. He rebuts the imputation with the affirmation that his addresses were "righteously" offered, and we are plainly told their union was sanctioned by the mother.

This play being written seventeen years after their marriage (though it might probably have been drafted earlier), was therefore indicted in the very middle of their married life and nothing can be more characteristic of his joyous nature. With what zest would he read this over to his wife, who styled him "her gentle master Fenton," and to his daughters, the lively Susanna being then in her sixteenth year. No wonder need be felt at his character of Juliet's love or Rosalind's gaiety of heart. He found their elasticity of spirit at home, with his own fireside circle. And, doubtless, his mother and his sister Joan, for whom he afterwards made such liberal provision, would be sharers in it. All allusions of doubt or apprehension as to his wedded life must now disappear, and with this clear elucidation of his cheerful temperament, and the undoubting testimony to his wife's amiable and elevated character, we may realize the home of Shakespeare at Stratford as one of solid domestic happiness. Before parting with this narrative of his married home, we are naturally led to contemplate for a moment the effect which such a state of rest and quiet, in the company of a partner so estimable, would have upon the

poet's mind: how far it might indeed impart a share of its temper and tone to the characters which might then be passing through his fruitful imagination, and so leave to her the just credit of having been a tacit, even though unconscious, helper in some of his female delineations!

To revert now to the poet's career after entering on his married state. Hitherto there has been a blank in his life, from the time of the birth of his three children until he reappears in the world of London as an actor and dramatic writer. Susanna, his eldest child, was born, as we have stated, on the 26th May, 1583, and on the 2nd day of February, 1585, his wife gave birth to twins, christened Hamnet and Judith. Where Shakespeare resided at this time has been hitherto as much unknown as his occupation. The grand escapade of the deer adventure has been dealt with separately in a previous page. As to his residence and his pursuits the facts divulged by this play offer suggestions that are highly satisfactory. There can, I think, be little doubt that after his marriage he and his wife took up their residence at Shottery with Anne's widowed mother.

Tradition, in the mouth of Mrs. Baker, who is the last resident and descendant of the Hathaways in the Shottery cottage, confirms this, and no evidence has ever appeared of his residing elsewhere. The widow had the estate on her hands; both her daughter and son-in-law were likely to be of much use in its management; and, as we have great reason to accept the statement that the daughter had property of her own, no more suitable

arrangement could be made than that the large family (nine in all) should have a united home. There is a singular confirmation of this idea in the circumstance of a former shepherd of Richard Hathaway, Thomas Whittington (to whom, in his will of 1581, he mentions himself as being indebted in a sum of £4 6*s.* 8*d.*), having been, to all appearance, still engaged in the family in 1601, or at least residing at Shottery. The shepherd makes his will at that date, with the following bequest:—

> I give and bequeath unto the poor people of Stratford forty shillings, that is in the hands of Anne Shakespeare, wife of William Shakespeare, and is debt due unto me, being paid to mine executor by the said William Shakespeare.

The presumption therefore is, that Anne Shakespeare had continued for some time a resident with her mother at Shottery.

How Shakespeare filled up this interval of his life—whether by assisting his father in his affairs, or as an assistant at the College, where books and cultured society would be available—is not known. The time would be favourable for supplying his mind with mental food, both from books and from Nature, of which no man ever tasted more freely or more profitably. This life lasted till 1587 or 1589. No certain date can be arrived at as to the time of his departure for the Metropolis. It is the great difficulty of his biographers how to determine it with something like precision.

The idea is strong in many minds that he had, prior to that event, cultivated his poetical talents, and had written his poem *Venus and Adonis*, which he would take with

him as a means of his introduction into the literary world.

It cannot be supposed that Shakespeare, with his large experience of life and the world, and his knowledge of his own powers, had no desire (ambition some may call it) to see and mix in the society which could alone afford him complete companionship and a field for developing his genius. In his almost earliest play, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, he has plainly expressed this :—

> Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.
> * * * * *
> I rather would entreat thy company
> To see the wonders of the world abroad,
> Than, living dully sluggardis'd at home,
> Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness.
> Act i. sc. i.

Living in the remote district of Stratford, what condition could there be more likely to awaken his powers than the opening of the Guildhall for the exhibition of plays, and the arrival of a band of performers from the metropolis to startle into vivid life the tastes of the town. Shakespeare's father, when High Bailiff, was the first, in the year 1571, to admit and welcome their performance, the boy Shakespeare being then seven years old. They came frequently. By the time of Shakespeare's twenty-third year the town had been visited by not less than twenty companies. James Burbage, the manager of one of the companies, was, if not a native, yet intimately connected with Stratford, and no doubt well acquainted with the Shakespeare family. A namesake, John Burbage, whom we may suppose to have been some relation, had, in 1556, held the position of

High Bailiff. One fellow-townsman at least, Thomas Green, probably a relative, was amongst the performers. In their company came in the course of time young Richard Burbage, the son of James. He became the lifelong friend of William Shakespeare, who remembered him in his Will. As the performer of all the leading parts in our dramatist's greatest plays he displayed a genius that placed him in the highest rank of English actors. Such a man would kindle the spirit of Shakespeare, which was only waiting for opportunity and a sympathetic friend.

As to the exact year of his leaving Stratford, as I have said, there is no guide. Till the year 1592, when he became fully engaged, there is nothing occurring in London that indicates his presence there. Some critics place his first visit as happening in 1586, but as his twin children were only born in the year preceding, I cannot agree to place it so early. Some dwell ill-naturedly on the deer affair and its great publicity, and the supposed threats of prosecution, as being the turning-point to induce his departure, but as I have shown motives quite adequate and more natural for taking the step, I cannot allow Shakespeare, with his independent spirit and his sense of right in that dispute, to have been influenced by other motives. A better reason, one perfectly natural and in accordance with all concurrent circumstances is, I submit, to be found in the visit and departure of the players about the year 1587, when Richard Burbage was at Stratford—a view which Mr. Dyce vaguely supports. And as to the loose reports of his being compelled to accept an inferior position,

it is impossible to doubt that from his intimacy with the Burbages, father and son, and his great talents, they would offer encouragement and an adequate engagement on his joining them.

It is not within my design to go farther with this biographical sketch. His life in London was so much a public life, I could not embrace it in this summary.

I have narrated the birth of his three children. Hamnet, the son, unhappily died in 1596, at the age of eleven, to the deep sorrow, we may be sure, of his parents. Susanna married Dr. Hall, before alluded to, a physician of undoubted position and high culture, and had one child, a daughter, Elizabeth, who married, firstly, Thomas Nash, and secondly, Sir Thomas Bernard, but left no issue. Judith, the second daughter, married Thomas Quiney (pronounced Queeny), a vintner, of Stratford, but her children died early. Three brothers of Shakespeare — Gilbert, Richard, and Edward—died with but little notice. His sister Joan, to whom he made a liberal bequest, and whom we may justly regard as a favourite sister, married William Hart, and their descendants lived in, or at least owned, the family dwelling where Shakespeare was born, till it was sold, as has been stated, in the year 1800.

The poet acquired large property, his greatest acquisition being the purchase of the mansion in Stratford called "New Place," in which he died 23rd of April, 1616, at the age of fifty-three.

His acquired property I estimate, in modern value, at little if anything under £3,000 per annum.

By his will he entailed his property strictly on his two daughters in succession, but that has all been dispersed.

It has been a subject of remark that in his Will he makes no express provision for his widow, except giving her his second best bed.

Mr. Knight was the first to draw attention to the fact that she would be well provided for by her right of dower, and this is plain; for instance, she had unquestionably such right in the mansion in New Place. This property descended (subject to such right) to her daughter Mrs. Hall, and the natural arrangement followed—viz., that the Halls dwelt there, and there is every probability that the widow lived with them.

The bequest of the second best bed was a gift of special regard, being no doubt their own bed; the spare, or superior bed would be for strangers. The bed of the master and mistress was in those days held always to be the best piece of furniture in the house.

The monument in Stratford Church, as we see it, was erected about 1623. The sculptor was Gerard Johnson. It has the appearance of being made from a cast taken after death, and taken not until the face had sunk by gravitation to the left side. The mouth, too, had then become more open, and the nose shrunk, as always happens shortly after death.

The dress to all appearance was adopted from the design of the Stratford Portrait, which it perfectly resembles.

There is a cast of the face, taken from the monument, in the National Portrait Gallery, where also the Chandos Portrait now is.

Beneath the monument appear the well-known lines—

> 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.

This sentiment, perhaps, had its origin from the practice which had at times obtained of removing many of the remains into the charnel-house which was close to that end of the church.

His widow died on the 6th day of August, 1623, at the age of sixty-seven years, and his daughter Susanna Hall, on the 11th of July, 1649, aged sixty-six. The two epitaphs before mentioned were then inscribed on their tombstones.

Judith was buried at Stratford, the 9th of February, 1661–2.

Elizabeth Hall, the grand-daughter, died without issue.

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