

element,—some hero or exploit, some emblem or allegory, being represented by means of costumed personations, pantomime, and dumb show, while in many cases songs, dances, and brief dialogues were interposed as part of a performance. There were masques and morris-dancing on May-day, as well as *mummers* and waits at Christmas. In a number of towns and villages the exploits of Robin Hood and his associates were also celebrated on May-day, often amidst a picturesque confusion of floral emblems and forestry devices. In Shakespeare's time the May-day rites and games thus included a variety of elements charged with legendary, historical, and emblematical significance. But, notwithstanding this mixture of festive elements, the celebration as a whole retained its leading character and purpose. It was still the spontaneous meeting of town and country to welcome the fresh beauty of the spring, the welcome being reflected in the open spaces of the sports by tall painted masts decked with garlands, streamers, and flowery crowns, and in the public thoroughfares by the leafy screens and arches, the bright diffused blossoms and fragrant spoils brought from the forest by rejoicing youths and maidens at the dawn. May-day was thus well fitted to be used, as it often is by Shakespeare, as the comprehensive symbol of all that is delightful and exhilarating in the renewed life and vernal freshness of the opening year.

After May-day, Whitsuntide was at Stratford perhaps the most important season of festive pageantry and scenic display. In addition to the procession of the guild and trades and the usual holiday ales and sports, it involved a distinct and somewhat noteworthy element of dramatic representation. And, as in the case of the regular stage-plays, the high-bailiff and council appear to have patronized and supported the performances. We find in the chamberlain's accounts entries of sums paid "for exhibiting a pastyme at Whitsuntide." Shakespeare himself refers to these dramatic features of the celebration, and in a manner that almost suggests he may in his youth have taken part in them. However this may be, the popular celebrations of Shakespeare's youth must have supplied a kind of training in the simpler forms of poetry and dramatic art, and have afforded some scope for the early exercise of his own powers in both directions. This view is indirectly confirmed by a passage in the early scenes of *The Return from Parnassus*, where the academic speakers sneer at the poets who come up from the country without any university training. The sneer is evidently the more bitter as it implies that some of these poets had been successful,—more successful than the college-bred wits. The academic critics suggest that the nurseries of these poets were the country ale-house and the country green,—the special stimulus to their powers being the May-day celebrations, the morris-dances, the hobby-horse, and the like.

But the moralities, interludes, and stage-plays proper afforded the most direct and varied dramatic instruction available in Shakespeare's youth. The earliest popular form of the drama was the mystery or miracle play, dealing in the main with Biblical subjects; and, Coventry being one of the chief centres for the production and exhibition of the mysteries, Shakespeare had ample opportunities of becoming well acquainted with them. Some of the acting companies formed from the numerous trade guilds of the "shire-town" were moreover in the habit of visiting the neighbouring cities for the purpose of exhibiting their plays and pageants. There is evidence of their having performed at Leicester and Bristol in Shakespeare's youth, and on returning from the latter city they would most probably have stopped at Stratford and given some performances there. And in any case,

Coventry being so near to Stratford, the fame of the multiplied pageants presented during the holiday weeks of Easter and Whitsuntide, and especially of the brilliant concourse that came to witness the grand series of Corpus Christi plays, would have early attracted the young poet, and he must have become familiar with the precincts of the Grey Friars at Coventry during the celebration of these great ecclesiastical festivals. The indirect evidence of this is supplied by Shakespeare's references to the well-known characters of the mysteries, such as Herod and Pilate, Cain and Judas, Termagant with his turbaned Turks and infidels, black-burning souls, grim and gaping hell, and the like. The moralities and interludes that gradually took the place of the Biblical mysteries were also acted by companies of strolling players over a wide area in the towns and cities of the Midland and western counties. Malone gives from an eye-witness a detailed and graphic account of the public acting of one of these companies at Gloucester in 1569, the year during which the poet's father as high-bailiff had brought the stage-players into Stratford and inaugurated a series of performances in the guild hall. The play acted at Gloucester was *The Cradle of Security*, one of the most striking and popular of the early moralities or interludes. Willis, the writer of the account, was just Shakespeare's age, having been born in 1564. As a boy of five years old he had been taken by his father to see the play, and, standing between his father's knees, watched the whole performance with such intense interest that, writing about it seventy years afterwards, he says, "the subject took such an impression upon me that when I came afterwards towards man's estate it was as fresh in my memory as if I had seen it newly enacted." In proof of this he gives a clear and detailed outline of the play. Willis was evidently a man of no special gifts, and, if the witnessing a play when a child could produce on an ordinary mind so memorable an impression, we may imagine what the effect would be on the mind of the marvellous boy who, about the same time and under like circumstances, was taken by his father to see the performances at Stratford. The company that first visited Stratford being a distinguished one, their plays were probably of a higher type and better acted than *The Cradle of Security* at Gloucester; and their effect on the young poet would be the more vivid and stimulating from the keener sensibilities and latent dramatic power to which in his case they appealed. These early impressions would be renewed and deepened with the boy's advancing years. During the decade of Shakespeare's active youth from 1573 to 1584 the best companies in the kingdom constantly visited Stratford, and he would thus have the advantage of seeing the finest dramas yet produced acted by the best players of the time. This would be for him a rich and fruitful experience of the flexible and impressive form of art which at a moment of exuberant national vitality was attracting to itself the scattered forces of poetic genius, and soon gained a position of unrivalled supremacy. As he watched the performance in turn of the various kinds of interlude, comedy, and pastoral, of chronicle and biographical plays, of historical, domestic, or realistic tragedy, he would gain in instructive insight into the wide scope and vast resources of the rising drama. And he would have opportunities of acquiring some knowledge of stage business, management, and effects, as well as of dramatic form. Amongst the companies that visited Stratford were those of the powerful local earls of Leicester, Warwick, and Worcester, whose members were largely recruited from the Midland counties. The earl of Leicester's company, the most eminent of all, included several Warwickshire men, while some of the leading members, like the elder Burbage, appear to have

been natives of Stratford or the immediate neighbourhood. And the poet's father being, as we have seen, so great a friend of the players, and during his most prosperous years in constant communication with them, his son would have every facility for studying their art. Curiosity and interest and the like would prompt him to find out all he could about the use of the stage "books," the distribution of the parts, the cues and exits, the management of voice and gesture, the graduated passion and controlled power of the leading actors in the play, the just subordination of the less important parts, and the measure and finish of each on which the success of the whole so largely depended. It is not improbable, too, that in connexion with some of the companies Shakespeare may have tried his hand both as poet and actor even before leaving Stratford. His poetical powers could hardly be unknown, and he may have written scenes and passages to fill out an imperfect or complete a defective play; and from his known interest in their work he may have been pressed by the actors to appear in some secondary part on the stage. In any case he would be acquainted with some of the leading players in the best companies, so that when he decided to adopt their profession he might reasonably hope on going to London to find occupation amongst them without much difficulty or delay.

Shakespeare received the technical part or scholastic elements of his education in the grammar school of his native town. The school was an old foundation dating from the second half of the 15th century and connected with the guild of the Holy Cross. But, having shared the fate of the guild at the suppression of religious houses, it was restored by Edward VI. in 1553, a few weeks before his death. The "King's New School," as it was now called, thus represented the fresh impulse given to education throughout the kingdom during the reign of Henry VIII.'s earnest-minded son, and well sustained under the enlightened rule of his sister, the learned virgin queen. What the course of instruction was in these country schools during the second half of the 16th century has recently been ascertained by special research,¹ and may be stated, at least in outline, with some degree of certainty and precision. As might have been expected, Latin was the chief scholastic drill, the thorough teaching of the Roman tongue being, as the name implies, the very purpose for which the grammar schools were originally founded. The regular teaching of Greek was indeed hardly introduced into the country schools until a somewhat later period. But the knowledge of Latin, as the language of all the learned professions, still largely used in literature, was regarded as quite indispensable. Whatever else might be neglected, the business of "gerund-grinding" was vigorously carried on, and the methods of teaching, the expedients and helps devised for enabling the pupils to read, write, and talk Latin, if rather complex and operose, were at the same time ingenious and effective. As a rule the pupil entered the grammar school at seven years old, having already acquired either at home or at the petty school the rudiments of reading and writing. During the first year the pupils were occupied with the elements of Latin grammar, the accidence, and lists of common words which were committed to memory and repeated two or three times a week, as well as further impressed upon their minds by varied exercises. In the second year the grammar was fully mastered, and the boys were drilled in short phrase-books, such as the *Sententia Pueriles*, to increase their familiarity with the structure and idioms of the language. In the third year the books used were *Æsop's Fables*, *Cato's Maxims*, and some good manual of

¹ "What Shakespeare learnt at School," *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1879, Jan. and May, 1880.

school conversation, such as the *Confabulationes Pueriles*. The most popular of these manuals in Shakespeare's day was that by the eminent scholar and still more eminent teacher Corderius. His celebrated *Colloquia* were probably used in almost every school in the kingdom; and Hoole, writing in 1652, says that the worth of the book had been proved "by scores if not hundreds of impressions in this and foreign countries." Bayle, indeed, says that from its universal use in the schools the editions of the book might be counted by thousands. This helps to illustrate the colloquial use of Latin, which was so essential a feature of grammar school discipline in the 16th and 17th centuries. The evidence of Brinsley, who was Shakespeare's contemporary, conclusively proves that the constant speaking of Latin by all the boys of the more advanced forms was indispensable even in the smallest and poorest of the country grammar schools. The same holds true of letter-writing in Latin; and this, as we know from the result, was diligently and successfully practised in the Stratford grammar school. During his school days, therefore, Shakespeare would be thoroughly trained in the conversational and epistolary use of Latin, and several well-known passages in his dramas show that he did not forget this early experience, but that like everything else he acquired it turned to fruitful uses in his hands. The books read in the more advanced forms of the school were the *Ecloques* of Mantuanus, the *Tristia* and *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, Cicero's *Offices*, *Orations*, and *Epistles*, the *Georgics* and *Æneid* of Virgil, and in the highest form parts of Juvenal, of the comedies of Terence and Plautus, and of the tragedies of Seneca. Shakespeare, having remained at school for at least six years, must have gone through a greater part of this course, and, being a pupil of unusual quickness and ability, endowed with rare strength of mental grip and firmness of moral purpose, he must during those years have acquired a fair mastery of Latin, both colloquial and classical. After the difficulties of the grammar had been overcome, his early intellectual cravings and poetic sensibilities would be alike quickened and gratified by the new world of heroic life and adventure opened to him in reading such authors as Ovid and Virgil. Unless the teaching at Stratford was very exceptionally poor he must have become so far familiar with the favourite school authors, such as Ovid, Tully, and Virgil, as to read them intelligently and with comparative ease.

And there is no reason whatever for supposing that the instruction at the Stratford grammar school was less efficient than in the grammar schools of other provincial towns of about the same size. There is abundant evidence to show that, with the fresh impulse given to education under energetic Protestant auspices in the second half of the 16th century, the teaching even in the country grammar schools was as a rule painstaking, intelligent, and fruitful. Brinsley himself was for many years an eminent and successful teacher in the grammar school of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, a small town on the borders of Warwickshire, only a few miles indeed from Coventry; and in his *Ludus Literarius*, referring to a book of exercises on the Latin accidence and grammar he had prepared, he says that he had chiefly followed the order of the questions "of that ancient schoolmaster Master Brunsword of Maxfield (Macclesfield) in Cheshire, so much commended for his order and scholars; who, of all other, commeth therein the nearest unto the marke." Another provincial schoolmaster, Mr Robert Doughty, a contemporary of Shakespeare, who was for nearly fifty years at the head of the Wakefield grammar school, is celebrated by Hoole, not only as an eminent teacher who had constantly sent out good scholars, but as one who had produced a class of teachers emulating his own educational zeal and intelligence. The masters of the Stratford grammar school in Shakespeare's time seem to have been men of a similar stamp. One of them, John Brunsword, who held the post for three years during the poet's childhood, was almost certainly a relative, probably a son, of the eminent Macclesfield master whose character and work Brinsley praises so highly. At least, Brunsword being an uncommon name, when we find it borne by two grammar-school masters in neighbouring counties who flourished either together or in close succession to each other, it is natural to conclude that there must have been some relationship between

them, and if so we may be sure that the Stratford master, who was evidently the younger man, had been well trained and must have proved an efficient teacher. The masters who followed Brunswold were university men of at least average attainments and ability, as they rapidly gained promotion in the church. Thomas Hunt, who was head-master during the most important years of Shakespeare's school course, became incumbent of the neighbouring village of Laddington; and, if there is any truth in the tradition that the poet's marriage was celebrated there, it is not improbable that, from having been a favourite pupil, he may have become the personal friend of his former master. In any case, during the years of his school attendance the poet must have gained sufficient knowledge of Latin to read for his own instruction and delight the authors included in the school curriculum who had struck his fancy and stimulated his awakening powers. While his writings supply clear evidence in support of this general position, they also bring out vividly the fact that Ovid was a special favourite with Shakespeare at the outset of his career. The influence of this romantic and elegiac Roman poet is indeed strongly marked and clearly traceable in the poems as well as in the early plays.

Home
life on
leaving
school.

According to Rowe's account, Shakespeare was withdrawn from school about 1578, a year or two before he had completed the usual course for boys going into business or passing on to the universities. The immediate cause of the withdrawal seems to have been the growing embarrassments of John Shakespeare's affairs, the boy being wanted at home to help in the various departments of his father's business. The poet had just entered on his fifteenth year, and his school attainments and turn for affairs, no less than his native energy and ability, fitted him for efficient action in almost any fairly open career. But open careers were not numerous at Stratford, and John Shakespeare's once prosperous way of life was now hampered by actual and threatening difficulties which the zeal and affection of his son were powerless to remove or avert. No doubt the boy did his best, trying to understand his father's position, and discharging with prompt alacrity any duties that came to be done. But he would soon discover how hopeless such efforts were, and with this deepening conviction there would come upon him the reaction of weariness and disappointment, which is the true *inferno* of ardent youthful minds. His father's difficulties were evidently of the chronic and complicated kind against which the generous and impulsive forces of youth and inexperience are of little avail. And, after his son had done his utmost to relieve the sinking fortunes of the family, the aching sense of failure would be among the bitterest experiences of his early years, would be indeed a sharp awakening to the realities and responsibilities of life. Within the narrow circle of his own domestic relationships and dearest interests he would feel with Hamlet that the times were out of joint, and in his gloomier moods be ready to curse the destiny that seemed to lay upon him, in part at least, the burden of setting the obstinately crooked straight. As a relief from such moods and a distraction from the fruitless toils of home affairs, he would naturally plunge with keener zest into such outlets for youthful energy and adventure as the town and neighbourhood afforded. What the young poet's actual occupations were during the four years and a half that elapsed between his leaving school and his marriage we have no adequate materials for deciding in any detail. But the local traditions on the subject would seem to indicate that after the adverse turn in his fortunes John Shakespeare had considerably contracted the area of his commercial transactions. Having virtually alienated his wife's patrimony by the mortgage of the Asbies and the disposal of all interest in the Snitterfield property, he seems to have given up the agricultural branches of his business, retaining only his original occupation of dealer in leather, skins, and sometimes carcases as well. His wider speculations had probably turned out ill, and having no longer any land of his own he apparently relinquished

the corn and timber business, restricting himself to the town trades of fellmonger, wool-stapler, and butcher. Aubrey at least had heard that Shakespeare after leaving school assisted his father in these branches,—and at times with a deal of youthful extravagance indicative of irrepressible energy and spirit. Aubrey also reports, on the authority of Beeston, and as incidentally proving he knew Latin fairly well, that for a time the poet was a teacher in a country school; while Malone believed from the internal evidence of his writings that he had spent two or three years in a lawyer's office. These stories may be taken to indicate, what is no doubt true, that at a time of domestic need the poet was ready to turn his hand to anything that offered. It is no doubt also true that he would prefer the comparative retirement and regularity of teaching or clerk's work to the intermittent drudgery and indolence of a retail shop in a small market-town. There is, however, no direct evidence in favour of either supposition; and the indirect evidence for the lawyer's office theory which has found favour with several recent critics is by no means decisive. Whether engaged in a lawyer's office or not, we may be quite sure that during the years of adolescence he was actively occupied in work of some kind or other. He was far too sensible and energetic to remain without employment; shapeless idleness had no attraction for his healthy nature, and his strong family feeling is certainly in favour of the tradition that for a time he did his best to help his father in his business.

But, however he may have been employed, this interval of home life was for the poet a time of active growth and development, and no kind of business routine could avail to absorb his expanding powers or repress the exuberant vitality of his nature. During these critical years, to a vigorous and healthy mind such as Shakespeare possessed, action—action of an adventurous and recreative kind, in which the spirit is quickened and refreshed by new experiences—must have become an absolute necessity of existence. The necessity was all the more urgent in Shakespeare's case from the narrower circle within which the once prosperous and expanding home life was now confined. We have seen that the poet occasionally shared the orthodox field sports organized by the country gentlemen, where landlords and tenants, yeomen and squires, animated by a kindred sentiment, meet to a certain extent on common ground. But this long-drawn pursuit of pleasure as an isolated unit in a local crowd would hardly satisfy the thirst for passionate excitement and personal adventure which is so dominant an impulse in the hey-day of youthful blood. It is doubtful, too, whether in the decline of his father's fortunes Shakespeare would have cared to join the prosperous concourse of local sportsmen. He would probably be thrown a good deal amongst a somewhat lower, though no doubt energetic and intelligent, class of town companions. And they would devise together exploits which, if somewhat irregular, possessed the inspiring charm of freedom and novelty, and would thus be congenial to an ardent nature with a passionate interest in life and action. Such a nature would eagerly welcome enterprises with a dash of hazard and daring in them, fitted to bring the more resolute virtues into play, and develop in moments of emergency the manly qualities of vigilance and promptitude, courage and endurance, dexterity and skill. It would seem indeed at first sight as though a quiet neighbourhood like Stratford could afford little scope for such adventures. But even at Stratford there were always the forest and the river, the outlying farms with adjacent parks and manor houses, the wide circle of picturesque towns and villages with their guilds and clubs, their local Shallows and Slenders, Dogberries and Verges; and in the most quiet neigh-

bourhood it still remains true that adventures are to be adventurous. That this dictum was verified in Shakespeare's experience seems clear alike from the internal evidence of his writings and the concurrent testimony of local tradition. In its modern form the story of the Bidford Challenge exploit may indeed be little better than a myth. But in substance it is by no means incredible, and if we knew all about the incident we should probably find there were other points to be tested between the rival companies besides strength of head to resist the effects of the well-known Bidford beer. The prompt refusal to return with his companions and renew the contest on the following day,—a decision playfully expressed and emphasized in the well-known doggerel lines,—implies that in Shakespeare's view such forms of good fellowship were to be accepted on social not self-indulgent grounds, that they were not to be resorted to for the sake of the lower accessories only, or allowed to grow into evil habits from being unduly repeated or prolonged. It is clear that this general principle of recreative and adventurous enterprise, announced more than once in his writings, guided his own conduct even in the excitable and impulsive season of youth and early manhood. If he let himself go, as he no doubt sometimes did, it was only as a good rider on coming to the turf gives the horse his head in order to enjoy the exhilaration of a gallop, having the bridle well in hand the while, and able to rein in the excited steed at a moment's notice. It may be said of Shakespeare at such seasons, as of his own Prince Hal, that he—

"Obscur'd his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness; which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crevice in his faculty."

The deer-stealing tradition illustrates the same point; and though belonging perhaps to a rather later period it may be conveniently noticed here. This fragment of Shakespeare's personal history rests on a much surer basis than the Bidford incident, being supported not only by early multiplied and constant traditions, but by evidence which the poet himself has supplied. Rowe's somewhat formal version of the narrative is to the effect that Shakespeare in his youth was guilty of an extravagance which, though unfortunate at the time, had the happy result of helping to develop his dramatic genius. This misfortune was that of being engaged with some of his companions more than once in robbing a park belonging to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote. Sir Thomas, it is said, prosecuted him sharply for the offence, and in retaliation he wrote a satirical ballad upon him, which so incensed the baronet that Shakespeare thought it prudent to leave Stratford and join his old friends and associates the players in London. Other versions of the tradition exist giving fresh details, some of which are on the face of them later additions of a fictitious and fanciful kind. But it would be useless to discuss the accretions incident to any narrative, however true, orally transmitted through two or three generations before being reduced to a written shape. All that can be required or expected of such traditions is that they should contain a kernel of biographical fact, and be true in substance although possibly not in form. And tried by this test the tradition in question must certainly be accepted as a genuine contribution to our knowledge of the poet's early years. Indeed it could hardly have been repeated again and again by inhabitants of Stratford within a few years of Shakespeare's death if it did not embody a characteristic feature of his early life which was well known in the town. This feature was no doubt the poet's love of woodland life, and the woodland sports through which it is realized in the most animated and vigorous form.

The neighbourhood of Stratford in Shakespeare's day afforded considerable scope for this kind of healthy recreation. There was the remnant of the old Arden forest, which, though still nominally a royal domain, was virtually free for many kinds of sport. Indeed, the observance of the forest laws had fallen into such neglect in the early years of Elizabeth's reign that even unlicensed deer-hunting in the royal domains was common enough. And hardly any attempt was made to prevent the pursuit of the smaller game belonging to the warren and the chase. Then, three or four miles to the east of Stratford, between the Warwick road and the river, stretched the romantic park of Fulbroke, which, as the property of an attainted exile, sequestered though not seized by the crown, was virtually open to all comers. There can be little doubt that when Shakespeare and his companions wished a day's outing in the woods they usually resorted to some part of the Arden forest still available for sporting purposes. But sometimes, probably on account of its greater convenience, they seem to have changed the venue to Fulbroke Park, and there they might easily come into collision with Sir Thomas Lucy's keepers. There has been a good deal of discussion as to the scene of the traditional adventure, but the probabilities of the case are strongly in favour of Fulbroke. When Sir Walter Scott visited Sir Thomas Lucy at Charlecote in 1828, Sir Thomas told him that the park from which Shakespeare stole the deer was not Charlecote, but one belonging to a mansion at some distance, the context indicating Fulbroke as the scene of the exploit. And Mr Bracebridge, in his interesting pamphlet *Shakespeare no Deer-Stealer*, has thrown fresh light on the subject, and made the whole incident more intelligible by marshalling the reasons in favour of this view. The park had, it seems, been held by the Lucys under the crown in the time of Henry VIII., but was afterwards granted by Queen Mary to one of her privy councillors,—Sir Francis Englefield. Being a devoted Romanist, he fled to Spain on the accession of Elizabeth and was subsequently adjudged a traitor, the Fulbroke estate being sequestered though not administered by the crown. The park being thus without a legal custodian for more than a quarter of a century became disparted, the palings having fallen into decay and the fences being in many places broken down. The deer with which it abounded were thus left without any legal protection, and might be hunted at will by enterprising sportsmen. The only person likely to check this freedom or to attempt to do so was Sir Thomas Lucy, whose own park of Charlecote ran for a mile along the other side of the river just below Fulbroke. As the nearest large landed proprietor, having a direct interest in the state of the neighbouring park, he might naturally think himself entitled to act as a kind of *ad interim* custodian of Fulbroke. And with his aristocratic feeling, his severe and exacting temper, he would be likely enough to push his temporary guardianship of custom or courtesy into an exclusive right, at least so far as the venison of the park was concerned. In any case Sir Thomas's keepers would occasionally perambulate Fulbroke Park as a protection to Charlecote, and in doing so they probably came upon Shakespeare and his companions after they had brought down a buck and were about to break it up for removal. Or the hunted deer may have crossed the river at the shallow ford between the two parks, and, pursued by the eager sportsmen, have been brought down within the Charlecote grounds. In either case the keepers would denounce the trespass, and possibly with menacing and abusive words demand the buck for their master. On being treated in this insulting way, Shakespeare, who had pride and personal dignity as well as courage, would deny any intentional or actual trespass, refuse to give up the venison, and plainly tell the keepers that they might report the matter to Sir Thomas Lucy and he would answer for himself and his companions. On finding what had happened, Sir Thomas would be all the more incensed and indignant from the consciousness that he had pushed his claims beyond the point at which they could legally be enforced. And, being to some extent in a false position, he would be proportionately wrathful and vindictive against the youthful sportsmen, and especially against their leader who had dared to resist and defy his authority. Sir Thomas was the great man of Stratford, who came periodically to the town on magistrate's business, was appealed to as arbitrator in special cases, and entertained by the corporation during his visits. In character, and entertained by the corporation during his visits. In character, he seems to have combined aristocratic pride and narrowness with the harshness and severity of the Puritan temper. As a landed proprietor and local magnate he was exacting and exclusive, looking with a kind of Puritanical sourness on all youthful frolics, merriment, and recreation. He would thus have a natural antipathy to young Shakespeare's free, generous, and enjoying nature, and would resent as an unpardonable outrage his high-spirited conduct in attempting to resist any claims he chose to make. Sir Thomas would no doubt vent his indignation to the authorities at Stratford, and try to set the law in motion, and failing in this might have threatened, as Justice Shallow does, to make a Star-Chamber matter of it. This was the kind of extreme course which a man in his position might take where there was no available local redress for any wrong he imagined himself to have suffered. And

the Stratford authorities, being naturally anxious to propitiate the great man, may have suggested that it would be well if young Shakespeare could be out of the way for a time. This would help him to decide on the adoption of a plan already seriously entertained of going to London to push his fortune among the players.

There is, however, another aspect in which this traditional incident may be looked at, which seems at least worthy of consideration. It is possible that Sir Thomas Lucy may have been prejudiced against the Shakespeares on religious grounds, and that this feeling may have prompted him to a display of exceptional severity against their eldest son. As we have seen, he was a narrow and extreme, a persecuting and almost fanatical Protestant, and several events had recently happened calculated to intensify his bitterness against the Romanists. In particular, Mary Shakespeare's family connexions—the Ardens of Parkhall—had been convicted of conspiracy against the queen's life. The son-in-law of Edward Arden, John Somerville, a rash and "hot-spirited young gentleman," instigated by Hall, the family priest, had formed the design of going to London and assassinating Queen Elizabeth with his own hand. He started on his journey in November 1583, but talked so incautiously by the way that he was arrested, conveyed to the Tower, and under a threat of the rack confessed everything, accusing his father-in-law as an accomplice and the priest as the instigator of the crime. All three were tried and convicted, their fate being probably hastened, as Dugdale states, by the animosity of Leicester against the Ardens. Somerville strangled himself in prison, and Edward Arden was hanged at Tyburn. These events produced a deep impression in Warwickshire, and no one in the locality would be more excited by them than Sir Thomas Lucy. His intensely vindictive feeling against the Romanists was exemplified a little later by his bringing forward a motion in parliament in favour of devising some new and lingering tortures for the execution of the Romanist conspirator Parry. As Mr Froude puts it, "Sir Thomas Lucy,—Shakespeare's Lucy, the original perhaps of Justice Shallow, with an English fierceness at the bottom of his stupid nature,—having studied the details of the execution of Gerard, proposed in the House of Commons 'that some new law should be devised for Parry's execution, such as might be thought fittest for his extraordinary and horrible treason.'" The Ardens were devoted Romanists; the terrible calamity that had befallen the family occurred only a short time before the deer-stealing adventure; and the Shakespeares themselves, so far from being Puritans, were suspected by many of being but indifferent Protestants.

John Shakespeare was an irregular attendant at church, and soon ceased to appear there at all, so that Sir Thomas Lucy probably regarded him as little better than a recusant. In any case Sir Thomas would be likely to resent the elder Shakespeare's convivial turn and profuse hospitality as alderman and bailiff, and especially his official patronage of the players and active encouragement of their dramatic representations in the guild hall. The Puritans had a rooted antipathy to the stage, and to the jaundiced eye of the local justice the reverses of the Shakespeares would probably appear as a judgment on their way of life. He would all the more eagerly seize any chance of humiliating their eldest son, who still held up his head and dared to look upon life as a scene of cheerful activity and occasional enjoyment. The young poet, indeed, embodied the very characteristics most opposed to Sir Thomas's dark and narrow conceptions of life and duty. His notions of public duty were very much restricted to persecuting the Romanists and preserving the game on Protestant estates. And Shakespeare probably took no pains to conceal his want of sympathy with these

supreme objects of aristocratic and Puritanical zeal. And Sir Thomas, having at length caught him, as he imagined, in a technical trespass, would be sure to pursue the culprit with the unrelenting rigour of his hard and gloomy nature. But, whatever may have been the actual or aggravating circumstances of the original offence, there can be no doubt that an element of truth is contained in the deer-stealing tradition. The substantial facts in the story are that Shakespeare in his youth was fond of woodland sport, and that in one of his hunting adventures he came into collision with Sir Thomas Lucy's keepers, and fell under the severe ban of that local potentate. The latter point is indirectly confirmed by Shakespeare's inimitable sketch of the formal country justice in the *Second Part of Henry IV.* and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.—Robert Shallow, Esq., being sufficiently identified with Sir Thomas Lucy by the pointed allusion to the coat of arms, as well as by other allusions of a more indirect but hardly less decisive kind. To talk of the sketch as an act of revenge is to treat it too seriously, or rather in too didactic and pedestrian a spirit. Having been brought into close relations with the justice, Shakespeare could hardly be expected to resist the temptation of turning to dramatic account so admirable a subject for humorous portraiture. The other point of the tradition, Shakespeare's fondness for woodland life, is supported by the internal evidence of his writings, and especially by the numerous allusions to the subject in his poems and earlier plays. The many references to woods and sports in the poems are well known; and in the early plays the allusions are not less frequent and in some respects even more striking. Having no space, however, to give these in detail, a general reference must suffice. The entire action of *Love's Labour's Lost* takes place in a royal park, while the scene of the most critical events of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a forest inhabited by generous outlaws whose offences appear to have been youthful follies, and who on being pardoned by the duke become his loyal followers. In these early plays it seems as though Shakespeare could hardly conceive of a royal palace or capital city without a forest close at hand as the scene of princely sport, criminal intrigue, or fairy enchantment. Outside the gates of Athens swept over hill and dale the wonderful forest which is the scene of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; and in *Titus Andronicus* imperial Rome seems to be almost surrounded by the brightness and terror, the inspiring charm and sombre shades of rolling forest lawns and ravines, the "ruthless, vast, and gloomy woods."

There can be no doubt, therefore, that during the years of home life at Stratford Shakespeare was often in the forest. But in the latter part of the time he would be found still more frequently hastening through the fields to Shottery, paying long visits at the Hathaway farm, followed by late and reluctant leave-takings. For the next important fact in Shakespeare's history is his marriage with Anne Hathaway. This event, or rather the formal and ecclesiastical part of it, took place in the end of November 1582, the bond for the licence from the consistory court being dated on the 28th of the month. Mr Halliwell-Phillipps has, however, sufficiently proved by detailed instances that the formal and public part of the ceremony would, according to the usage of the time, have been preceded some months earlier by the betrothal or pre-contract, which was in itself of legal validity. Shakespeare's marriage may therefore be dated from the summer of 1582, he being then in his nineteenth year, while his bride was between seven and eight years older. Many of the poet's biographers have assumed that the marriage was a hasty, unsuitable, and in its results an unhappy one. It is necessary therefore to repeat with all possible

Shakespeare's marriage

emphasis the well-founded statement of Mr Halliwell-Phillipps that "there is not a particle of direct evidence" for either of these suppositions. The marriage could hardly have been a hasty one, for, as we have seen, the two families had been intimate for fifteen years, and Shakespeare had known Anne Hathaway from his early boyhood. As to whether it was suitable or not Shakespeare himself was the best and only adequate judge, and there is not, in the whole literature of the subject, even the shadow of a successful appeal against his decision. And, so far from the marriage having been unhappy, all the evidence within our reach goes to show that it was not only a union of mutual affection but a most fortunate event for the poet himself, as well as for the wife and mother who remained at the head of his family, venerated and loved by her children, and a devoted helpmate to her husband to the very end. Looking at the matter in its wider aspects, and especially in relation to his future career, it may be said that Shakespeare's early marriage gave him at the most emotional and unsettled period of life a fixed centre of affection and a supreme motive to prompt and fruitful exertion. This would have a salutary and steadying effect on a nature so richly endowed with plastic fancy and passionate impulse, combined with rare powers of reflective foresight and self-control. If Shakespeare's range and depth of emotional and imaginative genius had not been combined with unusual force of character and strength of ethical and artistic purpose, and these elements had not been early stimulated to sustained activity, he could never have had so great and uninterrupted a career. And nothing perhaps is a more direct proof of Shakespeare's manly character than the prompt and serious way in which, from the first, he assumed the full responsibility of his acts, and unflinchingly faced the wider range of duties they entailed. He himself has told us that

"Love is too young to know what conscience is:
Yet who knows not conscience is born of love!"

and it remains true that conscience, courage, simplicity, and nobleness of conduct are all, in generous natures, evoked and strengthened by the vital touch of that regenerating power. Shakespeare's whole course was changed by the new influence; and with his growing responsibilities his character seems to have rapidly matured, and his powers to have found fresh and more effective development. His first child Susanna was born in May 1583, and, as she was baptized on the 26th, the day of her birth may have been the 23d, which would be exactly a month after her father completed his nineteenth year. In February 1585 the family was unexpectedly enlarged by the birth of twins, a boy and a girl, who were named respectively Hamnet and Judith, after Hamnet and Judith Sadler, inhabitants of Stratford, who were lifelong friends of Shakespeare. Before he had attained his majority the poet had thus a wife and three children dependent upon him, with little opportunity or means apparently of advancing his fortunes in Stratford. The situation was in itself sufficiently serious. But it was complicated by his father's increasing embarrassments and multiplied family claims. Four children still remained in Henley Street to be provided for,—the youngest, Edmund, born in May 1580, being scarcely five years old. John Shakespeare, too, was being sued by various creditors, and apparently in some danger of being arrested for debt. All this was enough to make a much older man than the poet look anxiously about him. But, with the unflinching sense and sagacity he displayed in practical affairs, he seems to have formed a sober and just estimate of his own powers, and made a careful survey of the various fields available for their remunerative exercise. As the result of his delibera-

tions he decided in favour of trying the metropolitan stage and theatre. He had already tested his faculty of acting by occasional essays on the provincial stage; and, once in London amongst the players, where new pieces were constantly required, he would have full scope for the exercise of his higher powers as a dramatic poet. At the outset he could indeed only expect to discharge the lower function, but, with the growing popular demand for dramatic representations, the actor's calling, though not without its social drawbacks, was in the closing decades of the 16th century a lucrative one. Greene, in his autobiographical sketch *Never Too Late*, one of the most interesting of his prose tracts, illustrates this point in the account he gives of his early dealings with the players and experiences as a writer for the stage. Speaking through his hero Francesco, he says that "when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb he fell in amongst a company of players who persuaded him to try his wit in writing of comedies, tragedies, or pastorals, and if he could perform anything worth the stage, then they would largely reward him for his pains." Succeeding in the work, he was so well paid that he soon became comparatively wealthy, and went about with a well-filled purse. Although writing from the author's rather than the actor's point of view, Greene intimates that the players grew rapidly rich and were entitled both to praise and profit so long as they were "neither covetous nor insolent." In the *Return from Parnassus* (1601) the large sums, fortunes indeed, realized, by good actors are referred to as matter of notoriety. One of the disappointed academic scholars, indeed, moralizing on the fact with some bitterness, exclaims,—

"England affords those glorious vagabonds,
That carried erst their families on their backs,
Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,
Sweeping it in their glaring satin suits,
And pages to attend their masterpieces:
With mouthing words that better wits have framed,
They purchase lands, and now esquires are made."

And in a humorous sketch entitled *Ratsey's Ghost*, and published in the first decade of the 17th century, an apparent reference to Shakespeare himself brings out the same point. The hero of the tract, Ratsey, a highwayman, having compelled a set of strolling players to act before him, advised their leader to leave the country and get to London, where, having a good presence for the stage and a turn for the work, he would soon fill his pockets, adding, "When thou feelest thy purse well-lined, buy thee some place of lordship in the country, that, growing weary of playing, thy money may bring thee dignity and reputation." The player, thanking him for his advice, replies, "I have heard indeed of some that have gone to London very meanly, who have in time become exceedingly wealthy." The movement to the London stage was therefore from a worldly point of view a prudent one, and for the higher purposes of Shakespeare's life it was equally wise and necessary. For besides the economic and practical considerations in favour of the step there must have pressed on the poet's mind the importance of a wider sphere of life and action for the enlargement of his inward horizon, and the effective development of his poetical and dramatic gifts.

The exact date of this event—of Shakespeare's leaving Stratford for London—cannot be fixed with any certainty. All the probabilities of the case, however, indicate that it must have taken place between the spring of 1585 and the autumn of 1587. In the latter year three of the leading companies visited Stratford, those belonging to the queen, Lord Leicester, and Lord Essex; and, as Lord Leicester's included three of Shakespeare's fellow townsmen,—Burbage, Heminge, and Greene,—it is not improbable that he may then have decided on trying his fortune in London.

At the same time it is quite possible, and on some grounds even likely, that the step may have been taken somewhat earlier. But for the five years between 1587 and 1592 we have no direct knowledge of Shakespeare's movements at all, the period being a complete biographical blank, dimly illuminated at the outset by one or two doubtful traditions. We have indeed the assurance that after leaving Stratford he continued to visit his native town at least once every year; and if he had left in 1586 we may confidently assume that he returned the next year for the purpose, amongst others, of consulting with his father and mother about the Asbies mortgage and of taking part with them in their action against John Lambert. His uniting with them in this action deserves special notice, as showing that he continued to take the keenest personal interest in all home affairs, and, although living mainly in London, was still looked upon, not only as the eldest son, but as the adviser and friend of the family. The anecdotes of Shakespeare's occupations on going to London are, that at first he was employed in a comparatively humble capacity about the theatre, and that for a time he took charge of the horses of those who rode to see the plays, and was so successful in this work that he soon had a number of juvenile assistants who were known as Shakespeare's boys. Even in their crude form these traditions embody a tribute to Shakespeare's business promptitude and skill. If there is any truth in them they may be taken to indicate that while filling some subordinate post in the theatre Shakespeare perceived a defective point in the local arrangements, or heard the complaints of the mounted gallants as to the difficulty of putting up their horses. His provisions for meeting the difficulty seem to have been completely and even notoriously successful. There were open sheds or temporary stables in connexion with the theatre in Shoreditch, and Shakespeare's boys, if the tradition is true, probably each took charge of a horse in these stables while its owner was at the play. But in any case this would be simply a brief episode in Shakespeare's multifarious employments when he first reached the scene of his active labours in London. He must soon have had more serious and absorbing professional occupations in the green room, on the stage, and in the laboratory of his own teeming brain, "the quick forge and working house of thought."

continues
his edu-
cation.

But his leisure hours during his first years in London would naturally be devoted to continuing his education and equipping himself as fully as possible for his future work. It was probably during this time, as Mr Halliwell-Phillipps suggests, that he acquired the working knowledge of French and Italian that his writings show he must have possessed. And it is perhaps now possible to point out the sources whence his knowledge of these languages was derived, or at least the master under whom he chiefly studied them. The most celebrated and accomplished teacher of French and Italian in Shakespeare's day was the resolute John Florio, who, after leaving Magdalen College, Oxford, lived for years in London, engaged in tutorial and literary work and intimately associated with eminent men of letters and their noble patrons. After the accession of James I., Florio was made tutor to Prince Henry, received an appointment about the court, became the friend and personal favourite of Queen Anne (to whom he dedicated the second edition of his Italian dictionary, entitled the *World of Words*), and died full of years and honours in 1625, having survived Shakespeare nine years. Florio had married the sister of Daniel the poet, and Ben Jonson presented a copy of *The Fox* to him, with the inscription, "To his loving father and worthy friend Master John Florio, Ben Jonson seals this testimony of his friendship and love." Daniel writes a poem

of some length in praise of his translation of Montaigne, while other contemporary poets contribute commendatory verses which are prefixed to his other publications. There are substantial reasons for believing that Shakespeare was also one of Florio's friends, and that during his early years in London he evinced his friendship by yielding for once to the fashion of writing this kind of eulogistic verse. Prefixed to Florio's *Second Fruits*, Prof. Minto discovered a sonnet so superior and characteristic that he was impressed with the conviction that Shakespeare must have written it. The internal evidence is in favour of this conclusion, while Mr Minto's critical analysis and comparison of its thought and diction with Shakespeare's early work tends strongly to support the reality and value of the discovery. In his next work, produced four years later, Florio claims the sonnet as the work of a friend "who loved better to be a poet than to be called one," and vindicates it from the indirect attack of a hostile critic, H. S., who had also disparaged the work in which it appeared. There are other points of connexion between Florio and Shakespeare. The only known volume that certainly belonged to Shakespeare and contains his autograph is Florio's version of Montaigne's *Essays* in the British Museum; and critics have from time to time produced evidence to show that Shakespeare must have read it carefully and was well acquainted with its contents. Victor Hugo in a powerful critical passage strongly supports this view. The most striking single proof of the point is Gonzalo's ideal republic in the *Tempest*, which is simply a passage from Florio's version turned into blank verse. Florio and Shakespeare were both, moreover, intimate personal friends of the young earl of Southampton, who, in harmony with his generous character and strong literary tastes, was the munificent patron of each. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, dedicated his *Venus and Adonis* and his *Lucrece* to this young nobleman; and three years later, in 1598, Florio dedicated the first edition of his Italian dictionary to the earl in terms that almost recall Shakespeare's words. Shakespeare had said in addressing the earl, "What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have devoted yours." And Florio says, "In truth I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all, yea of more than I know or can to your bounteous lordship, most noble, most virtuous, and most honourable earl of Southampton, in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years, to whom I owe and vow the years I have to live." Shakespeare was also familiar with Florio's earlier works, his *First Fruits* and *Second Fruits*, which were simply carefully prepared manuals for the study of Italian, containing an outline of the grammar, a selection of dialogues in parallel columns of Italian and English, and longer extracts from classical Italian writers in prose and verse. We have collected various points of indirect evidence showing Shakespeare's familiarity with these manuals, but these being numerous and minute cannot be given here. It must suffice to refer in illustration of this point to a single instance—the lines in praise of Venice which Holofernes gives forth with so much unction in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The *First Fruits* was published in 1578, and was for some years the most popular manual for the study of Italian. It is the book that Shakespeare would naturally have used in attempting to acquire a knowledge of the language after his arrival in London; and on finding that the author was the friend of some of his literary associates he would probably have sought his acquaintance and secured his personal help. As Florio was also a French scholar and habitually taught both languages, Shakespeare probably owed to him his knowledge of French as well as of Italian. If the sonnet

is accepted as Shakespeare's work he must have made Florio's acquaintance within a year or two after going to London, as in 1591 he appears in the character of a personal friend and well-wisher. In any case Shakespeare would almost certainly have met Florio a few years later at the house of Lord Southampton, with whom the Italian scholar seems to have occasionally resided. It also appears that he was in the habit of visiting at several titled houses, amongst others those of the earl of Bedford and Sir John Harrington. It seems also probable that he may have assisted Harrington in his translation of Ariosto. Another and perhaps even more direct link connecting Shakespeare with Florio during his early years in London is found in their common relation to the family of Lord Derby. In the year 1585 Florio translated a letter of news from Rome, giving an account of the sudden death of Pope Gregory XIII. and the election of his successor. This translation, published in July 1585, was dedicated "To the Right Excellent and Honourable Lord, Henry Earl of Derby," in terms expressive of Florio's strong personal obligations to the earl and devotion to his service. Three years later, on the death of Leicester in 1588, Lord Derby's eldest son Ferdinando Lord Strange became the patron of Leicester's company of players, which Shakespeare had recently joined. The new patron must have taken special interest in the company, as they soon became (chiefly through his influence) great favourites at court, superseding the Queen's players, and enjoying something like a practical monopoly of royal representations. Shakespeare would thus have the opportunity of making Florio's acquaintance at the outset of his London career, and everything tends to show that he did not miss the chance of numbering amongst his personal friends so accomplished a scholar, so alert, energetic, and original a man of letters, as the resolute John Florio. Warburton, it is well-known, had coupled Florio's name with Shakespeare in the last century. He suggested, or rather asserted, that Florio was the original of Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Of all Warburton's arbitrary conjectures and dogmatic assumptions this is perhaps the most infelicitous. That a scholar and man of the world like Florio, with marked literary powers of his own, the intimate friend and associate of some of the most eminent poets of the day, living in princely and noble circles, honoured by royal personages and welcomed at noble houses,—that such a man should be selected as the original of a rustic pedant and dominie like Holofernes, is surely the climax of reckless guesswork and absurd suggestion. There is, it is true, a distant connexion between Holofernes and Italy—the pedant being a well-known figure in the Italian comedies that obviously affected Shakespeare's early work. This usage calls forth a kind of sigh from the easy-going and tolerant Montaigne as he thinks of his early tutors and youthful interest in knowledge. "I have in my youth," he tells us, "often-times been vexed to see a pedant brought in in most of Italian comedies for a vice or sport-maker, and the nickname of magister (dominie) to be of no better significance amongst us." We may be sure that, if Shakespeare knew Florio before he produced *Love's Labour's Lost*, it was not as a sport-maker to be mocked at, but as a friend and literary associate to whom he felt personally indebted.

But, whatever his actual relation to the Italian scholar may have been, Shakespeare, on reaching London and beginning to breathe its literary atmosphere, would naturally betake himself to the study of Italian. At various altitudes the English Parnassus was at that time fanned by soft airs, swept by invigorating breezes, or darkened by gloomy and infected vapours from the south. In other words, the influence of Italian literature, so dominant in England during the second half of the 16th century,

may be said to have reached its highest point at the very time when Shakespeare entered on his poetic and dramatic labours. This influence was in part a revival of the strong impulse communicated to English literature from Italy in Chaucer's day. The note of the revival was struck in the title of Thomas's excellent Italian manual, "Principal rules of Italian grammar, with a dictionarie for the better understanding of *Boccace*, *Petrarcha*, and *Dante*" (1550). The first fruits of the revival were the lyrical poems of Surrey and Wyatt, written somewhat earlier, but published for the first time in Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557). The sonnets of these poets—the first ever written in English—produced in a few years the whole musical choir of Elizabethan sonneteers. Surrey and Wyatt were sympathetic students of Petrarch, and, as Puttenham says, reproduced in their sonnets and love poems much of the musical sweetness, the tender and refined sentiment, of the Petrarchian lyric. This perhaps can hardly in strictness of speech be called a revival, for, strong as was the influence of Boccaccio, and in a less degree of Dante, during the first period of English literature, the lyrical poetry of the south, as represented by Petrarch, affected English poetry almost for the first time in the 16th century. This influence, as subsequently developed by Lyly in his prose comedies and romances, indirectly affected the drama, and clear traces of it are to be found in Shakespeare's own work. Surrey, however, rendered the Elizabethans a still greater service by introducing from Italy the unrhymed verse, which, with the truest instinct, was adopted by the great dramatists as the metrical vehicle best fitted to meet the requirements of the most flexible and expressive form of the poetic art. But, although in part the revival of a previous impulse, the Italian literature that most powerfully affected English poetry during the Elizabethan period was in the main new. During the interval the prolific genius of the south had put forth fresh efforts which combined, in new and characteristic products, the forms of classical poetry and the substance of southern thought and feeling with the spirit of mediæval romance. The chivalrous and martial epics of Ariosto and Tasso represented a new school of poetry which embraced within its expanding range every department of imaginative activity. There appeared in rapid succession romantic pastorals, romantic elegies, romantic satires, and romantic dramas, as well as romantic epics. The epics were occupied with marvels of knightly daring and chivalrous adventure, expressed in flowing and melodious numbers; while the literature as a whole dealt largely in the favourite elements of ideal sentiment, learned allusion, and elaborate ornament, and was brightened at intervals by grave and sportive, by highly wrought but fanciful, pictures of courtly and Arcadian life. While Sidney and Spenser represented in England the new school of allegorical and romantic pastoral and epic, Shakespeare and his associates betook themselves to the study of the romantic drama and the whole dramatic element in recent and contemporary southern literature. The Italian drama proper, so far as it affected the form adopted by English playwrights, had indeed virtually done its work before any of Shakespeare's characteristic pieces were produced. His immediate predecessors, Greene, Peele, and Lodge, Nash, Kyd, and Marlowe, had all probably studied Italian models more carefully than Shakespeare himself ever did; and the result is seen in the appearance among these later Elizabethans of the romantic drama, which united the better elements of the English academic and popular plays with features of diction and fancy, incident and structure, that were virtually new. Many members of this dramatic group were, like Greene, good Italian scholars, had themselves travelled in Italy, knew the Italian stage at first