

modern Stratford Rother Market retains its place as the busiest centre at the annual fairs, during one of which it is still customary to roast an ox in the open street, often amidst a good deal of popular excitement and convivial uproar.

The cross ways going from Rother Street to the river side, which cut the central line, dividing it into three sections, are Ely Street and Sheep Street in a continuous line, and Scholar's Lane and Chapel Lane in another line. They run parallel with the head line of Bridge and Wood Streets, and like them traverse from east to west the northern shaft of the cross that constituted the ground plan of the town. Starting down this line from the market house at the top, the first division, the High Street, is now, as it was in Shakespeare's day, the busiest part for shops and shopping, the solid building at the further corner to the left being the Corn Exchange. At the first corner of the second division, called Chapel Street, stands the town-hall, while at the further corner are the site and railed-in gardens of New Place, the large mansion purchased by Shakespeare in 1597. Opposite New Place, at the corner of the third and last division, known as Church Street, is the grey mass of Gothic buildings belonging to the guild of the Holy Cross, and consisting of the chapel, the hall, the grammar school, and the almshouses of the ancient guild. Turning to the left at the bottom of Church Street, you enter upon what was in Shakespeare's day a well-wooded suburb, with a few good houses scattered among the ancient elms, and surrounded by ornamental gardens and extensive private grounds. In one of these houses, with a sunny exposure of lawn and shrubbery, lived in the early years of the 17th century Shakespeare's eldest daughter Susanna with her husband, Dr John Hall, and here in spring mornings and summer afternoons the great poet must have often strolled, either alone or accompanied by his favourite daughter, realizing to the full the quiet enjoyment of the sylvan scene and its social surroundings. This pleasant suburb, called then as now Old Town, leads directly to the church of the Holy Trinity, near the river side. The church, a fine specimen of Decorated and Perpendicular Gothic with a lofty spire, is approached on the northern side through an avenue of limes, and sheltered on the east and south by an irregular but massive group of elms towering above the churchway path between the transepts, the chancel, and the river. Below the church, on the margin of the river, were the mill, the mill-bridge, and the weir, half hidden by grey willows, green alders, and tall beds of rustling sedge. And, beyond the church, the college, and the line of streets already described, the suburbs stretched away into gardens, orchards, meadows, and cultivated fields, divided by rustic lanes with mossy banks, flowering hedgerows, and luminous vistas of bewildering beauty. These cross and country roads were dotted at intervals with cottage homesteads, isolated farms, and the small groups of both which constituted the villages and hamlets included within the wide sweep of old Stratford parish. Amongst these were the villages and hamlets of Welcombe, Ingon, Drayton, Shottery, Luddington, Little Wilmcote, and Bishopston. The town was thus girdled in the spring by daisied meadows and blossoming orchards, and enriched during the later months by the orange and gold of harvest fields and autumn foliage, mingled with the coral and purple clusters of elder, hawthorn, and mountain ash, and, around the farms and cottages, with the glow of ripening fruit for the winter's store.

But perhaps the most characteristic feature of the scenery in the neighbourhood of Stratford is to be found in the union of this rich and varied cultivation with picturesque survivals of the primeval forest territory. The low hills that rise at intervals above the well-turned soil still carry on their serrated crests the lingering glories of the ancient woodland. Though the once mighty forest of Arden has disappeared, the after-glow of its sylvan beauty rests on the neighbouring heights formerly enclosed within its ample margin. These traces of the forest wildness and freedom were of course far more striking and abundant in Shakespeare's day than now. At that time many of the farms had only recently been reclaimed from the forest, and most of them still had their bosky acres "of tooth'd briars, sharp furzes, pricking goss and thorns," their broom groves, hazel copses, and outlying patches of unshrubbed down. And the hills that rose above the chief villages of the neighbourhood were still clothed and crowned with the green and mystic mantle of the leafy Arden. But, though much of the ancient woodland has disappeared since Shakespeare's day, many traces of it still remain. Any of the roads out of Stratford will soon bring the pedestrian to some of these picturesque survivals of the old forest wilderness. On the Warwick

road, at the distance of about a mile from the town, there are on the left the Welcombe Woods, and just beyond the woods the well-known Dingles, a belt of straggling ash and hawthorn winding irregularly through blue-bell depths and briery hollows from the pathway below to the crest of the hill above, while immediately around rise the Welcombe Hills, from the top of which is obtained the finest local view of Stratford and the adjacent country. Looking south-west and facing the central line of the town, you see below you, above the mass of roofs, the square tower of the guild chapel, the graceful spire of the more distant church, the sweep of the winding river, and beyond the river the undulating valley of the Red Horse shut in by the blue range of the Cotswold Hills. A couple of miles to the east of the Welcombe Hills is the village of Snitterfield, where Shakespeare's grandfather, Richard Shakespeare, lived and cultivated to the end of his days the acres around his rustic dwelling. Beyond the village on its western side there is an upland reach of wilderness in the shape of a hill, covered with shrub and copsewood, and known as the Snitterfield Bushes. Here Shakespeare as a boy must have often rambled, enjoying the freedom of the unfenced downs, and enlarging his knowledge of nature's exuberant vitality. On the opposite side of the town, about a mile on the Evesham road, or rather between the Evesham and Alcester roads, lies the hamlet of Shottery, half concealed by ancestral elms and nestling amongst its homestead fruits and flowers. From one of these homesteads Shakespeare obtained his bride Anne Hathaway. A mile or two on the central road, passing out of the town through Henley Street, is the village of Bearly, and above the village another sweep of wooded upland known as Bearly Bushes. And at various more distant points between these roads the marl and sandstone heights, fringed with woods or covered with wilding growths, still bear eloquent testimony to the time when Guy of Warwick and his tutor in chivalry, Heraud of Arden, still roamed the forest in search of the wild ox and savage boar that frayed the infrequent travellers and devastated at intervals the slender cultivation of the district. The subtle power of this order of scenery, arising from the union of all that is rich and careful in cultivation with all that is wild and free in natural beauty, is exactly of the kind best fitted to attract and delight imaginative and emotional minds. It possesses the peculiar charm that in character arises from the union of refined culture with the bright and exhilarating spontaneity of a free and generous nature.

On its moral side such scenery has an expanding illuminating power which links it to the wider and deeper interests of humanity as a whole. Nature seems to put forth her vital energies expressly for the relief of man's estate, appearing as his friend and helper and consoler. Instead of being absorbed in her own inaccessibly grandeur and solitary sublimities, she exerts her benign influences expressly as it were for his good, to cheer and brighten his evanescent days, and beautify his temporary home. Bolder and more rugged landscapes, gloomy glens, and thunder-scarred peaks may excite more passionate feelings, may rouse and strengthen by reaction the individualistic elements of mind and character, and thus produce the hardy, daring type of mountaineer, the intense self-centred and defiant local patriot or hero, the chieftain and his clansmen, *contra mundam*. No doubt it is also true that the vaster and loftier mountain ranges have a unique power of exciting in susceptible minds the emotions of awe, wonder, and sublimity. But the very power and permanence of these mighty solitudes, the grandeur and immobility of their measureless strength and imperial repose, dwarf by comparison all merely human interests; and the meditative mind swept by the spirit of such immensities the moments of our mortal life seem to melt as dew-drops into the silence of their eternal years. The feelings thus excited, being in themselves of the essence of poetry, may indeed find expression in verse and in verse of a noble kind, but the poetry will be lyrical and reflective, not dramatic, or if dramatic in form it will be lyrical in substance. As Mr Ruskin has pointed out, the overmastering effect of mountain scenery tends to absorb and preoccupy the

mind, and thus to disturb the impartial view, the universal vision of nature and human nature as a complex whole, or rather of nature as the theatre and scene of human life, which the dramatist must preserve in order to secure success in his higher work. Mountain scenery is, however, not only rare and exacting in the range and intensity of feeling it excites, but locally remote in its separation from the interests and occupations of men. It is thus removed from the vital element in which the dramatist works, if not in its higher influence antagonistic to that element. Mr Hamerton, who discusses the question on a wider basis of knowledge and experience than perhaps any living authority except Mr Ruskin, supports this view. "As a general rule," he says, "I should say there is an antagonism between the love of mountains and the knowledge of mankind, that the lover of mountains will often be satisfied with their appearances of power and passion, their splendour and gloom, their seeming cheerfulness or melancholy, when a mind indifferent to this class of scenery might study the analogous phases of human character." Where, indeed, the influence of nature is overpowering, as in the East, wonder,—the wonder excited by mere physical vastness, power, and infinitude,—takes the place of intelligent interest in individual life and character.

But the dramatic poet has to deal primarily with human power and passion; and not for him therefore is the life of lonely raptures and awful delights realized by the mountain wanderer or the Alp-inspired bard. His work lies nearer the homes and ways of men, and his choicest scenery will be found in the forms of natural beauty most directly associated with their habitual activities, most completely blended with their more vivid emotional experiences. A wooded undulating country, watered by memorable streams, its ruder features relieved by the graces of cultivation, and its whole circuit rich in historical remains and associations, is outside the domain of cities, the natural stage and theatre of the dramatist and story-teller. This was the kind of scenery that fascinated Scott's imagination, amidst which he fixed his chosen home, and where he sleeps his last sleep. It is a border country of grey waving hills, divided by streams renowned in song, and enriched by the monuments of the piety, splendour, and martial power of the leaders whose fierce raids and patriotic conflicts filled with romantic tale and minstrelsy the whole district from the Lammermoors to the Cheviots, and from the Leader and the Tweed to the Solway Firth. In earlier times Shakespeare's own district had been virtually a border country also. The mediæval tide of intermittent but savage warfare, between the unsubdued Welsh and the Anglo-Normans under the feudal lords of the marches, ebbed and flowed across the Severn, inundating at times the whole of Powis-land, and sweeping on to the very verge of Warwickshire. In the 12th and 13th centuries the policy of intermarriage between their own families and the Welsh princes was tried by the English monarchs, and King John, on betrothing his daughter Joan to the Welsh prince Llewelyn, gave the manor of Bidford, six miles from Stratford-on-Avon, as part of her dower. The fact of this English princess being thus identified with South Warwickshire may help to explain the prevalence of the name Joan in the county, but the early impulse towards the giving of this royal name would no doubt be strengthened by the knowledge that John of Gaunt's daughter, the mother of the great earl of Warwick, had also borne the favourite local name. Shakespeare himself it will be remembered had two sisters of this name, the elder Joan, born some time before him, the firstborn of the family indeed, who died in infancy, and the younger Joan, who survived him. But the local popularity of a name, familiarly associated with the kitchen and the scullery rather than with the court or the palace, is no doubt due to one of the more striking incidents of the long conflict between the English and the Welsh on the western border. As we have seen, during the Barons' War and the Wars of the Roses the western border was the scene of active conflict, each party seeking Welsh support, and each being able in turn to rally a

power of hardy marchmen to its banner. And that the insurgent Welsh were not idle during the interval between these civil conflicts we have the emphatic testimony of Glendower:—

"Three times hath Henry Bolingbrooke made head
Against my power: thrice from the banks of Wye
And sedge-bottomed Severn have I sent him
Bootless home, and weather-beaten back."

The Hotspur and Mortimer revolt against Henry IV. well illustrates, indeed, the kind of support which English disaffection found for centuries in the Welsh marches. A rich heritage of stirring border life and heroic martial story was thus transmitted from the stormy ages of faith and feudalism to the more settled Tudor times. Apart from the border warfare there were also the multiplied associations connected with the struggles between the nobles and the crown, and the rise of the Commons as a distinctive power in the country. The whole local record of great names and signal deeds was in Shakespeare's day so far withdrawn into the past and mellowed by secular distance as to be capable of exerting its full enchantment over the feelings and the imagination. The historical associations thus connected with the hills and streams, the abbeys and castles, of Warwickshire added elements of striking moral interest to the natural beauty of the scenery. To the penetrating imagination of poetic natures these elements reflected the continuity of national life as well as the greatness and splendour of the personalities and achievements by which it was developed from age to age. They also helped to kindle within them a genuine enthusiasm for the fortunes and the fame of their native land. And scenery beautiful in itself acquired a tenfold charm from the power it thus possessed of bringing vividly before the mind the wide and moving panorama of the heroic past. The facts sufficiently prove that scenery endowed with this multiplied charm takes, if a calmer, still a deeper and firmer hold of the affections than any isolated and remote natural features, however beautiful and sublime, have power to do. This general truth is illustrated with even exceptional force in the lives of Scott and Shakespeare. Both were passionately attached to their native district, and the memorable scenes amidst which their early years were passed. So intense was Scott's feeling that he told Washington Irving that if he did not see the grey hills and the heather once a year he thought he should die. And one of the few traditions preserved of Shakespeare is that even in the most active period of his London career he always visited Stratford at least once every year. We know indeed from other sources that during his absence Shakespeare continued to take the liveliest interest in the affairs of his native place, and that, although London was for some years his professional residence, he never ceased to regard Stratford as his home.

Amongst other illustrations of this strong feeling of local attachment that might be given there is one that has recently excited a good deal of attention and is worth noticing in some detail. Mr Hallam, in a well-known passage, has stated that "no letter of Shakespeare's writing, no record of his conversation, has been preserved." But we certainly have at least one conversation reported at first hand, and it turns directly on the point in question. It relates to a proposal made in 1614 by some of the local proprietors for the enclosure of certain common lands at Welcombe and Old Stratford. The corporation of Stratford strongly opposed the project on the ground that it would be a hardship to the poorer members of the community, and their clerk Mr Thomas Greene, who was related to Shakespeare, was in London about the business in November of the same year. Under date November

17th Greene says, in notes which still exist, "My cosen Shakespear comyng yesterdy to town, I went to see him how he did. He told me that they assured him they ment to inclose no further than to Gospell Bush, and so upp straight (leavyng out part of the Dyngles to the ffield) to the gate in Clopton hedg, and take in Salisburyes peece; and that they mean in Aprill to surveye the land, and then to gyve satisfaction, and not before; and he and Mr Hall say they think ther will be nothyng done at all." This proves that the agents of the scheme had seen Shakespeare on the subject, that he had gone carefully into the details of their plan, consulted his son-in-law Dr John Hall about them, and arrived at the conclusion that for the present they need take no decided action in the matter. There is evidently on Shakespeare's part a strong feeling against the proposed enclosure, and the agents of the scheme had clearly done their best to remove his objections, promising amongst other things that if it went forward he should suffer no pecuniary loss, a promise already confirmed by a legal instrument. But nine months later, when the local proprietors seemed bent on pushing the scheme, Shakespeare takes a more decided stand, and pronounces strongly against the whole business. We have a notice, dated September 1, 1615, to the effect that Mr Shakespeare had on that day told the agent of the corporation "that he was not able to bear the enclosing of Welcombe." As his proprietary rights and pecuniary interests were not to be affected by the proposed enclosure, this strong expression of feeling must refer to the public advantages of the Welcombe common fields, and especially to what in Scotland would be called their "amenity," the element of value arising from their freedom and beauty, their local history and associations. Welcombe, as we have seen, was the most picturesque suburb of Stratford. The hills divided by the leafy Dingles afforded the finest panoramic view of the whole neighbourhood. On their eastern slope they led to Fulbroke Park, the probable scene of the deer-stealing adventure, and towards the north-west to the village of Snitterfield with its wooded sweep of upland "bushes." Every acre of the ground was associated with the happiest days of Shakespeare's youth. In his boyish holidays he had repeatedly crossed and recrossed the unfenced fields at the foot of the Welcombe Hills on his ways to the rustic scenes and occupations of his uncle Henry's farm in the outlying forest villages. He knew by heart every boundary tree and stone and bank, every pond and sheep-pool, every barn and cattle-shed, throughout the whole well-frequented circuit. And in his later years, when after the turmoil and excitement of his London life he came to reside at Stratford, and could visit at leisure the scenes of his youth, it was perfectly natural that he should shrink from the prospect of having these scenes partially destroyed and their associations broken up by the rash hand of needless innovation. In his own emphatic language, "he could not bear the enclosing of Welcombe," and the only authoritative fragment of his conversation preserved to us thus brings vividly out one of the best known and most distinctive features of his personal character and history—his deep and life-long attachment to his native place. Another illustration of the same feeling, common both to Scott and Shakespeare, is supplied by the prudence and foresight they both displayed in husbanding their early gains in order to provide, amidst the scenery they loved, a permanent home for themselves and their families. Shakespeare, the more careful and sharp-sighted of the two, ran no such risks and experienced no such reverses of fortune as those which saddened Scott's later days. Both, however, spent the last years of their lives in the home which their energy and affection had provided, and both

sleep their last sleep under the changing skies and amidst the fields and streams that gave light and music to their earliest years. Hence, of all great authors, they are the two most habitually thought of in connexion with their native haunts and homesteads. Even to his contemporaries Shakespeare was known as the Swan of Avon. The two spots on British ground most completely identified with the noblest energies of genius, consecrated by life-long associations, and hallowed by sacred dust are the banks of the Tweed from Abbotsford to Dryburgh Abbey, and the sweep of the Avon from Charlecote Park to Stratford church. To all lovers of literature, to all whose spirits have been touched to finer issues by its regenerating influence, these spots, and above all the abbey grave and the chancel tomb, are holy ground,—national shrines visited by pilgrims from every land, who breathe with pride and gratitude and affection the household names of Shakespeare and of Scott.

The name Shakespeare is found in the Midland counties two centuries before the birth of the poet, scattered so widely that it is not easy at first sight to fix the locality of its rise or trace the lines of its progress. Several facts, however, would seem to indicate that those who first bore it entered Warwickshire from the north and west, and may therefore have migrated in early times from the neighbouring marches. The name itself is of course thoroughly English, and it is given by Camden and Verstegan as an illustration of the way in which surnames were fabricated when first introduced into England in the 13th century. But it is by no means improbable that some hardy borderers who had fought successfully in the English ranks may have received or assumed a significant and sounding designation that would help to perpetuate the memory of their martial prowess. We have indeed a distinct and authoritative assertion that some of Shakespeare's ancestors had served their country in this way. However this may be, families bearing the name are found during the 15th and 16th centuries in the Arden district, especially at Wroxhall and Rowington,—some being connected with the priory of Wroxhall, while during the 15th century the names of more than twenty are enumerated as belonging to the guild of St Ann, at Knoll near Rowington. In the roll of this guild or college are also found the representatives of some of the best families in the county, such as the Ferrerses of Tamworth and the Clintons of Coleshill. Among the members of the guild the poet's ancestors are to be looked for, and it is not improbable, as Mr French suggests, that John and Joan Shakespeare, entered on the Knoll register in 1527, may have been the parents of Richard Shakespeare of Snitterfield, whose sons gave each to his children the favourite family names. Richard Shakespeare, the poet's grandfather, occupied a substantial dwelling and cultivated a forest farm at Snitterfield, between 3 and 4 miles from Stratford. He was the tenant of Robert Arden of Wilmcote, "a gentleman of worship," who farmed his own estate, situated a few miles to the west of Snitterfield. Richard Shakespeare was settled at the latter hamlet and doing well as early as 1543, Thomas Atwood of Stratford having in that year bequeathed to him four oxen which were then in his keeping; and he continued to reside there certainly till 1560, and probably till his death. He appears to have had two sons, John and Henry, of whom John, the eldest, early broke through the contracted circle of rustic life at Snitterfield, made his way to Stratford, and established himself as a trader in one of the leading thoroughfares of the town. This movement to the town probably took place in 1551, as in 1552 John Shakespeare is described in an official document as residing in Henley Street, where the poet was subsequently born. As to the

Shakespeare name and family.

precise nature of his occupation, the kind of wares in which he principally dealt, there are various and conflicting statements that have given rise to a good deal of discussion. The earliest official statement on the subject occurs in the register of the bailiff's court for the year 1556. He is there described as a "glover," which, according to the verbal usage of the time, included dealing in skins, as well as in the various leather-made articles of farming gear, such as rough gauntlets and leggings for hedging and ditching, white leather gloves for chopping wood, and the like. But in addition to the trade of glover and fell-monger tradition assigns to John Shakespeare the functions of butcher, wool-stapler, corn-dealer, and timber-merchant. These occupations are not incompatible, and together they represent the main lines some of which at least a young farmer going into the town for trading purposes would be likely to pursue. He would naturally deal with the things he knew most about, such as corn, wool, timber, skins, and leather-made articles used in farm work—in a word, he would deal in farm conveniences and farm products. In a town that was the centre and chief market of an agricultural and grazing district, and as the member of a family whose wide connexions were nearly all engaged in farming operations, his prospects were certainly rather favourable than otherwise. And he soon began to turn his country connexion to account. There is distinct evidence that he early dealt in corn and wood as well as gloves and leather, for in 1556 he sues a neighbour for eighteen quarters of barley, and a few years later is paid three shillings by the corporation for a load of timber.

The poet's father was evidently a man of energy, ambition, and public spirit, with the knowledge and ability requisite for pushing his fortune with fair success in his new career. His youthful vigour and intelligence soon told in his favour, and in a short time we find him taking an active part in public affairs. He made way so rapidly indeed amongst his fellow-townsmen, that within five years after entering Stratford he is recognized as a fitting recipient of municipal honours; and his official appointments steadily rise in dignity and value through the various gradations of leet-juror, ale-taster, constable, affeeror, Burgess, chamberlain, and alderman, until in 1568 he gains the most distinguished post of official dignity, that of high-bailiff or mayor of the town. Within twenty years after starting in business in Henley Street he thus rises to the highest place in the direction of municipal affairs, presiding as their head over the deliberations of his fellow aldermen and burgesses, and as chief magistrate over the local court of record. Three years later, in 1571, he was again elected as chief alderman. There is ample evidence, too, that during these years he advanced in material prosperity as well as in municipal dignities and honours. As early as 1556 he had means at his command which enabled him to purchase two houses in the town, one in Henley Street with a considerable garden, and another in Greenhill Street with a garden and croft attached to it. In the following year he married an heiress of gentle birth, Mary Arden of the Ashies, who had recently inherited under her father's will a substantial sum of ready money, an estate at Wilmcote, consisting of nearly 60 acres of land with two or three houses, and a reversionary interest in houses and lands at Snitterfield, including the farm tenanted by Richard Shakespeare, her husband's father. Being now a landed proprietor and a man of rising position and influence, John Shakespeare would be able to extend his business operations, and it is clear that he did so, though whether always with due prudence and foresight may be fairly questioned. To a man of his sanguine and somewhat impetuous temper the sudden increase of wealth was

probably by no means an unmixed good. But for some years, at all events, he was able to maintain his more prosperous state, and his new ventures appear for a time to have turned out well. He is designated in official documents as yeoman, freeholder, and gentleman, and has the epithet "master" prefixed to his name; this, being equivalent to esquire, was rarely used except in relation to men of means and station, possessing landed property of their own. In a note to another official document it is stated that about the time of his becoming chief magistrate of Stratford John Shakespeare had "lands and tenements of good worth and substance" estimated in value at £500, and though there may be some exaggeration in this estimate his property from various sources must have been worth nearly that sum. And in 1575 he increased the total amount by purchasing two houses in Henley Street, the two that still remain identified with the name and are consecrated by tradition as the birthplace of the poet. But this was his last purchase, the tide of his hitherto prosperous fortunes being but too clearly already on the turn. Having passed the highest point of social and commercial success, he was now facing the downward slope, and the descent once begun was for some years continuous, and at times alarmingly and almost inscrutably rapid.

It seems clear indeed from the facts of the case that, notwithstanding John Shakespeare's intelligence, activity, and early success, there was some defect of character which introduced an element of instability into his career, and in the end very much neutralized the working of his nobler powers. Faintly discernible perhaps from the first, and overpowered only for a time by the access of prosperity that followed his fortunate marriage, this vital flaw ultimately produced its natural fruit in the serious embarrassments that clouded his later years. The precise nature of the defect can only be indicated in general terms, but it seems to have consisted very much in a want of measure and balance, of adequate care and foresight, in his business dealings and calculations. He seems to have possessed the eager sanguine temperament which, absorbed in the immediate object of pursuit, overlooks difficulties and neglects the wider considerations on which lasting success depends. Even in his early years at Stratford there are signs of this ardent, impatient, somewhat unheeded temper. He is not only active and pushing, but too restless and excitable to pay proper attention to necessary details, or discharge with punctuality the minor duties of his position. The first recorded fact in his local history illustrates this feature of his character. In April 1552 John Shakespeare is fined twelve pence, equal to between eight and ten shillings of our English money now, for not removing the heap of household dirt and refuse that had accumulated in front of his own door. Another illustration of his want of thorough method and system in the management of his affairs is supplied by the fact that in the years 1556-57 he allowed himself to be sued in the bailiff's court for comparatively small debts. This could not have arisen from any want of means, as during the same period, in October 1556, he made the purchase already referred to of two houses with extensive gardens. The actions for debt must therefore have been the result of negligence or temper on John Shakespeare's part, and either alternative tells almost equally against his habits of business coolness and regularity. Another illustration of his restless, ill-considered, and unbalanced energy may be found in the number and variety of occupations which he seems to have added to his early trade of glover and leather-dealer. As his prospects improved he appears to have seized on fresh branches of business, until he had included within his grasp the whole circle of agricultural products that could in any way be brought to market. It would seem also that he added farming, to a not inconsiderable extent, to his expanding retail business in Stratford. But it is equally clear that he lacked the orderly method, the comprehensive outlook, and the vigilant care for details essential for holding well in hand the threads of so complicated a commercial web. Other disturbing forces may probably be discovered in the pride and ambition, the love of social excitement and display, which appear to be among the ground notes of John Shakespeare's character so far as it is revealed to us in the few facts of his history. His strong social feeling and love of pleasurable excitement are illustrated by the fact that during the year of his mayoralty he brought companies of players into the town, and inaugurated dramatic performances in the guild hall. It is during the year of his filling the post of high-bailiff that we first hear of stage plays at Stratford, and the players must have visited the town, if not, as is most likely, at the invitation and desire of the poet's father, at least with his sanction and support.

In such cases the players could not act at all without the permission of the mayor and council, and their first performance was usually a free entertainment, patronized and paid for by the corporation, and called the mayor's play. In all this John Shakespeare took the initiative, and in so doing probably helped to decide the future career of his son. The notes of personal pride and social ambition are equally apparent. It is on record, for example, that soon after reaching the highest post of municipal distinction the poet's father applied to the heralds' college for a grant of arms. This application was not at the time successful, but it seems to have been so far seriously entertained that official inquiries were made into the family history and social standing of the Shakespeares. But the remarkable fact is that such an application should have been made at all by a Stratford burgess whose position and prospects were so unstable and precarious as the events of the next few years showed those of John Shakespeare to be. At the time of the application his increasing family must have enlarged his household expenses, while his official position, combined with his open and generous nature, his love of social sympathy, distinction, and support, would probably have led him into habits of free-handed hospitality and inconsiderate expenditure. All this must have helped to introduce a scale of lavish domestic outlay that would tend directly to hasten the financial collapse in his affairs that speedily followed. And on finding things going against him John Shakespeare was just the man to discount his available resources, and, as the pressure increased, mortgage his future and adopt any possible expedient for maintaining the increased port and social consequence he had imprudently assumed.

Moral effects.

This seems to have been the course actually pursued when pecuniary difficulties arose. During the three years that elapsed after his last purchase of house property his affairs became so seriously embarrassed that it was found necessary, if not to sacrifice, at least to jeopardize the most cherished future of the family in order to meet the exigencies of the moment. In 1578 John and Mary Shakespeare mortgaged for forty pounds their most considerable piece of landed property, the estate of the Asbies. The mortgagee was a family connexion of their own, Edmund Lambert, who had married Mary Shakespeare's sister Joan. The subsequent history of this transaction shows how bitter must have been the need that induced the Shakespeares to surrender, even for a time, their full control over the ancestral estate. The next year, however, the pressure, instead of being relieved by the sacrifice, had become still more urgent, and the only outlying property that remained to meet it was the reversionary interest in the Snitterfield estate. Under a family settlement Mary Shakespeare, on the death of her stepmother, would come into the possession of houses and land at Snitterfield almost equal in value to the Asbies estate. But in 1579 the Shakespeares found it necessary to dispose altogether of this reversionary interest. In that year it was sold to Robert Webb for the sum of forty pounds. The buyer was a nephew of Mary Shakespeare, being the son of Alexander Webb, who had married her sister Margaret. In thus applying to relatives or family connexions in their need, and disposing of their property to them, the Shakespeares may have hoped it would be more easily regained should times of prosperity return. The sacrifice of the remaining interests in the Snitterfield property afforded, however, only a temporary relief, quite insufficient to remove the accumulating burden of debt and difficulty which now weighed the Shakespeares down. The notes of the proceedings of the Stratford corporation and of the local court of record sufficiently show that John Shakespeare's adverse fortune continued through a series of years, and they also enable us in part to understand how he bore himself under the changes in his social position that followed. These changes begin in the critical year 1578. In January of that year, when his brother aldermen were called upon to pay a considerable sum each as a contribution to the military equipment to be provided by the town, John Shakespeare is so far relieved that only one half the amount is required from him. Later in the year we find him wholly exempted from the weekly tax paid by his fellow-aldermen for the relief of the poor. In the spring of the following year, on a further tax for military purposes being laid on the town, he is unable to contribute anything, and is accordingly reported as a defaulter. A few years later, in an action for a debt, a verdict is recorded against him, with the official report that he had no goods on which distraint could be made. About the same time he appears to have been under some restraint, if not actually imprisoned for debt. And as late as 1592 it is officially stated, as a result of an inquiry into the number who fail to attend the church service once a month according to the statutory requirement, that John Shakespeare with some others, two of whom, curiously enough, are named Fluellen and Bardolph, "come not to church for fear of process for debt." In the year 1586 another alderman had at length been chosen in his place, the reason given being expressly because "John Shakespeare doth not come to the halles when they are warned, nor hath not done for a long time."

From this brief official record it would seem that under his reverse of fortune he was treated with marked sympathy and consideration

by his fellow townsmen. For at least seven years after his troubles first began his fellow-burgesses persist in keeping his name in its place of honour on their roll, partly no doubt as a mark of respect for his character and past services, and partly it may be in the hope that his fortunes might improve and prosperous days return. And, when at length he is superseded by the appointment of another in his place, this is done, not on the ground of his reduced circumstances, but simply because he voluntarily absents himself from the council, never attends its meetings or takes any part in its affairs. This is a noteworthy fact illustrating still further John Shakespeare's character. The statement clearly indicates the kind of moral collapse that had followed the continuous pressure of material reverses. The eager sanguine nature that had so genially expanded in prosperity was, it is clear, sorely chilled and depressed by adversity. He abandons the usual places of resort, withdraws himself from the meetings of the corporation, and ceases to associate with his fellow-burgesses. And, what is perhaps still more noticeable, he gives up attending church, and no longer even worships with his fellow-townsmen. All this is the more significant because his circumstances, though seriously embarrassed, and for some years much reduced, were never so desperate as to compel him to part with his freehold property in Henley Street. In the darkest hours of his clouded fortune he still retained the now world-famous houses associated with the poet's birth and early years. There was no adequate reason therefore why John Shakespeare should have so completely forsaken the usual haunts and regular assemblies of his fellow-townsmen and friends. But it seems clear, as already intimated, that, while gifted with a good deal of native energy and intelligence, and possessing a temper that was proud, sensitive, and even passionate, John Shakespeare lacked the kind of fortitude and moral courage which enables men to meet serious reverses of fortune with dignity and reserve, if not with cheerfulness and hope. With the instinct of a wounded animal he seems to have left the prosperous herd and retired apart to bear his pain and loss in solitude and alone. Nor apparently did he hold up his head again until the efficient support of his prosperous son enabled him to take active measures for the recovery of his alienated estate and lost position in the town. By the middle of the last decade of the 16th century the poet's success in his profession was thoroughly assured, and he was on the high road to wealth and fame. As actor, dramatist, and probably also as sharer in the Blackfriars theatre, he was in the receipt of a large income, and according to tradition received a considerable sum from the young earl of Southampton, to whom his poems were dedicated. The son was now therefore as able as he had always been willing to help his father to regain the position of comfort and dignity he had formerly occupied. We find accordingly that in 1597 John and Mary Shakespeare filed a bill in Chancery against John Lambert for the recovery of the Asbies estate, which had been mortgaged to his father nearly twenty years before. There had indeed been some movement in the matter ten years earlier, on the death of Edward Lambert the mortgagee. His son John being apparently anxious to settle the dispute, it was proposed that he should pay an additional sum of twenty pounds in order to convert the mortgage into a sale, and that he should then receive from the Shakespeares an absolute title to the estate. The arrangement was not, however, carried out, and in 1589 John Shakespeare brought a bill of complaint against Lambert in the Court of Queen's Bench. Nothing further, however, seems to have been done, probably because Lambert may have felt that in the low state of the Shakespeares' fortune the action could not be pressed. In 1597, however, there was a change in the relative position of the litigants, John Shakespeare having now the purse of his son at his command, and a bill in Chancery was accordingly filed against John Lambert. The plea in support of the Shakespeares' claim was that the original conditions of the mortgage had been fulfilled, the money in discharge having been offered to Edward Lambert at the proper date, but refused by him on the ground that other sums were owing which must also be repaid at the same time. To this plea John Lambert replied, and there is a still further "replication" on the part of the Shakespeares. How the matter was eventually decided is not known, no decree of the court in the case having been discovered. But the probabilities are that it was settled out of court, and, as the estate did not return to the Shakespeares, probably on the basis of the proposal already made,—that of the payment of an additional sum by John Lambert. About the same date, or rather earlier, in 1596, John Shakespeare also renewed his application to the heralds' college for a grant of arms, and this time with success. The grant was made on the ground that the history and position of the Shakespeare and Arden families fully entitled the applicant to receive coat armour. There can be no doubt that the means required for supporting these applications were supplied by the poet, and he would be well rewarded by the knowledge that in the evening of his days his father had at length realized the desire of his heart, being officially recognized as a "gentleman of worship." And, what would now perhaps please his father still better, he

would be able to hand on the distinction to his son, whose profession prevented him at the time from gaining it on his own account. John Shakespeare died in 1601, having through the affectionate care of his son spent the last years of his life in the ease and comfort befitting one who had not only been a prosperous burgess, but chief alderman and mayor of Stratford.

Of Mary Arden, the poet's mother, we know little, hardly anything directly indeed; but the little known is wholly in her favour. From the provisions of her father's will it is clear that of his seven daughters she was his favourite; and the links of evidence are now complete connecting her father Robert Arden with the great Warwickshire family of Arden, whose members had more than once filled the posts of high-sheriff and lord-lieutenant of the county. She was thus descended from an old county family, the oldest in Warwickshire, and had inherited the traditions of gentle birth and good breeding. Her ancestors are traced back, not only to Norman, but to Anglo-Saxon times, Alwin, an early representative of the family, and himself connected with the royal house of Athelstane, having been *vice-comes* or sheriff of Warwickshire in the time of Edward the Confessor. His son Turchill retained his extensive possessions under the Conqueror; and, when they were divided on the marriage of his daughter Margaret to a Norman noble created by William Rufus earl of Warwick, Turchill betook himself to his numerous lordships in the Arden district of the county, and assumed the name of De Arden or Arden. His descendants, who retained the name, multiplied in the shire, and were united in marriage from time to time with the best Norman blood of the kingdom. The family of Arden thus represented the union, under somewhat rare conditions of original distinction and equality, of the two great race elements that have gone to the making of the typical modern Englishman. The immediate ancestors of Mary Shakespeare were the Ardens of Parkhall, near Aston in the north-western part of the shire. During the Wars of the Roses Robert Arden of Parkhall, being at the outset of the quarrel a devoted Yorkist, was seized by the Lancastrians, attached for high treason, and executed at Ludlow in 1452. He left an only son, Walter Arden, who was restored by Edward IV. to his position in the country, and received back his hereditary lordships and lands. At his death in 1502 he was buried with great state in Aston church, where three separate monuments were erected to his memory. He had married Eleanor, second daughter of John Hampden of Bucks, and by her had eight children, six sons and two daughters. The eldest son, Sir John Arden of Parkhall, having been for some years esquire of the body of Henry VII., was knighted and rewarded by that monarch. Sir John was the great-uncle of Mary Shakespeare—his brother Thomas, the second son of Walter Arden, being her grandfather. Thomas Arden is found residing at Aston Cantlowe during the first half of the 16th century, and in the year 1501 he united with his son Robert Arden, Mary Shakespeare's father, in the purchase of the Snitterfield estate. Mary Shakespeare was thus directly connected by birth and lineage with those who had taken, and were to take, a foremost part in the great conflicts which constitute turning-points in the history of the country. On her father's side she was related to Robert Arden, who in the 15th century lost his life while engaged in rallying local forces on behalf of the White Rose, and on her mother's side to John Hampden, who took a still more distinguished part in the momentous civil struggles of the 17th century.

A very needless and abortive attempt has been made to call in question Robert Arden's social and family position on the ground that in a contemporary deed he is called a husbandman (*agricola*),—the assumption being that a husbandman is simply a farm-labourer. But the term husbandman was often used in Shakespeare's day to designate

a landed proprietor who farmed one of his own estates. The fact of his being spoken of in official documents as a husbandman does not therefore in the least affect Robert Arden's social position, or his relation to the great house of Arden, which is now established on the clearest evidence. He was, however, a younger member of the house, and would naturally share in the diminished fortune and obscurer career of such a position. But, even as a cadet of so old and distinguished a family, he would tenaciously preserve the generous traditions of birth and breeding he had inherited. Mary Arden was thus a gentlewoman in the truest sense of the term, and she would bring into her husband's household elements of character and culture that would be of priceless value to the family, and especially to the eldest son, who naturally had the first place in her care and love. A good mother is to an imaginative boy his earliest ideal of womanhood, and in her for him are gathered up, in all their vital fulness, the tenderness, sympathy, and truth, the infinite love, patient watchfulness, and self-abnegation of the whole sex. And the experience of his mother's bearing and example during the vicissitudes of their home life must have been for the future dramatist a vivid revelation of the more sprightly and gracious, as well as of the profounder elements, of female character. In the earlier and prosperous days at Stratford, when all within the home circle was bright and happy, and in her intercourse with her boy Mary Shakespeare could freely unfold the attractive qualities that had so endeared her to her father's heart, the delightful image of the young mother would melt unconsciously into the boy's mind, fill his imagination, and become a storehouse whence in after years he would draw some of the finest lines in his matchless portraiture of women. In the darker days that followed he would learn something of the vast possibilities of suffering, personal and sympathetic, belonging to a deep and sensitive nature, and as the troubles made head he would gain some insight into the quiet courage and self-possession, the unwearied fortitude, sweetness, and dignity which such a nature reveals when stirred to its depths by adversity, and rallying all its resources to meet the inevitable storms of fate. These storms were not simply the ever-deepening pecuniary embarrassments and consequent loss of social position. In the very crisis of the troubles, in the spring of 1579, death entered the straitened household, carrying off Ann, the younger of the only two remaining daughters of John and Mary Shakespeare. A characteristic trait of the father's grief and pride is afforded by the entry in the church books that a somewhat excessive sum was paid on this occasion for the tolling of the bell. Even with ruin staring him in the face John Shakespeare would forego no point of customary respect nor abate one jot of the ceremonial usage proper to the family of an eminent burgess, although the observance might involve a very needless outlay. In passing through these chequered domestic scenes and vividly realizing the alternations of grief and hope, the eldest son, even in his early years, would gain a fund of memorable experiences. From his native sensibility and strong family affection he would passionately sympathize with his parents in their apparently hopeless struggle against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Above all he would cherish the memory of his mother's noble bearing alike under serene and clouded skies, and learn to estimate at their true worth the refined strength of inherited courage, the dignified grace and silent helpfulness of inherited courtesy and genuine kindness of heart. These recollections were vitalized in the sprightly intelligence, quick sympathy, and loving truthfulness belonging to the female characters of his early comedies, as well as in the profounder notes of womanly grief and suffering

struck with so sure a hand and with such depth and intensity of tone, in the early tragedies.

But in addition to her constant influence and example the poet was probably indebted to his mother for certain elements of his own mind and character directly inherited from her. This position may be maintained without accepting the vague and comparatively empty dictum that Shakespeare derived his genius from his mother, as many eminent men are loosely said to have done. The sacred gift of genius has ever been, and perhaps always will be, inexplicable. No analysis, however complete, of the forces acting on the individual mind can avail to extract this vital secret. The elements of race, country, parentage, and education, though all powerful factors in its development, fail adequately to account for the mystery involved in pre-eminent poetical genius. Like the unseen wind from heaven it bloweth where it listeth, and the inspired voice is gladly heard of men, but none can tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. While, however, genius is thus without ancestry or lineage, there are elements of character and qualities of mind that, like the features of the countenance and the lines of the bodily frame, appear to be clearly transmissible from parent to child. Shakespeare not unfrequently recognizes this general truth, especially in relation to moral qualities; and it is mainly qualities of this kind that he himself appears to have inherited from his gently born and nurtured mother, Mary Arden of the Asbies. At least it is hardly fanciful to say that in the life and character of the poet we may trace elements of higher feeling and conduct derived from the hereditary culture and courtesy, the social insight and refinement, of the Ardens. Amongst such elements may be reckoned his strong sense of independence and self-respect, his delicate feeling of honour, his habitual consideration for others, and, above all perhaps, his deep instinctive regard for all family interests and relationships, for everything indeed connected with family character and position. The two epithets which those who knew Shakespeare personally most habitually applied to him appear to embody some of these characteristics. They unite in describing him as "gentle" and "honest" in character, and of an open and free, a frank and generous disposition. The epithet "gentle" may be taken to represent the innate courtesy, the delicate consideration for the feelings of others, which belongs in a marked degree to the best representatives of gentle birth, although happily it is by no means confined to them. The second epithet, "honest," which in the usage of the time meant honourable, may be taken to express the high spirit of independence and self-respect which carefully respects the just claims and rights of others. One point of the truest gentle breeding, which, if not inherited from his mother, must have been derived from her teaching and example, is the cardinal maxim, which Shakespeare seems to have faithfully observed, as to nice exactness in money matters—the maxim not lightly to incur pecuniary obligations, and if incurred to meet them with scrupulous precision and punctuality. This he could not have learnt from his father, who, though an honest man enough, was too eager and careless to be very particular on the point. Indeed, carelessness in money matters seems rather to have belonged to the Snitterfield family, the poet's uncle Henry having been often in the courts for debt, and, as we have seen, this was true of his father also. But, while his father was often prosecuted for debt, no trace of any such action against the poet himself, for any amount however small, has been discovered. He sued others for money due to him and at times for sums comparatively small, but he never appears as a debtor himself. Indeed, his whole life contradicts the supposition that he would ever

have rendered himself liable to such a humiliation. The family troubles must have very early developed and strengthened the high feeling of honour on this vital point he had inherited. He must obviously have taken to heart the lesson his father's imprudence could hardly fail to impress on a mind so capacious and reflective. John Shakespeare was no doubt a warm-hearted lovable man, who would carry the sympathy and affection of his family with him through all his troubles, but his eldest son, who early understood the secret springs as well as the open issues of life, must have realized vividly the rock on which their domestic prosperity had been wrecked, and before he left home he had evidently formed an invincible resolution to avoid it at all hazards. This helps to explain what has often excited surprise in relation to his future career—his business industry, financial skill, and steady progress to what may be called worldly success. Few things are more remarkable in Shakespeare's personal history than the resolute spirit of independence he seems to have displayed from the moment he left his straitened household to seek his fortunes in the world to the time when he returned to live at Stratford as a man of wealth and position in the town. While many of his fellow dramatists were spendthrifts, in constant difficulties, leading disorderly lives, and sinking into unhonoured graves, he must have husbanded his early resources with a rare amount of quiet firmness and self-control. Chettle's testimony as to Shakespeare's character and standing during his first years in London is decisive on this head. Having published a posthumous work by Greene, in which Marlowe and Shakespeare were somewhat sharply referred to, Chettle expressed his regret in a preface to a work of his own issued a few months later, in December 1592; he intimates that at the time of publishing Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* he knew neither Marlowe nor Shakespeare, and that he does not care to become acquainted with the former. But having made Shakespeare's acquaintance in the interval he expresses his regret that he should, even as editor, have published a word to his disparagement, adding this remarkable testimony: "Because myself have seen his demeanour, no less civil than he excellent in the qualities he professes; besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, which approves his art." So that Shakespeare, during his earliest and most anxious years in London, had not only kept himself out of debt and difficulty, but had established a reputation of strictly honourable conduct, "divers of worship," i.e., men of position and authority entitled to speak on such a point, "having reported his uprightness of dealing, which argued his honesty." Now, considering the poet's associates, occupations, and surroundings, this is significant testimony, and conclusively proves that, although fond of social life and its enjoyments, and without a touch of harshness or severity in his temper, he yet held himself thoroughly in hand, that amidst the ocean of new experiences and desires on which he was suddenly launched he never abandoned the helm, never lost command over his course, never sacrificed the larger interests of the future to the clamorous or excessive demands of the hour. And this no doubt indicates the direction in which he was most indebted to his mother. From his father he might have derived ambitious desires, energetic impulses, and an excitable temper capable of rushing to the verge of passionate excess, but, if so, it is clear that he inherited from his mother the firmness of nerve and fibre as well as the ethical strength required for regulating these violent and explosive elements. If he received as a paternal heritage a very tempest and whirlwind of passion, the maternal gift of temperance and

measure would help to give it smoothness and finish in the working, would supply in some degree at least the power of concentration and self-control indispensable for moulding the extremes of exuberant sensibility and passionate impulse into forms of intense and varied dramatic portraiture; and of course all the finer and regulative elements of character and disposition derived from the spindle side of the house would, throughout the poet's early years, be strengthened and developed by his mother's constant presence, influence, and example.

John and Mary Shakespeare had eight children, four sons and four daughters. Of the latter, two, the first Joan and Margaret, died in infancy, before the birth of the poet, and a third, Anne, in early childhood. In addition to the poet, three sons, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund, and one daughter, the second Joan, lived to maturity and will be referred to again. William Shakespeare was christened in Stratford church on April 26, 1564, having most probably been born, according to tradition, on the 23d. In July of the same year the town was visited by a severe outbreak of the plague, which in the course of a few months carried off one-sixth of the inhabitants. Fortunately, however, the family of the Shakespeares wholly escaped the contagion, their exemption being probably due to the fact that they lived in the healthiest part of the town, away from the river side, on a dry and porous soil. At the back of Henley Street, indeed, were the gravel pits of the guild, which were in frequent use for repairing the inundated pathways near the river after its periodical overflows. For two years and a half William, their first-born son, remained the only child of his parents, and all his mother's love and care would naturally be lavished upon him. A special bond would in this way be established between mother and child, and, his father's affairs being at the time in a highly prosperous state, Mary Shakespeare would see to it that the boy had all the pleasures and advantages suitable to his age, and which the family of a foremost Stratford burgess could easily command. Healthy outdoor enjoyment is not the least valuable part of a boy's education, and the chief recreations available for the future dramatist in those early years would be the sports and pastimes, the recurring festivals, spectacles, and festivities, of the town and neighbourhood, especially the varying round of rural occupations and the celebration in the forest farms and villages of the chief incidents of the agricultural year. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, each brought its own group of picturesque merry-makings, including some more important festivals that evoked a good deal of rustic pride, enthusiasm, and display. There were, during these years, at least three of the forest farms where the poet's parents would be always welcome, and where the boy must have spent many a happy day amidst the freedom and delights of outdoor country life. At Snitterfield his grandfather would be proud enough of the curly-headed youngster with the fine hazel eyes, and his uncle Henry would be charmed at the boy's interest in all he saw and heard as he trotted with him through the byres and barns, the poultry yard and steading, or, from a safe nook on the bushy margin of the pool, enjoyed the fun and excitement of sheep-washing, or later on watched the mysteries of the shearing and saw the heavy fleece fall from the sides of the palpitating victim before the sure and rapid furrowing of the shears. He would no doubt also be present at the shearing feast and see the queen of the festival receive her rustic guests and distribute amongst them her floral gifts. At Wilmeccote, in the solid oak-timbered dwelling of the Asbies, with its well-stocked garden and orchard, the boy would be received with cordial hospitality, as well as with the attention and respect due

to his parents as the proprietors and to himself as the heir of the maternal estate. At Shottery the welcome of the Shakespeares would not be less cordial or friendly, as there is evidence to show that as early as 1566 the families were known to each other, John Shakespeare having in that year rendered Richard Hathaway an important personal service. Here the poet met his future bride, Anne Hathaway, in all the charm of her sunny girlhood, and they may be said to have grown up together, except that from the difference of their ages she would reach early womanhood while he was yet a stripling. In his later youthful years he would thus be far more frequently at the Hathaway farm than at Snitterfield or the Asbies. There were, however, family connexions of the Shakespeares occupying farms further afield,—Hills and Webbs at Bearley and Lamberts at Barton-on-the-Heath. There was thus an exceptionally wide circle of country life open to the poet during his growing years. And in those years he must have repeatedly gone the whole picturesque round with the fresh senses and eager feeling, the observant eye and open mind, that left every detail, from the scarlet hips by the wayside to the proud tops of the eastern pines, imprinted indelibly upon his heart and brain. Hence the apt and vivid references to the scenes and scenery of his youth, the intense and penetrating glances at the most vital aspects as well as the minutest beauties of nature, with which his dramas abound. These glances are so penetrating, the result of such intimate knowledge and enjoyment, that they often seem to reveal in a moment, and by a single touch as it were, all the loveliness and charm of the objects thus rapidly flashed on the inward eye. In relation to the scenes of his youth what fresh and delightful hours at the farms are reflected in the full summer beauty and motley humours of a sheep-shearing festival in the *Winter's Tale*; in the autumn glow of the "sun-burnt sicklemon and sedge-crowned nymphs" of the masque in the *Tempest*; and in the vivid pictures of rural sights and sounds in spring and winter so musically rendered in the owl and cuckoo songs of *Love's Labour's Lost*! But, in addition to the festivities and merry-makings of the forest farms, it is clear that, in his early years, the poet had some experience of country sports proper, such as hunting, hawking, coursing, wild-duck shooting, and the like. Many of these sports were pursued by the local gentry and the yeomen together, and the poet, as the son of a well-connected burgess of Stratford, who had recently been mayor of the town and possessed estates in the county, would be well entitled to share in them, while his handsome presence and courteous bearing would be likely to ensure him a hearty welcome. If any of the stiffer local magnates looked coldly upon the high-spirited youth, or resented in any way his presence amongst them, their conduct would be likely enough to provoke the kind of sportive retaliations that might naturally culminate in the deer-stealing adventure. However this may be, it is clear from internal evidence that the poet was practically familiar with the field sports of his day.

In the town the chief holiday spectacles and entertainments were those connected with the Christmas, New Year, and Easter festivals, the May-day rites and games, the pageants of delight of Whitsuntide, the beating of the bounds during Rogation week, and the occasional representation of mysteries, moralities, and stage-plays. In relation to the main bent of the poet's mind, and the future development of his powers, the latter constituted probably the most important educational influence and stimulus which the social activities and public entertainments of the place could have supplied. Most of these recurring celebrations involved, it is true, a dramatic