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The nature of autobiography: The sonnet of the self. An annotated critical edition of "Autobiography of Shakespeare from his Thirty-fourth to his Thirty-ninth year, derived from his Sonnets—Together with the Sonnets themselves arranged and elucidated" by David Masson, with an analysis and discussion of the sonnet as a literary form and autobiography as a literary genre

Abramowitz, Rhoda (Ronni) Sue, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1993

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THE NATURE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: THE SONNET OF THE SELF

An annotated critical edition of Autobiography of Shakespeare from His Thirty-fourth to his Thirty-ninth year, derived from His Sonnets --- Together with the Sonnets themselves arranged and elucidated by David Masson, with an analysis and discussion of the sonnet as a literary form and autobiography as a literary genre

by

Rhoda (Ronni) S. Abramowitz

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1993

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
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Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my mother who always wanted a doctor in the family, albeit a son-in-law.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Pages
I. General Introduction	1
II. David Masson Bibliography	65
III. <u>Autobiography of Shakespeare from His Thirty-fourth to his Thirty-ninth year, derived from his Sonnets --- Together with the Sonnets themselves, arranged and elucidated.</u> Edited by David Masson	77
IV. Glossary of Proper Names	514
V. Bibliography	
General criticism	519
Sonnet criticism	523

Chapter I. General Introduction

In an age of many whipper - snappers in criticism he
{Masson} is something of a Gulliver.

J. M. Barrie

In 1846, David Masson started his search for the true nature of Shakespeare's character. His studies spanned a fifty-year period and while he pursued this investigation through the entire Shakespearean canon, Masson ultimately concluded that if the modern world could ever know Shakespeare personally, the insight must come from Shakespeare's sonnets. This is the focus of Masson's manuscript, Autobiography of Shakespeare from His Thirty-fourth to his Thirty-ninth year, derived from his Sonnets --- Together with the Sonnets themselves arranged and elucidated, which I intend to consider in this dissertation. My own purposes, however, for considering Masson's text, are, although I think as important, quite different. The central purpose of this dissertation is, first, to prove that by using Masson's Autobiography of Shakespeare as a clue to the Victorian frame of mind, a sharper picture will emerge of Masson as an important and overlooked literary and social critic, whose intuitive knowledge of nineteenth-

century aesthetics and societal issues deserves closer scrutiny for what it says about both Shakespearean and Victorian thought. My second purpose will be to show that Masson's manuscript can lead to a profound understanding of the sonnet as a powerful literary form whose reemergence and revaluation in the nineteenth century imposed entelechical precepts on autobiography as a literary genre. If thought of in Aristotelian terms, it is the form which is achieved through the process of determining the essence, the concrete individual object, of a thing. I hope, moreover, to include in my edition of Masson's Autobiography of Shakespeare what will be the first comprehensive alphabetical listing of Masson's wide-ranging published works. Finally, I shall offer here an annotated critical edition of David Masson's unpublished manuscript, Autobiography of Shakespeare.

Of all popular nineteenth-century critical writers, David Masson has probably been one of the most neglected in the twentieth century. If he is known at all, it is as Milton's biographer. Masson's monumental work, which comprises 7 volumes, in addition to being Milton's biography, is also a painstaking re-creation of the world which produced and nourished Milton's thoughts. To this day, it remains a standard authority on the poet. A similar re-creation of a Shakespearean world view is part of what Masson undertakes in the Autobiography of Shakespeare. Unfortunately, the bulk of Masson's work, which proves him to be an original and perceptive nineteenth-century critic, has still not been given its due consideration. With the exception of The Life of Milton; Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats,

and Other Essays; and "College education and self-education, a lecture," Masson's works have not been reprinted; and from the major prose anthologies and collections of analytical critical studies of and on the Victorian period, most notably Templeman and Harrold's English Prose of the Victorian Era, Buckler's Prose of the Victorian Period, and Houghton and Stange's Victorian Poetry and Poetics, Masson's intuitive contributions to literary and historical theories have been omitted. For example, Masson's British Novelists and Their Styles was one of the earliest and best histories and theories of the novel form, and the first place Dickens and Shakespeare were compared in print; Masson was the first critic to compare Keats with Shakespeare in Essays, Biographical and Critical; and as witnessed by his series of lectures for the Association for the University Education of Women, which he began in 1867, Masson was in the forefront of the fight for higher education and medical education for women. Only a few and only recently have Victorian scholars begun to consider Masson's significant contribution to nineteenth-century thought. Isobel Armstrong, in 1972, discussed Masson's theories on what constitutes dramatic poetry, on what constitutes the proper subject of poetry, and on the projection of the poet into different personae, experiences and states of feeling (38-48). Michael Wheeler, in 1985, used Masson's theories on the novel to explain some of his own critical guidelines in showing how the fiction "reflects the energy and vitality of an age which witnessed more rapid and disturbing social and intellectual change than any other period before or since" (11). And W. David

Shaw, in 1987, showed how Masson was influenced by Kant's Critique of Judgement in formulating and more clearly expounding his own understanding of nineteenth-century poetic concepts. But this is a very short list of scholars, and the portion of Masson's works which they cover touches only a fraction of Masson's contribution to literary critical theory. Others, for example Abrams and Houghton, if they refer to Masson's assistance in understanding nineteenth-century aesthetics at all, relegate him, in their works, to a mere footnote on the period. This is particularly disheartening in light of the fact that during the nineteenth century, Masson was highly regarded as a perceptive and insightful literary and social critic; he was so well known that he was included in the 1920 edition of the Dictionary of National Biography; and a bibliography, although not complete, of Masson's works is included in The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900, published 1966-1987.

Although my introduction will be limited to a critical discussion of Masson's Autobiography of Shakespeare, I believe that a short biographical sketch of Masson's life and works is essential in order for twentieth-century literary critics to fully appreciate the breadth and depth of his critical inquiries, and to exemplify to those critics why David Masson's critical oeuvre deserves close scrutiny. Masson was born in 1822 in Aberdeen, Scotland. He attended Marischal College and Aberdeen University where, in 1839, he _____ received a Master of Arts degree. After that he attended Edinburgh University for three years. Between the years

1842-4, he edited the weekly journal The Banner. From 1844 to 1847, Masson worked on the staff of publishers William and Robert Chambers, preparing their Miscellanies and Educational Series. In 1848, his "Ancient History," in 1855, his "Medieval History," and in 1856, his "Modern History" were incorporated in Chambers's Educational Series. In 1853, he was appointed Professor of English Literature at University College, London. He started, in 1859, and edited Macmillian's Magazine until 1867. During the same period, in 1863, he also edited Reader. In 1865, Masson was appointed Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, a position he held until his retirement in 1895. In 1893, he was appointed Historiographer-Royal for Scotland; and in 1896 he was elected honorary member and Professor of Ancient Literature for the Royal Scottish Academy (DNB 583-5). All of this was in addition to the numerous articles he wrote for the most prestigious scholarly journals of the nineteenth century, the many books of literary theory he wrote, his editions of De Quincey, Goldsmith, and Milton, both their lives and works, and his contributions to the Leader and the Encyclopedia Britannica. The London Times, in its obituary of Masson on October 8, 1907, called him "Scotland's most distinguished representative in the field of serious literature." Aside from being one of the most popular and widely read literary critics of his day, Masson was one of the most creative, prolific, and astute intellectuals of the nineteenth century. His bibliography suggests the range of his interests: biography, education, history, language,

literature, philosophy, politics, psychology, and sociology. Because of his many areas of expertise, and because he was acquainted and on intimate terms with the most notable thinkers and writers of his day, Masson was acutely aware of what constituted the complex Victorian mind. During his stay in London, 1848-1865, and even after his return to Scotland, he frequently socialized and exchanged ideas with Thomas Carlyle, William Makepeace Thackeray, Coventry Patmore, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas Woolner, Holman Hunt, Alexander Macmillan, Lord Tennyson, Charles Kingsley, and John Stuart Mill, to mention a few. In addition, Masson's literary theories were so highly thought of, they were the subject of numerous discussions contained in the correspondence of the most influential writers of the nineteenth century. Some of those discussing and referring to Masson's literary concepts in their letters were George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, William Thackeray, and John Addington Symonds. Masson had the ability to place his literary theories firmly within the context of the nineteenth century. For example, in his poetic discussions, Masson defined poetry as creation. "The antithesis is between Poetry and Science. On one hand, the intellect of {the scientist} may brood over it [the universe of all accumulated existence] inquiringly, striving to penetrate beneath it, to understand the system of laws by which it is held together. On the other hand, the intellect of {the poet} may brood over it creatively, careless how it is held together, or whether it is held together at all. It is the intellectual process of producing a new or artificial

concrete" ("Theories of Poetry and a New Poet" in Essays Biographical and Critical 420-422). In addition to his interpretations of the romantic creative processes and the proper subject of poetry, which is what separated Masson from other critics, such as Matthew Arnold, in their understanding of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's intentions, Masson also sets up a dichotomy between humanism and materialism which was being explored at that time, and which is further discussed below. This ability of Masson's to apply his literary theories to concrete images of nineteenth-century artistic practices is what made Masson the outstanding literary critic he was, what made him a distinguished and highly regarded teacher, and what precisely makes his text, Autobiography of Shakespeare, which is under scrutiny in this dissertation so significant.

Another area of poetics that captured Masson's attention was the sonnet, and particularly Shakespeare's sonnets, as a literary autobiographical form. "It betrays more than ordinary deficiency of critical acumen in Shakespeare's commentators {prior to the nineteenth century} that none of them, so far as we know, has ever thought of availing himself of his sonnets for tracing the circumstances of his life. These sonnets paint most unequivocally the actual situation and sentiments of the poet; they make us acquainted with the passions of the man; they even contain remarkable confessions of his youthful errors" (August Wilhelm Schlegel, "Lecture XXII" [1811], in *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, rpt. 1965, 352). As the nineteenth century progressed, critics

such as Coleridge, Henry Hallam, Furnivall and Dowden tackled the biographical nature of literature in general, and Shakespeare's sonnets as autobiographical in particular; however, Masson saw the natural symbiotic relationship between the sonnet and autobiography, and in The Autobiography of Shakespeare, he minutely explores Shakespeare's sonnets as an autobiographical form.

An additional element in the development and interest in biographical interpretation which concerned intellectual Victorians was an interest in history, in the past, and in using that understanding of the past in an effort to contextualize the world of the subject with the subject, in an attempt to better comprehend the inner self. That means, for the purposes of this study, looking at how Masson places the poet, Shakespeare, in his autobiographical setting, and showing how he traces Shakespeare's search for self-knowledge. This was especially important because Victorians felt a special kinship to the Renaissance. The Middle Ages were the model of wholeness, but the Renaissance was the beginning of the modern age in which the Victorians sought to see their reflection, as in a mirror. During an age in which the world was rapidly being transformed with respect to religion, industrialization, and political power, Victorians needed to find those links with the past in an effort to anchor and order their present. And the two periods have some very real parallels. One parallel is the pervasive influence of science on everyday life. During the Renaissance, the Royal Society emerged as a force for using the scientific method as a means of proving what was "truth"

and how one went about the process of finding it. This can be compared to the nineteenth century's Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851, which "intensified the general preoccupation with time and space. As space imploded, so did time" (Taylor 175). "Truth," therefore, was to be found internally. Another parallel is to be found in the Royal Society's insistence upon the accumulation and verification of "facts." "A rich feeling for concrete fact was the dominant characteristic of the Elizabethan age" (Edward Dowden, "Teaching of Literature," Studies in Literature. (1895), 447). "Dowden's Shakespeare accepted the logic of facts and possessed a rich feeling for positive, concrete fact; of concrete moral facts he had the clearest perception" (Taylor 181). This can be compared to the nineteenth-century's utilitarianism, so ably caricatured by Dickens as Gradgrindian thought. Shakespeare's humanism had given way to the mechanized accumulation of facts in an effort to order the process of being because "positive concrete moral facts" coupled with religious truths no longer seemed to exist. The sum total of an individual became both what he was and how he got that way - "the scientific doctrine of self-development" (Taylor 180). Therefore the Victorian mind's preoccupation with basic Renaissance concerns was considerable. Masson saw and understood this attraction as early as 1846, the year in which the Shakespearean manuscript was written, and he develops a dialectic in the Autobiography of Shakespeare which addresses the importance of the Victorians' relationship to the Renaissance as a means of understanding

the developmental growth of the sonnet as an autobiographical form. This understanding of "the need for some such tie with the remote (and supposedly preferable) past had become all the more pressing with the advance of materialism and secularism. But there was a more pressing reason for the recurrent evocation of the past: the wish to discover there a society more stable and equitable, an intellectual temper more unified and free of doubt, than the Victorian age was capable of. Victorians longed for a fixed order. Change was so slow as to be negligible; cathedrals took centuries to build" (Altick, Victorian People 101-5). This understanding of how Victorians viewed Elizabethans is absolutely critical to any discussion of nineteenth-century thought. It would also be difficult to understand why the nineteenth century was fascinated by Shakespeare, and what kind of hold Shakespeare had on the nineteenth-century imagination without it. Shakespeare appeared to speak personally to the Victorians. Perhaps as Carlyle stated in On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, he "embodies for us the Outer Life of our Europe as developed then, its chivalries, courtesies, humours, ambitions, what practical way of thinking, acting, looking at the world, men then had . . . what our modern Europe was, in Faith and in Practice, will still be legible" (101). Masson, in addition, says of Spenser, Bacon, and Shakespeare in "The Three Interests in Old English Literature," that "we are quite at home amongst them; they are our teachers, our coevals in a sense, our familiar acquaintances, or constantly present superiors" (212). In his discussion of

nineteenth century poetic theory, Masson, while discussing Keats' poetry, is also describing Shakespeare when he states that "the truest measure of every man is the measure of his speculative or purely philosophical faculty" ("Life and Poetry of Keats" 8). For Masson, speculative poetry could either be active, in which case the poet has extensively or permanently influenced mankind, or passive, which he also calls the "metaphysical mood."

The metaphysical mood or tendency, in this simple and beautiful sense, is therefore that habit of mind which dwells with fondness and fascination on those ideas which are legitimate to all Humanity as such, which are the last thoughts that Humanity can think about itself, and which it must always think when it imagines itself as a whole. It is the mood which embraces the totality of things physical, and sees this totality floating in a vast, unknown sea of metaphysical or supernatural, ringing it round mysteriously, inscrutably, everlastingly. It is the tendency, strong in some minds in their solitary hours, to walk meditatively round the very boundary of all the world of knowledge, visibility, and experience, and to indulge in the ever-baffled contemplation and wonder of what may be surrounding and enclosing it - the gaze into the unimaginable Infinitude.

Having, thus, set up the parallels between Shakespeare's poetic world view and the world view of the Victorians, Masson's exploration of this relationship in his Autobiography of Shakespeare is of critical importance to any understanding of nineteenth-century sensibilities. As Carlyle said in Sartor Resartus, in the nineteenth century there was a hope for a new Jerusalem, to be brought about not by changing the world, but by changing the world view. This was "Shakespeare's version of the orthodox encomia of what man, created in God's image, was like in his prelapsarian state and of what ideally he is still capable of being. The greatness of the Elizabethan age was that it contained so much of new without bursting the noble form of the old order" (Tillyard 1-8). For Masson, the sonnet form would enable poets to "recreate" man, thus redefining man in the modern world. To do this, Masson used Shakespeare's sonnets almost as a spiritual guide.

As the need for a vehicle with which to explore the development of the inner self grew, the critical importance of the Victorian relationship to the sonnet form grew. The form informs the subject of its limitations, thus forcing an internalization of the subject, which is the self. Victorian sonneteers chose a form which imposed fourteen-line parameters on them in order to be able to impose order on their worlds. They didn't continue in the wandering meditative contemplative poetic tradition of Wordsworth (who also wrote great sonnets) because the internal journey was more focused and narrow. The one question facing the poet

had become "Who am I?" rather than "How do I feel?" By studying Masson's Autobiography of Shakespeare, the properties which made the sonnet form so popular in the nineteenth century, order, a well-defined structure, a sense of closure, become evident. I will use Masson's manuscript to show how Masson explored the nineteenth-century rebirth, started by Wordsworth, of this form. In a sense, the use of the sonnet itself is an example of an evolutionary process which took place in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century, "The major lyric innovation of the Romantic period, for example, the extended poems of description and meditation, are in fact fragments of reshaped autobiography, in which the poet confronts a particular scene at a significant stage of his life, in a colloquy that specifies the present, evokes the past, and anticipates the future, and thereby defines and evaluates what it means to have suffered and to grow older" (Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism 123). As the century progressed and the need of the individual to more fully understand himself and his place in the world order arose, a more orderly form was required to reflect an individual's personal progress. The sonnet, compactly compressed and more unified and focused, was often preferred by the Victorians as a channel for the development of this quest for an understanding of the self, and, by extension, the age, because the form forced their attention internally on themselves rather than externally on the world. After almost two hundred years of relative disuse, the Victorians seemed to find in the sonnet's lyrical form that which would enable them to

explore their personal reactions to emotional situations to the fullest, and armed with this understanding, recall a sense of unity and belonging which existed in Shakespeare's day. Masson called this "the translation from the subjective into the objective 'intellection'" ("Theories of Poetry and a New Poet"). This theory of Masson's adumbrates T.S. Eliot's "objective correlative," except for Masson the end product is an understanding of the emotion that is being experienced rather than simply experiencing an emotion which is being evoked. Masson understood that what was engendered in the Shakespearean sonnet form, an airing of a doubt, a cry of indignation, or a vision of the ideal, together with its epigrammatic close, provided a sense of communion for the Victorians in an increasingly mechanized and dehumanized world. In a Gradgrindian world of "Hands" where the individual is reduced to the sum of his body parts, the need to reassert the individual as an individual became central for Victorians. Recapturing a sense of internal unity in the midst of the external fragmentation that followed in the crisis of faith, restoring an almost lost personally imaginative and emotional approach to life, and rediscovering self value in a fact-oriented culture were matters of the utmost need in the nineteenth century. Victorian poets seemed to find the sonnet form an acceptable means for exploring these concerns.

Masson, in the Autobiography of Shakespeare, explores the sonnet form's ability to address these problems. At the same time, he elucidates how the sonnet maintains its focus on the poetic self. An issue connected to this use of the

sonnet form, a public examination of a very private and emotional reliving of individual upheavals, is the relationship between the Victorian idea of autobiography and biography to art. The focus on this relationship gained its impetus during the Romantic period, with its insistence on the subjectivity of empirical philosophy, which concentrated its emphasis on placing the individual at the center of all life's experiences. This would put the individual, the poet, at the center of art, thereby making literature a portrayal and expression of his unique experiences and feelings. This subjective nature of Romanticism produced an interest and resurgence in the lyric, especially as its qualities were expressed through the sonnet form. "The concept of the poem as an object which, insulated from the world and from ordinary human concerns, exists only for its own perfection; and the related concept of the alienated and anguished artist whose priestly vocation entails the renunciation of this life and of this contemptible world in favor of that other world which is the work of his art" (Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism 427), makes the form, the sonnet, the object of the imaginative process, a personal process which of necessity looks inward. Masson was one of the few Victorians who could "analyze the poetry of the dialogue of the mind" (Armstrong 47). In addition, he saw the shift in emphasis from a Romantic insistence on the metaphysical in poetry, a passive, contemplative, personal activity, to a more speculative and philosophically oriented poetry, more active, intellectual, and universal (Armstrong 39-41). This would allow for a redefinition of

autobiography in the nineteenth century as the finding of one's self, rather than recounting one's life story. Masson has taken this lyrical relationship and growth between the sonnet and autobiography and has explored its implications for use in the inward journey in search of the self.

In looking at the importance of David Masson's works, and in using the Autobiography of Shakespeare as a guide, a clearer picture will emerge both of the nineteenth century with its industrial revolution, which tore apart communities and families, its loss of religious faith, which shook individual conceptions of basic truths, and its need to believe in something that could not be deracinated, and the mirror-like image one gets of the nineteenth century through a refracted Renaissance eye. The questioning of man's place in the universe, which was initiated during the Renaissance, was being reflected in the agonizing questioning of man's place in society, and of society itself, during the nineteenth century. In the final analysis, the one entity in which any single individual could truly know and believe was himself. And the rise in autobiography during this period contributed to further this solipsism. True nineteenth-century autobiographers, the poets, philosophers, historians, and literary and social critics who wrote Bildungsgeschichte such as Wordsworth in The Prelude, Coleridge in Dejection: An Ode, John Stuart Mill in Autobiography, and John Henry Newman in Apologia Pro Vita Sua, told how they had lost their faiths, their beliefs, how they had gained their newfound beliefs, and how this newfound insight adumbrated the collective self. They took

their readers inward on a spiritual journey, or through an "inner apocalypse" to use Abrams' term. As early as 1846, Masson saw this need for introspection, and he decided that the proper way to study the Victorians' need for finding the inner self was a heuristic approach through Shakespeare's sonnets. If it was possible to find Shakespeare after so many years, it certainly would be possible to understand the true Victorian self. An examination of Masson's manuscript makes this critical and needed search possible. Finally, it is hoped that after reading Masson's manuscript, there will be a realization of the critical importance of Masson to nineteenth-century aesthetics, and that a much-needed revaluation of Masson's literary theories will be undertaken.

*

A review of sonnet and Shakespearean sonnet criticism, from 1640 to 1850, is informative and very reflective of prevailing literary concerns of each period. It also reveals the sonnet form as it was inherited by the Victorians. Sonnet critics, for example Boaden, Brown, Malone, and Steevens, all start with detailed histories of the origins of the sonnet as a poetic form in general, and characteristics of their individual sonnet studies under scrutiny in particular. This is usually followed by a discussion of individual sonnets of particular authors under consideration and where they fall in an historical and form continuum. That is, what age are the sonnets reflective of, and whose sonnet style are they following (Petrarch, Wyatt, Shakespeare). It is generally acknowledged that Shakespeare was following a tradition of sonnet writing presented in the fourteenth century by the Italian poet Petrarch in Rime. Thomas Wyatt is credited with the introduction of the sonnet form into England in the 1530's, some translated from the Italian and some of his own written in English. Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, who also played a part in this introduction, is partially responsible for modifying the Petrarchan (Italian) form, which seemed too rigid for English poets. His contribution to the form was the use of the rhymed couplet to end all of his sonnets. Because Shakespeare was probably the greatest practitioner of this modified format, the English sonnet is better known as the Shakespearean sonnet. Following the examples of Petrarch, Sidney, Spenser, Daniel and Drayton, Shakespeare wrote sonnet sequences, that is a series of sonnets in which a

common theme is thoroughly investigated. In addition to Shakespeare's, some famous sonnet sequences were written by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, House of Life, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnets from the Portuguese. It is interesting to note that approximately two hundred and fifty years separate the most popular and well-known sonnet sequences. This is because after Milton's use of the form, between the years 1638 and 1658, the sonnet as a poetic entity began to lose its appeal and fell into comparative disuse. In addition to the autobiographical aspects of some of his sonnets, Milton discussed public men and their political affairs. This use is quite different from that of the Elizabethan sonneteers, who wrote amorous sonnets, on the one hand, and Wordsworth, who wrote contemplative sonnets, on the other. The abandonment of the sonnet form came about because it could no longer contain the spiritual and intellectual demands of eighteenth-century poets. Then poetry usually served didactic or satiric purposes which placed an emphasis on man in his public aspects, general human nature, and the permanent relations of human beings in society. The heroic couplet became a major verse form, with the ode as a widely used genre. Although a few sonneteers appeared in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it was not until the early nineteenth century, when Wordsworth focused attention on the form and its introspective, autobiographical properties, that the sonnet enjoyed renewed popularity.

A few issues concerning Shakespeare's sonnets have been of the utmost concern to critics through the ensuing two centuries after their publication: First, the identity of

the young man addressed in Sonnets 1-126; second, the identity of the Dark Lady addressed in Sonnets 127-154; third, the identity of the Rival Poet; and fourth, the arrangement of the 1609 Quarto. In addition, contextual concerns were also expressed. In 1640, John Benson edited an unauthorized and corrupt volume of the sonnets. This caused questions to be raised with regard to the authenticity of the sonnets and the person of the poet. In the eighteenth century, Charles Gildon became the first critic to evaluate the Shakespeare canon. He concluded that Shakespeare did write the sonnets, but "tho' Love and its Effects are often happily enough touch'd in many of these Poems, yet I must confess that it is but too visible, that Petrarch had a little infected his way of thinking on that Subject, yet who ever can admire Mr. Cowley's Mistress, has a thousand Times more Cause of Admiration of our Shakespear in his Love Verses, because he has sometimes such touches of Nature as will make Amends for those Points, those Epigrammatic Acumina, which are not or ever can be the Product of a Soul truly touch'd with the Passion of Love" (450). In 1780, Edmond Malone published the first reliable text of the sonnets, but his disaffection with them is clear.

When they are described as a mass of affectation, pedantry, circumlocution, and nonsense, the picture appears to me overcharged. Their great defects seem to be a want of variety, and the majority of them not being directed to a female, to whom alone such ardent expressions of esteem

could with propriety be addressed. It cannot be denied too that they contain some far-fetched conceits . . . though many of them are not so simple and clear as they ought to be, yet some of them are written with perspicuity and energy; many beautiful lines, scattered through these poems, will, it is supposed, strike every reader who is not determined to allow no praise to any species of poetry except blank verse or heroick couplets. (684-5)

John Monck Mason, in 1785, referred to the sonnets as "miserable, a quaint and languid kind of poem of Italian origin, in which a dozen insipid lines are to serve as an introduction to an epigram of two, which generally turns upon some forced conceit. Nothing but a violent attachment to those {Italian} poets could have induced Shakespeare to deal so largely in a species of composition but ill adapted either to the English language or the taste of his countrymen" (406). George Steevens' dislike of the sonnet form stemmed from its quaintness and artificiality. "Let inferiour writers be warned against a species of composition which has reduced the most exalted poets to a level with the meanest rhimers; has almost cut down Milton and Shakespeare to the standards of Pomfret and - but the name of Pomfret is perhaps the lowest in the scale of English versifiers" ("Sonnets" 684). In 1793, Steevens did not include the sonnets in his 15 volume collection of Shakespeare's works because "the strongest act of Parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service. Had

Shakespeare produced no other works than these, his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older and much more elegant sonneteer" ("Preface" 577). Finally, George Chalmers, in 1799, noted that the sonnets, "as a whole poem, which is often tied together by a very slight ligature, have two of the worst faults that can degrade any writing; they are obscure; and they are tedious" (82). These negative comments on Shakespeare's sonnets are not surprising given the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century, but are necessary in looking for a rational explanation for the rebirth of the sonnet form in the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth-century age of Lockean psychology, highly public and social kinds of literature prevailed. Critics and poets concluded that the human mind was uniform and the only route to knowledge was through sense experiences. "After all, if the nature of man is, in essentials, uniform, and if ideas enter the mind only through external experience, then truth must be both simple and ultimately apparent to all. The general mind of the eighteenth century thus believes that what is real and important is what is public and 'normal' rather than private and singular" (Tillotson 4). In addition, Nature had become demythologized and therefore more orderly and understandable; and Reason conformed to common-sense. The models for these ideas were to be found in the classical Greek and more especially Roman traditions. The introspective lyric form, used by the poet to display his individuality rather than his reflection of society, was not

to be used or taken seriously. When the objectified intellectual stance of the eighteenth century gave way to the introspective nature of the nineteenth century, the sonnet was recalled as a medium for exploring those individual concerns. Of interest is the fact that even though his sonnets were not appreciated during the eighteenth century, Shakespeare's dramas received high praise and were widely performed.

From 1800 to 1850, critics turned to questions relating to the artistic merits of the sonnets, their possible autobiographical nature, and the identities of the persons being addressed and of the "rival" poet. In 1800, Nathan Drake thought that the sonnets were "buried beneath a load of obscurity and quaintness" (108); however, in 1817, he concluded that while the sonnets were "rendered hard and repulsive by the peculiarities of the period of their production, we have only to search beneath, in order to discover a rich ore of thought, imagery, and sentiment" (385). Concerning the autobiographical issues, James Boswell denied the verses were autobiographical, William Wordsworth concluded "with this key {the Sonnets} Shakespeare unlocked his heart" ("Scorn Not the Sonnet" 1827), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Anna Brownell Jameson, and Henry Hallum at different times concurred with Wordsworth. Although they differed with respect to the degree of artistic merit of Shakespeare's abilities, all agreed the sonnets deserved close attention because of the expressions of personal emotions which they embodied.

This "humanizing" of Shakespeare, this linking of emotions felt approximately two-hundred and fifty years apart, was what partially attracted Victorians to the sonnets. In addition, they became intrigued with the sonnet form and its autobiographical nature. Critics such as Charles Armitage Brown (1838) and Charles Knight (1849) began discussing the poems as sonnet-stanzas rather than as individual fourteen-line poems. In this way, an individual personal sentiment could be explored through different approaches in self-contained entities, and an historical record was produced from which to draw a picture of the emotional make-up of the artist. This continuity of feelings, set in context with physical surroundings, they contend, tells a biographical tale sometimes painful but necessary to watch, of Shakespeare the man coping in the world. This important point is minutely investigated in Masson's Autobiography of Shakespeare. Not only was it of critical importance to Masson, but it was also of primary concern to the Victorians.

The last hundred years of sonnet criticism has taken a decidedly different path. While the same four questions originally investigated with respect to Shakespeare's sonnets, namely to whom were they addressed, who was the dark lady, who was the rival poet, and in what order were they written, continue to receive comment, the focus in the twentieth century is much more hermeneutic with relation to teleology, polysemy, and logomachy. C. S. Lewis, in "Verse in the 'Golden' Period," evaluates Shakespeare's language and metrics, with specific emphasis on rhythm, vocabulary

and rhetorical patterns as they appear in individual sonnets. Structuralist G. Wilson Knight pursues Shakespeare's use of imagery and symbolism, which he believes are independent of their context; however, at the same time, he still finds them (the images and symbolism) to be harmonious within the sonnets. Northrop Frye, who, in Anatomy of Criticism (1957), views all literature as derived from cultural myths or archetypes, concludes in "How True a Twain" that the sonnets are "a poetic realization of the whole range of love in the Western world, from the idealism of Petrarch to the ironic frustrations of Proust" (53). Stephen Booth discusses the sonnet as "organized in a multitude of different coexistent and conflicting patterns - formal, logical, ideological, syntactic, rhythmic, and phonetic. My concern is not to give a reading of the poems but to discover what in them or about them results in the reading experiences they evoke" (ix-x). Joel Fineman discusses the sonnets in terms of

epideitics - the poetry of praise becomes a praise of poetry itself. In this way, moreover, the poetic self of the orthodox Renaissance sonnet characteristically presents itself as a full self, present to itself, or potentially so, by virtue of the complementarity it discovers or hopes to discover, between objective and subjective pointing. Thus it is that in such poetry the past will regularly prefigure what the present refigures, that what the poet sees outside himself will regularly be, in fact, an image of himself,

or that the poet's praise of `thee' will regularly turn out to be a praise of `me.' (9)

Sonnet criticism in the last thirty years has been quite eclectic, and shows an emphasis on everything from structuralism, which sets up a dialectic between the meanings of words and the relationship language establishes between words, through deconstruction, which gives priority to the free play of language over meaning, to semiotics which applies the text to its own historical and cultural setting as well as placing it in the modern world, in addition to feminism, which challenges putative gender roles, and Marxism, which discourses on the challenge for power between ideology and language usage (Terence Hawkes, "Shakespeare and New Critical Approaches" in Wells 288-99).

It can be seen from this brief discussion of what has been said about Shakespeare's sonnets over the past three-hundred years that very few approaches have been left out when critics have attempted to "decode" the sonnet's meanings. As E. K. Chambers said in 1930, "More folly has been written about the sonnets than about any other Shakespearean topic." What I propose in this dissertation is to take a different approach in looking at the sonnets. Actually, I propose a different approach in looking at Masson's commentary on the sonnets. Because it is important, informative and interesting, I propose leaving to Shakespearean and Renaissance critics the job of evaluating what Masson has to say about Shakespeare and the sonnets as they relate to Shakespeare, the Renaissance, and the sonnet form. Rather, I want the reader to look at what Masson has

to say as it can be related to nineteenth-century mortmain. I want Masson's text to be used to explore the sonnet as a nineteenth-century form and autobiography as a nineteenth-century genre using Shakespeare's sonnets as exemplars of both, rather than as examples of Renaissance thought. Masson's manuscript, with Masson editing Shakespeare and Carlyle editing Masson, as it is applied to Shakespeare criticism might appear to be "enlivened by romantic elaboration" (Schoenbaum 440). Obviously, Schoenbaum did not mean this as a compliment, but it does point out modern resistance to using Shakespeare to define anyone but Shakespeare. "There has also been a reaction against those nineteenth-century critics who used Shakespeare merely as a splendid pretext for writing about themselves. They for long stereotyped the 'right' attitude and formulas to be adopted towards 'The Bard.' In so doing they tell us more about themselves and their own day than about Shakespeare" (Fluchere, Shakespeare and the Victorian Roots of Modern Criticism 20-1). Considering the fact that Shakespeare died almost four-hundred years ago, what useful purpose could be served by learning who he actually was as a physical being? Truly none! However, in understanding what makes Shakespeare Shakespeare, we can learn from his perceptions of the demands he made upon life and vice versa. Thus in a test for an understanding of the Victorian notion of self, knowing how Shakespeare coped is most helpful and useful in that understanding. "No man, worth his life, ever was at peace with himself, or the world either. That which is the essence in all worth, all beauty, all humour, all genius, is

open or secret reference to the supernatural, and this is sorrow. The attitude of a finite creature contemplating the Infinite can only be that of an exile; grief and wonder blending in a wistful longing for an unknown home" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 134). For this, it is necessary to look at what Masson finds of interest:

What we desire to know respecting all such men, is how they lived, how they spoke, how they thought, how they appeared and looked, as individuals once alive, walking amid those influences to which we in our turn are subject; and by what means this ephemeral personality of theirs, and what precise proportion of it was woven forth into that large and historic existence. This desire, innate in man, it is the part of Biography to satisfy.

(Autobiography of Shakespeare 98-9)

Masson is looking at Shakespeare's sonnets both for what they have to say about the poet, the author, and for what they have to say about the nature of the Victorian being. That is, he is applying the form, the sonnet, to its autobiographical properties in order to answer the question, "Who am I?"

That the Poet is but a form of the man, and that, if the man were different, so would be the poet, is a truth that may work as an axiom; but to expound how it is that the Man passes into the Poet, in other words to show how the personal bent and peculiarities of a man where in writings whose essential character it is to be arbitrary and

universal, is a problem of the highest difficulty.

(Autobiography of Shakespeare 118)

In looking at Masson searching for answers about Shakespeare, the man, we will also find Masson discovering answers about Victorian man. The text under consideration ensures this.

*

The manuscript itself is divided into four sections. The first section is the Introduction, which examines various critical thoughts about the Sonnets. Masson mainly utilizes early nineteenth-century critics' theories in this section in his quest for Shakespeare the man. The second section is Biographic, and it discusses what was known about Shakespeare from sources other than Shakespeare's own works and gives a preliminary account of the Sonnets and the story they tell. Here Masson, in his autobiographical search, uses sources contemporaneous with Shakespeare. The third section is The Sonnets Elucidated. This section is an in-depth exegesis of the sonnets themselves. And the last section is a supplement, which details historical facts which Masson claims prove his theory that the youth was William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, to whom the first 126 sonnets were addressed; and the "other Poet" who is mentioned in Sonnets LXXVIII-LXXXVI was John Davies of Hereford. Masson does all this in an attempt to find the man, Shakespeare, behind the Sonnets. The notebooks, in addition to containing an unpublished Masson text, were read and annotated by Thomas Carlyle, and throughout the work there are the marginal notations and critical emendations of Carlyle. Perhaps when Carlyle's letters are fully published, there will be more information on Masson's manuscript available. For now, all we have is the 1850 fair copy which is housed in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. This manuscript, roughly a hand-written notebook and a half, was purchased in 1929 by Mr. Folger from Maggs Bros. LTD of London, in a private sale.

Unfortunately, because it was a private sale, and not a Maggs catalog sale, little more is known about its history from 1850 to 1929. However, judging Masson's use over the years of the material it contains, there is no reason to believe the manuscript ever left the Masson family until it was sold to Maggs. An interesting aside concerning the manuscript under consideration should be noted. Although the manuscript was never published, some references and excerpted material appeared in Masson's Shakespeare Personally, which was published posthumously in 1914 by Masson's daughter Rosaline (d.1949), who was an author and historian in her own right. It is from this source that it is known that Thomas Carlyle read and commented upon the manuscript. Further reference was made to the manuscript in Samuel Schoenbaum's Shakespeare's Lives in 1970. Since 1970, no one has considered the critical and literary merits of the manuscript. However, it began Masson's lifelong study of Shakespeare, and formed the basis of his lectures on Shakespeare, himself, and in comparison to major nineteenth-century writers. Throughout his career as a literary critic, Masson incorporated information about Shakespeare contained within this manuscript into other endeavors. An example of this is to be found in an article written for the British Quarterly Review in November 1852, called "Shakespeare and Goethe." Excerpts from historical documentation and some poetic theories are reiterated in the article. This article was, in turn, reprinted in Essays Biographical and Critical: Chiefly on English Poets. It is fascinating to trace Masson's use of the manuscript material

has used brackets, [], in the manuscript when elucidating points, I have embedded uppercase brackets, { }, to insert missing words or correct inaccuracies in the text. However, in going back to original source documents from which Masson quotes, I have found some textual inaccuracies. Because I do not know whether Masson is misquoting or whether his amanuensis made the error, my feeling is to correct the "mistakes." I have done this because, regardless of the reason for the error, these are the actual works which Masson was using while he was thinking and writing. To maintain the integrity of the manuscript, I have not modernized spelling or punctuation, but in those instances where there are actual spelling errors, I have simply made the corrections. At the end of each chapter of the manuscript I will list the marginal notations, all of those being the annotations made by Carlyle. After the original work was copied in 1850, Carlyle gave the manuscript a very close reading. While correcting grammar, punctuation, spelling and miscopied words in the sonnets themselves, he evaluated Masson's commentary. However, in some instances Carlyle merely pointed out what he believed were errors by simply marking an "X" in the margin. This usually indicated a spelling error, and those I have corrected without including Carlyle's notations. Where Carlyle thought the error was factual but left no indication of what he thought the truth to be, I have left the "X" in place. Any actual corrections made by Carlyle will be found in the marginal notations sections. I have indicated in the margins variations between the sonnets that appear in this

over his fifty year career and see that in 1895 his basic theories and conclusions concerning Shakespeare, the sonnet, and autobiography were still pretty much intact.

In explaining the editorial procedures to be followed in establishing the critical text of this manuscript, I also hope to convey an appreciation of the text as a product of its age. One of the beauties of the manuscript lies in its Victorianism. By this I mean the way in which Masson expresses his thoughts and uses language to convey meaning. The periodic sentences, the overabundance of semicolons, and the reiteration of facts, while a bit convoluted and confusing at first for modern readers, I believe give insight into the workings not only of Masson's thought processes, but also into the Victorian mind. To "modernize" these grammatical entanglements would not only do harm to the ideas expressed, but would also take away from the charm and feeling of the manuscript itself; and these I hope I have been able to preserve. In doing so, I have followed Masson's own dictum for editors which he stated in "The Three Interests in Old English Literature." "With Elizabethan books, or seventeenth-century books, it matters little; the old spelling there is no obstacle to any educated reader, and indeed imparts a relish to the text which some like. Not a word should be changed or tampered with; whatever in the old spelling is really significant, for etymology, meaning, or rhythm, should be punctually retained" (225). Therefore, any infelicity which occurs as a result of Masson's style, except where it is an error that obscures the meaning, has been left alone. Because Masson

manuscript and the quarto of 1609. Masson wrote this using a copy of the 1609 text by Thomas Thorpe, which most of the Shakespearean editors in the 1830's and 40's used. While Carlyle's corrections and suggestions may or may not improve our understanding of the material contained within the manuscript, leaving them in the marginal notations sections at the end of each chapter can only enhance the manuscript. It may, perhaps, also shed some insight into the personal relationship between Masson and Carlyle. Because both Masson and Carlyle refer to many literary and historical names which may be obscure today, a glossary of proper names has been included in the back matter of the text. However, if a person named is identified within the manuscript, or I feel needs no elucidating, then that name has been omitted from the glossary.

Finally, Masson has reordered the sonnets so that they appear chronologically, according to his calculations, rather than in numerical sequence. However, the numbers of the individual sonnets referred to continue to be those of the 1609 edition. This reordering, I believe, is critical to any understanding of Masson's work as a nineteenth-century guide in the journey that was undertaken in search of the self. Masson concludes that the last of Shakespeare's sonnets ends with poem CXXVII, which he considers an envoy to a critical five-year period, 1597-1602, in the poet's life. Without this important reordering of Masson's, the sonnets' importance as both a literary form and an exegesis of the literary genre of autobiography cannot be sufficiently examined or accurately evaluated in

the twentieth century.

Analysis of the sonnet as a literary form

A sonnet is a moment's monument - Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Rhyme, being far more laborious than loose measures (whatsoever is objected) must needs, meeting with wit and industry, breed greater and worthier effects in our language. So that if our labours have wrought out a manumission from bondage, and that we go at greater liberty notwithstanding these ties, we are no longer the slaves of Rhyme, but we make it a most excellent instrument to serve us. Nor is this certain limit observed in Sonnets any tyrannical bounding of the conceipt, but rather a reducing it in gyrum and a just form, {neither} too long for the shortest project, nor too short for the longest, being but only employed for a present passion. For the body of our imagination being as an unformed chaos, without fashion, without day, if by the divine power of the spirit it be wrought into an orb of some order and form, is it not more pleasing to

Nature, which desires a certainty and comports not with that which is infinite, to have these closes rather than not to know where to end, or how far to go?

(Autobiography of Shakespeare 453-4)

To the Victorian mind, Masson's rationale for or "definition" of the sonnet form is in perfect harmony with the autobiographical quests being undertaken during the nineteenth century. The form informs the subject of its limitations thereby enforcing a sense of closure, and allowing for a complete whole. It also forces artists, poets, to turn inside themselves, in order to discover values. Since they can't go outside the form, the body, they must look inward towards their feelings and emotions to get at their very natures. The author is, as Foucault has identified him, the self "without an equivalent, who, in a determined place and time completed a certain task" (984). Thus the creation of the sonnets is transformed into the interior search for the self of their creators. "The idea that art should teach and inspire as well as give pleasure was not new; but seldom had it been so firmly established as it was in this period, when society's need for self-understanding, criticism, and direction was so urgent" (Altick 272).

Because Shakespeare was probably the greatest practitioner of the modified Italian format, the English sonnet is better known as the Shakespearean sonnet. And although the Shakespearean sonnet grew from the Italian form, they are very different. The Italian sonnet is noted

for its bipartite division into an octave and a sestet. The octave consists of eight lines with the rhyme scheme abba abba, and the sestet rhyme scheme was either cde cde, cdc cdc, or cde dce. The octave bears the burden which can be a doubt, a problem, a reflection, a query, an historical statement, a cry of indignation or desire, or a vision of the ideal. The sestet eases the load, resolves the problem or doubt, answers the query, solaces the yearning, realizes the vision. The Shakespearean sonnet consists of three quatrains of four-line units and a final couplet with the usual rhyme scheme abab cdcd efef gg. The three quatrains in the English form have similar material to the Italian, but the final couplet normally gives an epigrammatic close to the poem. In keeping with the common practice of his age, Shakespeare has written sonnet sequences, as Masson has argued and proven in the Autobiography of Shakespeare is the proper way that the sonnets should be read, which produced a series of papers in which a common theme is thoroughly investigated. This was the accepted analysis of the sonnet form, and Shakespeare's sonnets in particular, which Masson inherited. However, Masson's purpose was to find Shakespeare the man. That is, he wanted to understand Shakespeare's very soul, and in order to accomplish this, Masson had to use the form of the sonnet to frame everything that belonged to Shakespeare.

Just one example of how Shakespeare did this, as Masson saw it, can be explained by using one of Shakespeare's most often used topics -- the swiftness and destructiveness of time, and its ramifications with respect to vicissitude and

mortality. In the plays, we see time ruling all human feelings, with such diverse characters as Prospero, Jaques, Hamlet, Juliet, Henry V and Richard II all exploring the limitations placed upon their worlds by time's ephemerality. "The moments pass into minutes, the minutes into hours, the hours into days, the days into years, the years into centuries, still with the same phenomenon of Death and Birth, of Persistence and Oneness through mutability and variety: real as it seems, it is all phantasmagoric and phenomenal. Time merges into Eternity" (Shakespeare Personally 219). According to Masson, in the sonnets, Shakespeare was able to convert "a transient thing; i.e. the beauty and worth of my friend into a small mass of substance perennial in its very nature, i.e. a 14 line Sonnet.' He is making war upon Time, outwitting Time, making Time ridiculous. [Sonnet] 'be a satire to decay, and make Time's spoils despised everywhere.' It is, therefore, not so much the imperishable character of his own sonnets in particular that Shakespeare has in view, . . . but the imperishable nature in general of those little coagulations of language called poems or sonnets" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 188-9).

Shakespeare's reoccurring brooding over the shortness of man's time, while seen in the dramas, is never far beneath the surface in the sonnets. "In nonartistic experience the mind is constantly shifting its frame of reference. In the experience of the sonnet it makes similar shifts, but from one to another of overlapping frames of reference that are firmly ordered and fixed. {The}

approximation of real experience is made to occur within mind-formed limits of logic, or subject matter, or form, or sound" (Booth 172). In the First Paper, as Masson calls sonnets I - XXVI, he tries to convince his friend to marry. Here we see an inchoate friendship, and the feelings expressed are closer to the surface than those which will be seen in Papers Fourth through Seventh (sonnets LVI - CXXVI). "Each sonnet is an action; and when successfully wrought, the action has a formal consummation" (Barber 161). Masson shows how Shakespeare, after making his argument in the first 12 lines of each sonnet, concludes with an epigrammatic close of each one which encompasses death, dying, vicissitudes of change, or destructiveness and swiftness of time. Masson, in accordance with the thinking of his day, interprets this to mean that Shakespeare believes that this will be the gloomy end if his advice is not followed. The shortness of the opening 12 lines swiftly brings about the death-knell couplet, in essence mimicking the mutability of the life cycle. Thus it creates a sense of unity and completeness, which inevitably allows for and forces closure.

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
 To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

{By not marrying you are wasting your life and denying your appetites and duty by not having heirs. Thus you will allow death to win.}

This were to be new-made when thou art old,

And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.
{If you have a son then, when you are a young man grown old,
the father will live longer through the son.}

But if thou live remember'd not to be
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.
{If you do not marry and are forgotten, it will be because
your mirror-image (your son) and reputation will die with
you.}

Thy unus'd beauty must be tomb'd with thee,
Which, us'd, lives thy executor to be.
{If you die without issue, then who will carry out the
orders of your will?}

Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair
To be death's conquest, and make worms thine heir.
{Don't be obstinate and allow death to win. Offspring
recapitulate a parent.}

So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,
Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son.
{Even though you are in the prime of manhood, if you die
without issue, you will be forgotten.}

The confines of the form have forced Shakespeare to finish
pursuing the subject, that is the topic of these particular
fourteen lines, and he can now move to another sonnet and
pursue the subject from another angle. This would appeal to
the Victorian sensibility because the doubting and
questioning have been addressed and an answer of sorts has
been supplied. As A. C. Bradley explained it, "Reading or

understanding the poem will involve readers in making the same process occur in themselves as occurred in the poet's head. We should study poetry in order to reproduce in ourselves more faintly that which went on in the poet's mind when he wrote" (Wells 288). But if we read the sonnets together, as Masson has suggested, as if they were chapters of a book, or more correctly a collection of letters to a friend, then all aspects of the same topic are explored, and various conclusions would be available from which the Victorians could find a sympathetic and amenable expression of feeling. "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy? To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (Pater, The Renaissance 158).

An interesting comparison to the endings discussed above, is the poem of closure, the phrase I have given to the envoy poem, CXXVI. This poem will be explicated further on in this section. Of particular fascination is the fact that in Paper I the friendship has not evolved into the deeply personal and heartfelt relationship traced through Papers II to VII and so the emotions are perfunctory and formulaic. Sonnet CXXVI comes full circle, and the emotions are again superficial and finite. "And her quietus is to render thee." That is, death's responsibilities will end

with your death at which point she will give you up -- as I must give you up now. The cycle has ended, the emotions of a deep personal friendship have all been explored, and the two friends move on with their separate lives.

In the Second Paper, which Masson has defined as sonnets XXVII - XXXII, Shakespeare's tone is melancholy and he is depressed. He discusses these emotions with the one person he feels will understand and sympathize with him.

It was the habit of Shakespeare's mind, forced thereto by the necessity of its structure, to ponder ceaselessly those questions relating to Man, his origin and destination, in familiarity with which lies what is called the spiritual Element in human character. It was Shakespeare's use, as it seems to us, to revert often, when alone with himself, to that ultimate mood of the soul, in which one hovers wistfully on the border of the finite, vainly pressing against the barriers that separate it from the fathomless Unknown; that mood in which even what is common seems part of a vast current mystery, and in which, like Arabian Job of old, one looks by turns at the heaven above, the earth beneath, and one's own moving body between, interrogating whence it all is, and whither it all tends.

(Autobiography of Shakespeare 133-4)

According to Masson and other prominent nineteenth-century Shakespearean scholars, Edward Dowden and Georg Brandes to name but two, these six sonnets are the most

autobiographical of the entire 154. As such, they will be more closely scrutinized in the next section, on autobiography. However, the sense of aloneness, of being on the outside of a society which has concerns other than for the individual as an individual, and of merely playing a role on life's stage, which these six sonnets express, would have touched a nineteenth-century nerve, and would have propelled people to be curious to know how Shakespeare resolved the inner conflict, because the concern was universal. "Much of English Romantic literature is a literature of movement. Especially common, however, is the story form of the pilgrimage and quest - the journey in search of an unknown or inexpressible something which gradually leads the wanderer back toward his point of origin" (Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism 193).

Next, according to Masson, is what he calls the Intercalated Paper, sonnets CXXVII - CLIV. These 26 sonnets were written to and about the dark lady, and chronologically, as Masson has determined, were composed about the same time as the Second Paper, 1597-98. The moral implications of the material contained in these sonnets for the nineteenth-century Victorian are portentous. The topic is also mentioned through the start of the next paper, namely in sonnets XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XL, XLI, XLII. Shakespeare, whose name alone could conjure up the image of a personage of heroic proportions, "and no man of the modern world can be said to have existed more largely than Shakespeare" (Shakespeare Personally 1), is shown in light of all his human frailties and failings. Marriage, in the

nineteenth century, started to crumble outwardly with the breakdown of the family as a unit and the allowance of divorce. This was reflected in the literature of the period. During the eighteenth century, almost all novels ended with a marriage and the implication that all would be happy ever after. Most Victorian novels start with that perfect eighteenth-century marriage in the process of failing or having already failed. And yet, "at the center of Victorian life was the family, with the conception of the home as a source of virtues and emotions which were nowhere else to be found, least of all in business and society" (Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 341-8). In the 26 sonnets of this paper, we see how a human being deals with the moral decay which he perceives has taken place within himself. Again the form allows Shakespeare to pursue a purely personal thought, passion, and forces him to deal and reconcile those emotions within the context of 14 lines. This clear definition of man faced with the dilemma of being human and dealing with it, is what would have especially appealed to the Victorians. "A man's conduct is but what he is himself, weak or strong, pure or bad; a man's calm and private conversation with himself in thoughtful moments regarding his conduct, is to be received, if it can be overheard, as an utterance of absolute truth made through him to mankind. So far then from being injurious either to Shakespeare or to the simple law of right and wrong which good souls acknowledge, the impression of these Sonnets as a whole, should be to increase our love for the one, and our respect for the other" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 261-2).

Each sonnet traces an emotion, such as joy, merriment, pain, remorse and shame. But taken as a whole, the sonnet sequence portrays a relationship, immoral in form, deteriorating from within. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in sonnet 144, which Masson calls "a summary for posterity of the whole story of that part of Shakespeare's life" (152).

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit, a woman color'd ill.
To win me soon to hell my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
Suspect I may, but not directly tell
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

The form of the sonnet sets up the external parameters, the choice between good, that is his true Platonic friendship, and evil, his illicit lustful affair. The closing couplet expresses the doubt that until one has vanquished the other, and the dark lady and the young man have separated, Shakespeare will not know internal peace. For Victorians,

the choices with which they were faced were overwhelming. And their doubts concerning making a wrong choice were even more horrendous in a changing world where right and wrong were not as clearly delineated as in Shakespeare's world. This was the metaphysical (and metaphorical) vision of man and the cosmos, as Abrams calls it "the great circle: the course of all things is a circuit whose end is its beginning, of which the movement is from unity out to the increasingly many and back to unity, and in which this movement into and out of division is identified with the falling away from good to evil and the return to good" (Natural Supernaturalism 150). This doubt is even sharper when considered in its autobiographical aspects. In this sonnet, Shakespeare knows what his choice must be. In fact, he has already chosen his friend. "I do forgive thy robbery gentle thief, / Although thou steal thee all my poverty: / And yet love knows, it is a greater grief / To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury" (Sonnet XL). Now his dilemma is to have the strength of character and reject the dark lady, his evil temptress, completely.

In the Third Paper, sonnets XXXIII - LV, Shakespeare is out of town on a journey. Although he has given up the dark lady and forgiven his friend, Shakespeare is still trying to reconcile within himself the pain and sorrow which his friend's treachery has caused him with the love and friendship which they have shared. "That thou hast her, it is not all my grief. / And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly; / That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief, / A loss of love that touches me more nearly" (Sonnet XLII). In

this paper, the sonnet sequence is very important because of the story it tells. While each sonnet discusses an individual and present emotion, the paper as a whole shows a man being carried along by his emotions, as Shakespeare was by his horse, trying to understand and come to terms with his feelings. The sonnet sequence forces a unity between the individual sonnets and the individual passions which each one expresses. Poets "undertook to justify the experience of suffering within the limits of experience itself" (Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism 444). Taken as a whole, the sequence informs the reader of the range of emotions man will experience when his world is shattered and he has to put it back into some kind of order. For Arnold this was "a source of illumination and joy to the whole human race for ever." For Bradley this meant that we could "reproduce in ourselves that which went on in the poet's mind when he wrote." Unfortunately Bradley insisted on separating Shakespeare from his works, in contrast to Masson and Carlyle, who make Shakespeare an integral and central part of his works. As Carlyle asked, "How could a man delineate so many suffering heroic hearts if his own heroic heart had never suffered?" (108-09). Learning to cope in an ever-changing world was a topic very near to nineteenth-century sensibilities. Shakespeare, having explored each emotional up and down passionately, finally forgives his friend, if not himself, completely, and says that the incident has actually brought them closer than before. This occurs in sonnet XLII, which is the last place any mention is made of the dark lady or the indiscretion. "But here's

the joy; my friend and I are one;/ Sweet flattery! then she loves me alone." After this, Shakespeare continues his journey, apparently having been able to resolve the difficulties of the past and been forced by the briefness of the sonnet form to move on.

In the Fourth (sonnets LVI - LXXVII), Fifth (sonnets LXXVIII - XCIX), Sixth (sonnets C - CVII), and Seventh (sonnets CVIII - CXXVI) Papers, Masson sees the development in the vicissitudes of the evolving friendship between Shakespeare and the young man. They represent an emotional roller coaster where the participants are estranged then reunited a number of times. Each time the friends forgive the other's insensitivity or disaffection, especially on Shakespeare's part, the friendship is strengthened, but the maturation that takes place during the exploration of individual feelings leaves the friends intellectually growing further apart. The feelings, emotions, seem to grow in importance, as if they were the cynosure of the friendship, rather than the emotional interaction of the friends. "Life is growth, but growth means loss, and the loss deeply matters" (Natural Supernaturalism 445). Thus in Sonnet CXXVI:

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour;
{My friend you control time's accoutrements: the mirror
(which reflects the passage of time), the scythe, and the
hourglass.}

Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
Thy lover's withering, as thy sweet self grow'st!
{The friends, by growing apart, have increased
understanding; as the young man grows in stature, his friend
becomes less important.}

If nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
{As you journey through life, nature always maintains power
over you.}

She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill,
May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill.
{Nature is so powerful that she has the ability to discredit
and obliterate time.}

Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure
She may detain, but not still keep her treasure:
{Friend, fear your master, Nature, but remember that there
are ways to outwit her.}

Her audit, though delayed, answer'd must be,
And her quietus is to render thee.
{However, though outwitted for a time, death will come; and
it is at this point that Nature's responsibility for you
will end and she will give you up.}

It must be noted that by definition this is not a proper
sonnet, either by the number of lines, only 12, or by the

form, rhyming couplets throughout. But Masson, in his reordering of the sonnets, places this as the envoy to all 154 poems. If we consider the use of the rhyming couplet in a proper sonnet, an epigrammatic close to the form and the topical passion, then this "poem" would certainly seem appropriate. It is a series of closures, a poem of closure, - to the sonnet sequence itself, to the veil that was lifted from Shakespeare the man, to the kind of Platonic love that can only exist and be truly understood in a world where parameters are universally set, and to the emergence of a sense of self-importance and self-worth in a deracinated milieu. The God-centered world of medieval thinking had given way to the man-centered philosophy of Renaissance humanism (Kristeller 167), but it had raised the question of man's rightful place in the infinite scheme of things. Shakespeare's internal questioning was indicative of a form that had a distinct, mimetic shape on the outside, but was quite indistinct and metaphoric on the inside. However, the matter that the form contained was universal, immutable. And it was this desire to understand the very nature of man for which the Victorians looked to the Renaissance, to Shakespeare. "The sonnet was an invention of genius. To modulate an erotic theme through hundreds of sonnets was an only too attractive invention of Petrarch's, which spread almost like an epidemic disease and made the sixteenth century sonnet-mad. Shakespeare was able to refill the outworn form with his soul's tensions" (Curtius 396). In addition, "it is by recognizing every powerful passage in a poem as originally the throb of some heart that we reach the

true depths of minute critical relish. But not till every poem has been chased up to the moment of its organic origin, and resolved into the mood, or intention, or constitutional reverie, out of which it sprang, will its import be felt or understood" (Shakespeare Personally 13-4). The nineteenth century was undertaking this inward quest, and they looked to Shakespeare as their guide in the form of the sonnet and the autobiographical journey inward that his sonnets recounted. In looking at Shakespeare's sonnets and using them to extract those autobiographical properties which they contain in order to find Shakespeare, Masson has also focused in on finding the Victorian self. This is important because in the process he has redefined the sonnet as a nineteenth-century autobiographical form. Masson has taken the concept of Renaissance sonnets, a public form of poetry, and shown how private, personal, and autobiographical Shakespeare had made them. In addition, if we divorce the sonnets from their historical context and look at them for what Masson saw in terms of nineteenth-century sensibilities, then the nature of autobiography, the inward journey for an understanding of the self becomes evident.

Autobiography as a nineteenth-century literary genre

So word by word, and line by line
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once, it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine.

In Memoriam - Tennyson

In addition to looking at the sonnet's form, Masson minutely explores the sonnets themselves for their autobiographical associations with Shakespeare. We are also forced, as readers, to deal with the concept of what an author is. "The coming into being of the notion of 'author' constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences" (Foucault 978). Part of the author-function, as Foucault defined it, is to create a self, "one that speaks to tell the work's meaning, the obstacles encountered, the results obtained, and the remaining problems" (984). In using the form of the sonnet, a creation of the poet, to understand and define Shakespeare the man, Masson is setting up a dialogic relation between the author, Shakespeare, and his (Masson's) audience, the nineteenth-century Victorian. "Autobiography is a highly

conventional, even prescriptive form, and its generic conventions shape our ways of thinking about the most private aspects of our lives" (Paterson 2). Because sonnets XXVII - XXXII, as a paper, are so intensely internalized in their concerns, and because they really tell us nothing of the external, physical Shakespeare, they are considered the most autobiographical. As shown in the previous section, the form allowed Victorians to see the author state his complaint, explore the possibilities for reaching some sense of understanding, and achieve closure all within 14 lines. The prescribed length of the sonnet form enforced unity on the expression. In order to truly understand this, those autobiographical properties which are the poetic self-conscious reflecting on innermost thoughts that are forced from that form must be explored. "A man's conduct is but what he is himself, weak or strong, pure or bad; a man's calm and private conversation with himself in thoughtful moments regarding his conduct, is to be received, if it can be overheard, as an utterance of absolute truth made through him to mankind" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 261-2).

If we look at the larger picture, that is the story that is derived from the sonnets as a whole, as Masson has defined it, we see first a developing deep friendship, second the emotional makeup of the poet, third the entanglement and emotional upheaval of an affair, fourth the working through of those feelings of betrayal, and fifth the evolving friendship as the participants mature and grow apart. Here I want to explore the second paper, which

Masson has delineated as sonnets XXVII - XXXII and titled "A copy, for the Poet's friend, of some Sonnets written under great depression." "Depressed, solitary, overpowered with melancholy, the poet pours what he feels for his own relief; and hence the tone is deeper, truer. . . . They admit us to his heart" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 249). In using the form, the sonnet, to express his innermost thoughts and feelings, Shakespeare is forced by the form inward to explore all sides of his emotional psyche. "Each sonnet is different, but the difference is achieved not by changing the framework of form but by moving in fresh ways within it" (Barber 163).

Sonnet XXVII

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tir'd;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expir'd;
For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

The poet is on a journey, but we don't know where he is or where he is going. However, we do see the start of an

inward journey. "But then begins a journey in my head, / To work my mind, when body's work's expir'd." The physical journey is tiring, but the mental journey is even more exhausting. "Lo, thus, by day my limbs, bu night my mind, / For thee, and for myself, no quiet find." It is as if the fourteen lines of the sonnet encompass a typical twenty-four hour day in the poet's life which is replicated every twenty-four hours on his quest.

Sonnet XXVIII

How can I then return in happy plight,
That am debarr'd the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eas'd by night,
But day by night and night by day oppress'd?
And each, though enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil, still farther off from thee.
I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright,
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven:
So flatter I the swart-complexioned night;
When sparkling stars twire not, thou gild'st the even.
But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer
And night doth nightly make grief's length seem
stronger.

As this daily onward journey continues, the inward journey becomes more oppressive and weighs more heavily on the poet's mind. "But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer / And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger." Once the cycle has started in Sonnet XXVII, setting up the

outward parameters of the journey, then the inward search for the true Shakespeare begins and the tone of Sonnets XXIX though XXXI becomes progressively more melancholic, despondent, and painful.

Sonnet XXIX

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friend's possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, -- and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising,
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered, such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

After Sonnet XXVIII, the physical journey, which still continues, is not referred to again. Rather, the poet confronts his mental journey, that is his innermost feelings, and tries to find something to hold onto despite the depression into which these thoughts plunge him. "I all alone beweepe my outcast state" discloses the poet's feelings of alienation and aloneness; "And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries" pursues the poet's belief that he is living in a cold, uncaring universe which is oblivious to one man's sorrows; "And look upon myself, and curse my fate"

shows the poet's dissatisfaction with his life; "Wishing me like" starts a catalogue of the poet's feelings of inferiority in comparison to those around him, "to one more rich in hope," that is to someone who has better chances of success; "Feature'd like him, like him with friends possess'd," the poet wants to look like another and have all of that second self's friends; "Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope," shows the poet's sense of creative inferiority in relation to other poets whose abilities and education he feels are better than his; "With what I most enjoy contented least" shows the poet's inability to appreciate and take pleasure in that which should please him. Victorians reading the words of Shakespeare, a poet who, in their minds, was a giant among men, and expressing those very same doubts which were plaguing them, would quite naturally feel an affinity with the poet. What are these thoughts but "concepts which have evolved into the reigning diagnosis of our own age of anxiety: the claim that man, who was once well, is now ill, and that at the core of the modern malaise lies his fragmentation, dissociation, estrangement, or alienation. He is divided within himself, he is divided from other men, and he is divided from his environment" (Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism 145); "what is constantly present, therefore, is the fear or suspicion, or simply the vague uneasy feeling, that one was not sure he believed what he believed" (Houghton, The Victorian Frame 21). Because of this sense of uncertainty and insecurity felt by Victorians, one could very easily predict that this would lead to a sense of understanding and harmony between

Victorians and the sentiments contained in Shakespeare's sonnets. Finally, in the couplet, the resolution that through his deep friendship he can overcome and conquer these depressing thoughts and find psychological contentment in his life. "For thy sweet love remembered, such wealth brings, / That then I scorn to change my state with kings." This would have been an ideal resolution for a world where "it is a thick and lumpish human nature with which we have to deal in the present day yielding none of those exquisite, deep singularities, those curious and beautiful developments; seen in the antique world; man is related to man by coarse and common ties, tears for a friend's death are rare; even in our love there is sanity and measure; and money regulates all" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 196).

Sonnets XXX and XXXI

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er,
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,
Which I by lacking have supposed dead;
And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,
And all those friends which I thought buried.
How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
As interest of the dead, which now appear
But things remov'd, that hidden in thee lie!
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone,
Who all their parts of me to thee did give;
That due of many now is thine alone:
Their images I lov'd I view in thee,
And thou, (all they) hast all the all of me.

These two sonnets explore what Shakespeare's friendship with his friend has enabled him to do - recall fondly and deal emotionally with his past sorrows, griefs, and loves. "I sigh . . ., I drown an eye . . ., and weep afresh . . ., and moan . . ., and grieve." And both sonnets end in closure which has turned those feelings into channels that have enabled the poet to accept and appreciate more that which he does have, "a strong present feeling in which the past is merged and forgotten" (Autobiography of Shakespeare 257).

"But if the while I think on thee, dear friend, / All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end. And those who once delighted in my ditties / Are dead, or scattered through the wide world's cities." Masson places these sonnets in their nineteenth-century context by showing how Shakespeare's

concerns are equal to those feelings expressed by Goethe in his Dedication to Faust.

Ye bring with you the shapes of days of glory,
And many a dear old shadow rises grey;
Like to an ancient half-forgotten story,
Comes forth first love and with it friendships gay;
And grief grows new and that complaint so heavy
Of life's confused and labyrinthine way;
And names of kindly ones I hear repeated,
All early-vanished, of their fair hours cheated.

They do not listen to my present singing,
The souls to whom I sang my maiden song;
Dispersed now the crowd so friendly clinging,
Silent alas! the echo heard so long.

My sorrows to the ears of strangers bringing
Their very praise but does my heart a wrong;
And those who once delighted in my ditties

Are dead, or scattered through the wide world's cities.

The connection between the two poets is undeniable. The sense of sadness and aloneness in the two is so close that one gets the impression that they are truly kindred spirits, brothers under the skin.

Another nineteenth-century poet Masson likens to Shakespeare is Lord Byron. In Sonnet LXXIII, Shakespeare is despondent and anticipates his own premature death. Juxtapose these sentiments expressed in that poem with Byron's poem, "The Day I Completed My Thirty-Sixth Year," on the same subject:

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worms, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is like volcanic isle
No torch is kindled at its blaze
A funeral pile.

Sonnet XXXII

If thou survive my well-contented day
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,
And shalt by fortune once more resurvey,
These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,
Compare them with the bettering of the time;
And though they be outstripp'd by every pen,
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men.

O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought!
Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age,
A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
To march in ranks of better equipage:
But since he died, and poets better prove,
Theirs for their style I'll read, his, for his love.

This envoy to these soul-searching sonnets exhorts
Shakespeare's friend to read the poems and remember him not
for his poetry, but rather for the true feelings encompassed
in them. This emotional sense parallels the completion of
the emotional journey Shakespeare has just taken. Instead

of being envious of others' abilities, as in Sonnet XXIX, he has accepted and come to terms with what he considers his own limitations and found a positive useful sense of closure for them in the final couplet. "But since he died, and poets better prove, / Theirs for their style I'll read, his, for his love."

Masson has looked into Shakespeare's heart, as reflected in these mirror-like sonnets, and discovered his emotional make-up. In the one-hundred plus sonnets that follow, Shakespeare will return to these same feelings and explore all their permutated meanings. At the end of the one-hundred fifty-four sonnet journey, Shakespeare will truly know himself, and we will understand him and ourselves, as the Victorians did, as we are all refracted in his image. As a nineteenth-century literary and social critic, Masson believed that in order to truly comprehend individuals and society, one must look to literature as a vehicle for some indication of where society's values and concerns lie. What was important to Masson was using the lessons learned from the past to make sense of the human condition in the modern world. He did this in his Milton biography, and he does this here in his Autobiography of Shakespeare. Using the sonnet form as the framework for recreating Shakespeare's life over a six-year period, Masson has not only revalued the sonnet as a nineteenth-century form, but he has also forced attention to be directed to its natural autobiographical properties. Over and over, in discussing individual sonnets, Masson says, "The sonnet casts itself into the following shape." It is almost as if

the sonnet has a life of its own and is able to define itself in terms of a life form. As a result of this, Masson has allowed the form to delineate autobiography as a nineteenth-century genre.

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Chapter III

**Autobiography of Shakespeare
from
His Thirty-fourth to his Thirty-ninth year,
derived from
His Sonnets**

**Together with
The Sonnets themselves
arranged and elucidated**

- by -

**David Masson
never published**

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colored ill.

Sonnet CXLIV.

Introduction

Examination of opinions regarding the Sonnets.

Part 1. Biographic.

Chap. 1st. Summary of what is known respecting Shakespeare
from other sources than the Sonnets.

Chap. 2nd. Preliminary exposition of the Sonnets and of
their story.

Part 2nd. The Sonnets Elucidated.

Paper 1st	Sonnets I - XXVI.	}	
Paper 2nd	Sonnets XXVII - XXXII.	}	
Intercalated Paper.	Sonnets CXXVII - CLIV.	}	
Paper 3rd	Sonnets XXXIII - LV.	}	with
Paper 4th	Sonnets LVI -LXXVII.	}	annotations
Paper 5th	Sonnets LXXVIII -XCIX.	}	
Paper 6th	Sonnets C -CVII.	}	
Paper 7th	Sonnets CVIII - CXXVI.	}	

Part III

Supplement of Historical Particulars.

Introduction¹

It was reserved for Augustus William Schlegel not more than thirty years ago, to call attention to the Sonnets of Shakespeare, and to express the opinion that, by studying them minutely, one might be able to work himself back into an acquaintance with certain traits in the character, and certain facts in the private history of the great poet.

The hope of such a result, one would think, ought to have produced such an outlay of interpretative ingenuity upon the Sonnets, as would long ere now have exhausted them of their biographical matter, and obliged them to yield some small solid contribution to our knowledge of Shakespeare's life. The case, however, stands far otherwise. Only two real attempts to follow out the suggestion of Schlegel are known to us, - the one by the anonymous author of some clever papers which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine during 1835; the other, far more important and elaborate, by Mr. Charles Armitage Brown, in a column on the "Autobiographical Poems of Shakespeare," published in 1838. Mr. Brown's conclusions regarding the sonnets appear to have been based on the most careful study; and the value of what he has done can be appreciated only by those who, in attempting the same task, shall experience his assistance. It must be confessed, however, that while his merit is complete as regards the perception of the general story involved in the sonnets, he has by no means followed out his own discovery by penetrating the meaning of the sonnets individually, tracing their connexion in the mind of

Shakespeare, or reconciling their mysterious tradition with what is rare and lofty in human nature. There is room accordingly, for a new commentary which while it will repeat some of Mr. Brown's conclusions regarding the Sonnets, shall endeavor to subject them individually and as a whole to a more rigorous scrutiny.

On the title page of an Edition of the Minor Poems of Shakespeare published in the beginning of last century it is announced that among the contents of the book are "One hundred and fifty four sonnets all of them in praise of the Poet's mistress." Inexcusable as this blunder is, we have reason to believe that it still prevails, not only among those who possess only that amount of acquaintance with Shakespeare which the usages of society require, but even among persons who have actually read and enjoyed many of the sonnets which they thus misinterpret. Mr. Collier himself must have been laboring under this misconception, when, in his "History of English Dramatic Poetry," he referred to the 69th and 112th sonnets of the collection as confirming the notion that Shakespeare's moral conduct was not unexceptionable. As sonnets usually concern women more or less, one is not prepared to find that the case is different as regards those of Shakespeare; the language of the sonnets themselves, if read in parts, is also such as to keep up the mistake; and it is only a careful and continuous reader of the whole that will discover that by far the greater proportion of the sonnets, namely 126 out of 154 are addressed, not to a woman, but to a young and beautiful male friend. Even those who have discovered, or have been

informed, that many of Shakespeare's Sonnets are addressed to a young man do not find their labor on that account over. On the contrary, the difficulty seems at first increased. One cannot understand with what purpose or on what conceivable occasion any human being could address another of his own sex in such strange and hyperbolic yet evidently earnest language, as that employed by Shakespeare in many of these sonnets. It must have been some feeling of this kind that drew from Mr. Hazlitt the confession with regard to Shakespeare's Sonnets that "he could make neither head nor tail of their ultimate drift." Partaking of this despair of any literal interpretation of the sonnets, some have had recourse to the reckless supposition that they are wholly or in part allegorical -- a supposition which, whilst it leaves us at liberty to select for use such passages as we may find lucid and intelligible, virtually permits us to throw the remainder aside. Others, unwilling to treat in this summary manner anything that Shakespeare once wrote, maintain that the sonnets are to be regarded as a medley of fugitive pieces, written at different periods, some of them to express the Poet's own feelings, others for the mere sake of recreation, and others in the character of vicarious sonneteering for his more prosaic friends. If this be the case, it must be admitted that Shakespeare's Sonnets collected as we now have them, constitute a medley more obscure and troublesome than would a similar series of the sonnets of any other writer, or even than would a miscellany of sonnets culled at random from eight or ten different poets and printed in any order whatever. Yet Mr. Charles

Knight clings to the hypothesis in question -- accepting information regarding Shakespeare from every source it might be said, except Shakespeare's own pen. Mr. Collier, in his edition of the Poet's works, makes a step in advance of Mr. Knight, for he admits having abandoned the idea which he once thought probable, that many of the Sonnets were written by Shakespeare at the request and in the name of others. Yet even he shrinks from the only remaining possible opinion, namely, that these Sonnets of Shakespeare, either in their present arrangement or in some other, form a continuous story, and are to be accepted as the records of a special, and in some points, very bitter series of incidents in the Poet's life.

This is the conclusion to which, we have no hesitation in asserting, a careful perusal of the sonnets themselves, pencil in hand, will inevitably lead one; and the longer one protracts the examination, the more powerful does the evidence become. The public indeed when the conclusion shall be fairly put before them, cannot possibly reject it. In truth it is the very closeness of the contact into which this view of the sonnets brings us with Shakespeare, the very value of the revelations concerning him to which it leads, that operates against it. Where we have so eager a desire to know, there we fear to believe; lest what we have once cherished in so high a subject we should be obliged again to give up; or lest, if our imaginations should dare to figure aught exact and familiar regarding the motives of so royal a spirit in its mansion, the question should be put to us what we can know of the halls of a palace or the

mantled head of a king. Yet, Shakespeare was a man; and it is as Humanity struggling vastly towards God, and not as any assignable proportion of the outer strength of the Universe, revealed in the human form that we call him or any man great. With no abated curiosity, therefore, are we bound to proceed; only with that reverence which becomes those who would attach this or that of their feeble meanings to words spoken by the mightiest of men, when he too, weak as the humblest of us, hung his head with shame, and muttered his griefs in the streets.

The Sonnets were first published in 1609, when Shakespeare was forty-five years of age. Two of them however the 138th and the 144th had appeared as early as 1599 in a surreptitious edition of some of his minor poems, published by a person named Jaggard. Evidence of another kind proves the sonnets to have been later compositions than the "Venus and Adonis" and the "Rape of Lucrece" which were dedicated by the poet to Lord Southampton; the former in 1593, and the latter in 1594. The certainty, therefore, is that the Sonnets were all written between 1594 and 1609 or between Shakespeare's thirty-first and forty-sixth years. A variety of circumstances, to which allusion will be made, lead to the more specific conclusion that they were composed during three or four out of those fifteen years; namely between 1597 and 1602 or between Shakespeare's thirty-fourth and his thirty-ninth year. The earliest of them seem to have been written in 1597. Shakespeare would then be in his thirty-fifth year --almost exactly at that middle point, as Dante calls it, of human life, when, in all thoughtful

minds, the sense of manhood fully attained, is mellowed with the pensive feeling that now no longer is the path up the hill.

What one gathers from an attentive and continuous perusal of the sonnets for the first time, is to the following effect: That Shakespeare addressed the greater part of them to a young and very beautiful male friend for whom he entertained a singular degree of affection resembling rather some of those ideal friendships of which we read in ancient romance than an ordinary English intimacy; that, about the same time, Shakespeare was in love with a woman, considerably older than this youth, of very dark complexion, not reputed beautiful, and known to be unfaithful in her conduct; and that at one time, during the period in which the sonnets were composed, Shakespeare's feelings were wounded to the quick by the discovery of an intrigue between this youth his friend, and this woman, his mistress.

These are the conclusions, to which, shrink as the reader may from contact with Shakespeare at a point where the imagination, if it act at all, must weave his life into a tale of old London scandal, he must in the end arrive. Nor, with such conclusions in prospect, ought the enquiry to be arrested at its outset by general clamours to forbear, or prejudged by such amiable appeals as "Can it be supposed" or "The pure and noble Shakespeare -- forget the wife of his bosom -- Anne Hathaway at Stratford." Let this manner of reasoning before evidence cease; and let it be granted the present writer to believe, (oh how truly) that Shakespeare

was not only one of the greatest but one of the purest breaths of God, and yet to have read these Sonnets line by line! And if still some natural reluctance will remain to think of error in such a soul, let it be remembered that, in this scene of struggle against evil, it may be for some good purpose that we are shown how even a God will bleed when a spear pierces. If the reader, his curiosity excited, should proceed to examine the sonnets more minutely he will detect many interesting allusions, subordinate to the principal facts, and a connected story will begin to glimmer through upon him. Eventually he will become aware that there are pauses in this story; that, at particular points the flow of meaning is interrupted as if the poet had at these points laid aside his pen and not resumed it until after some interval of time. If with this discovery fresh in his mind, he were to fall in with Mr. Brown's volume, he would doubtless be charmed with the ingenuous proposition there laid down regarding the manner in which the Sonnets should be arranged. Mr. Brown's idea is that the Sonnets of Shakespeare are not properly sonnets at all but six distinct poems in the sonnet stanza, written at different times and addressed five of them to the young friend of the Poet, and the sixth to his mistress. The following is his scheme of the sonnets, according to this idea.

First poem (Sonnets I-XXVI) To the poet's friend, persuading him to marry.

Second poem (Sonnets XXVII-LV) To the poet's friend, who had robbed him of his mistress, forgiving him.

Third poem (Sonnets LVI-LXXVII) To the poet's friend,

complaining of his coldness, and warning him of
Life's decay.

Fourth poem (Sonnets LXXVIII-CI) To the poet's friend
complaining that he prefers another poet's
praises, and reproving him for faults that may
injure his character.

Fifth poem (Sonnets CII-CXXVI) To the poet's friend,
excusing himself for having been for some time
silent, and disclaiming the charge of inconstancy.

Sixth poem (Sonnets CXXVII-CLIV) To the poet's mistress, on
her infidelity.

One of the most felicitous of the observations with
which Mr. Brown supports his theory is that the closing
stanza of each of the various poems into which he has thus
clipped the series of sonnets, may, with little difficulty
be used as an envoy, such as it was customary in those days
to append to a poetical epistle. Reprinted, therefore,
according to the above scheme, as six separate poems in the
sonnet-stanza, Mr. Brown contends that the sonnets would
become more popular and intelligible than they now are.

In proceeding to test the validity of Mr. Brown's theme
one soon finds that, although serviceable for the purposes
of elucidation, it cannot be accepted as final. The
statement made by him which is most liable to objection is
precisely that upon which the value of his arrangement as a
definitive one, depends; namely, that in the various so-
called poems, each stanza "is connected with the preceding
and following ones, so as to produce a consecutive sense and
feeling throughout; as much as will be found in any

poetical, or even prose epistle." This is not the case. Although frequently in the series, several contiguous sonnets do run into each other so as evidently, or at least possibly, to have been produced at a sitting, and intended to be read together; this inter-connexion of the sonnets is by no means so extensive as Mr. Brown supposes. A glance at the so-called poems severally will suffice to make this clear.

According to Mr. Brown, the first twenty-six sonnets of the collection ought to be treated as a continuous poem, in which under the form of argument persuading his young friend to marry, Shakespeare pays him compliments on his beauty, and, in general, expresses a strong interest in his welfare. A single perusal, however, of the twenty-six sonnets will show that they cannot be considered as a continuous poem if by this we imply a poem worked out so as to form a whole. In the first place, if the duration of the argument for marriage is to determine the length of this opening poem, it should cease at the end of the seventeenth Sonnet, where the argument for marriage is decidedly brought to a close; the remaining nine sonnets being mere general declarations of the poet's affection, which could, on no artistic principle, be accepted as the conclusion of a poem commenced and carried on for seventeen stanzas in so peculiar a strain. But farther; not only is the poem bent awry, if we may so speak, at the end of the seventeenth stanza; but the two parts into which it is thus divided, do not, either of them, exhibit that artistic intertexture of the several verses which we expect in every regular poem, and which we find in

the other compositions of Shakespeare. Sonnets I-III indeed, appear to have been written together; but the manner in which Sonnet IV opens, is that of a man returning to a subject which he had quitted in order to repeat an old thought in a new form. Sonnet IV once written, Sonnets V-VII may have followed it at the same sitting (Sonnets V and VI must have been produced together as they are grammatically connected); but Sonnet VIII, again, seems to have been suggested, not out of Sonnet VII, but by some little independent incident. Sonnet IX very probably flowed out of Sonnet VIII; Sonnet X possibly, although not so evidently out of Sonnet IX; and Sonnet XI with about equal likelihood out of Sonnet X. The opening of Sonnet XII is such as clearly to indicate some new inspiration from without; Sonnets XIII and XIV may as probably have been written apart as together; Sonnet XV is manifestly a new start but is grammatically connected with Sonnet XVI; and Sonnet XVII concludes the series. There the argument for the marriage is closed; and the remaining nine sonnets diverge into other topics. Sonnets XVIII and XIX might indeed be considered as connected by some concealed link with Sonnet XVII; but Sonnet XX is so evidently built on a new foundation of thought and feeling that it would be a positive violence to make it consecutive on Sonnet XIX as one stanza of a poem is consecutive on another. Sonnets XXI-XXVI are six separate pieces. It is needless to analyze the other alleged poems in the same minute manner; the reader can pursue the investigation for himself. Let us call his attention only to one or two instances in which he

may put Mr. Brown's theory to the test with the quickest and most decisive result. Sonnets XXXII and XXXIII are according to Mr. Brown consecutive stanzas of a poem, numbered the second in his scheme; let the reader attempt to read them as such. Sonnets L-LV, are according to Mr. Brown consecutive stanzas of the same poem; yet Shakespeare after addressing his friend by the pronominal form Thou and Thee in Sonnets L and LI, suddenly alters it for You in the four which follow. This is not a solitary instance, either, of the same change from one form to the other - see Sonnets LIX and LX which according to Mr. Brown are consecutive stanzas of the third poem. Try at the same time, to read Sonnets LVIII-LX as three continuous verses; the attempt, if undertaken with intelligence, will be found hopeless. If the occurring transitions from the pronominal form Thou to that of You and vice versa should still appear possible in the hurry of composition, surely it will not be supposed that the occasional and causeless exchange of the second personal pronoun for the third and vice versa is an equally insignificant matter. Yet of this we have examples. In Sonnet LXIII the Thou of the preceding Sonnets became He; and then after this pronominal form has been used throughout Sonnets LXIII-LXVIII the poet again in Sonnet LXIX relapses into Thou; which, however, he retains only for two verses, preferring You in Sonnet LXXI. All these Sonnets nevertheless, according to Mr. Brown, are continuous stanzas of the same poem. Again, observe the last three stanzas, as Mr. Brown calls them, of the fourth poem -i.e. Sonnets XCIX-CI. In Sonnet XCIX the poet's friend is directly

addressed as Thou; in Sonnets C and CI he is indirectly referred to as He and Him. Nor is this transition more violent than that of the sense. Sonnet C begins thus:

Where art thou Muse, that thou forget'st so long

To speak of that which gave thee all thy might?

Is such an invocation to the Muse usual in the penultimate stanza of a poem? Is it not more probable that the Sonnet opening thus was the beginning of a new series of verses? But the impression of the arbitrariness of Mr. Brown's supposition, that may be derived from such observations in detail is quite weak compared with that which a more continuous perusal of the Sonnets will produce. If the "Sonnets" are six poems in the Sonnet stanza, they are the most confused things of the kind in Literature. Such transitions, such disjunctions, such abrupt changes of mood were never seen within the compass of a single poem before, as are to be found in each of these alleged six of Shakespeare. It is true, here or there, an idea is pushed through several Sonnets; but in general each is self-complete and of independent origin. And even in those cases where a common meaning seems to connect several Sonnets, the connexion is not always that of artistic evolution. Only in twelve instances (Sonnets V-VI; XV-XVI; XXVII-XXVIII; XLIV-XLV; L-LI; LXIV-LXV; LXVII-LXVIII; LXXIII-LXXIV; XCI-XCII; XCII-XCIII; XCVIII-XCIV; and CXXIII-CXXIV) does the grammatical construction indicate the conjunction of a Sonnet with its successor in the mind of the poet; and the instances in addition to these, in which such a conjunction is rendered probable by the sense are not numerous. Two

cases occur (Sonnets LXVI-LXVIII; XCI-XCIII) in which three consecutive sonnets were evidently intended to be read together; and there are one or two other cases in which similar concatenation of three sonnets or even of four will assist the sense. In no case however can more than four sonnets be thus read in connexion. The only cases in which the attempt could be made with any plausibility are those of the seventeen Sonnets (I-XVII) through which the poet prosecutes the subject of his friend's marriage and of the nine Sonnets (LXXVIII-LXXXVI) through which he protracts his allusions to "the other Poet." In neither the one case nor the other, however, have we an artistic evolution of one conception such as we expect in a poem; but only such a non-progressive iteration of the same thought or fancy in different forms as we should expect in a series of distinct Sonnets written with one purpose. In short let the reader, prepossessed never so strongly with Mr. Brown's theory of the 6 poems in the Sonnet stanza, undertake and execute a thorough examination of the supposed poems, and they will crumble back in his hands, into that mere series of detached sonnets (one or two of them sometimes exceptionally linked together) which they have hitherto been understood to be. And certainly this agrees better with external probability. Is it likely that if these little pieces were originally poems in the Sonnet stanza, they would have been printed under the title of "Sonnets" in Shakespeare's own lifetime? Besides, Francis Meres, an obscure author who in a book published in 1598, makes favorable notice of Shakespeare, mentions particularly "his sugared sonnets among his private

friends"; or unless these pieces which Mr. Brown seeks to turn into poems are the Sonnets in question, where are they to be found? That which evidently misled Mr. Brown in the first place was his own happy observation that at certain points the series of sonnets was broken short, or that at these points there uniformly occurred some Sonnet in which the poet seemed, as it were, to wind up his epistle and come to a formal conclusion. Once led astray by this observation he was farther deceived by the circumstance of the manifest connexion of sense, visible in several cases, between contiguous sonnets - a circumstance which certainly proves at least, what is indeed proved independently by the nature of the metre employed, that these Sonnets are not of the proper Italian structure.

But, although Mr. Brown's theory is untenable, it is not to be supposed that the labor he has bestowed on the sonnets has been without result. On the contrary by no method would a student of the sonnets be able more expeditiously to work himself into their meaning as they stand in the common editions, than by adopting Mr. Brown's theory provisionally, and arranging them in accordance with it. And even after experience had convinced him of its futility, he would still thankfully retain the main observation on which it is founded, to wit, that at certain points there is an evident interruption of the series, showing that it ought to have been broken up into parts by the printer, and not arranged as now as a mere continuous miscellany of occasional sonnets.

For ourselves, our conclusion is that these 154 Sonnets

of Shakespeare consist not of so many poems in the Sonnet stanza, but of several distinct papers or collections of real and veritable Sonnets, such as Shakespeare understood them; that these papers were written between 1597 and 1602; and that in 1609, coming into the hands of Thomas Thorpe the publisher they were printed together without any such division being indicated between the separate papers, as Shakespeare himself would probably have made had he superintended the publication. How many of such Sonnets are united so as to form the collection it would be difficult to determine with certainty. To us however, it appears, that a subdivision of the series into 8 distinct papers of Sonnets is the most probable that can be made. Seven of these papers comprehending 126 Sonnets (I-CXXVI) are addressed to the Poet's friend; the 8th paper comprehending the remaining 28 Sonnets (CXXVII-CLIV) are addressed to the poet's mistress. This 8th paper however, although appended to the others in the original edition, was composed, as internal evidence proves, about the same time as the earlier papers of the other 7; in all probability immediately after the 2nd, and contemporaneously with the 3rd of these papers. In order to present the Sonnets therefore in their natural and chronological sequence it is necessary to transpose this 8th paper, inserting it between the 2nd and 3rd of the other 7. The entire collection thus rearranged, will consist of 7 papers of Sonnets to the poet's friend, and an intercalated one to the poet's mistress; as follows

1st Paper - Sonnets I-XXVI

2nd Paper - Sonnets XXVII-XXXII

Intercalated Paper - Sonnets CXXVII-CLIV

3rd Paper - Sonnets XXXIII-LV

4th Paper - Sonnets LVI-LXXVII

5th Paper - Sonnets LXXVIII-XCIX

6th Paper - Sonnets C-CVII

7th Paper - Sonnets CVIII- CXXVI

Such is the scheme according to which we propose to arrange the Sonnets, with a view to evolve their biographical significance. It is necessary to propound the scheme in this express manner at the outset; the reasons on which it is founded will appear more clearly in the sequel. Adhering therefore, to the foregoing arrangement, and retaining in our recollection the brief compendium which has already been given of the general story of the Sonnets we shall travel at leisure through them, vigilant for every hint, every allusion, every indication of feeling that may help us to fill up the story, or to conceive more distinctly than we otherwise might the person and character of Shakespeare. Much will be observed till we are amidst the Sonnets themselves where it will appear most conveniently in the form of annotations; a preliminary exposition, however, of their meaning and import seems desirable; and in order that this exposition may be fully understood, it is necessary first of all to present our readers with a summary of what is already to be known regarding Shakespeare from other sources.

Marginal Notation

Written in 1846

Part I
Biographic

Chap. I. -----

Summary of what is known respecting Shakespeare from other sources than the Sonnets.

Shakespeare, this man who died 230 years ago, what is he now to us his countrymen who ought to know him best? A great name, certainly, in the first place, of which we are proud! That this our little foggy island of England should have given birth to such a man is of itself a moiety of our acquittance among the nations. By Frenchmen, Shakespeare is accepted as equal to their own first; Italians waver between him and Dante; Germans, by race more our brethren, worship him as their own highest product also, though born by chance amongst us. All confess him to have been one of those great spirits occasionally created, in whom the human faculties seemed to have reached that extreme degree of expansion, on the slightest increase beyond which, Man would burst away into some other mode of being than the present, as an aerolite flung too far from its native moon, is seized they say by the Earth. Nor shall we ever be robbed of this however. Let the world last for a thousand ages, Shakespeare's place among men will still be the same, and still secure. When the new Hemisphere shall be clothed with the civilization of European cities; and when the old one, tinged by the expected genius of the Slaves, shall have

altered the aspect and arrangements, still shall Shakespeare the Englishman of the 16th century, be remembered, and the spot where he was born be visited by men.

But what is he, this Shakespeare? What are his special claims to this high worship? Through what mode of activity, practiced while alive, has he earned this immortality after he is dead? The answer is simple! He was an Artist, a Poet, a Dramatist! Having during some 20 years of a life, not very long, written about 40 dramatic pieces, tragic, comic, and historical, which after having been acted in several London theatres, were printed either by himself or his executors; he has by this means, bequeathed to the memory of the human race an immense number of verses, and to its imagination a great variety of ideal characters and creations --Lears, Othellos, Hamlets, Macbeths, Falstaffs, Shylocks, Shallows, Aguecheeks, Ariels, Calibans, Titanias, Rosalinds, Cordelias, Imogens, Isabellas, Mirandas, Juliets. This, understood in its fullest extent, is what Shakespeare has done. Whatever blank in human affairs as they now are, would be produced by the immediate withdrawal of all this spiritual and intellectual capital, together with all the interest that has been accumulated on it, that is the measure of what we have received from Shakespeare. This conception, however, while it serves vaguely to indicate to us the greatness of Shakespeare, by no means defines his character. What we desire to know respecting all such men, is how they lived, how they spoke, how they thought, how they appeared and looked, as individuals once alive, walking amid those influences to which we in our turn are subject;

and by what means this ephemeral personality of theirs, and what precise proportion of it was woven forth into that large and historic existence. This desire, innate in man, it is the part of Biography to satisfy.

In an attempt to obtain this close kind of acquaintance with Shakespeare, to ascend, as it were, to the living spring from which have flowed those rich poetic streams, we inevitably rely on 2 kinds of assistance -- the information now accessible to us regarding the events of Shakespeare's life; and such casual sketches of him as have been left us by his contemporaries. Out of the hints supplied from these 2 sources, it may be said, that we have formed our picture, such as it is of Shakespeare.

The dried information that we possess regarding the facts of Shakespeare's life, is, it has been again and again remarked, singularly meagre. The industry of enquirers has fixed a few of the more important dates, and ascertained a few minute particulars; but that is all. That he was born at Stratford on Avon in Warwickshire, in April 1564, probably on the 23rd day of the month, and the 3rd child and eldest son of John Shakespeare, a glover or wool dealer in respectable circumstances, who afterwards became poor; that he was educated with some care in his native town, and married there at the age of 18 to a farmer's daughter, Anne Hathaway, who was 8 years older than himself, and with whom he had been too intimate before marriage; that after his marriage he earned his livelihood either as a scrivener, or as a schoolmaster somewhere in Warwickshire; that in 1586 he was the father of 3 children, which were all he ever had;

that, about this time, being in his 23rd or 24th year he quitted his native county either from inclination or necessity and came to London, where he became professionally connected with the Blackfriar's theatre and commenced the career of a Poet and play-writer; that in 1589 he was one of the proprietors of the afore-said theatre; that he began to attract notice as a successful dramatic author even while Marlowe, Greene, Peele, and others were writing for the stage; that in 1593 he published and dedicated to Lord Southampton, what he himself calls "the 1st heir of his invention" --a short poem of the fancy entitled "Venus and Adonis", which was followed in 1594 by a similar poem called, "The Rape of Lucrece", dedicated to the same nobleman; that about this time, besides ranking as one of the principal proprietors of the theatre with which he had been connected from the beginning, he became joint proprietor of the Globe theatre; and that, in order as we may suppose to be near these theatres, he has his residence in Southwark near the Bear Garden; that he paid occasional visits, however, to Stratford; that before 1598, that is, before his 33rd year he had written at least 12 of his great dramas, and become rich enough to buy the best house in his native town, with its grounds and appurtenances; that till 1603 or 1604, he continued in his profession as an actor, but that then, being a man of repute and of property, to the amount of about L1500 a year, he either retired from the stage altogether or ceased to act habitually, and took up his residence at Stratford where his old mother was still living, though his father had died 3 years before; that here

he employed himself in writing for the stage, and also in such occupations as devolved on him as the wealthiest man of the village -- having, for instance, in 1605 bought a moiety of the town-tithes; that in 1608, when he was only 43 years of age, he was made a grandfather by the birth of a child to his daughter Susanna who in the previous year had married Dr. Hall a physician of Stratford; that in the same year his mother died, having just seen as we may suppose, her great grand-daughter christened; that in 1616 his other daughter Judith, married a Mr. Thomas Quiney; and that about 2 months after that event when he had attained his 53rd year, he died at Stratford, and was buried at the chancel of the parish church -- such are the main facts that have been ascertained in the biography of Shakespeare. The impression which they leave on the mind is that he was for some years of his youth in a somewhat unsettled condition, both as regarded his character and his prospects, but that on the whole he led a life of singular calmness, prudence, industry, and success, and was respected accordingly. While it is in this manner that we retain the general outline for our portrait of Shakespeare, our more special and minute impressions regarding him, are derived, justly or unjustly, from a few notices of him that have come down to us from his contemporaries. We shall here print in their proper order, all or most of these notices; not seeking to discriminate very precisely, between such as are, and such as are not authentic, but copying them all alike as the traditions from which, merely because they are current, biographers always do borrow something when they form a picture of Shakespeare.

The earliest notice that remains of Shakespeare, it is believed, is in the covert allusion to him by the rival-dramatist, Robert Greene, in his "Groatsworth of Wit" published in 1592. At this time Shakespeare was a player at the Blackfriar's Theatre and one of the proprietors. Besides scheming and writing dramatic essays of his own, he seems to have employed himself largely in altering and adapting stockpieces already in use; and it was probably to his success in such attempts, that Greene alluded in the following ill-natured paragraph: "There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is, in his own conceit, the only Shakescene in a country." Contemporary with the foregoing was the following good word for the new Play-writer by the Poet Chettle. "Myself have seen his demeanor no less civil than he is excellent in the quality he professes. Besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art." The next is a still more generous notice. It occurs in "Palladis Tamia or Wits Treasury" published in 1598, the work of the obscure writer named Francis Meres, a master of arts of Cambridge and who afterwards took holy orders. The book is a collection of passages from the ancients; but included in it is a "Comparative Discourse of our English Poets" containing the following sentences: "As the Greek tongue is made famous and eloquent by Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Aeschylus,

Sophocles, Pindarus, Phocylides and Aristophanes; and the Latin tongue by Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Silius Italicus, Lucanus, Lucretius, Ausonius, and Claudianus; so the English tongue is mightily enriched and gorgeously invested in rare ornaments and resplendent habiliments, by Sir Philip Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Warner¹, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Chapman. As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare; witness his "Venus and Adonis" his "Lucrece", his sugared Sonnets among his private friends etc. As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage. In comedy witness his "Gentlemen of Verona", his "Errors", his "Love's Labour's Lost" his "Love's Labour's Won" (probably "All's well that ends well") his "Midsummer's Night's Dream" and his "Merchant of Venice"; for tragedy, his "Richard II", "Richard III", "Henry IV", "King John", "Titus Andronicus", and his "Romeo and Juliet". (In this list are omitted the "Taming of the Shrew" and an original sketch of "Hamlet" on which the mature play was afterwards founded --both written before 1598) --Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus' tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase if they would speak English." After this in point of date, comes a curious little morsel. Mr. J. P. Collier to whose indefatigable researches into all matters relating to Shakespeare, the world owes so much, chanced while preparing

his "History of English Dramatic Poetry" to find in the British Museum, a manuscript Diary which had been kept about the year 1600, by an anonymous person, evidently a member of one of the Inns of Court. Going about among his acquaintances, this person apparently made it a habit to jot down any occasional bit of gossip that came to his hand. Under the date March 13th 1601, accordingly, he has left us the following entry, copied thus by Mr. Collier. "Upon a tyme when Burbidge played Rich. 3. there was a citizen grewe so farre in liking with him, that, before shee went from the play, shee appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Rich. the 3. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained, and at his game, ere Burbidge came. Then message being brought that Rich. the 3. was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Rich. the 3; Shakespeare's name being William." The Mr. Tooley here named probably as the informant of the writer may have been Mr. Nicholas Tooley,² who was a fellow actor with Shakespeare, and a joint proprietor with him in the Globe Theatre. This would give the story more respectability than it has on the face of it. Even, then, however, we should not be entitled to receive it as true, but only (which however of itself would be something) as one of the jokes current about Shakespeare among his theatrical acquaintances. The joke, clearly if it is one, was intended to be at the expense of Burbidge.

The next notice of Shakespeare, which we also owe to Mr. Collier, is very valuable. In 1608, it appears, the

corporation of London, interfered in the affairs of the Blackfriar's Theatre, to the detriment of those who possessed an interest in it. After trying to eject the proprietors, the corporation came to an agreement with them and purchased their property. In the course of the negotiations, Shakespeare, it would appear, had used his influence with Lord Southampton, the nobleman to whom he had dedicated his earliest poems, to persuade him to do what he could for the interests of the Company. The letter, from which the following is an extract, was the result, written by Lord Southampton to the then Lord Chancellor Ellesmere; and probably delivered to the Lord Chancellor in person by Shakespeare and Burbidge. It was discovered by Mr. Collier among the Egerton papers.

"These bearers are two of the chief of the Company -- one of them by name Richard Burbidge, who humbly sueth for your Lordship's kind help, for that he is a man famous as our English Roscius, one who fitteth the action to the word, and the word to the action, most admirably. By the exercise of his quality, industry and good behavior, he hath become possessed of the Blackfriar's Playhouse which hath been employed for plays since it was built by his father, now near 30 years ago. The other is a man no whit less deserving favor, and my especial friend, till of late an actor of good account in the Company, now a sharer in the same, and writer of some of our best English plays, which as your Lordship knoweth, were most singularly liked by Queen Elizabeth, at court, at Christmas and Shrovetide. His most gracious Majesty King James, also, since his coming to the

Crown, hath extended his royal favor to the Company in
divors ways, and at sundry times. This other hath to name
William Shakespeare; and they are both of one country and
indeed almost of one town. Both are right famous in their
qualities, though it layeth not to your Lordship's gravity
and wisdom to resort unto the places where they are want to
delight the public ear. Their trust and suit now is, not to
be molested in their way of life, whereby they maintain
themselves and their wives and families (being both married,
and of good reputation) as well as the widows and orphans of
some of their dead fellows."

After this may be quoted the notices of Shakespeare by
his great contemporary and personal friend, Ben Jonson, but
first we extract a few lines from the somewhat heavy piece
published by Ben. "In memory of his beloved Master, William
Shakespeare."

"Soul of the age!

The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!

My Shakespeare rise! I will not lodge thee by

Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie

A little further off to make thee room.

Thou art a monument without a tomb.

And art alive still while thy book doth live,

And we have wits to read and praise to give.

That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,

I mean with great but disproportioned muses;

For if I thought my judgement were of years

I should commit thee surely with thy peers

And tell how far thou didst our Lily outshine

Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek
From thence to honour thee I will not seek
For names; but call forth thund'ring Aeschylus
Euripides, and Sophocles to us
Paccuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead (Seneca)
To live again, to hear thy buskin tread
And shake a stage. Or when thy socks were on
Leave thee alone for the comparison,
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come
Triumph my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe
He was not of an age but for all time.

* * * *

Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well toned and tune-filled lines
In each of which he seems to shake a lance
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance
Sweet Swan of Avon! What a sight it were
To see thee on our water yet appear
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza, and our James!"

More important than this ponderous eulogy, are his prone
remarks, the substance of his conversation, regarding
Shakespeare, held with Drummond of Hawthornden when he

visited in Scotland in 1619.

"I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, would he had blotted a thousand! Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour; for I loved the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy {phantsie}, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometime it was necessary he should be stopped; 'sufflaminandus erat' as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter; as when he said in the person of Cesar, one speaking to him 'Cesar thou dost me wrong.' He replied 'Cesar did never wrong but with just cause'; and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned."

Interesting in another way is the following morsel, purporting to be an impromptu of Shakespeare, and extracted as such by Mr. Collier from a m.s. volume of songs, collected by a person named Richard Jackson, apparently for his own amusement previously to the year 1631, and now in the possession of Mr. Thorpe, publisher. "Shakespeare's

Rhyme which he made at the Mytre Tavern in Fleete Street
Give me a cup of rich canary wine,
Which was the Mitre's (drinks) and now is mine;
Of which had Horace and Anacreon tasted,
Their lives as well as lines till now had lasted!"

At such meetings at the Mitre and other taverns, as that in which this bit of doggerel may have been thrown off by the poet, those wit-combats between him and Ben Jonson must be supposed to have taken place, which are referred to in the following well known passage from Thomas Fuller, written in 1662. "Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man of War. Master Jonson like the former was built far higher in learning; solid but slow in his performance. Shakespeare, with the English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention." As Fuller, who was born in 1608, was but 8 years of age when Shakespeare died, the foregoing is to be received only as a fancy-picture, by the writer of what others may have described to him. About equal value attaches to the following pleasant sketch of Shakespeare by Aubrey, who wrote in 1680.

"This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess about 18, and was an actor at one of the play-houses, and did exceedingly well. (Mr. B Jonson was never a good actor, but an excellent instructor) He began early to make essays and dramatic poetry, which at that time was very low, and his plays took well. He was a

handsome, well shaped man; very good company and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit. The humour of the Constable in "A Midsummer's Night's Dream" (Aubrey probably refers to Dogberry in "Much ado about Nothing") he happened to take at Grendon in Bucks which is the road from London to Stratford; and there was living that Constable about 1642, when I first came to Oxon. Mr. J^o Howe is of that parish, and knew him. Ben Jonson and he did gather humours of men daily wherever they came. One time he was at the tavern of Stratford on Avon, one Combes an old rich usurer was to be buried. He makes there this extemporary Epitaph.

"Ten in the hundred the Devil allows
But Combes will have twelve, he swears and vows.
If any one asks who lies in this tomb,
'Ho' quoth the Devil 'tis my John a' Combe.'"³

He was wont to go to his native country once a year. I think I have been told that he left L200 or L300 per annum, there and thereabout to a sister. I have heard Sir William Davenant and Mr. Tho^s Shadwell, who is accounted the best comedian we have now, say, that he had a most prodigious wit, and did admire his natural parts beyond all other dramatic writers. He was wont to say that he never blotted out a line in his life. Said Ben Jonson 'I wish he had blotted out a thousand.'"

The last notice that we shall extract is that contained in the Diary of the Rev. John Ward who was Vicar of Stratford from 1640 to 1679. Catching up at the distance of 40 years some obscure local tradition regarding the manner in which his distinguished co-parishioner, over whose grave

he so often walked on Sundays, had died, Mr. Ward thus jotted it down: "I have heard that Mr. Shakespeare was a natural wit without any art at all. He frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his older days, lived at Stratford, and supplied the stage with 2 plays every year, and for it had an allowance so large, that he spent at the rate of £1000 a year, as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merry meeting, and it seemed, drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted."

We have thus placed before the reader all those notices of Shakespeare by his contemporaries that have contributed to determine the idea, entertained by us at this distance of time, of his character, manners, and habits. Whatever picture of Shakespeare exists in the imagination of any living person, has we repeat been derived, more or less directly, from these notices, or from one or more of them; and to the end of time, these notices will have this effect. What then, are the impressions regarding Shakespeare which these notices leave on the mind? That he was a prudent, calm, peaceful man seems already established by the known facts of his life; and to this general delineation of his character it may be said that the foregoing quotations add to those particulars --that he was assiduous in working for the stage; that he was unexceptionally upright in his dealings; that he attained a great and early popularity; that his reputation with the critics of the day was that of a man inferior to some of his literary contemporaries in erudition and scholarship, but surpassing almost all of them

by his prodigious natural wit, or as we would now say, by his prodigious native genius; that in his behavior he was courteous, amiable, and as the world then was, "gentle"; that the characteristics of his conversation were sweetness as to the manner; boundlessness and brave invention as to the matter, and a fluency as to quantity, which sometimes became excessive; that in composition he was swift, easy, and, as some thought, negligent; that he was by no means of unsocial habits, and was often present at the convivial parties of his brother wits at the Mitre, the Falcon, the Mermaid, or other taverns of the day where he would laugh and make extempore doggerel with the others; that neither was he so austere, but that a merry scandal might be circulated at his expense, and might even chance to be true; yet that on the whole his conduct was fair in the eyes of the world and such as to procure for him the ultimate friendship of persons of rank and distinction; that he was, through his dramas at least, a favorite with both Queen Elizabeth and King James; but that he disliked the stage and that this was probably his reason for withdrawing from it so soon and finally that having retired to his native village about the age of 41, he lived there as a country gentleman of moderate fortune, whom his old friends Jonson, Drayton, and others were glad to visit now and then when they had a week or two to spare, from their occupations in town.

Now all this forms a considerable addition to the mere impression made by the chronological outline of his life; and it no longer remains true, as Steevens hastily asserted, and as writer after writer has been in the habit of

slavishly repeating, that all we know of Shakespeare is, "that he was born at Stratford on Avon; married and had children there; went to London whence he commenced actor and wrote plays and poems; returned to Stratford, made his will, died and was buried." Since Ben Jonson's criticism of him was before the public, it has been our own fault if we have not known a great deal more of Shakespeare than this; for instance,⁴ we have not been able distinctly to conceive that fact of his excessive fluency in speech. The other notices too, transferred as it were to the portraits we possess of the "calm poet", assist to stamp on the memory of any intelligent reader, an image pretty well defined, whether accurate or not, of his appearance or general demeanor among his fellows.

Still, after all, this image does not, and ought not to, content us. With regard to such a man we cannot rest satisfied with a mere picture of his exterior, in its aspect of repose, or in a few of its common attitudes; we desire, as the phrase is, to penetrate into his heart to ascertain how he felt as an individual human being; we seek to arrest and fix in everlasting portraiture that mood of his soul, which was ultimate and characteristic; in which, so to speak, he came fashioned from the hands of his Creator; towards which he always sank when alone; and upon which all the thoughts and actions of his life were but voluntary variations determined by occasion. To understand a man, we must seize him in this, his essential and characteristic mood; and however interesting in themselves are anecdotes and stories about eminent men, they are only valuable in a

high biographic sense when either through any of them individually we obtain the true glimpse once for all, or when by their conveyance they lead us in the right direction. This is what is meant when it is said, that, in order to understand a man, we must seize his character as a whole, and view its various parts in the light of that whole. The whole, here, does not mean the general mass of the man's actions throughout his life; these ought indeed to yield an equivalent result, but it is not by summing them up that the result is arrived at; by the whole, is rather implied, that characteristic state or mental attitude of any human being (revealed often, by a flash and in instant) in which we have him reduced back, as it were, to the condition of a specific idea in the Divine Mind. Now as far short of such a whole as would be any conception we could form of the great Burns, for example, from a meagre chronological outline of his life, together with a few stories such as are current regarding his moral irregularities; so far short of a true appreciation of Shakespeare would be that item of him which we would elicit from the mere external evidence that exists regarding him. Fortunately, however, we are not left to external evidence, any more in the case of Shakespeare than in that of Burns. It is from Burns' own poetry that we derive that idea of him which makes us think so fondly and lovingly of him, although we have never seen him. And if in any way we are to arrive at as close and familiar an intimacy with the soul of Shakespeare it must be through his writings.

But here we find ourselves obstructed by a formidable

difference between Burns and Shakespeare. Burns is a lyricist, penning forth his own feelings in song; often speaking directly of himself, and generally under personal agitation when he writes. Shakespeare, on the other hand is a dramatist, whose function is not to communicate but to create. Had he been a dramatist of the same school as Ben Jonson, indeed, using the Drama as a means of spreading opinions, and indicating his purposes by the very manner of his dramatis personae (as Downright, Meercraft, Brainworm, Eitherside); then the task would have been easier. No one need want a distinct idea of Ben Jonson, if he is anxious to obtain such. His dramas are as explicit of his opinions of men and things as are newspaper articles or Parliamentary speeches. But it is different with regard to Shakespeare. Less than almost any man that ever wrote, does he inculcate a dogmatist. He is the very type of the Poet. He paints, represents, creates, holds the ruin up to nature; but from opinion, doctrine, controversy, theory, he holds instinctively aloof. In each of his plays there is an "Idea" to use the favorite word of the German critics; that is, every part of the play is one productive thought of his mind; but there is no pervading maxim to be supported, no point to be proven. Of none of all Shakespeare's plays can it be asserted that it is the vehicle for any of his favorite opinions; and so far it is true that in none of them does he reveal himself. As difficult almost as it would have been to arrive at an idea of the character of Burns from his Poems, if all of them had been descriptive in their nature, so difficult is it to discern the man

Shakespeare through his dramas.

One quality of Shakespeare, however, we cannot fail to have impressed on us by his dramatic writings - that many-sidedness, of which so much has been said that it has become in a manner the fixed idea in the popular mind regarding him. The immense variety of his character, embracing as it does Kings and Clowns, Prosperos and Dogberrys, Hamlets and Falstaffs, and his apparently equal ease in handling them all, have been noted and admired by all his critics. And thus while his own character is lost in his incessant shifting through such a succession of masks, we yet manage, as it were, in revenge, to seize out of this very impossibility of describing him, an adjective which does possess a certain pseudo-descriptive value; as if of some one who baffled all our attempts to investigate him, we were to console ourselves by saying that he was a perfect Proteus, we call Shakespeare many-sided; and in adding this to our other adjectives concerning him, we find a certain satisfaction, and even an increase of light.

But it would be cowardice to stop here. The old sea-God Proteus himself notwithstanding his subtleness, and versatility had a real form and character which was specially his own, and into which he could be compelled as we learn in the Odyssey if one knew the way:

We at once,
Loud shouting flew on him, and in our arms
Constrained him fast; nor the sea-prophet old
Called not incontinent his shifts to mind
First he became a long-maned lion grim

A dragon then, a panther, a huge boar,
A limpid stream, and an o'ershadowing tree.
We persevering, held him, till at length
The subtle sage, his ineffectual arts
Resigning weary, questioned me and spoke.

To the many-sidedness of the dramatist is but the versatility of a certain personal and inalienable form of being which is himself. "Man is only manysided" says Goethe "when he strives after the highest because he must, and descends to the lesser because he will," that is, when he is borne on in a certain earnest moral direction in all that he does by the very structure and constitution of his mind, while at his own option he may keep planting this fixed path or not with a sportive flowery border. There is then still a hope that we may arrive at a knowledge of the personal character of Shakespeare through his writings. Shakespeare also was compelled by the necessity of his nature in a certain earnest direction in all that he did; and it is our business to search through the thickets of imagery and gratuitous fiction, amid which he spent his life that this path may be discovered. As the lion or the limpid stream, or the overshadowing tree, into which Proteus turned himself was not a real lion or a real stream, or a real tree, but only Proteus as the one or the other; so involved in each of Shakespeare's characters, in Hamlet, in Falstaff, or in Romeo; involved in some deep manner in each of these diverse characters is the whole of Shakespeare's own nature. For if Shakespeare had not been precisely and wholly Shakespeare and no other man actual or conceivable, could Hamlet or

Falstaff or any other of his creations have been what they are? Let Shakespeare have differed from what he was by the smallest tittle, and everything he wrote would have stood otherwise than we now have it.

But how to evolve Shakespeare from his works, how to compel this Proteus into his proper and characteristic form, is still the question. That the Poet is but a form of the man, and that, if the man were different, so would be the poet, is a truth that may work as an axiom; but to expound how it is that the Man passes into the Poet, in other words to show how the personal bent and peculiarities of a man where in writings whose essential character it is to be arbitrary and universal, is a problem of the highest difficulty. It is not so difficult however, practically to elicit somewhat regarding the man from his writings in such a case; thus in reading the plays of Shakespeare we often arrive at passages, of which for their peculiar effect upon ourselves, their conceivable reference to what we know to have been the poet's circumstances, and sometimes also from their evident superfluousness, or the disproportionate warmth with which they are expressed, we do not hesitate to say, "There speaks the Poet's own heart." It is desirable we think, that this habit should be as much encouraged as possible when we read Shakespeare or any other great Poet; and we are convinced that in this way the faculty of discerning the writer through his works, is capable of being considerably cultivated. But if instead of being able to adopt this method of arriving at a conception of Shakespeare through a collection of passages in his characteristic works

previously remarked, we were in possession of certain poems assuredly and expressly autobiographic, how much more satisfactory it would be! What light is often thrown on a man's character by a single reported saying of his referring to the conditions of his own mind! How deep an insight, for example we obtain into Cesar's character by means of that saying of his which Cicero has felicitously preserved for us! "It has often reached my ears" said Cicero addressing Cesar at the time when he was monarch of the world "that it is a saying commonly in your mouth that you have lived long enough for yourself." If only we had a few such sayings of Shakespeare! If only we had a few poems in which such autobiographic references might be expected to occur! Having easily and with far less chance of error, than under the other method, derived from such autobiographic poems an impression of Shakespeare's character, we should then go forth upon his dramatic writings searching them by the light of this impression, as by that of a lamp; and the result would be a full, a clear, and allowance being made for our feebleness as interpreters, an accurate picture of the whole man. Now these Sonnets are beyond the possibility of controversy, precisely such autobiographic records as we should desire, containing sayings of Shakespeare, regarding himself quite as interesting as that of Cesar. What remains therefore, but that we should use them as such?

Marginal Notations

¹Mr. Warner wrote Albions England, a historical poem
from the Deluge to Elizabeth. See Argentile and Curan {in}
Percy's reliques

²Mr Tooly

³"a' combe" = has come

⁴if

Preliminary Exposition of the Sonnets and their Story.

The Poet, it seems, now (1597-8) in the prime of Life, has formed a warm friendship for a gentle and accomplished youth. Nothing can exceed the interest which he takes in this youth and in all that concerns him. Perceiving him just entering the dangerous spring-time of life, he is prompted by his affection for him to wish that he was married. Revolving the subject in his mind he forms the project of making the youth acquainted with his thoughts through the medium of some verses which shall be gay and fanciful in their style, but serious in their intention. The Sonnet stanza comes most readily to his pen, as having been already used for such purposes. He begins:

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby Beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decrease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:

But thou etc-----

Sonnet I.

His friend he says, falsifies the intention of Nature with respect to all beautiful things, by refusing to marry. This idea he prolongs, reiterating it through 3 sonnets or stanzas; and returning to it again, after a little time, he repeats it through other 4 consecutive stanzas. Here for a while he lays the topic aside; but, some time afterwards, chancing to observe his friend while listening to music, and struck by the melancholy expression of his countenance, he finds in this little incident a text for a new poetic

conceit to the same effect as the preceding.

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not
gladly?

Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
By unions married, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.

Mark how one string etc----- Sonnet VIII.

That is; these sweet sounds united in happy marriage taunt
and rebuke thee with thy singleness; and this is the reason
that music makes thee sad. Even yet the Poet is not tired
of the subject; through sonnet after sonnet he pursues it,
until at length he has 14 sonnets committed to paper, all
urging his friend to marry. In none of these is the general
idea or argument more neatly expressed than in Sonnet XI, in
which, reproaching his friend for his indisposition to
marry, he says.

If all were minded so, the times should cease,
And threescore years would make the world away.
Let those whose Nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:
Look whom she best endowed, she gave thee more;
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty
cherish;

She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
Thou shouldst print more, not let the copy die.

At length, intending probably to send what he has written to his friend, he brings the topic of marriage to a conclusion in a little piece of 3 Sonnets (XV-XVII) in which he argues that, if his friend were but to follow his advice then his memory would be perpetuated not only in these few Sonnets that he had inspired him to write, but also, more effectually, in his own lineage. Thus, in the last of the three stanzas:

Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet Heaven knows, it is but as a tomb
Which hides your life, and shows not half your
parts.

If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
The age to come would say, this poet lies;
Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly
faces.

So should my papers, yellow'd with their age,
Be scorn'd, like old men of less truth than
tongue;

And your true rights be termed a poet's rage,
And stretched metre of an antique song:
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice: in it, and in my rhyme.

The form of this Sonnet, the pointed manner, in particular, in which the last line is constructed, so as to end in a phrase, in which thoughts of the topic are blended with consciousness of authorship, and the fact that here the

topic itself, already pursued through 17 Sonnets, is finally laid aside -- all indicate that the little piece to which the Sonnet belongs was intended as an Envoy to a paper which Shakespeare, if he had folded it up and sent it, would probably have labelled with some such title as this:

"Sonnets to my Friend, persuading him to marry."

Shakespeare, however, appears not to have dispatched the Paper immediately, but to have kept it by him some time longer. Meanwhile, the habit having been formed, his affection for his friend expresses itself in another and yet another Sonnet, as the mood returns. These additional sonnets are carelessly jotted down on paper containing the little Marriage-collection; until at length the entire number of Sonnets amounts to twenty-six.

In these 9 additional Sonnets it is that the intimate nature of the friendship which subsisted between the Poet and the youth whom he addresses, begins clearly to be revealed to us. Already, indeed, in the preceding 17, compliments and endearing epithets have been lavished on the youth; his beauty and gentleness have been spoken of; the words "Love" and "Dear Love" have been applied to him by the Poet as forms of address; and altogether the tone has been one of tender interest and affection. Still, lulled by the ordinary notion that much is to be attributed to poetic license, one is apt to pass over all this without surprise, or enquiry. The recurrence, however, of the same exaggerated forms of expression in the Sonnets which follow those persuading to marriage, begins to arrest the attention. Thus is Sonnet XIX.

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's
jaws,

And burn the long-liv'd phoenix in her blood;
Make glad and sorry seasons, as thou fleet'st,
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
To the wide world, and all her fading sweets;
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:
O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thy antique pen.

And again, more expressly in Sonnet XX.

A woman's face, with Nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women's
fashion;

An eye more bright than theirs, less false in
rolling,

Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes, and women's souls
amazeth.

And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting
And by addition, me of thee defeated.

Unless, we choose, in the case of this Sonnet, to abjure the right to interpret literally a piece of plain writing, what an interesting picture of Shakespeare is here presented to

us. Let us but exercise our imagination, as the lines just quoted direct us; and what do we see? Vague and dim to the half-shut eye, there rises what seems to be a room in ancient London. Two figures in the costume of the day are there. Reclining on a chair, tearing his spaniel's neck with his ringed and ruffled hand from which he has just dropped a volume, is a youth in the first bloom of years, his forehead fair as a girl's, although with manlier locks clustering round it, his eye-lids downcast so that their orbs are fringed, and the soft peach on his cheek first dimpling where it curls towards the small proud lip, and then rounding itself away in the white chin and throat. Standing by the window near and looking with a smile of pleasure and affection on the youth, is a man in his early prime, full-browed, clear-eyed, and with a short close beard. It is William Shakespeare, the Player. Yes, Reader, that is our Poet, not as we now regard him, a great disembodied voice, speaking to us out of the Past, but as he was ere the tide of Time had overtaken him, and while yet he stood, as we now do in our turn, on Humanity's foremost edge. Some hidden sympathy, such as will at first sight knit one human being to another, has attracted the Poet towards the youth; and (strange mystery to Posterity!) there is not in all London, another creature in human form towards whom that immense soul so bends and yearns as towards that almost boy-figure playing with the spaniel's collar. True, the youth is rich, but it is not this that explains their friendship; he is accomplished beyond his years, but it is not that; he is beautiful and gentle, but it is not wholly

that. There is between the two souls, as constituted by Nature, some deep and mystic relation, which connects them by the ties of a friendship quite romantic and ideal. Weak, timid, almost unmanly is the love of our Poet for this youth; as if his spirit were rather the slave than the master, more dependent on the youth, than the youth on him. Strange that a man whose step might have been calmly royal had a Bacon, a Spenser, or a Raleigh been near, should thus cringe in spirit before a nameless youth, and crave a kindly glance from his eye!

That this is no fancy-picture, but a literal transcript of the impression which the sonnets themselves must necessarily make on every imagination, let the reader carefully convince himself. They are no flatteries these, addressed by the Poet to a young and rich patron; no labored Sonnets to express gratitude and purchase favor. Prejudice in behalf of Shakespeare apart, they are clearly spontaneous effusions from a nature singularly affectionate. True, the language, hitherto, has been chiefly that of the fancy; a fond playing with analogies quaint, and conceits intellectual; but such also may be the language of affection, while nothing disturbs the smoothness of its stream. Wait only a little while; and bitterness enough will break through! Each Sonnet read in its order, adds distinctness to the picture that has been already suggested. In Sonnet XXI for instance the following lines must completely destroy any lingering impression that these are ordinary complimentary Sonnets to a Patron.

O, let me, true in love, but truly write,

And then believe me, my love is as fair,
As any mother's child, though not so bright
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air:
Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
I will not praise, that purpose not to sell.

Again in Sonnet XXII, there is an indication of the age of the Poet, as compared with that of his friend.

For all that Beauty doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me;
How can I then be older than thou art?

Nor is it possible, we think, after reading Sonnet XXV, the most earnest in its tone of any that the Poet has hitherto addressed to his friend, to doubt that this friendship was a real force in the Poet's life, recognized by himself as such. How nobly the words march!

Let those who are in favor with their stars,
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whose fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlook'd for joy in that I honour most.
Great prince's favorites their fair leaves spread
But as the marigold at the sun's eye;
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honour razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled:
Then happy I, that love and am beloved

Where I may not remove, nor be removed.

Sonnet XXVI is clearly the Envoy appended to the preceding
25. It opens thus:

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassy,
To witness duty, not to show my wit.
Duty so great etc-----

Accordingly, this Sonnet having been written, the Paper which it includes, is sent to the Poet's friend, endorsed with some such title as this: "An Epistle to my friend, of divers Sonnets." Having penned the first paper of Sonnets, and derived from it little more than a conception, such as we have tried to embody, of some very intimate friendship subsisting between the Poet and a youth with whom he has become acquainted in London; the reader is supposed to proceed to the perusal of the 6 Sonnets (XXVII-XXXII) that constitute what we have called the 2nd paper, and which was evidently written some little time after the 1st paper had been dispatched. Should the reader do so, the first observation that he will make will be how altered the Poet's tone is in these 6 Sonnets, as compared with those which precede them in the collection. In the 1st Paper the language is almost entirely that of the fancy; not affected or unreal, certainly; but indicating, nevertheless, a voluntary exercise of the poetic faculty, rather than a hurried or querulous state of feeling, a wish to write something rather than an impulse to seize the pen. In this Paper, accordingly, although there is much to please, both

in the thought and the diction, the reader rarely feels the thrill by which one detects when and where in a poem, the writer's heart spoke. Sonnet XXV, is perhaps the only one of the series in which there is the warmth or freedom of a mind self-agitated. In the 2nd Paper, however, all is different. Here the time is keen throughout; the language full, emotional, historic. In short these 6 Sonnets are clearly autobiographic in their import. The general impression which they make on the mind, is that the Poet when he wrote them, was laboring under the deepest melancholy. They might very appropriately be designated as "Sonnets written under great depression." What may have been the occasion of this depression - whether there was any express worldly cause, or whether it was the mere turning of the Poet's mind into an attitude more congenial to it when left to itself than any other - there is nothing in the Sonnets themselves to indicate. In the first 2, the Poet, who writes as if he were at some distance from his friend at the time, describes himself as passing his nights in sleepless thought, and longing to return. Thus in Sonnet XXVIII.

How can I then return in happy plight,
That am debarr'd the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eas'd by night,
But day by night and night by day oppress'd?
And each, though enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil, still farther off from thee.

Of these words it may indeed be said that their seriousness is exaggerated; that the expression is out of proportion with the fact. Such an observation, however, will not hold with regard to the following:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state
And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends
possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy, contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despairing
Haply I think on thee, etc----- Sonnet XXIX.

And again, in the Sonnet immediately following, how real is the melancholy

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless
night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe.
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight.

or, more decisively still, in the concluding Sonnet of the little series (XXXII) in which the Poet seems completely overborne by his own gloomy fancies.

If thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall
cover,
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
These poor made lines of thy deceased lover,
Compare them with the bettering of the time;
And though they be outstripped by every pen,
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men.

What melancholy and self-abasement is here! Shakespeare it would seem, if we may trust these revelations of his dispositions from his own pen, was subject to sad and gloomy hours; to causeless mental weariness; to bitter and desponding thoughts concerning himself, his powers, his position in life; to painful toilings of the memory backward among the recollections of his youth; to pensive forebodings of death and a swift oblivion among his fellow men. Let us pause a little to receive the full impression of such declarations.

From the largest induction we have been able to make, we should be disposed to say that the mood in question is about the most characteristic in which we can hope to figure Shakespeare. That condition of mind which we call melancholy we hold to have been natural to Shakespeare and probably in his hours of seclusion from society, more congenial to him, than any other. It is not by any means here intended that Shakespeare was what is called a sad or gloomy man, wronged by Nature out of all mirth; he who gave us Falstaff, to say no more, can hardly have been a Werter.

The broadest, largest mirth was his, the most willing disposition to enjoy all that life yields of the pleasurable. What is meant is that his mind when left to itself was apt to sink into that state in which thoughts of what is sad or mysterious in the Universe, most easily come or go. At no time, except during sleep, is the mind of any human being completely idle. Every man, even when left alone with himself, must be doing something or other. One man recounts with himself the follies of the previous day, reviewing the pleasure of his acts by the recollection of them; another uses his leisure to hate his enemy and scheme his discomfiture; a third, rehearses in imagination, in order to be prepared, the position which he is to occupy on the morrow. All in short have some natural and congenial mood into which they fall when they are left to talk with themselves. Now what we say is that {during} such moments it was the habit of Shakespeare's mind, forced thereto by the necessity of its structure, to ponder ceaselessly those questions relating to Man, his origin and destination, in familiarity with which lies what is called the spiritual Element in human character. It was Shakespeare's use, as it seems to us, to revert often, when alone with himself, to that ultimate mood of the soul, in which one hovers wistfully on the border of the finite, vainly pressing against the barriers that separate it from the fathomless Unknown; that mood in which even what is common seems part of a vast current mystery, and in which, like Arabian Job of old, one looks by turns at the heaven above, the earth beneath, and one's own moving body between, interrogating

whence it all is, and whither it all tends. Now this is melancholy. We hear much of Shakespeare as the calm, the sunny, the joyous, the man at peace with himself and with the world. There is truth in this, a truth which we hope to illustrate; but the language is after all equivocal. No man, worth his life, ever was at peace with himself, or with the world either. That which is the essence in all worth, all beauty, all humour, all genius, is open or secret reference to the supernatural, and this is sorrow. The attitude of a finite creature contemplating the Infinite can only be that of an exile; grief and wonder blending in a wistful longing for an unknown home.

As we consider this frame of mind to have been characteristic of Shakespeare, so we find that he has not forgotten to represent it in his capacity as a Poet. Hamlet we have always fancied to be a closer translation of Shakespeare's own character than any of his other creations. The same meditateness, the same inordinate development of the speculative faculty, the same wondrous melancholy, that are seen in the Prince of Denmark, seem to have distinguished Shakespeare. Nor is it possible here to forget the ornament of "As you like it" the "melancholy Jacques": who if "caped in his sullen fits" was always so "full of matter."

Jaques. More, more, I pray thee, more

Amiens. It will make you melancholy Monsieur Jaques

Jaques. I thank it; more, I prithee more. I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs. More, I prithee more.

Amiens. My voice is ragged; I know I cannot please you.

Jaques I do not desire you to please me, I desire you to sing.

And again in another part of the same play where Jaques meets Rosalind

Rosalind They say you are a melancholy fellow.

Jaques I am so; I do love it better than laughing.

Rosalind Those that are in extremity of either are abominable fellows; and betray themselves to every modern censure worse than drunkards.

Jaques Why 'tis good to be sad and say nothing.

Rosalind Why then 'tis good to be a post.

Jaques I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's which is fantastical; nor the courtier's which is proud; nor the soldier's which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's which is justice; nor the lady's which is nice; nor the lover's which is all these; but is melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects; and indeed, the sundry contemplations of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

Jaques is not Shakespeare, but in writing the above description of Jaques, Shakespeare drew from his knowledge of himself. His also was a "melancholy of his own," a "humorous sadness" in which his often "rumination wrapped

him." In that declared power of "sucking melancholy out of a song" we believe the reference of Shakespeare to himself to have been direct. Of all Shakespeare's songs and quoted choruses it may be observed that there is in them some deep and quaint evidence, utterly apart from the sense, and quite mystic in its effect, by which he seems to have been caught and saddened.

When that I was and a little tiny boy
With a heigh-ho the wind and the rain
A foolish thing was but a toy
And the rain it raineth every day.

Jaques is careful to define his melancholy. There are various forms of melancholy, he says -- the scholar's, the musician's, the courtier's, the soldier's, the lawyer's, the lady's, the lover's; but his was a melancholy different from all these; a complex melancholy, a melancholy compounded of many simples. The world owes much to Jaques for this observation. Melancholy is a thing of growth; man may be doomed to it; but it is by his life that he forms it. Hence in studying the forms of a man's melancholy it is essential to find out of what simples it is compounded; above all it is essential to discover the primitive ingredient upon which, as such, it devolved to collect the others to mix with it. There has been in the lives of all men that have ever been touched to the humorous sadness of which Jaques speaks, some sore passage or other. Let us suppose the commonest case of all -- a disappointment in love. A man that has undergone this sorrow in any extreme degree, is by that fact awakened at once and for ever to the melancholy

side of things; he becomes alive to the gloomy in Nature and to the miserable in Life; and by one stupendous resumption as it were, of stars, clouds, trees, and flowers, into his own pained being, like an old coinage requiring re-issue, he realizes how it is that all creation groweth and travaileth together in spirit until now. Out of the vast multitude, however, of melancholy conceits thus presented to him, his character or his position will lead him to select a few which, affecting him particularly will stand to him as representative instances of all misery. Thus Shakespeare in paragraph could.

For who would bear the whips and scores of Time
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin! Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that etc -----

Here round the initiative instance, the sore biographic point, which, for the sake of being special, we will suppose to be "the pangs of despis'd love" there are gathered other forms of wretchedness culled, on account of a certain saliency which they had in the writer's mind, from the general crowd of lamentable things. The miseries that impress us may not impress another equally; nay in this very passage so trivial a matter as the doubtful reading in the 3rd line will be decided by each one for himself on evidence

more powerful than the authority of old Editions; the despairing suitor preferring "pangs of despised love", the lover now hopeless maintaining that "despised" is better. Now it is these salient instances of misery clustered round the sore biographic point, like red berries hanging round a thorn, that are the simples of a man's melancholy; and it is when allusion is required to these, that his soul is touched to its most tearful cadences. What, then, are the simples of Shakespeare's melancholy? Already in the lines just quoted we have seen what were the forms of wretchedness which his poetic hand, with the liberty of so large a field, chose to pluck, when he could tie a striking few together. Let us but read his Sonnets through and we shall find that these, selected by his poetic hand, were but all too prompt for use, familiar already to his human heart. We turn by anticipation to Sonnet LXVI.

Tired with all these, for restful Death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily foresworn,
And gilded honour, shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill;
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,

But that, to die, I leave my love alone.

What is this but the soul of Hamlet weary in the London of 1597? It is but a shallow, although perhaps a serviceable distinction, between Poets that are subjective and Poets that are objective. Let the brow of the Poet be marble as Goethe's, the range of his invention, universal as Shakespeare's; let the things, men, scenes, circumstances, that teem from his fancy be as heterogenous as they may, yet the element of power in such a man, equally as in a Dante or a Byron, is severe biographic reference; and wherever in a Poet's pages the reader thrills, there be sure the ink is blood.

Among the most interesting of the Sonnets in which Shakespeare more especially reveals his tendency to melancholy is that already quoted (XXIX) where he speaks of "beweeeping his outcast state," "troubling deaf Heaven with his bootless cries," "looking on himself and cursing his fate." On referring to these lines the reader will find that they afford a glimpse of Shakespeare's mood as he thought of himself in his solitary hours -- a poor London player, penning dramas for a livelihood; enjoying the work, yet almost envying those whose circumstances exempted them from such a necessity; nay even discontented with his own performances, and discerning in his brother-dramatists gifts which he wanted. The Sonnet ends as follows:

Yet in these thoughts, myself almost despising
Haply I think on thee, -- and then my state
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate,

For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.
Here, as indeed in almost all the other Sonnets, one is startled at first by what seems the preposterous extravagance of the compliment. This is the circumstance connected with these sonnets that readers have found it most difficult to get over, without a disagreeable feeling; as if Shakespeare were placed in a mean light by it. That he should have written in such a strain even to a woman would have appeared a matter for surprise; although then the language would have passed as the mere hyperbolic of Love. But that he should deliberately write words to the effect that his affection for his friend was so strong that the mere thought of this friend was able to gladden him in his saddest hours, seems inexplicable. Yet this is the express language of more than 50 of these sonnets.

This point has of course provided discussion among the few critics that have read the Sonnets. "It is the style of the age" say some, "It was not uncommon for intimate friends in that age to subscribe themselves each other's Lovers." An explanation this which is totally without value! These are not complimentary stanzas addressed to a patron, and containing conceits heaped up as in an ancient dedication; they are the pensive and thoughtful feelings of the poet, walking about in the streets or leaning listlessly over his writing table. In short, the specific fact regarding these sonnets must be that our great Poet, singular among men for so much else, was singular also in this that his spirit felt itself drawn to this youth by the bond of an ideal

friendship, strong and beautiful as Love itself. Rare such a mystic bond uniting 2 friends; but not without example! Hundreds of years ere Shakespeare lived, and in another clime than England, there lived another Poet, who had a friend whom he loved as his own soul. "O Jonathan thou wast slain in thy pleasant places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been to me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

Although in what we have denominated the 2nd Paper of Sonnets, (XXVII-XXXII), the unity of a pervading melancholy is manifest, yet no cause is assigned for it. Passing, however, to the Sonnets which immediately succeed those, and which we propose to treat as the 1st Sonnets of the 3rd Paper, we are all at once surprised by a sudden revelation which they make. Sonnet XXXII has closed without any breathing of want of confidence between the poet and his friend; and then most unexpectedly, in Sonnets XXXIII-XXXVI there breaks forth an accusation to the effect that the Poet had been injured by his friend in some important point.

Thus in Sonnet XXXIV:

Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss:
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offenses cross.

Again in the Sonnet which follows:

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns etc -----

It is evident, too, that these Sonnets were not written immediately after the Sonnets constituting the 2nd Paper, but after some little interval during which it was that the

injury in question was done. But what was this injury; of which we learn from the lines quoted, the Poet's friend repented, and for which the poet bids him no longer grieve? On this point no information is to be obtained from Sonnets XXXIIII-XXXVI; nor from the 3 (XXXVII-XXXIX) which follow. Overlooking these last 3, which contain no allusion to the wrong done to the Poet, we find the thread of feeling resumed in Sonnets XL-XLII; and here there are indications of the nature of the wrong regarding which the complaint is made thus in Sonnet XL.

I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief
Although thou steal thee all my poverty;
And yet love knows, it is a greater grief
To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury.

Farther in Sonnet XLI.

Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,
Beauteous thou art, and therefore to be assail'd;
And when a woman woos what woman's son
Will sourly leave her till she have prevailed;
Ah me! but yet thou mightst my seat forbear
And chide thy beauty, and thy straying youth,
Who lead thee in thy riot even there,
Where thou art forced to break a two-fold truth;
Hers by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
Thine, by thy beauty, being false to me.

And still more explicitly in the opening lines of Sonnet XLII.

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief,
And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly;

That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief,

A loss in love that touches me more nearly.

The fact to which allusion is made in these sonnets is clearly this: The Poet's friend has had an intrigue with the Poet's mistress; and these Sonnets are written by the Poet while the wound inflicted on his feelings by this injury is still fresh.

Anxious to penetrate the mystery farther, the reader will in vain examine the succeeding Sonnets of the series addressed to the youth for any allusions that may help him. That occasionally indeed, there may be some latent reference in these Sonnets to the wrong bygone, is true; but the only Sonnets of the entire series addressed to the youth in which specific mention is made of the wrong are the 7 that have been pointed out, namely Sonnets XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XL, XLI, and XLII.

If at this point, however, the reader will turn from the 126 Sonnets addressed to the Poet's friend, and pursue his enquiries, through the remaining 28 Sonnets addressed to the Poet's mistress, he will elicit a few additional points of interest. This, indeed, might be anticipated were there reason for supposing that the person referred to in the foregoing Sonnets in connexion with the Poet's friend was the same to whom the extraneous 28 were addressed. On this point, fortunately, there can be no doubt; nay, many arguments concur to show that the most important of the Sonnets addressed to the Poet's mistress were written almost contemporaneously with the 7 notable Sonnets that have just arrested our attention. In short Sonnets CXXVII-CLIV ought

to be regarded as constituting an independent Paper of Sonnets; written immediately before Paper 3rd, and to be read in connexion with it. Let us, on this assumption, proceed to examine it before advancing through the remaining Sonnets of the 3rd Paper.

The Sonnets in question (CXXVII-CLIV) ought to be entitled "Divers Sonnets written, some of them to, and others concerning the Poet's mistress." The fact which they explicitly reveal is this: That about the time that Shakespeare had formed the friendship celebrated in the 2 Papers of Sonnets which we have been considering, he was in love with a woman of dark complexion, not reputed beautiful, and known to be unfaithful in her conduct; that for a while this intimacy proceeded smoothly; but that eventually a rupture took place, on account of the sudden discovery by the Poet that an intrigue was being carried on between the youth, his friend, and this woman, his mistress. The 28 Sonnets do not seem to stand in our present collections, in the order in which they were written. It is even possible that one or 2 of them were addressed not to the person under notice at all, but to some one else at another time. This, however, is by no means likely. The most probable supposition is that they were all addressed to, or written concerning the Poet's unfaithful mistress; but that having been procured by the Publisher in some more circuitous way than the Sonnets addressed to the Poet's friend, they were appended to those Sonnets without any care having been taken as to their arrangement. The principle, therefore, on which it is necessary to proceed in interpreting them is: to

dispose first of those of them, which being merely fanciful, and gallant, in their tone, were evidently written before the rupture took place; to arrange next those which are more serious, and which seem, accordingly, to indicate awakened suspicion on the Poet's part, and coldness on the part of his consciously unfaithful mistress; and finally to reserve for the end those which, either from their express manner of stating facts, or their bitterness of language, we may reasonably infer were written last, and just when the drama had reached its catastrophe. In the first of these 3 classes into which the 28 Sonnets may be divided, we would place Sonnets CXXVII, CXXVIII, CXXX, CXXXV, CXXXVI, CXLIII, CXLV, CLIII, and CLIV. All these are mere general Sonnets of a gallant tone, and such as any lover might address to his mistress. As written by Shakespeare, however, some of them interest us much. Sonnet CXXX is impudent and frank; in Sonnets CXXXV, CXXXVI, and CXLIII, the Poet puns on his own name Will; and the pretty Sonnet CXLV suggests of itself the saucy little incident on which it is founded. In Sonnet CXXVIII, the Poet paints himself leaning like a lover in a modern drawing room over the instrument which his love is playing, watching her sweet fingers moving over the wood, and enjoying the leaping jacks

That kiss the tender inward of her hand. . . .

It is in Sonnet CXXVII that we find the 1st distinct allusion to the personal appearance of this queen of her sex before whom Shakespeare bowed.

Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black

Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem

As such, who not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says, beauty should look so.

Passing to Sonnets CXXXI and CXXXII, we find allusions still more express. In the 1st the Poet even intimates that his mistress was not reputed beautiful, and that his taste, in loving her, was liable to be called in question, thus:

For well thou knowest, to my dear dotting heart,
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan:
To say they err, I dare not be so bold,
Although I swear it to myself alone.
And to be sure that is not false I swear,
A thousand groans, but thinking on thy face,
One on another's neck, do witness bear
Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.

There are similar references, also in various others of the Sonnets. Thus in Sonnet CXLIV, the Poet alluding to his mistress, expressly names her "a woman colored ill" and in Sonnet CXLVIII, there are the following lines.

Oh me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight!
Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
That censures falsely, what they see aright?
If that be fair, whereon my false eyes dote,
What means the world, to say it is not so?
If it be not, then love doth well denote,

Love's eye is not so true, as all men's; no,
How can it?

In this Sonnet, however, the Poet evidently has in view not only his mistress' face, but also her conduct which, he gives it to be understood, varied as decidedly from the world's standard of what is right, as her face did from the world's standard of what is beautiful. This idea pervades a considerable number of the Sonnets; expressed, sometimes, half gaily, at others with bitter seriousness. In not a few, indeed, the tone is that of shame and remorse -- shame on account of an attachment to an unworthy object, and remorse for an attachment which at all events involved guilt. Thus in Sonnet CXXXVII.

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine
eyes,
That they behold, and see not what they see?
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is, take the worst to be,
If eyes, corrupt by over partial looks,
Be anchored in the bay, where all men ride,
Why of eyes' falsehood, hast thou forged hooks,
Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?
Why should my heart think that a several plot
Which my heart knows the wide world's common
place
Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?

Again in Sonnet CXLII:

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,

Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:
O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
That have profan'd their scarlet ornaments,
And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine;
Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.

Also in Sonnet CLII:

In loving thee thou knowest I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing.

Full of remorse on account of this illicit attachment, and of bitter resentment on account of the known and even scandalous unworthiness of its object, the Poet yet confesses her power over him. Thus in Sonnet CL:

O, from what Power hast thou this powerful might,
With insufficiency my heart to sway?
To make me give the lie to my true sight,
And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds,
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
That in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?

The meaning of these Sonnets, and the manner in which they seem to be connected so as to form the story, will appear more satisfactorily when we are employed in arranging and

perusing the Sonnets themselves. Meanwhile, let us pause a moment at this point, where on the strength of Shakespeare's own confession we are given to know that the attachment which these sonnets celebrate was illicit.

One cannot help being aware how unwelcome this information is likely to be to many. When one reflects, that, Shakespeare, when these Sonnets were written was a man in the prime of life, residing in London, while his wife 8 years his senior probably remained at Stratford, there arises in the imagination through the medium of these Sonnets as we have been interpreting them, conceptions so disagreeable that one is apt to shrink back, and attempt to reject even thus late the supposition with regard to the Sonnets on which the interpretation has proceeded. But one ought not to feel so hastily in such a case. Let one first cast a glance over one's own conduct, or over society at large; let him recollect what he knows of the lives of men whom the world adores as next in genius after Shakespeare, and regarding whose lives more minute information has been preserved; and then let him consider whether this conception of a Shakespeare necessarily immaculate does not show more generosity than sense; more affectation than generosity. It is a diseased love of the ideal that will accept only such and such facts as true, as if any others would spoil the picture! Nor need those who admit that Shakespeare was not faultless in his conduct, forego the conviction that he was essentially, and in the rarest sense, a noble and good man. Hear with what prudency of heart he can treat poetically even foulness itself.

The expense of spirit, in a waste of shame,
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoy'd no sooner, but despised straight;
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait;
On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
Had, having and in quest to have, extreme;
A bliss in proof, and prov'd a very woe;
Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream:
All this the world well knows: yet none knows
well

To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.
Shakespeare, at least, had not learned, with all his
knowledge, to think frivolously regarding his own vices. In
none of all his contemporary dramatists do we discern so
earnest a longing towards the good; so pensive a sense of
human weakness; or even, where the subject matter is gross,
so true an upward touch in the feeling of the writer. It
were well, too, if in this very instance, those that have
been accustomed to think of Shakespeare as a purely
objective Poet writing out of mere poetic intuition, were to
observe how the personal feelings that we find expressed in
these Sonnets reappear in his dramatic writings. Was
Shakespeare calm and master of himself, or was not rather
but eagerly repeating for his own pleasure the sentiments of
the Sonnet last quoted when in his play of "Cymbeline" he

thoughtlessly put such a burst of chaste enthusiasm as the following into the mouth of the villain

Iachimo

Had I this cheek

To bathe my lips upon; this hand whose touch,
Whose every touch, would force the feeler's
soul

To the oath of loyalty; this object which
Takes prisoner the wild motion of mine eye
Firing it only here; should I (damn'd then!)
Slaver with lips as common as the stairs
That mount the Capitol; join gripes with hands
Made hard with hourly falsehood / falsehood as

{by-} With labour/; then the peeping in an eye

{illustrious} Base and unlustrous as the smoky light

That's fed with stinking tallow:

It were fit That all the plagues of hell
should at one time Encounter such revolt.

This is but one case out of many that would support the opinion with which we desire to impress our readers, that the Sonnets of Shakespeare are the fundamental lyric snatches which his poetic intellect has interwoven everywhere with the texture of his dramas.

To return to the story: Tied to this woman by a bond of which he is himself ashamed, teased by her frivolity, and tortured by the thought of her unworthiness -- he is at length completely overthrown by the discovery of a fact of which he has been too long ignorant -- an intrigue between this woman and his friend. This, which may have been the latent cause of much of that bitter feeling which displays

itself in some of the Sonnets already quoted, is the express topic of Sonnets CXXXIIII, CXXXIV, and CXLIV. Thus in Sonnet CXXXIIII.

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan,
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!
Is't not enough to torture me alone,
But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
And my next self thou harder hast engross'd;
Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken;
A torment thrice three-fold thus to be crossed.

Again in Sonnet CXXXIV.

But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
For thou art covetous, and he is kind;
He learned but, surety-like, to write for me,
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.

And most clearly of all in Sonnet CXLIV, which in fact, may be regarded as a summary for posterity of the whole story of that part of Shakespeare's life.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman color'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side;
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil;
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.

Returning now to the 3rd Paper of Sonnets, which we left in order to investigate the contents of what we have

called the Intercalated Paper, we find ourselves in possession of a clearer view of the circumstances in which both Papers were written. And what circumstances! Formerly we saw the great Poet drawn to linger away his mornings by the side of a youth unknown and undistinguished amid the crowd of his fellow-citizens, save that to this one kingly man among them his face had charms above all others, and the very street in which he lived was dear -- its paving, its kennels, the voices of its inhabitants, and the bruisy hum of its wagon-wheels. So now another centre in great old London, towards which our Poet's footsteps often bend! In a street at some distance from the other, and in a house of less imposing appearance, lives a woman past the first prime of years, dark in complexion, stately in gait, and with black lustrous eyes that shun not the gaze of men, but flash out by turns, lust, pride, mirth, wit, and treachery. Hurried hither by the power which she has gained over him, the Poet may be seen moodily ascending the steps that lead to her dwelling. Now he remains absent for weeks, almost cursing her in his heart; now he sees her daily, self-abandoned to the foul witchery of her eyes; and again, tortured by some new coquetry, he breaks the spell, and retires, with bitter heart, into the calm of better pursuits. She, meanwhile, laughs on, her lustrous eyes flashing busily on others as they did on him; he knows he is not missed; yet again he appears at the door, and once more accepts the hand held out to him, as frankly as if, though by no means yet longed for, his return were an expected matter.

Such are the 2 centres in ancient London round which we are to conceive that the thread of the Poet's life daily wound and tangled itself in the year 1597-8; the house of the fair youth, and that of the deceitful woman. Would that imagination could assist us farther! Those houses, sacred with the footsteps of Shakespeare, how shall we fancy them? In what street, demolished or still extant; how far from the river; near what churches, theatres, breweries, shops; with what sounds in the ears of the inmates of the mills, cooper-work, street music; with what prospects from the windows, whether the dingy face of opposite houses, or the cheerful peek of grass and trees? Veiled alas! all this from our knowledge, like the generation of the time, sunk long ago into the earth, and now rolled and trampled over by feet of a new one! Ah! London! thou perpetual home of a shifting multitude, vast over the flat acres spreadeth thy red hollow-work of brick, scooped, furrowed, honeycombed, and riddled with doors and windows; and down, ever down into thee, as into a huge sieve, is showered the floor of life from above, trickling away and disappearing into the flesh-fattened earth beneath! Awhile thou holdest us; but the reservoir is filling over us with the perpetual rain, and we too are sinking, sinking, towards the ancient dead! That a man should have 2 points of keen feeling, and centres round which his thoughts and sensibilities wind themselves, is not common. Usually there is in a man's life but one such vortex at a time; one ground fact or circumstance towards which all the miscellaneous thoughts and occurrences of his life are drawn, and in which they are dissolved and

integrated as fuel in a fire. This is usually woman's love. But Shakespeare's moral existence at the time when the earliest of the Sonnets were written, was distracted between 2 such centres. Not as is usual, round his attachment to her who had gained a woman's power over him did his high thoughts gather. Rushing away from this centre, these thoughts chose rather to gather round the other or fairer centre -- that of his lofty friendship. It is in the Sonnets that are addressed to his friend rather than in those that are addressed to the woman that we are to look for the noblest and most various manifestations of Shakespeare's spirit; for his scattered thoughts on great subjects for traces of the channels in which his feelings loved to flow in the hours of their mighty solitude.

This we expect, is a singularity as regards Shakespeare. Who is it that usually presides over the towering thoughts, the heaven-ward wishes, the melancholy enthusiasms of the youthful dreamer or the still poetic man? Whose face, whose image is it that shines through the misty congregation of wavering shapes, that come and go before his troubled gaze? Through whom is he noble; through whom is he strong; through whom does all beauty, all sorrow, all joy come home to him; by what soul-searching balsam are the thick impurities of his spirit daily purged away? Is it not through her he loves; her, the gentle girl he woos and whose downcast eyelids give his humbleness hope of a future day; or her the cruel love of his widowed spirit, who gave herself to another's arms; or her, the white and shrouded skeleton of a vanished one sleeping in the arms of Death?

Not so in the case of Shakespeare at the time these Sonnets were written. His friendship, rather than his love, was the powerful centre of his being. The image of his friend, rather than that of his mistress, seems to have presided over all that he thought, said, or did; and the reason of this seems clearly to have been that his friendship was intrinsically a loftier feeling than his love, so that high things were sensible of a greater affinity with it.

But although Shakespeare's moral existence was thus temporarily distracted between 2 centres, it was destined that so anomalous a state of things should not long continue. Mysterious are the conjunction of events, and often are we borne up against our wills to the belief of some special Providence in human affairs by some coincidence in our own lives too startling to be dismissed summarily. Such a coincidence is the fortuitous clashing, in an unexpected situation, of some new incident with some old and settled feeling. To hear a dear name uttered suddenly a thousand miles away from the form that bears it, and to find that there also, in an Australian wilderness it may be, or in the throng of a vast city, one's life may intersect the very line of associations and sequences that one went thither to avoid -- one feels then a direct sensation of the supernatural at once quaint and fearful. Often it is as if Fate were pursuing one to drag him back to that special spot on the planet's surface where his heart is, but whence his feet are straying; often on the other hand, it is like an express announcement that the drama which one supposed to be at an end, is not so; but is going on to some unseen

catastrophe for the evolution of which it is taking in new persons and interests. Whether it was by any such surprising coincidence in Shakespeare's life that the catastrophe took place which these Sonnets commemorate, is not very clear. Was it through Shakespeare himself that the youth became acquainted with the dark traitress, or was he carried into her society by some fortuitous influence? The language of Sonnet CXXXIV, would seem to indicate that the former is the correct supposition. What were Shakespeare's feelings when he had discovered the wrong that had been done to him, it is not difficult to imagine; but the more interesting question still remains: What was his conduct? Almost with certainty we may state it to have been as follows: At once and forever, although not without much suffering, he severed his connexion with the woman; but with the youth he became reconciled forgiving him, and cherishing his friendship with even warmer affection than before.

That the spell which had bound the Poet to his mistress was broken by the denouement that had taken place is rendered all but certain, by the total omission of any allusion to her in the Sonnets that were afterwards addressed by the Poet to his friend. What effort it cost the Poet to make the separation may be inferred from Sonnet CXLVII, which may very well be regarded as the last Farewell Sonnet addressed to the traitress herself.

My love is as a fever, longing still,
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.

My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve,
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are
At random from the truth vainly expressed.
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee
bright,

Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

How different from this language is that in which the Poet addresses his friend assuring him of his forgiveness. See Sonnet XXXV.

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done;
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.

In this and in 1 or 2 others of the sonnets that plainly were written after the discovery by the Poet of the wrong that had been done him, we see injured love struggling with relenting friendship and the sense of injury dying away in rising gushes of affection. How is this? Is it that in Shakespeare, so mighty among men, there dwelt not that harder than stoic pride, that, once wronged, can keep its wrath apart, and maintain a brow of iron civility towards the offender and the world; but rather that moist spirit of tenderness that belongs to womanly dispositions, bursting out probably at first into paroxysms and reproaches, but

deliquescing away finally in forgiveness and tears? One thing, not yet mentioned, is to be noted regarding the 3rd Paper of Sonnets, namely that it was manifestly written while the Poet was absent on a country journey. This is clearly indicated by the language of no fewer than 10 of the 23 Sonnets (XXXIII-LV) that compose the Paper. Thus Sonnet XXXIX.

O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove Were
it not etc

And Sonnet XLIV.

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought
Injurious distance should not stop my way;
For then despite of space, I would be brought,
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.

Nay farther, in this little series of Sonnets, all the circumstances incident to a traveller on his journey are seized by the Poet and made poetically to represent his various moods and feelings, from time to time. Thus (to arrange the Sonnets in the natural order of the incidents to which they may be imagined to refer) we have first in Sonnet XLVIII, the packing represented and the locking up of valuable articles previous to the traveller's departure from town.

{when} How careful was I ere I took my way,
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That to my use it might unused stay,
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust!
But thou to whom my jewels, trifles are,
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,

Thou best and dearest, and mine only care,
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief
Thee have I not locked up in any chest,
Save etc

Nor are we left in doubt as to the Poet's mode of travelling
on his journey. See Sonnet L.

{the} How heavy do I journey on my way,
{what} When that I seek - my weary travel's end -
Doth teach that ease and that repose to
say,

'Thus far the miles are measured from thy
friend!'

The beast that bears me, tired with my
woe,

Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider lov'd not speed, being made from thee:
The bloody spur cannot provoke him on
That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide,

And so also in the succeeding Sonnet. {LI}

The Poet then, according to our interpretation of these
Sonnets, has, after the fatal discovery of the wrong that
has been done him, undertaken a journey into the country --
for the purpose, we will suppose, of diverting his thoughts,
and facilitating by a temporary absence, the line of conduct
on which he has resolved. He is on horseback. Slowly on
some dusty highway passing over 4 or 5 miles an hour, we see
the traveller leaving behind him the smoke of London. His
slow pace is partly the fault of the rider who "loves not

speed"; partly that of the hack, who does not love it either. O, ye nameless ale-drinking villagers, road-sick blacksmithy, and women knitting at cottage doors, who, on that day, 250 years ago, caught a glimpse of that rider, as he plodded slowly past you on his way, did ye, or did ye not, lay down your mugs, your hammers, your knitting needles, to look the longer at him? Could any of you write? If then, ye had but jotted down on paper a word or two to tell us how he and his horse looked, or at what o'clock ye saw him pass! Probably, however, ye did not heed him --none of you, it may be, save some honest fellow that would touch his bonnet and receive a nod in return from Shakespeare, or some pretty girl that would cast her head modestly down as she passed him on the road; but poor people, how should you have known who the rider was? In Sonnet LII we have a fine poetic use of the trivial incidents of travel.

So am I as the rich, whose blessed key
Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
The which he will not every hour survey,
For blunting the fine edge of seldom pleasure.
Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
Since seldom coming, in the long year set
Like stones of worth they thinly placed are
Or captain-jewels in the carcanet.
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide
To make some special instant special-blest
By new unfolding his imprisoned pride.

Here we see the Poet, his day's journey on his sorry hack

over, arrived at his inn or some other place of abode for the night --not, surely that famous inn of tradition, the Crown at Oxford, where Shakespeare knew the landlady so well, and at which he always lodged on his journeys between London and Stratford. Whether at an inn or not, whether on the road between London and Stratford or not; we see the Poet arrived somewhere. Having supped, he retires to his chamber where he is to sleep -- an old tapestried room, we will suppose like that in Chaucer's dream:

On the walls old portraiture
Of horsemen, hawkies, and of hounds,
And hurt deer all full of wounds,
Some like bitten, some hurt with shot.

Here in the dim light, mechanically unlocking the little chest in which are contained clothes and other lighter luggage of travel, there flashes upon the Poet's mind, the idea of the foregoing sonnet, conveyed as it were, in the opening of the lid: "As the locked chest, concealing his treasure is to the rich man, so is the time to me that detains you from my sight."¹

Nor even when the Poet has lain down on his bed, will his craving faculty be lulled to rest. The very shadows, and rustling curtains, and dark recesses of the room teem before his poetic gaze.

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected;
But when I sleep in dreams they look on thee
And darkly-bright are bright in dark directed
Then thou, whose shadow, shadows doth make bright

How admirably do these lines represent the wearied imagination of a traveller falling asleep in a strange chamber! The "things unrespected" that have been viewed all day are the fields, the houses, the grazing cattle, amid which the journey has been wended. These, when the traveller's head is laid at night on the pillow, swims and swims again through the eyesight, passing so gently in their ceaseless confusion as to please rather than annoy.² These however are but the superfluous impressions of the day discharged spontaneously by the overloaded senses; the mind itself has no part in their coming or going. Dominant over these illusions of the closing eyelids is the image which the heart sends forth. Sometimes as in the case of the Poet, this may be the image of an absent friend. But oftener, a dearer spirit still flits through the shadows of the strange chamber. Why smiles the youth in the moment of approaching slumber? Ah! Blue-eyed and golden-ringleted on his way-worn fancy is beaming the constant Angel-face; lo! he smiles again, he murmurs, he stretches his arms, the dear name escapes him; with a tear on his pillow he falls asleep.

Sonnets XLIV and XLV are but variations of the same idea; but from Sonnets XLVI and XLVII we gather an additional particular --that Shakespeare, on this journey through whatever part of the country it was made, carried with him a miniature portrait of his friend. {See marginal notation 1}

The 3rd paper of Sonnets, which we have thus gone over, and which was clearly written during the Poet's absence from

town, closes with Sonnet LV. This sonnet may be considered as an Envoy appended to the 22 sonnets preceding it. It commences thus:

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme
The word "rhyme" clearly meaning "Paper of Sonnets!"

We come now to the 4th Paper of Sonnets, to which Mr. Brown affixes the following title, as indicating its contents: "To the Poet's friend, complaining of his coldness, and warning him of Life's decay." This title, we shall find, gives but a partial idea of the turn of the Sonnets in question (LVI-LXXVII) which are of a miscellaneous description. The 1st Sonnet of the Paper opens as follows:

Sweet love, renew thy force; be it not said
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite.
From this as well as from certain other lines in the same sonnet

Let this sad interim like the ocean be
Which parts the shore where two contracted - new
Come daily to the banks.

it is to be inferred that some time has elapsed during which there has been a cessation of intercourse between Shakespeare and his friend. Meanwhile, it would appear the scene and the circumstances are changed. The Poet's no longer in the country; he is again in town and pursuing his ordinary avocations. He is now completely enfranchised from the old slavery that enthralled him; and the only effect that his recent struggle has left is a deeper shade of

melancholy in his character. Often in solitude he may recall the hours spent so worthlessly by the side of the dark traitress and a sigh, half of love's sorrow, half of shame's, may escape him; but her name is never named by him again; and he sees her no more. And where may she be now, the Circe of the gentlest soul that ever woman wrung? Ah! there are a thousand rooms in London gay in the evening; a thousand lovers more amusing than Shakespeare. Adown the dance she floats, or o'er the song she bends, her black eyes flashing out wit, and lust as before; and, amid the shower of hoarse repartees from the large-limbed admirers, is quite forgotten the sweet shy voice that used to say the deep things in the ear. Distant now in his own abode sits he, sadder, busier, wiser. Dance on, sing on, thou heartless fair one; let the eyes flash, and the brain scheme; it lasts not long! The wrinkles come, and age will come; and without one soul in the vast world to pity thee, thou shalt sit, at last, a crippled old woman, timid, when alone, of thine own hired servant, and envious from the room's corner when abroad, of all young fresh faces.

Shakespeare, as we have already seen, although he broke through his entanglement with his faithless mistress, did not cease his friendship with the youth who had equally wronged him, but rather felt his affection for this youth increase. So singular a fact deserves to be considered more particularly. Throughout our exposition of these Sonnets we have kept in view the supposition with which we set out that Shakespeare was attached to his young friend by the tie of one of those lofty Platonic friendships which pass now for

historical rarities, if not altogether for fictions. Unless, in studying these Sonnets, we start with this assumption, it is impossible to proceed a step without being bewildered. Nor is there any a priori reason for avoiding the assumption. On the contrary there is a species of self-evidencing power in the conception that Shakespeare, enormous as he was in the mass of his spirit, should also have had some resulting abnormity in its mode of display as a whole. The voice appertaining to such a congress of faculties and passions as he was, must not only have excelled in strength and volume, but must also have been capable of attaining to notes that lie out of the ordinary human compass.

Nor need Shakespeare's choice of a friend surprise us - a youth beautiful and gentle but inferior probably to 20 others whom the Poet saw daily, and certainly, at least, no equal companion for his kingly spirit. How strange, to look at an analogous case, are the marriages of Love. Not beauty not merit, not even community of taste, or aspiration, is it, that charms the Lover, and makes him prefer his Love to all others of her sex; it is the indescribable sensation of spiritual affinity by which Great Nature, unscrupulously bent in the perpetuation of the species, is ever swindling her children into the necessary parties of two. Hence, those unions at which society wonders -- the wise man with the silly woman, or the noble suffering woman with the selfish cruel man. Now as it is with Love, so it is with that which is worthy to be called Friendship. What is more frequent than the preference shown by some man of mature and

even stern mind for the society of some one much younger than himself, and wholly his intellectual inferior. Sometimes indeed, it may be because such a youth is a genial listener whose society affords his friend a just occasion for talking aloud. "Whosoever" says Bacon "hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discovering with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look where they are turned into words; finally he waxeth wiser with himself and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. A man were better relate himself to a statue or a picture, than suffer his thoughts to pass in another." Such a statue or picture, serving this function of a listener, the gentle youth of these Sonnets may have been to the fluent Shakespeare. But it is clear that there was a deeper foundation for their friendship. The Poet's affection for his friend, was grounded on some mystic spiritual affinity, like that which unites two lovers, rather than a mutual conscience, or even community of tastes. The friendship, in short, was not an ordinary everyday intimacy, but a profound attachment of one soul to another.

It is in this way, and in no other, that we can explain the style of these Sonnets -- their sentimentalism, their enthusiasm, their sorrow, their self-abasement, their all but braggardism of word and metaphor. This surprise of posterity at the style of his sonnets did not escape the Poet himself - shrewd it would seem in the midst of his

phrensy. Respice Sonnet XVII.

So should my papers yellowed with their age
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue
And your true rights be deemed a Poet's rage
And stretched metre of an antique song.

It is interesting however, to observe that even in Shakespeare's dramas all his serious friendships are of that rare ideal character in which this hyperbolic language, this "stretched metre" seems natural. Thus in the "Merchant of Venice," Antonio is to Bassanio

The dearest friend to me, the kindest man
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies; and one in whom
The ancient Roman honour doth more appear
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

And Bassanio's wife Portia says of the same Antonio:

This Antonio

Being the bosom-lover of my lord.

Again, as if to show how absolutely an idea in the mind of Shakespeare was this possibility of a friendship, almost as exquisite and ideal in its nature as love, we find in more than one of his plays, cases of such a friendship between persons of the other sex. Thus in "As you like it" of the two friends, Rosalind the daughter of the banished Duke and Celia the daughter of the usurping Duke, it is expressly said

their loves

Are dearer than the natural bow of sisters
and in a scene in which they just appear, walking on a lawn

before the Duke's palace, they converse as follows:

Celia I pray thee Rosalind, sweet my coz, be
 merry.

Rosalind Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am
 mistress of; and would you yet I were
 merrier? Unless you could teach me to
 forget a banished father, you must not
 learn me how to remember any
 extraordinary pleasure.

Celia Therein I see thou lovest me not with
 the full weight that I love thee. If my
 Uncle, thy banished father, had banished
 thy Uncle, the Duke my father, so thou
 hadst been still with me, I could have
 taught my love to take thy father for
 mine. So wouldst thou, if the truth of
 thy love to me were so righteously
 tempered as mine is to thee.

Rosalind Well I shall forget the condition of my
 estate to rejoice in yours.

Generalizing this observation, we would say that one of
Shakespeare's peculiarities as a Dramatist, is his habit,
wherever he represents one human spirit related by affection
to another --whether it be the affection of lovers, or that
of two friends coequals in age and of the same sex, or that
of a poor clown for his outcast king; or that of a daughter
for her father, or that of an old servitor for his young
master; -- always to assume this affection as existing in
that extravagant degree in which it is scarcely to be found

existing in the real world, and of which it is only nature of imaginary fineness that could be conceived susceptible at all. We are disposed to lay great stress on this fact respecting Shakespeare as a poet. In no other poet do we find the same disposition always to represent as so earnest and intense a thing, the relation between one human spirit and another. Reviewing almost any of his plays we should discover cases of this description, to which, if truth to actual life were our critical standard, objection must be taken on the score of unreality. In Love, indeed even in the actual world, we are accustomed to regard this intensity of affection as possible and natural. And even in such friendships as we see existing between two Germans or Italians who thou each other, or between two of our own less demonstrative countrymen, who attack the world with one little mass of pecuniary force for both, we recognize a certain distinguishing depth. One loves to hear, when friend speaks of friend, not the cautious and measured estimate as if one were recommending a clerk, but the hearty panegyric by which one of the two related spirits, finding itself advanced into new scenes, seems to say eagerly "May I bring my brother too?" Still in Shakespeare even this height is surpassed. All his friendships, all his intimacies, are deep, exquisite, measureless, chivalrous. Now here also, if our interpretation of these Sonnets be worth anything, we find that what is a peculiarity of Shakespeare as a Poet, and Dramatist, may be seen rooted in a peculiarity of his character as a man. His own nature we believe to have been singularly affectionate; singularly

capable of attaching itself to individuals that came within its scope. In the absence of all records of his loves -- whether his imprudent passion for Anne Hathaway, or any nobler and purer attachment that may have had power over his great young soul --the friendship commemorated in these Sonnets is to be regarded as the most characteristic manifestation that remains to us of this faculty which he possessed of relating himself to individuals through his affections. And certainly the example is an extreme one. The language of the Sonnets is such "stretched metre"; exaggerates to all appearance so boundlessly, humbles the writer so abasedly, in short commits such outrage against the whole value and proportion of things, that it would probably have been disgusting, if the artist had been only a little inferior to Shakespeare. As the love letters of eminent men reprinted in their biographies, move and interest the reader in quite a different way than the similar letters sometimes produced in courts of law in which equal earnestness is not supported by equal skill in expression -- so it may be said of many of these Sonnets that it is the grandeur of the thought, the quaintness of the conceit, the richness of the language, or the sweetness of the verse, that redeems them from a certain contempt that, but for these literary merits, would arise in the minds of the cool and critical readers. Thus:

That God forbid, that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of pleasure;
Or at your hand the account of hours crave,
Being your vassal, bound to stay your leisure.

(S. LVIII)

For nothing this wide Universe I call

Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all. (S. CIX)

You are so strongly in my purpose bred

That all the world besides methinks are dead. (S. CXII)

What feeling but that of wonder can be entertained when one reads such passages as these, and remembers that they were deliberately written with the pen that was held between the fingers of Shakespeare. The exaggeration manifest in these and 50 others of the Sonnets addressed to the youth, is paralleled only by that monster instance of the Love hyperbole in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona."

She shalt be dignified with this high honour

To bear my lady's train; lest the base earth

Should from her vesture chance to steal a kiss,

And, of so great a favour growing proud,

Disdain to root the summer-smelling flower

And make rough winter everlastingly.

Yet, as sincere as Valentine was, in this burst of his love for Silvia, so sincere do we believe Shakespeare to have been even in the most hyperbolic of his Sonnets to his friend.

Valentine's hyperbole, however, will serve to illustrate the peculiar character of only some of the Sonnets in question. These Sonnets, as has already been remarked, consist of two classes --Sonnets of the Fancy, such as the first 26; and Sonnets of the Heart, of which almost all the rest are examples. In the former, the affection that is expressed is equally sincere as in the

latter; but the writer's mind is unruffled; and the intellect acts, as it were, for the mere sake of exercise. In the others the mind is agitated; and the intellect is but a wearied servant dispatched hither and thither in quest of language, for a throbbing heart. Now Valentine's hyperbole is a pure illustration of the fancy. The feeling expressed is perfectly sincere; but the words are uttered half-furioso with a beaming eye; and the reader follows them laughing. But let Valentine have been tired³ in his love; let his Silvia have been his thought for months and years; let there have been time for the whole miscellany of human interests to have been crushed successively through the porch of this single feeling, until Life, Death, and all the generalities of nations had become but modes of Silvia; then should the language have been very different -- hyperbolic still; but earnest, severe, melancholy.

Precisely so is it with Shakespeare's Sonnets to his friend. The earlier Sonnets are like Valentine's hyperbole as it stands, pleasing because genuine, but without power to move the reader deeply; the later Sonnets are, as Valentine's language would have become, after his love had grown rich by the absorption of years --hyperbolic still, but earnest, severe, melancholy. Now this progress from the dominion of fancy, to that of earnest feeling is the natural progress of a mind affected by any influence of a permanent nature -- that of Love, for instance. It is the nature of Love to dissolve into itself every other feeling that arises while it lasts, and thus to add daily to its own intensity by absorbing whatever of the intense surrounds or encounters

it. The youthful lover finds an obstacle to his suit in the poverty which in itself is sufficiently hard to be borne. Does this weaken his love? No; but from that moment all that is earnest in a struggle with poverty, is incorporated with his love, so that he loves now with all his original passion plus all the sorrow, all the defiance that his lot had bred in him. The lover passes a funeral procession, or lingers among the tombs in a churchyard. Does the thought of Death, thus occasioned in his mind, displace for a moment his reigning love? No; he is forecasting the hour of his own burial; and whether her coffin shall lie in the same grave with his. Thus does love grow strong, by imbibing strength out of all things else, winding itself about all things winding all things in itself.

As it is with love, so it is with any other powerful and permanent feeling. Whoever has entrusted, for example, an important secret to a friend, let him but recall the circumstances, and he will find that his affection for that friend sustained, at that point of time, an increase precisely equivalent to the amount of emotion involved in the secret that was discussed between them. Supposing now that Shakespeare's Friendship followed this law of increase, into what a flood must this river have swelled, rushing through such a life! Like tributaries from neighboring hills, all thoughts, all accumulations of feeling, whether pleasant or painful, discharged themselves into it, and were borne thanklessly along in its mingled waters. At one point of its course, as we have seen, there came a tributary to join it, so large as to seem at first almost a greater

river. As where a Mississippi and a Missouri meet, was that day in Shakespeare's life when the fatal disclosure was made to him which these Sonnets commemorate. From that point, one of the streams must cease to have a name; must lose itself in the other. For a while there may be a doubt which shall be called the tributary, which shall remain the river. Mingle the waters, the clear and the muddy; round in the powerful tide circle the waif of each, the floating logs, and the upturned charred roots; but the struggle is short, and on at length towards the distant ocean pours the acknowledged victor mightier than before. As soon as it had become clear that Shakespeare's friendship was to survive the love that had put it in jeopardy, it might have become clear also that it would survive, not lessened in any degree by what had occurred, but increased by the addition of all the pain, pleasure, shame and remorse that had been interred in it. With this explanation in our minds of the state of Shakespeare's feelings at the time when, having returned to town, he renewed his intercourse with his friend in this 4th Paper of Sonnets, let us proceed to examine the contents of the Paper -- one, we shall find, in which the interests involved are more various, and the poetry on the whole richer, than in those that precede it.

It is in this paper that we first become aware of Shakespeare's fondness for certain special themes -- particularly that of the speed and destructiveness of Time. The thoughts of the vicissitude and decay of things appear to have been, beyond all conception, powerful in the mind of Shakespeare. Death, the march of generations across the

little stage of time, the rotting of human bodies in the earth; these and all the other forms of the same thought, were familiar to him beyond what is to be seen in the case of almost any other poet. It seems to have been a habit of his mind, when alone even to indulge in that oldest of human contemplations, which is not yet trite. "Man that is borne of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not." Let us cull a few examples from the Sonnets.

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge state presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment. (XV)
If thou survive my well-contented day
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover
(XXXII)

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with viler worms to dwell.
(LXXI)

When I perhaps compounded am with clay (LXXI)
The wrinkles which the glass will truly show
Of mouthed graves will give thee memory;
Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know
Time's thievish progress to eternity. (LXXVII)
Or shall I live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten? (LXXXI)

These are but a few out of many similar passages that occur in the Sonnets. Indeed, it may be said that wherever Shakespeare pronounces the words Time, Age, Death, etc it is with a deep and almost cutting personal emphasis, quite different from the usual manner of the Poets in their stereotyped allusions to mortality. Time, in particular, seems to have tenanted his imagination as a soul of a grim and hideous personality, cruel out of mere malevolence of nature. Death, too had become to him something morally unamiable, and deserving of reproach -- "that churl Death."

To turn to the plays of Shakespeare, we find that in them too, the same almost morbid sensitiveness as to all that is connected with Death and mortality is ever breaking out. The vividness for example, with which Juliet describes the interior of a charnel-house, partakes of a spirit of revenge, as if Shakespeare were retaliating through her upon an object that was horrible to himself.

Or hide me nightly in a charnel-house
O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones
With reeky shanks, and yellow chapless skulls.
More distinctly revengeful is Romeo's speculation at the tomb.

Thou detestable maw, thou womb of Death
Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth
Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open.
And who does not remember the famous passage in "Measure for Measure"?

Claudio Death is a fearful thing
Isabella And shamed life a hateful.

Claudio Ay, but to die, and go we know not where
 To lie in cold obstruction and to rot
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed
 ice;
 To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
 And blown with restless violence round
 about
 The pendent world; or to be worse than
 worst
 Of those that lawless and uncertain
 thoughts
 Imagine howling! 'tis too horrible
 The weariest and most loathed worldly
 life
 That age, ache, penury, and
 imprisonment,
 Can lay on Nature, is a paradise
 To what we fear of Death.

Again, in the grave digging scene in "Hamlet" we see the same fascinated familiarity with all that pertains to churchyards, coffins, and the corruption within them.

Hamlet Prithee, Horatio; tell me one thing.

Horatio What's that, my lord?

Hamlet Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this
 fashion i' the earth?

Horatio E'en so!

Hamlet And smelt so? Pah! (throws down the skull)

Horatio E'en so, my lord!

Hamlet To what base uses we may return Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung hole?

Horatio 'Twere to reason too curiously to consider so.

Hamlet No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it. As thus; Alexander died; Alexander was buried; Alexander returned to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why, of that loam whereto he was converted, might we not stop a beer barrel?

Imperial Caesar dead and turned to clay
May stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O that that flesh that kept the world
in awe
Should stop a hole to expel the
winter's flaw!

Observe how Shakespeare here defends through Hamlet his own tendency "too curiously" to consider Death! Nor with all this, need we forbear to quote, whatever may be its value otherwise, the famous inscription on Shakespeare's tomb in the parish church of Stratford.

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear

To dig the dust enclosed here.

Blest be the man that spares these stones,

And curst be he that moves my bones.

To sum up all let us quote in conclusion that unparalleled burst of language in which our poet has defeated time itself by chivalrously proclaiming to all time what time can do.

And like the baseless fabric of a vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this unsubstantial pageant, faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made of; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

This, we contend, is no more poetic phrensy, inserted because it was dramatically suitable that Prospero should so express himself at that place; it is the explosion into words of a feeling during which Prospero was forgotten, and Shakespeare swooned into himself. And then, the continuation of the passage, what is it but a postscript describing through the medium of Prospero, Shakespeare's own agitation with what he had just written?

Sir, I am vexed;

Bear with my weakness, my old brain is troubled;

Be not disturbed with my infirmity;

If you be pleased, retire into my cell,

And there repose; a turn or two I'll walk

To still my beating mind.

To our imagination the surmise is that Shakespeare here laid down his pen, and began to pace his chamber, too agitated to write more that night.

In this extreme familiarity with the conception of mortality in general, and perhaps also in this extreme sensitiveness to the thought of Death as a matter of personal import, we hold that all great poets, and possibly all great men whatever, have resembled Shakespeare. For are not these the feelings of our common nature on which Religion and all solemn activity have founded and maintained themselves. To have learnt to think of the world as a whole, what is this except thoroughly to have conceived its transitoriness, as regards time, and its globular form as regards space? Space and time are the uttermost and largest of our conceptions; they are the limitations of the human capacity of thinking; the obstructions, so to speak, that remain between Man and God -- Him through whose Person the scattered stars whistle,⁴ and in whose existence there is no lapse of time. Now to stand incessantly upon these extreme conceptions, as upon the perimeter of a figure, and to view all inwards from there, is the highest work of thought to which a human being can attain. In Milton, Goethe, Richter, Burns, Beranger, and all great poets, there may be discerned this familiarity of the imagination with the world as a brown little ball pendent in space, and moving forward out of a dark Past into a future of gloom. Their strength lies in this; that which is mystic in their poetry. For here it is that the clear merges in the supernatural, and that the mind begins to pant and press against the great shell of the

Infinite that surrounds and shuts us in. But this general outward pressure of the spirit towards that which is Unknown is the native untaught exhibition of the Religious Sentiment; and creeds are but the intellectual machinery by which the pressure is made easy and confined to points. There is therefore in this sense, no poet that is more religious, more spiritual, than Shakespeare. Into an inordinate amount of that outward pressure of the spirit beyond the perimeter of things, infuse the peculiar moral power of Christianity and you have the Religion of Shakespeare. Thus:

And our little life

Is rounded with a sleep.

Tempest

Here the poetic imagination sweeps boldly round the Universe, severing it from the Infinite.

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth

Fooled by those rebel powers that lead thee stray^s

(CXLVI)

Here the soul, retracting its thoughts from the far and the physical, dwells disgustedly on itself.

Ay, but to die and go we know not where! M. for M.

The dread of something after Death

The undiscovered country from whose bourn

No traveller returns!

Hamlet

Here the soul charged with the new and awful thought of sin wings out again into the Infinite, and finds it dark.

How would you be,

If He, which is the top of judgment, should

But judge you as you are?

M. for M.

Here the silver lamp of Hope is hung up within the gloomy sphere to burn faintly forever!

And so it is throughout Shakespeare's writings. Whatever is special or doctrinal is avoided; all that intellectual tackling is struck away that would afford the Soul any deceitful relief from the whole sensation of the supernatural. This is essentially religious writing. The Finite pressing interrogatively against the Infinite, that is Religion; the Infinite thundering or whispering back a reply through the human soul, that is Revelation; the Finite framing a reply for itself, that is Theology; the Finite refusing to knock any longer, that is Atheism!

Looking back from these speculations regarding Shakespeare into which we have been led by our comments on the allusions that occur in the Fourth Paper of Sonnets to the fleetness of time, we have to remark on another feature of the same paper, closely connected with the foregoing - namely the frequency with which the Poet predicts in it the immortality of his own verses.

It is not creditable, we think, to the criticisms of this country that, while there is so much valuable matter besides in the Sonnets of Shakespeare these so called prophecies by the poet of his own immortality should be the only portions of them generally known. "Shakespeare" it is usually said by the critics "was by no means so unconscious a man, or so indifferent to his literary reputation as is supposed; for in his sonnets he more than once asserts his greatness, and anticipates a splendid posthumous fame." And with this passing notice, the unfortunate Sonnets are almost

invariably thrown aside.

Now to a certain extent, the observation is true. Shakespeare does anticipate the manner in which he is to be treated by posterity. The following collection of instances will clearly illustrate the point.

O fearful meditation! Where, alack!
Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O none; unless this miracle have might
That in black ink my love may still shine bright
(LXV)

Yet do thy worst, old time; despite thy wrong
My love shall in my verse live ever young (XIX)
Not marble, nor gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme. (LV)
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of Nature's truth
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow;
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand. (LX)
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen;
And they shall live, and he in them, still green.
(LXIII)

Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read;
And^e to be, your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead.

You still shall live, (such virtue hath my pen!)
Where breath most breathes --
even in the mouths of men.

(LXXXI)

It lies in thee
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb
And to be praised of ages yet to be
Then, do thy office, Muse.

(CI)

It is evident from these passages that Shakespeare did contemplate his own immortality as a Poet. We think however that the critics who have referred to such passages have in general missed a very subtle train of feeling that they involve, and substituted for it a feeling too coarse to have belonged to Shakespeare. It is no assertion of literary supremacy that Shakespeare meant to make in such passages as the foregoing; no declaration that he had tried himself or seen reason to be pleased; no demand from posterity of what he considered to be his due need of fame. Irreconcilable with such a supposition are other passages in the same Sonnets. Thus

Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope;
With what I most enjoy, contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising.

(XXIX)

And again, in the following extraordinary Sonnet which deserves to be quoted entire.

{task} O, lest the world should ask you to recite
What merit lived in me, that you should love
After my Death -- dear love, forget me quite,

For you in me can nothing worthy prove;
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
To do more for me than mine own desert,
And hang more praise upon deceased I,
Than niggard truth would willingly impart.
O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor you
For I am shamed by that which I bring forth
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

(LXXII)

What then is the meaning of those passages in the Sonnets,
in which Shakespeare appears to predict his own immortality
as a Poet?

Let it be observed in the first place, that in almost
none of the passages in question does Shakespeare seem to
have his own immortality in view, so much as that of the
Sonnets. This is not a trivial observation. It is
uniformly of the Sonnets as such, that Shakespeare is
thinking; of the verse that shall "be in men's eyes" after
he himself is dead; of the "black lines" that shall be read
by persons yet unborn. And the thought most pleasant to him
is that thus, by means of the Sonnets, the subject of them,
i.e. his friend, shall necessarily live in the thoughts of
future generations. In short, it is the immortality of his
friend as the subject of the Sonnets, and not his own
immortality as their author, that is the dominant idea in
Shakespeare's mind.

But if, as will not be decried, it is natural for the painter or the poet to produce, each, according to his special art, a picture of her whom he loves, thus causing the whole contemporary earth and ages still to come to take interest in her, and rooting her being, as it were, broad in the fields of time -- so also was it for Shakespeare in the case of a friend whom he loved so dearly. This is the prerogative of Art; to call upon all humanity for sympathy in what is originally individual; and that which endureth for a moment and is gone, to send rolling everlastingly through the thought of ages. Because Rubens loved his mistress in gross fashion, has he not compelled her plump limbs into the imagination of all futurity, obliging the mariners of other countries to "look at those"; And Laura, has not the Italian that loved her 500 years ago, procured for her a large room in the thoughts of men? Ah! this is what the lover ever wishes, to do as Petrarch did, and hold the whole human race by the button, obliging it to listen while he describes and redescribes his loved one, how soft her eyes were, how sweet her voice, how lily-like she walked, and how her lips were parted! Yet this poetic longing is not usually confounded with the desire for posthumous fame.

Shakespeare's friendship being as we have seen as intense in its nature as love, he also made use of his prerogative as an artist, to publish the portrait of his friend. But the thought of time, and its destructiveness being so powerful and familiar in the mind of Shakespeare, there arose this peculiarity in his case --that, not content

with the exercise of his prerogative, he exulted in it, and announced that he was exercising it. In other words. while in the majority of the Sonnets, he simply obeyed the artist impulse, in many he went deeper, and actually celebrated the impulse itself. This is very Shakespeare-like. In the first place, he writes Sonnets in obedience to the ordinary poetic instinct; next he analyzes this instinct and intellectually regards himself as a writer of Sonnets; and lastly, resolved as it were to rest in the poetic mood as ultimate and most congenial, he delves deeper, lifts the scientific process itself in his poetic grasp, and writes sonnets on himself considered as a writer of Sonnets.

"It is my prerogative as a poet" Shakespeare virtually says to his friend in those so-called prophetic Sonnets, "to compel futurity to take an interest in you." Then, exulting in this prerogative, he defies his enemy time, he taunts him with his powerlessness; and of every sonnet as it is written he feels, "Thus have I converted a transient thing; i.e. the beauty and worth of my friend into a small mass of substance perennial in its very nature, i.e. a 14 line Sonnet."

And all in war with time for love of you,

As he takes from you, I engraft you new. (XV)

That is to say, "Daily Time is wearing you away; but his assiduity is useless, for, as fast as He wastes you, I seize the abraden matter, and transmit it to Posterity in Sonnets." Thus, in Shakespeare's vivid style of conception, he is making war upon Time, outwitting Time, making Time ridiculous. "Rise" he says to his Muse in Sonnet C, "and if thou shalt discover any wrinkle in my love's face, discomfit

it by a Sonnet; be a Satire to decay, and make Time's spoils despised everywhere." It is, therefore, not so much the imperishable character of his own sonnets in particular that Shakespeare has in view in his passages such as those on which we have been commenting, but the imperishable nature in general of those little coagulations of language called Poems or Sonnets.

Time, vicissitude, mortality -- these as we have seen, are the great topics of the 4th Paper; and the predictions which it includes of an immortal duration for the Poet's verses are but accessory to these. Begun in melancholy, the Paper ends in melancholy -- almost in hypochondria. How desponding, for example, are Sonnets LXXIII, and LXXIV, written, it may be supposed, shortly before the Paper left the hands of Shakespeare.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds
sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black Night doth take away
Death's second self that seals up all the rest;
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more

strong

To love that well which then must leave ere long.
But be contented. When that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away,
My life etc. -----

Who would believe that Shakespeare when he wrote these lines was in the prime of manhood, a successful London citizen? And yet how natural is the despondency which they express let the following almost identical words of another Poet prove -- words written at the same period of life by a man also prosperous as the world goes, yet indicating the same weariness of the world, and the same sensation of approaching premature Death:

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worms, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is like to some volcanic isle
No torch is kindled at its blaze

A funeral pile.

A few weeks after these words had been written, Byron was dead: the words had been true! But Shakespeare outlived his despondency 19 years; the ruined choirs were restored and the sweet birds sang again. Ah! is it that at a certain period in the life of every true soul there comes this Hezekiah-sickness; and that the Byrons and the Burnses do actually die, while the Shakespeares, and the Goethes weep sore and have their days lengthened? "I said in the cutting

off of my days 'I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years.' I said 'I shall not see the Lord, in the land of the living; I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world; mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent.'" Such was the lamentation of the king, when his face was turned towards the wall, and he expected to die. But when the sickness was over, and he saw a long life yet before him, his thoughts were no longer clouded. "Like a crane or a swallow" he then said "so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes did fail with looking upward." So did the past lamentations now appear; and for the future there was a gentle hope. "I shall go softly all my years in the betterness of my soul. Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee; Death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." O that thus every true soul in these days, might come out of the Hezekiah-sickness!

The 5th Paper of Sonnets extends, as we reckon, from Sonnet LXXVIII to Sonnet XCIX inclusive. It appears to have been written, the greater part of it in town, but at some little interval after Paper 4th. Its topics are various, and will be best presented when we come to remark on the Sonnets individually; one of them, however, as being of general biographical import may be here adverted to.

The relation between the poet and his friend has, it

seems, been complicated by certain circumstances that have occurred since the composition of the Sonnets forming the 4th Paper. The friend of the Poet is no mean citizen, it would appear; he is of such station and reputation for accomplishment that he is sought after as a patron by the literary aspirants of the day. His house, we are to understand, is open to a considerable circle of clients, eager, some doubtless from less interested motives than others, to obtain his favour. Our Poet, alone, however, has hitherto been his intimate friend; his companion, his adviser. Attracted towards the youth at first perhaps by some expectation of patronage at his hands -- an expectation perfectly honorable in those days; when literature depended for its subsistence on the great, even when it derived its spirit from the people, and which with Shakespeare's manly dedications of his 2 minor poems to Lord Southampton before us, we are entitled to say, can have involved not one atom of servility -- the Poet had gradually gained the youth's confidence and returned it with his own. The youth of noble family (for such we may, even on present evidence call him) had formed a friendship with the popular play-writer on terms of equality. This friendship, as we have seen, had grown and grown, till at length it had attained a height and strength altogether ideal and romantic. Suddenly dashed in twain by a deplorable mishap, it had again been cemented, and built afresh. All the emotion that had been accumulated in the Poet's mind on the subject of his love with the black-eyed lady, had been transferred into his singular affection for this youth; who

in return felt himself bound to the Poet by the new ties of gratitude and repentance. Nothing, it appeared could separate them; and in the preceding paper, as we have seen, the Poet brought all his thoughts, all his aspirations, to the shrine of so lofty a friendship. Now, suddenly all this is changed. Profiting it would seem, by some relaxation of duty on the part of the Poet, others have attempted to step into his place. The clients that have been hitherto kept aloof by the presence of Shakespeare, came forward in his absence; and vie with each other in paying honor to so princely and promising a patron; the youth is flattered; he receives their attentions favorably, and there is one in particular on whom he smiles. Thus in Sonnet LXXVIII.

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse
As every alien pen hath got my use
And under thee their poesy disperse.

Here is distinctly figured to us the eager rush of the literary aspirants of the day to the atrium of the young Patron. They "disperse under thee their poesy" says Shakespeare; which can only mean that other poets were addressing verses or dedications to him, with a view thereby to obtain currency for their productions. That among these, Shakespeare had one individual specially in view, is clear from such passages as the following.

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace
But now my gracious numbers are decayed
And my sick Muse doth give another place. (LXXIX)

O how I faint when I of you doth write
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name. (LXXX)
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
Than both your poets can in praise devise.

(LXXXIII)

Was it the full proud sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all too precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?

(LXXXVI)

It is clear that Shakespeare is jealous of this intrusion of the other poet, and of the favor which his friend has shown him. Thus:

Ye be most proud of that which I compile
Whose influence is thine and born of thee,
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
And arts with thy sweet graces, graced be.

(LXXVIII)

Or again:

But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)
The humblest as the proudest sail doth bear
My saucy bark, inferior far to his
On your broad main doth wilfully appear. (LXXX)

And this strain of discontent pervades all these Sonnets (LXXVIII-LXXXVI) in which allusions occur to the other Poet. In short, if any meaning is to be attached to the Sonnets at all, they indicate real concern on the part of Shakespeare at the turn which affairs had taken. Cursory readers of the Sonnets have remarked this; and staggered by the idea, that

Shakespeare could in this whining way address a young patron and beg him to receive him back into favor and dismiss his rival-poets that were clustering round him, have refused to proceed with the interpretation of the Sonnets at all, and have even wished that they could be proved not to have been written by Shakespeare. But this alarm arises from the shallowest possible conception of what the Sonnets are. They are not, we repeat for the third or fourth time, they are not mere complimentary Sonnets to a patron. If they were, then their meanness would beggar all the meanness ever exhibited in print; and Shakespeare must have been one of the most shameless of human beings. There is no escape from this conclusion, or the supposition in question, let it, therefore, be explicitly stated. Shakespeare the king of Poets, the purest and loftiest spirit of our English literature, the prudent upright man whom his contemporaries respected and who is not known to have addressed any such flatteries to the royalty of the time as were permissible and frequent among his brother poets, this Shakespeare did yet, for some private ends, wheedle, flatter, and for 3 years or more incessantly fawn on some young nobleman whom he does not name.

This notion is incredible on the face of it; and could only be entertained even for a moment by men who have a taste for historic carrion, or a boundless faith in the absurd. No one can read these several Sonnets of the collection as they ought to be read, without seeing that, hyperbolic and singular as their language is, every word of it is sincere. There is pain, there is grief, there is

earnestness, there is reproach, in these Sonnets; and if they are flatteries to a patron, they are after a model the strangest ever followed where flattery was the object. In short, these Sonnets are and can be only what they pretend to be, sonnets written by the Poet in all moods to a young friend, whom he loved with a singular and romantic affection, and at whose hands he had suffered much.

Now this view, while it certainly does not dissipate our surprise that Shakespeare should exhibit such sensitiveness to the inclusion of other poets on the acquaintanceship of his friend, at least places the fact in another light. As jealousy even in the noblest minds is inseparable from love, so it would appear, it is a feature of that high and rare friendship of which the intimacy commemorated in these Sonnets is an example, to desire to monopolize the affection of the person who is the object of it. It is a thick and lumpish human nature with which we have to deal in the present day yielding none of those exquisite, deep singularities, those curious and beautiful developments; seen in the antique world; man is related to man by coarse and common ties, tears for a friend's death are rare; even in our love there is sanity and measure; and money regulates all. Hence we are ill qualified to appreciate the condition of mind revealed by these Sonnets of Shakespeare in which jealous of the partition with another of what he conceived to be peculiarly his own, he complains to his friend, and asserts his own claims against those of his competitor. The analogous case of love indeed, may serve as an illustration. Yet even in such friendships

as our present condition of society offers, we are mistaken if this very jealousy, this desire to monopolize the affections of the person with whom the intimacy subsists, is not also a feature. Shakespeare, we believe, has instances to this effect in his dramas. Nor is it out of place to adduce in such a connexion the fact mentioned by Goethe that his sister who loved him extremely should herself {be} jealous of his intimacy with other people.

As the honorable lover even in the bitterness of his jealousy, will not malign his rival, so in these Sonnets, Shakespeare wherever he alludes to the "other poet" does so in terms that amply acknowledge his merits. Who this other poet was, in other words, to which of the literary contemporaries of Shakespeare it is that he may be supposed to allude in these curious Sonnets, is a question the discussion of which will be better left for the Appendix. Meanwhile, however, we may attend to one or two passages in the Sonnets, that seem in part to define him as belonging to that "learned school" of poets, of which Shakespeare, the Dramatist of the people, with "his small Latin and less Greek" was never accounted a member. In Sonnet LXXVIII there are the following lines,

Thine eyes that taught the dumb on high to sing
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly
Have added feathers to the learned's wing
And given grace a double majesty.

showing that the poet alluded to was a man of reputation for learning. That the rival was a man of no mean note is also clear from the lines in Sonnet LXXIX.

I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen.
As well as from those already quoted in Sonnets LXXX and
LXXXVI.

Knowing a better spirit doth use your name
Was it the proud full sail of his great verse
Bound for the prize of all too precious you.
Here, however, while describing himself as inferior to the
"other poet" Shakespeare contrives to insinuate a latent
comparison of their respective qualities. If "the other
poet" is a man of learning, he is a dear untaught singer.
Nay, this "other poet" it would appear, he regards as a poet
of the new artificial school.

Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
Finding thy worth, a limit past my praise,
And therefore art enforced to seek anew
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days.
And do so, love; yet when they have devised
What strained touches rhetoric can lend.

(LXXXII)

Not only is "the other poet"⁷ rhetorical and artificial; he
is florid and pedantic. Thus in Sonnet LXXXII.

And their gross painting might be better used
Where cheeks need blood; in thee it is abused.
Also in Sonnet LXXXV.

My tongue-tied muse in manners holds her still
While comments of your praise richly compiled
Reserve their character with golden quill
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed.

It is impossible to suppose anything else than that Shakespeare in his choice of descriptive adjectives in these Sonnets had in view the literary peculiarities of his rival, his learning approaching to pedantry, his sounding verse, his florid language, in that simile in Sonnet LXXX in which he contrasts himself with his rival, the same semi-critical spirit seems discernable through the modesty and self disparagement that are studied.

But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)
{humble} The humblest as the proudest sail will bear {doth}
My saucy bark inferior far to his
On your broad main doth wilfully appear.
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride
Or, being wracked, I am a worthless boat,
He, of tall building, and of goodly pride.

Here, we have precisely the same simile, it will be observed, as that employed by Fuller to describe the wit-combats between Ben Jonson and Shakespeare -- Ben Jonson "the great galleon, built far higher in learning," Shakespeare the "English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing." Altogether the coincidence is such as to entitle us to conclude that "the other poet" if not Ben Jonson, (and that he was not will appear hereafter) was at least a poet of Ben's school, and distinguished by some of Ben's peculiarities.

Eight or nine Sonnets of the Paper now under notice are entirely occupied with these jealous allusions to the "other poet." They seem for some time to have been unheeded by the

person to whom they are addressed, for here follow several sonnets of the most abject description in which Shakespeare utters bitter complaints of his friend's continued unkindness and indifference. Ultimately however, it is evident that an agreement takes place, for the paper closes with the renewed expressions of the tenderest affection. All this will appear most conveniently when we expound the Sonnets individually.

The tenor of the 6th Paper of Sonnets (C-CVII) is that of apology by the Poet for a longer period of silence than has been usual with him. Busy, apparently, on more common themes, and perhaps in a more worldly frame of mind than when he wrote the earnest Sonnets that composed the 4 preceding papers, he has neglected to pay the customary tribute of verse to his friend; and when at length he is aroused to this neglect and resumes his pen, one perceives in what he does write, a predominance of the fancy, that plainly indicates a slight relapse of affection. "Though I make less show of my love, yet I love you as at first," is the purport of the few sonnets that compose the Paper; and altogether one perceives that the Poet writes this because he feels in a manner compelled to it, in order to vindicate his own character for constancy. This will appear when we come to comment on the Sonnets themselves; meanwhile there is one point of importance fixed in this Paper to which we would call attention. Sonnet CII opens as follows:

My love is strengthened, though more weak in
seeming

I love not less, though less the show appear,

That love is merchandized, whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere
Our love was new, and then but in the spring
When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days.

In connexion with this take the opening lines of S. CIV.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For, as you were, when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
Have from the forest shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned;
In process of the seasons have I seen
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.

This Sonnet, then, was written 3 years after the commencement of the friendship which it celebrates. But (if there is any truth in the idea that these Sonnets were originally dispatched in continuous papers) this is equivalent to saying that not only the particular Sonnet, but the whole paper of which it forms a part was written about this time. The composition therefore of the first 6 papers of Sonnets and addressed to the youth, extended over a period of 3 years; not less; and not much more. Farther, if the statement in Sonnet CII "Our love was new" is to be understood literally, it follows, that the majority, or at least, a large proportion of the Sonnets were written in the early part of this triennium.

This, while so far satisfactory, would still leave us

at sea, as regarded the precise year in which any part of the collection was written, not one sonnet out of the 126 addressed to the youth, having been published before 1609. Fortunately however, a fact here comes to our help -- the publication namely by Jaggard in 1599, of the important Sonnet numbered CXLIV.

Two loves I have etc

To allow this Sonnet time to have found its way into Jaggard's hands, we will suppose it to have been in existence in 1598. The incident alluded to in it -- the intrigue between the Poet's friend and his mistress, must therefore have occurred in or about the year 1598; and by consequence all the Sonnets that express the Poet's feelings contemporaneous with that incident must have been committed to paper in 1598-9. But Sonnets XXXIIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XL, XLI, XLII, constituting part of what we have called the 3rd Paper of Sonnets, express such feelings; therefore these Sonnets and the Paper to which they belong must have been composed in 1598-9. As these Sonnets allude to the friendship subsisting between Shakespeare and the youth, that friendship must have been formed earlier than 1598-9. There is no necessity however, for believing it to have been formed much earlier. Historical probability will be satisfied with the supposition of an acquaintanceship of a few months before the fatal occurrence; and Shakespeare's intimation that most of the Sonnets were written at an early period of their friendship points to the same conclusion. In short, if we fix the date of the commencement of the friendship at 1597-8, we shall probably be nearly right.

The first paper of Sonnets, then, being written in 1597-8 and one of the Sonnets of the 6th Paper affirming itself to have been written 3 years after the commencement of the friendship, that spreads the composition of these 6 papers together with the intercalated one, over the 3 years intermediate between 1597-8 and 1600-1. The friendship itself may have lasted much longer; but, on any supposition that will regard the Sonnets as a whole, they must all, with the exception of the 7th Paper, have been in manuscript before the year 1601 was far advanced. Allowing finally an additional period for the composition of the 7th Paper (and that this paper followed very closely on its predecessor will immediately appear) it may be confidently asserted that all those Sonnets of Shakespeare that form the present collection were in manuscript possibly before the year 1601 had closed; and certainly before the year 1602 had much more than begun. The supposition of Ulrici and other critics that some of the Sonnets were written as late as 1605-9, is untenable. They were all written between 1597 and 1602. If we were required to specify the dates of the composition of the several papers individually, we would range them as follows: Paper 1st probably in 1597; Paper 2nd probably about 1597-8; Intercalated Paper probably about 1597-8; Paper 3rd probably in 1598; Paper 4th probably about 1598-9; Paper 5th probably about 1599-1600; Paper 6th probably about 1600-1601; and Paper 7th either about 1600-01, or 1601-2, according as certain considerations now to be presented decide for the one or the other.

In the whole range of literature we do not know another

treasure of great substance so compact as the 19 Sonnets that compose what we have called the 7th Paper of the present collection. It seems as if in these Sonnets the Poet had gone down into depths of human history unusual even to himself, and wrenching out rugged masses of substance from among the secresies of man's experience, had heaved them, crushed and glittering up into daylight. They are full of precisely that intimate kind of experience that ought to furnish the matter for novels.

Almost all the Sonnets of this Paper have reference to a period of tedious estrangement between Shakespeare and his friend. Respecting this period of estrangement two opinions may be held. It may be held, in the first place, that it was the mere prolongation of that period of silence and comparative indifference alluded to in Paper 6th with such apologetic explanations of the fact, in which case Paper 7th would be but a continuation of Paper 6th, and one would be justified in attributing it also to the year 1600-1, or it may be held that this period of estrangement was a totally independent portion of the history of the friendship which it interrupted, not growing out of the mere period of indifference alluded to, in Paper 6th, but considerably subsequent to that period, and originating in different circumstances. That in any case, there was some little interval between the 2 papers is clear from the manner in which the one closes, as well as from that in which the other opens; but whether the two were separated by so wide an interval as the 2nd of the hypotheses just stated would suppose, or whether they are so closely connected as the

other hypothesis would represent, is a question the answer to which will depend on the view we take of a certain portion of the story of the 7th Paper.

From various allusions in the Sonnets composing the Paper we are able to gather that the Poet has again been absent from his friend on a journey. Thus in Sonnet CXIII.

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
And that which governs me to go about
Doth part his function.

From certain lines of the same sonnet we are also to infer that the journey was one of some length, and not confined to the neighborhood of London. Speaking of the illusions of his eyesight on the journey, he says,

For if I see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
The most sweet favour, or deformed'st creature
The mountain or the sea.

Farther, from the whole tenor of Sonnets CX and CXI, which are bitter complaints of the Poet against his fortune in having to earn his bread by an occupation so disreputable as that of a player was conceived to be; and especially from the opening lines of Sonnet CX

Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view.

we are led to conclude that the journey in question was a professional one. Shakespeare, in other words, has been absent with his company, performing, in the interval between the theatrical seasons in town, in other parts of the island; and it is after his return that the present paper is written. It appears from the Paper that after his return,

he was induced by some whim or other, for no sufficient reason is stated, to absent himself from his friend's society in a deliberate and avowed manner. Whether such conduct was the mere natural determination of a change that had for some time been going on within him, and of which warning had been given in the Sonnets of Paper 6th written before his departure on the journey in question; or whether it was the result of some fresh resolution expressly adopted with his friend -is, as has already been observed, a point difficult to settle. The fact of the estrangement, however, is quite certain. Thus S. CIX

O, never say that I was false of heart

Though absence seemed my flame to qualify.

that is "though" my absence seemed to abate my affection for you." Again Sonnet CXVII.

Accuse me thus: that I have scanted all

Wherein I should your great deserts repay;

Forgot upon, your dearest love to call

Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day;

That I have frequent been with unknown minds

And given to time your own dear-purchased right

That I have hoisted sail to all the winds

{which} That should transport me farthest from your sight.

A distinct confession, it will be observed, that the Poet after his return, had neglected the ordinary courtesies of friendship and kept purposely aloof from his friend's presence. This conduct deeply wounds his friend's feelings. Alluding to this fact, and recalling to memory the previous occasion on which he had himself suffered in a similar

manner from his friend's coldness, the Poet says in Sonnet CXX.

For if you were by my unkindness shaken

As I by yours, you have passed a hell of time.

But that which aggravates the distress of the Poet's friend, on account of his unkindness is that reports are reaching him detrimental to the Poet's character. "This time during which he shuns your company" seems to have been the substance of those reports, "he is spending in an unworthy manner, with unworthy theatrical associates." This most fully appears from S^c CXXI.

For why should others' false adulterate eyes

Give salutation to my sportive blood

Or on my frailties why are frailer spies

Which in their wills count bad what I think good?

No, -- I am that I am; and they that level

At my abuses reckon up their own.

At length, apparently when the estrangement had proceeded to the utmost length, some kind chance brings the two friends together again. A reconciliation takes place. The youth pours out his reproaches; and the Poet hastens with all the fervor of the occasion, to affirm that his affection is not abated; that it will last forever. This, in fact, is the origin of the present paper; and the allusions that we have quoted from it are all retrospective. The one pervading topic of the Paper is that true affection is in its nature eternal, and that whatever recent appearances may have seemed to indicate, his regard for his friend is rooted and ineradicable. "Never believe" he says in Sonnet {CIX}

Never believe, though in my nature reigned
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood
That it could so preposterously be stained,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good.
and again in S. CXVI, summing up, as it were, the whole
story, in the permanent aspect.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken
It is the star to every wandering bark
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
taken.

This affection for his friend, he says, is now increased;
the estrangement has had at least this good effect. Thus S^c
CXV.

Those lines, that I before have writ, do lie
Even those that said I could not love thee dearer.
Again in Sonnet CXIX.

O, benefit of ill! now I find true
That better is by evil still made better
And ruined love when it is built anew
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far
greater.

He confesses that, except this result of confirmed
friendship, no good came of his purpose of evading his
friend's society.

How have mine eyes out of their spheres been
fitted

In the distraction of this maddening fever!
It was a whim, he says, a mere freak, that indicated his
conduct. S^c CXVIII

Like as, to make our appetites more keen
With eager compounds we our palates urge,
As to prevent our maladies unseen
We sicken to shun sickness when we purge;
Even so, being full of your ne'er cloying
sweetness

To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding.
He has learnt better, however, from the experiment; and all
this is over now. Thus Sonnet CX.

These blenches gave my heart another youth
And worse essays proved thee my best of love
{have} Now all is done, save what shall have no end;
Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof to try an older friend --
A god in love, to whom I am confined
Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.
Lastly from this same sweet haven of friendship, he looks
back with disgust on the incidents of that professional
journey, from which he had returned to treat his friend so
ill. Thus in the Sonnet just quoted.

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

dear.

Made old offenses of affections new
Most true it is that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely.

Again in the Sonnet that follows.

O, for my sake do you with fortune chide
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

Here we see the Poet looking back almost with loathing, on the scenes and events of his professional journey -- the travelling from place to place; the repairs and scene-shiftings of provincial theatres, many of them probably fitted up for the occasion; the annoying visits and instructions regarding plays to be acted from pompous country baronets disposed to patronize the players in public or desirous to have private theatricals in their own houses; the bustle of performance before thankless audiences; the roystering suppers in village inns after play was over; the midnight Philnia adventures;⁹ and all the other conceivable incidents in such a Wilhelm Meister's Journey, through the England of 1601. In Shakespeare's Dramas there are various passages that may here help out our conception. Thus in the "Taming of the Shrew."

Lord How now? who is it?

Servant An it please your honour,

Players that offer service to your worship.

Lord Bid them come near.

Enter Players

Now fellows you are welcome

1st Player We thank your honour

Lord Do you intend to stay with me tonight? 1st

Player So, please your Lordship to accept our duty.

Lord With all my heart: This fellow I remember
 Since once he played a farmer's eldest son;
 I' was where you woo'd the gentlewoman so
 well:

 Have I forgot your name; but sure that part
 Was aptly fitted, and naturally performed.

1st Player I think 'twas Soto that your honour means.

Lord 'Tis very true; thou didst it excellent

x x

Go, sirrah, take them to the buttery (to a
servant)

And give them friendly welcome everyone

Let them want nothing that my house affords.

(exeunt Servant and Players)

In the retrospect of such scenes as these, the Poet seems in the Sonnets before us, to have felt a double disgust -- disgust at the business itself, natural in a man of cultured and nice taste; and self disgust, arising from the recollection of the indecent cast with which he had often enjoyed this mode of life, and the companionship which it afforded. Annoyed by such feelings he finds repose in the thought that he, from player as he is, possesses a true

friend, in his intercourse with whom all these fancies concerning station and respectability are abolished. Thus in S^c CXII

Your love and pity doth the impression fill,
Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow;
For what care I, who calls me well or ill,
So you o'ergreen my bad, my good allow?

Such is the story of Paper 7th, so far as we have been able to elicit it, by collating and arranging the allusions which the Paper contains. We would fain however, learn something more, if possible, concerning that professional tour of Shakespeare to which it so explicitly refers.

The journey may have been only into some of the southern counties of England,¹⁰ during the summer vacation; and if so the whole Paper may have been written in 1600-1, and may have closely followed up the Paper that precedes it. But here a consideration presents itself that tempts us decidedly to close with the supposition, which is as likely in itself, that the Paper ought to be dated somewhat later, namely, in 1601-2. This consideration is the possibility of using these last Sonnets of Shakespeare, as evidence in connexion with the question relative to the life of the Poet, that has been started by his biographer Mr. Charles Knight -- "Did he, or did he not visit Scotland?"

That Shakespeare had been at one time in an attorney's office has been argued from the familiarity with the legal terms which he shows in his plays; that he had held and curried ponies might also be argued in a similar manner from his evident skill in describing the horse; that he must have

travelled in Italy is maintained by Mr. Brown on the strength of a great number of references and allusions that occur in some of his plays; and that he visited Scotland could not fail, on much the same grounds, to be asserted by somebody.

The play, of course, from which arguments would most naturally be drawn in favor of this supposition is "Macbeth," written it is believed, about 1603, at the very time when, in consequence of the accession of James VI of Scotland, to the crown of England, there would be a strong popular interest among the English, in Scottish subjects. In this play, it is contended, there is such a strictness and accuracy in the allusions, and especially in the description of local scenery as can have been attained only by personal observation. Thus, although Holinshed, from whose "Chronicles" Shakespeare derived the plot of his play, makes Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches on a laund which is a meadow among trees; the Poet alters the scene to a blasted heath. Now the country round Forres consists of barren moorlands answering the description precisely; and how, it is asked, could Shakespeare have known this? Again, one of the scenes of the play is "Forres -- a room in the palace"; and it does so happen that at Forres there are the remains of a Castle, which, according to tradition, was once a royal residence. How was Shakespeare, at a time when there were no guide books, to know this, except by having seen it? Farther, when Shakespeare transfers the scene to "Macbeth's Castle at Inverness" he gives the scenery a totally new character.

Duncan This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
 Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
 Unto our gentle senses.

Banquo This guest of summer,
 The temple-haunting marlet, doth approve
 By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's
 breath
 Smells wooingly here; no jutty, frieze,
 Buttress nor coign of vantage, but this bird
 Hath made his pendent bed and procreant
 cradle.

 Where they most breed and haunt, I have
 observed

 The air is delicate.

This, it is said, is strictly consonant with the reality;
and how was Shakespeare the Englishman to know that the
scenery round these two remote northern towns Forres and
Inverness was so different as he has correctly represented
it to be? So with a great many other coincidences. In
"Othello" too, the snatch of song, sung by Iago,

 King Stephen was a worthy peer
is a new version of a verse of a very old Scottish ballad
popular to this day

 In days when good king Robert rang
 His trews, they cost him half a crown.
 He thought they were a groat o'er dear
 And ca'd the tailor thief and loon.

Even in the English version, the Scottish pronunciation of
the word "crown is kept so as to make it rhyme to 'loon'" --

also a word specially scotch, and as such put by Shakespeare into the mouth of Macbeth.

The Devil damon thee black, thou cream-faced loon.
And so on, through many similar little curiosities, an argument is educed that Shakespeare must have visited Scotland.

Now all this would be trifling of the feeblest kind, unworthy of anyone who knows what is meant by the word Poet, did there not exist some shadow of positive evidence with a line to connect it. It is an ascertained fact that in the autumn of the year 1601 a company of English players did visit the north of Scotland, after having performed at Edinburgh. In October in that year, as appears from the Council records of Aberdeen, a company of English players came to that town, commended to the magistrates by a special letter from King James, in which they are styled "the King's servants." As this was the first occasion on which the cautious inhabitants of the brave town, had (notwithstanding that they were fonder at that time than the mass of their Presbyterian fellow-countrymen of ungodly pageants and amusements) had the opportunity of witnessing the regular drama -- the English "Play-acters" as they would be called in that part of Scotland, seem to have been particularly well received. They performed several times; were entertained at supper by the magistrates, presented with a gift of 32 merks in money, and, most astonishing of all, one of their number, Laurence Fletcher, who is designated in the Council-books "Comediane to his Majestie" actually had the freedom of the city conferred on him in company with 11

others persons, one of them a French nobleman, and the others Scottish gentlemen of property. This was the highest honor that the town could bestow; and it is still conferred on distinguished strangers, that chance to visit Aberdeen on any occasion of public importance. Lord Brougham received it not many years since.

But this is not all. In May 1603, about 18 months after Laurence Fletcher had been made a burgess of Aberdeen, we find his name mentioned in a license granted to the Company of the Globe Theatre in London, by James I, who had then but newly succeeded to the throne of England. The patent is headed "For Laurence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, Augustus Philips, John Hemings" and other 4 Players that are named. In this Patent, the Company are spoken of as "His Majesty's Servants." Now this title is an innovation. In the reign of Elizabeth, as we learn from various documents, the same Globe Company bore only the title of "Servants to the Right Honourable, the Lord Chamberlain to her Majesty." From this and from other circumstances it is concluded, almost with certainty, that it was the Company of the Globe Theatre, with Fletcher at their head, that visited Aberdeen in 1601. Although of the Players that visited Aberdeen, Fletcher's is the only name preserved to us, it can scarcely be supposed that his companions were any others than his ordinary comrades of the Globe. Authorized by James at Edinburgh in 1601 to bear the name of "King's Servants," under which name they appear in the Aberdeen Council-records, it would be unnecessary to renew this permission in 1603 when James gave

them their London patent. His "Servants" while in Scotland, they would not now be degraded back into the "Servants of his Lord Chamberlain."

Seeing then that almost certainly Shakespeare's company visited Scotland, the only question that remains is, "Was Shakespeare among them?" Certainly the probability in such a case, even as it now stands, would be that he was. The only arguments that we have seen adduced against this probability are these 3 --that he was already a rich enough man; that, if he had been with his company the likelihood is that as a distinguished Poet he would have received the freedom of Aberdeen along with Laurence Fletcher; and that, having such an aversion as one or two of his sonnets show us he had, "to make himself a motley to the view," he was not the man to go on such a strolling excursion, to "star it" among barbarians. These arguments are naught. As to that of his wealth, Fletcher was probably a richer man than Shakespeare, and yet he went; Shakespeare rich as he was, had not yet withdrawn from the company and was not likely therefore to object to do what the rest did; and moreover a journey to Scotland between the theatrical seasons in town, might be pleasant enough to him and his companions, for its own sake. As for the omission to make Shakespeare a burgess of Aberdeen along with Fletcher, if he was really there; this was certainly a grievous piece of neglect now alas! remediless, on the part of the worthy magistrates of the good town; and it may account for the fact that the Poet in all his plays never once takes the slightest notice of civic corporations with whose merits he must have been so well

acquainted; still it is just possible that the claims of the great Dramatist may not have been fairly represented to them, and that, therefore, they selected Fletcher, who was the head of the Company, as the man whom they delighted to honor. Lastly as to Shakespeare's known aversion to

Go here and there

And make himself a motley to the view
what if these very words, instead of precluding the likelihood that Shakespeare visited Scotland, were written subsequently with express reference to such a visit? In short, according to our interpretation, and as we conceive, the only intelligible one, of these last Sonnets of Shakespeare, they inform us that not long before they were written, the Poet was absent from London on a professional tour. Almost certainly these Sonnets were written in 1601-2. But precisely at this time there is a probability, on independent historical evidence, that Shakespeare visited Scotland along with his Company, and acted at Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The coincidence we conceive, is such as to make the case for Shakespeare's visit to the northern parts of our island much stronger than it has been hitherto understood to be. We give up Inverness and Forres. There is no evidence as far as we are aware, that the company that acted at Aberdeen, proceeded so far north as the frontier of the Highlands on which these two towns are situated; nor with the limited conveniences for locomotion then existing in Scotland, could such a journey have been performed within any reasonable space of time, such as our party of English tourists could have afforded. As for the blasted heath at

Forres, the palace there, and the pleasant scenery about Inverness, we shall not draw much on probability, if we suppose Nature to have been so far kind to the poet, as to have carried him towards accuracy in these points, while he but strove for the picturesque. But Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and the intermediate East coast --there is, we would say, as matters stand, a considerable likelihood in their favor. The difficulty of traversing this portion of Scotland would not even in those days, be too great for Shakespeare's leisure; and here it was quite possible to obtain such a general acquaintance with the aspects of Scottish nature, and such a general interest in what was peculiarly Scottish as would have made Shakespeare both ready to undertake the subject of Macbeth, when the occasion for it came, and competent, were any such contingent qualification necessary, to handle it.

The fact of Shakespeare's visit to those parts of Scotland granted, the imagination of a North Briton will easily fill up the picture. How, for instance, standing by some inn-door listening to the jargon of hangers on and stable boys, he would readily pick up the word loon, if, after all, that word be peculiarly Scottish! How, if he heard sung that exquisite old Scottish song of "Tak your auld cloak about ye," he would infallibly be pleased with it, and would certainly carry away in his memory its most striking verse, afterwards to be given to Iago! And how, present at the supper given by the Aberdeen magistrates at the time when his comrade Fletcher was made a burgess, he must have eaten of those veritable crab-claws and

unparalleled smoked fish, that from time immemorial have always constituted part of the supper, and above all the civic suppers, of Bon accord!

If Shakespeare was in this part of the country we may be sure he would make the most of it, and as old Aubrey says, "would gather its humours." In no part of the whole island probably could he have heard so much about witches as in this extreme northern district. The whole country-side would at that time be ringing with the stories of witchcraft connected with the many trials for that offence that had taken place at Aberdeen only 4 years before. No fewer than 21 poor wretches had been executed there on this charge, by horrible deaths; and many more had been banished or otherwise punished. Here, the Poet might hear accounts of the trials of Isobel Oige who "laid a wind by the power of Satan," of Violet Leys who, because her husband had been paid off from his ship, had persecuted the poor ship with bad winds ever since so that sometimes the master and the crew were forced to throw overboard part of the lading to save their lives; of Janet Wishart who prophecied the state of the harvest by feeling the ears of the green growing corn in May; of Marion Grant whom, as she herself confessed, a devil named Christsonday "caused to dance sundry times with him, and with our Lady, a fine woman, clad in a white wyliccoat and sundry others of Christsonday's servants, the Devil playing on his form of instruments very pleasantly unto them," and finally of Andro Man, "a most notorious witch and sorcerer," who received visits from the Queen of Elphen. From these stories Mr. Knight has remarked,

Shakespeare may have derived hints for the conduct of his witches in Macbeth; and certainly it seems as if Shakespeare in fitting his haggard weird-sisters into Macbeth meant thereby to paint a thing as peculiar to Scottish life in his conception of it, as blasted heaths or mountains were to his conception of Scottish nature. The earnest witch scenes of Macbeth embody a peculiarly Scottish form of the belief in the supernatural, that seems hardly to have been known in England before the accession of the Stuarts; and if Shakespeare was in Aberdeen the very seat of Scottish witchcraft, may not this have been one of the humours that he gathered there?

Leaving these uncertain speculations, we return to surer ground. That Shakespeare either in 1600 or 1601, was absent from London on a professional tour, and that it was after his return from this tour that he wrote that last Paper of Sonnets to his friend, the general drift of which we have already explained, may be regarded as established by the Sonnets themselves. Additional particulars may be evolved when we come to annotate the Sonnets individually. Meanwhile let us attend to the fact clearly indicated in more than one of them that Shakespeare had begun to entertain a distaste for the life of a Player. This is indubitable. The expressions to this effect already quoted from Sonnets CX, CXI, and CXII, are very strong; and various sonnets in previous Papers are susceptible of a similar interpretation.

Shakespeare, then, is tired of the stage; chides with Fortune for not providing better for his life; feels keenly

of the late innovation.

Hamlet Do they hold the same estimation they did, when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

Rosen No indeed, they are not.

Hamlet How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

Rosen Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace; but, there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't; these are now the fashion and so berate the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing rapiers, are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

Hamlet What, are they children? Who maintains them? How are they escoted (paid)? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players (as is like most of their means are no better) their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?

Rosen Faith, there has been much to do, on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was, for a while, no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player

went to cuffs on the question.

Hamlet Is't possible?

Guildestern O, there has been much throwing about
of brains.

Hamlet Do the boys carry it away?

Rosen Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and
his load too.

Hamlet It is not strange, for mine Uncle is
king of Denmark, and those that would
make mouths at him while my father lived
give twenty, forty, an hundred ducats
apiece, for his picture in little.
There is something in this more than
natural, if philosophy could find it
out.

But here we must close. The Sonnets carry us no farther than 1601-2; and about two years afterwards Shakespeare retired to Stratford. We learn nothing more of the romantic friendship celebrated in these Sonnets, and to which they owe their origin. After the little period during which Shakespeare's life is made somewhat luminous by the autobiographic poems, it buries itself in the woods of Warwickshire. Seeing, however, that the poems close at a point where the friendship is asserting its increased strength, and its resolution to last forever, we may well suppose that this friend of Shakespeare, whoever he was, remained dear to the Poet during his whole life, and that, until the death of the one or the other, the correspondence between them did not cease. If that friend continued to

reside in town, the Poet would, we may be sure, when any chance brought him thither also, renew the personal interviews, which we have ventured to picture. One of those visits of the Poet to town must have taken place in 1609, in which year it is known he was residing in the Liberty of the Chick in Southwark. Curiously enough this is the year in which the Sonnets were published. Six years afterwards Shakespeare died at Stratford.

Marginal Notations

¹possibly the miniature see p. 101 {of m.s.; see p. 162
of this text}

²nothing of this in sonnet

³tried?

⁴?

⁵thee array

⁶ ^ tongues

⁷other poets

⁸or "though my absenting myself seemed as if my
affections
were modified"

⁹no female actors

¹⁰mountains CXIII

Part II
The Sonnets Elucidated

Dedication
of the original Edition, published in 1609

To the
Only Begetter of These Ensuing Sonnets,
Mr. W. H.
All Happiness And That Eternity Promised By Our Ever-living
Poet,
Wisheth The Well-wishing Adventurer in setting forth.

T. T.

First Paper

being

An epistle of divers Sonnets to a young friend. Our opinion, as stated in the Introduction, is that the first 26 Sonnets of the original collection were sent by Shakespeare to his friend all together, and contained, probably, in the same manuscript; and that from this manuscript they were ultimately copied by the Editor.

The 26 were not written continuously. Seventeen of them were first written down at different times, although with a common tenor; the other 9 were afterwards added. It is probable, however, that Shakespeare at first intended to send the 17 alone. The manner in which these 17 Sonnets were produced seems to have been this: Desirous to see his young friend married, but perceiving no sign of any such intention on his part, he thinks of addressing him on the subject through the form of a few poetical conceits, in which, without seeming to be very serious, he may yet say what he means. Accordingly, one day, he writes a little trifle in the Sonnet-stanza, teaching his friend very prettily that it is his duty to marry. His fancy once stirred on the topic, he returns to it again and again, each time with a new expression; till at last 17 Sonnet-stanzas are written all persuading to marriage. These, therefore, intending to present them to the youth, he entitles in his own mind "Sonnets to my friend, advising him to wed."

Although entitled "Sonnets" because consisting of 14 lines, each, these little pieces are not properly sonnets; that is, they are not after the Italian model. In several

cases one or two of them, seem not only to have been written together, but also to have been intended to be read together. Thus, as has just been said, the first 3 appear to form a little poem, in the sonnet-stanza. As such, accordingly, we shall print them; retaining, however, as, for the convenience of reference, we shall do throughout, the numbers attached to them as separate sonnets, in the original Edition. The headings in this case, as in all that follow, is an addition of our own to assist the reader.

Sonnets I-III

That Beauty should increase.

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decrease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial
fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,

And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,
Will be at¹ tattered weed, of small worth held:
Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days;
To say, within thine own deep sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame, and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's use,
If thou couldst answer - "This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse - "
Proving his beauty by succession thine.
This were to be new-made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form another;
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother,
For where is she so fair, whose uneared womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond, will be the tomb
Of his self-love, to stop posterity?
Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime:
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
But if thou live remember'd not to be,
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

This piece having been written, but Shakespeare's fancy still running on the topic, he recurs to it a little after, and pens the following, written, apparently, also as a small continuous poem.

Sonnets IV-VII.

That Beauty should increase, argued again.

Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,
And being frank, she lends to those are free.
Then, beauteous niggard, why doth thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?
For having traffick with thyself alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive.
Then how, when nature calls thee to be gone,
What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
Thy unus'd beauty must be tomb'd with thee,
Which, us'd, lives thy executor to be.

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,
Will play the tyrants to the very same,
And that unfair which fairly doth excell;
For never resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter, and confounds him there;
Sap check'd with frost, and lusty leaves quite

gone,
Beauty o'ersnowed, and bareness every where:
Then, were not summer's distillation left,
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was.
But flowers distill'd, though they with winter
meet, Leese but their show; their substance still
lives sweet.²

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
In thee thy summer, ere thou be distill'd:
Make sweet some phial; treasure thou some place
With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-kill'd.
That use is not forbidden usury,
Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
That's for thyself to breed another thee,
Or ten times happier, be it ten for one;
Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
If ten of thine ten times refigur'd thee:
Then, what could death do if thou should'st
depart,

{thee} Leaving the living in posterity?
Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair
To be death's conquest, and make worms thine heir.

Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Doth homage to his new appearing sight,

Serving with looks his sacred majesty;
And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
Attending on his golden pilgrimage;
But when from high-most pitch, with weary car,
Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,
The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are
From his low tract, and look another way:
So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,
Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son.

Even yet the topic does not quit Shakespeare's mind; and
hence the following.

Sonnets VIII and IX.

To my friend, listening to music, that he ought to marry.

Musick to hear, why hear'st thou musick sadly;
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not
gladly?
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
By unions married, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou should'st bear.
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire and child and happy mother,

Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee, "Thou single wilt prove none."

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye,
That thou consum'st thyself in single life?
Ah! if thou issueless shalt hap to die,
The world will wail thee, like a makeless wife;
The world will be thy widow, and still weep,
That thou no form of thee hast left behind,
When every private widow well may keep,
By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind.
Look, what an unthrift in the world doth spend,
Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys
it;

But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,
And kept unus'd, the user so destroys it.
No love toward others in that bosom sits,
That on himself such murderous shame commits.

After this there is a pause; but soon the Poet returns to
the subject.

Sonnets X and XI.

To my friend, that he wrongeth Nature.

For shame! deny that thou bear'st love to any,
Who for thyself art so unprovident.
Grant if thou wilt, thou art belov'd of many,
But that thou none lov'st, is most evident;

For thou art so possess'd with murderous hate,
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate,
Which to repair should be thy chief desire.
O change thy thought that I may change my mind!
Shall hate be fairer lodg'd than gentle love?
Be as thy presence is, gracious and kind,
Or to thyself, at least, kind-hearted prove;
Make thee another self, for love of me,
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
In one of thine, from that which thou departest;
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st,
Thou may'st call thine, when thou from youth
convertest.

Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase;
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay:
If all were minded so, the times should cease,
And threescore years would make the world away.
Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:
Look whom she best endow'd, she gave thee more;
{the} Which bounteous gift thou should'st in bounty
cherish;
She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby,
Thou should'st print more, nor let that copy die.

Even yet the subject is not exhausted; and hence, at

intervals these stanzas.

Sonnet XII.

To my friend, that as all things else, he decayeth.

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls, all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst time's scythe can make
defence,
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

Sonnet XIII.

To my friend, how he may be immortal.

O, that you were yourself! but, love, you are
No longer yours, than you yourself here live;
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance, to some other give.
So should that beauty which you hold in lease

Find no determination: then you were
Yourself again, after yourself's decease,
When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.
Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honour might uphold
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day,
And barren rage of death's eternal cold?
O! none but unthrifths: Dear my love, you know
You had a father; let your son say so.

Sonnet XIV

To my friend, a prophecy of him.

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck;
And yet methinks I have astronomy,
But not to tell of good, or evil luck,
Of plagues, of dearths, or season's quality:
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,
Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind,
Or say, with princes if it shall go well,
By oft predict that I in heaven find:
But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,
And (constant stars) in them I read such art
As truth and beauty shall together thrive,
If from thyself to store thou would'st convert:
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

At length, closing the subject, as if with a consciousness

that he had pursued it long enough, Shakespeare writes the following, in which, as it were, he sums up and reiterates the whole of the foregoing.

Sonnets XV-XVII.

To my friend, that he must assist me to immortalise himself.

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows,
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheer'd and check'd ever by the self same sky;
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful time debateth with decay,
To change your day of youth to sullied night;
And all in war with time, for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

But wherefore do not you a mightier way
Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time?
And fortify yourself in your decay
With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?
Now stand you on the top of happy hours;
And many maiden gardens, yet unset,
With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,
Much liker than your painted counterfeit:

So should the lines of life that life repair,
Which this, Time's pencil, or my pupil pen,
Neither in inward worth, nor outward fair,
Can make you live yourself in eyes of men.
To give away yourself, keeps yourself still;
And you must live, drawn by your own sweet skill.

Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?
Though yet heaven knows it is but as a tomb
Which hides your life, and shows not half your
parts. If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
And in fresh numbers, number all your graces,
The age to come would say, this poet lies,
Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces.
So should my papers, yellow'd with their age,
Be scorn'd, like old men of less truth than
tongue; And your true rights be term'd a poet's
rage,
And stretched metre of an antique song:
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice; in it, and in my rhyme.

Here ends the series of marriage urging Sonnets; and now, probably, according to Shakespeare's first intention, the Paper should have been dispatched. Retaining it, however, a little longer, the mood again comes upon him; and chancing, we will suppose, to read the piece last written, he prolongs the idea of that piece as follows:

Sonnet XVIII.

To my friend, that I immortalise him.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest;
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet XIX.

That I make my friend immortal.

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-liv'd phoenix in her blood;
Make glad and sorry seasons, as thou fleets,
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
To the wide world, and all her fading sweets;
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:

O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
Him in thy course untainted do allow,
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
Yet do thy worst, old time: despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

Here again, the idea is, for the time, exhausted; and when Shakespeare resumes the pen, it is simply to express generally his affection for his friend.

Sonnet XX.

To my friend, that he is beautiful.

A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in
rolling, Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes, and women's souls
amazeth. And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till nature as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
{women's} But since she prick'd thee out for woman's
pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their
treasure.

Sonnet XXI

To my friend, that I flatter him not.

So is it not with me as with that muse,
Stirr'd by a painted beauty to his verse;
Who heaven itself for ornament doth use,
And every fair with his fair doth rehearse;
Making a compliment of proud compare,
With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
With April's first-born flowers, and all things
rare, That heaven's air in his huge rondure hems.
O let me, true in love, but truly write,
And then believe me, my love is as fair
As any mother's child, though not so bright
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air:
Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
I will not praise, that purpose not to sell.

Sonnet XXII

To my friend, that my life is bound up in his.

My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date;
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate.
For all that beauty that doth cover thee,
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me;

How can I then be elder than thou art?
O, therefore, love, be of thyself so wary,
As I not for myself but for thee will;
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary,
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.
Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain;
Thou gav'st me thine, not to give back again.

Sonnet XXIII

To my friend, that my silence shows not diminished love.

As an unperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharged with burthen of mine own love's might.
O let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,
More than that tongue that more hath more
express'd;
O learn to read what silent love hath writ:
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

Sonnet XXIV

To my friend, how I paint his image within me.

Mine eye hath play'd the painter, and hath stell'd
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is best painter's art.
For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictur'd lies,
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.
Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done;
Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
Are windows to my breast, where-through the sun
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee;
Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art,
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

[The conceit of this sonnet is somewhat obscure. The meaning seems to be as follows: My eye, receiving your image, paints a likeness of you within me. To this likeness my body is as a frame; and I have managed the perspective like a good painter. For, if you wish to look at this likeness of yourself within me, you must first look through me, the painter, in order to see it. As a picture hangs up in a shop; so your likeness hangs up in my bosom, your eyes looking like windows in its wall. See what good turn eyes have done for eyes. My eyes have drawn thy shape within me; and then those eyes of yours which are part of that internal painting serve as windows through which the sun penetrates into the chamber of my heart. Yet etc -- If this is the

conceit of the Sonnet, one is obliged to confess that it is somewhat heavy. In Shakespeare, however, there are many instances of this resolute and minute investigation of a physical comparison for its own sake.]

Sonnet XXV

To my friend, that his love is my happiness.

Let those who are in favour with their stars,
Of public honour, and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlook'd for joy in that I honour most.
Great princes' favourites their fair leaves
spread,

But as the marigold at the sun's eye;
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foil'd,
Is from the book of honour razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd:
Then happy I, that love and am belov'd,
Where I may not remove, nor be remov'd.

This is the last of the First Paper of Sonnets, written evidently with a freer hand than many of the preceding, probably because Shakespeare instead of merely working out a conception with the cold fancy as in the last Sonnet, was here assisted by one of his habitual personal emotions. "I whom Fortune of such triumph bars," -- here there rushes

before Shakespeare his own personal and worldly condition;
in a moment his blood warms; and his language comes fast and
great. "But as the marigold at the sun's eye" --what scorn
there! "The painful warrior famoused for fight," what
strength and verve!

This Sonnet written, Shakespeare resolves to dispatch
the Paper to his friend. Accordingly, folding it up, he
addresses it to him, endorsing it with the following envoy.

Sonnet XXVI

To my friend, with a paper of verses.

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage,
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassy,
To witness duty, not to show my wit.
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it;
But that I hope some good conceit of thine
In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it:
{my} Till whatsoever star that guides by moving,
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
And puts apparel on my tatter'd loving,
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:
Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove
me.

Marginal Notations

²X {a totter'd}

²X

Second Paper

being

A copy, for the Poet's friend, of some Sonnets written under
great depression.

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We take the liberty of prefixing the above title to the Sonnets from XXVII to XXXII inclusive, as marked in the original Edition; referring the reader to the Introduction for our Justification in doing so. What period may have elapsed between the composition of the Sonnets of the First Paper, and the composition of these, it is impossible precisely to determine. Evidently, however, some great change has in the meantime come over the Poet's feelings. In the Sonnets of the First Paper we have exquisite performances of the fancy; the great intellect of the Poet ruling even amidst the pretty imagery which he seeks for his simple purpose, and the language pervaded throughout with a certain soft and gentle spirit of affection. In the Sonnets which follow, on the other hand, there is still the intellect and affection; but there is no longer the effort - the air of mere literary performance, with the intention to please a friend. Depressed, solitary, overpowered with melancholy, the poet pours what he feels for his own relief; and hence the tone is deeper, truer; the language keener and more molten in its flow. If anything that Shakespeare ever wrote is autobiographic, these Sonnets are. They admit us to his heart in those moments when, his Falstaffs, his Lears, and his Othellos all laid aside, he sat alone and mused about himself. No sentimentalist, Shakespeare,

tearful with pale cheek like Tibullus; no Byron, even, cursing his stars; but a strong, firmly-treading, clear, and genial man, to whom all life from the tavern-supper to the court-ceremony was good and welcome as it came! Yet he, too, had his moody hours; and that nameless something, unknown to wits, which constitutes heart-melancholy, self-disgust, spiritual weariness, power of tears, was familiar and ordinary in his princely nature.

I like an owl in desert am
That nightly there doth moan;
I also like a sparrow am
On the house-tops alone.

So, ages ago, said the ruddy King who slew the giant Goliath; and no weakling was he.

O thou pale moon that silent shines
While care-untroubled mortals sleep
Thou seest a wretch who inly pines
And wanders forth to wail and weep.

Thus, also, could speak of himself the manliest Scottish soul that has yet been born. Let us not, therefore, in our zeal for the clear and calm as characteristic of Shakespeare, and our natural horror of aught that could suggest his portrait in a Byronic shirt collar, err on the other side by making him a robust man of business, or even a self-sculptured impassive Goethe. No, Shakespeare could feel, could sorrow, could shut himself up from the sight of men, and literally and really weep. To us it even appears that a certain womanliness in this respect, a certain Hamlet-like disposition to converse with himself sadly when

alone on the mysteries of life, death, and suffering, were as characteristic of him, as his intellectual clearness in facing the world, and his rich and humorous benevolence for everything that breathes. Seeing then that it is precisely this aspect of Shakespeare, the aspect of him as a soliloquist and thoughtful man, that his Sonnets if they are calculated to reveal to us anything at all concerning him, must specially bring out; we ought not to come to the reading of these Sonnets too strongly prepossessed with those ideas regarding his personal character which his dramas necessarily give. We ought rather first to obtain from the Sonnets some idea of Shakespeare as a man, and then carry this idea forth into the interpretation of his genius as a dramatist. Marking in his dramas, on the other hand, those parts where the peculiar and personal habits of feeling that are shown in the Sonnets, reappear and exert themselves, and on the other, those parts where this is not the case, we shall receive not only the fullest possible idea regarding Shakespeare, but also an illustration in the noblest instance that could be chosen for such a purpose, of the manner in which the heart rules in the work of poetic creation.

Out of what circumstances in Shakespeare's life the feelings arose which have been brought to us embalmed in these 6 sweet Sonnets, it is impossible to say; in all of them, however, we discern a melancholy produced by some external worldly cause, yet expressed, as the custom is, at the shrine of an inward and constant sentiment. For solace, for refuge from the ephemeral miseries of his lot,

Shakespeare comes home to the thought of his sacred and undying friendship. Thus:

Sonnets XXVII and XXVIII.

To my friend, absent, that I always think of him.

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tir'd;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expir'd;
For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

How can I then return in happy plight,
That am debarr'd the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eas'd by night,
But day by night and night by day oppress'd?
And each, though enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil, still farther off from thee.
I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright,

And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven:
So flatter I the swart-complexioned night;
When sparkling stars twire¹ not, thou gild'st the
even.

But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer
And night doth nightly make grief's length seem
stronger.

From the language one would infer that this was written on a journey. The melancholy is rather latent in the tone than actually expressed in the words. In the two pieces which follow however, grief is more manifest; and they are particularly interesting as explicit declarations from Shakespeare himself that gloomy thoughts were frequent with him. The first expresses his despondency regarding his personal situation and prospects; the second his disposition to painful recollections of the past.

Sonnet XXIX

To my friend, that he heals my despair.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends
possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,

Haply I think on thee, -- and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising,
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered, such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

[What a remarkable Sonnet this! Shakespeare "beweeping his outcast state" "looking on himself and cursing his fate" desiring one man's "features" enjoying another's "art." Compare this with Rosalind's address to the melancholy Jaques: "Disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola."]

Sonnets XXX and XXXI

To my friend, that he makes up for all I have lost.

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless
night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er,
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,

Which I new pay as if not paid before.

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,
Which I by lacking have supposed dead;
And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,
And all those friends which I thought buried.
How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
As interest of the dead, which now appear
But things remov'd, that hidden in thee lie!
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone,
Who all their parts of me to thee did give;
That due of many now is thine alone:
Their images I lov'd I view in thee,
And thou, (all they) hast all the all of me.

[This is a precious little piece. Shakespeare, then, summoning to the sessions of sweet silent thought the remembrance of things past; sighing, on such occasions, the lack of many a thing he had sought, and wailing, with old griefs, his dear time's waste. --Shakespeare could drown an eye, unused to flow, with tears for dear friends, and weep afresh the long cancelled woe of early love. They are literal words, these, to be understood literally. Compare them with the words written by another great poet calling up in his old age the wavering images that were known to his

youth, and that still came and went before the troubled gaze of his fancy. "Ye bring with you" says Goethe in the Dedication to his Faust, addressing these phantom-forms of the memory.

Ye bring with you the shapes of days of glory,
And many a dear old shadow rises grey;
Like to an ancient half-forgotten story,
Comes forth first love and with it friendships
gay;

And grief grows new, and that complaint so heavy
Of Life's confused and labyrinthine way;
And names of kindly ones I hear repeated,
All early-vanished, of their fair hours cheated.

They do not listen to my present singing,
The souls to whom I sang my maiden song;
Dispersed now the crowd so friendly clinging,
Silent alas! the echo heard so long.
My sorrows to the ears of strangers bringing,
Their very praise but does my heart a wrong;
And those who once delighted in my ditties
Are dead, or scattered through the wide world's
cities.

Memories here, sad in the mind of the stately German
Poet, of pleasant old Frankfort and the family circle; of
Gretchen the lost one, of sunny Alsace, of the forsaken
Rica, of Herder and the noble cluster of kindred souls that
entered manhood together! Dead these; all dead, or

scattered through the wild world's cities! And he lives on solitary and single, an old man in a new generation, a singer of applauded songs. So too, although the scale is smaller, with our Shakespeare. To him, the resident in London, are these not old memories also -- memories of native Stratford, of the crystal Avon, of wooded Warwickshire, of rural maidens, of days of mirth, of early friends? Dead or left behind, all these, some of whom, perhaps, delighted once in our Poet's ditties! And he lives on, a stranger amid new scenes and grown men. He is an applauded singer too; nay, if he knew it, a man of all time; yet this consoles him not, and often he recurs to those dear old days of his youth. Of nameless dead ones buried in Warwickshire church-yards; of mean villagers whose honest faces he knew; of manly companions now scattered through England; of favorite fair-lipped maidens now married and mothers -- the player Shakespeare thinks. It is all sad! One only thought there is that restores him and makes him cheerful -- that of his new friendship; a strong present feeling in which the past is merged and forgotten.]

And now, this second little paper of Sonnets is finished; and Shakespeare adds an envoy.

Sonnet XXXII

To my friend, that he would remember me after I am dead.

If thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall
cover,
And shalt by fortune once more resurvey,

These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,
Compare them with the bettering of the time;
And though they be outstripp'd by every pen,
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men.

O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought!
Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age,
A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
To march in ranks of better equipage:
But since he died, and poets better prove,
Theirs for their style I'll read, his, for his
love.

Marginal Notation

²gleam at intervals (Gifford)

Intercalated Paper

being

A collection of divers Sonnets, written, some of them, to,
and others concerning, the poet's mistress.

About the time that Shakespeare was writing the foregoing Sonnets to his young friend, he was also writing Sonnets to another personage -- a woman with whom he was in love. Although married, and 35 years of age, and of a character certainly as upright and conscientious as any of his contemporaries, the Player, exposed by his very profession to influences which might lead to evil, set loose as it were, by the common understanding of Society, from restraints which often men were expected to observe; and, moreover, living, it is probable, without any of his family in town with him -- did not escape morally unscathed. It is best for those who revere Shakespeare, and are anxious to see his fame as the greatest of our species grow and spread, fearlessly, as Ulrici has done, to admit this fact -- a fact, indeed, which cannot be gainsaid, without violence to historical evidence. And if other great and good men of that class to which Shakespeare belongs -- Dante, Burns, Goethe -- have so sinned; why not Shakespeare? Let there be no congratulation over this; it is a fact of the deepest seriousness, not to be discussed with satisfaction and purity of wit over the wine-cups, but to be thought of solemnly when human nature is contemplated. That this pure and noble spirit, large even to the dimensions of a God, should have been so clogged and drawn down by its grosser

part, like a pinioned eagle; nay that, in the mystic connexion of things, its errors and vices should have been a necessary part of its training for a higher life and a more exalted function, is a question not of comparison between man and man, but of the relation which Man holds to the Power which made him. One thing, however, it is well to observe --Shakespeare's manner of sin; his deliberate and secret thoughts regarding his own vices. This is the important point. A man's conduct is but what he is himself, weak or strong, pure or bad; a man's calm and private conversation with himself in thoughtful moments regarding his conduct, is to be received, if it can be overheard, as an utterance of absolute truth made through him to mankind. Nor, in our fancy, can there be a more triumphant corroboration of all that the simplest and keenest moral sense has ever taught to man, than is afforded by this series of Sonnets by our great Poet, relating to a questionable topic. Let them be read fairly, and attentively. We have here the humour, the wit, the gaiety of the merry hour, when Shakespeare, like Beaumont and Fletcher around him, was a man of his time; but we have here also the afterthought, the pain, the remorse, when Shakespeare carried clear out of the crowd by his pure immortal sense of right, shook off the clinging shame, and faced with contrite gaze the great whiteness of Nature. So far then from being injurious either to Shakespeare or to the simple law of right and wrong which good souls acknowledge, the impression of these Sonnets as a whole, should be to increase our love for the one, and our respect

for the other.

Hitherto, we have arranged the Sonnets precisely in the order in which they are printed in the common editions. It is necessary, however, now to deviate from that order. Sonnets from CXXVII to CLIV inclusive, we have remarked in the Introduction are to be regarded as {a} series of miscellaneous Sonnets written by the Poet to his mistress, about the very time at which those that compose the two first Papers were written to his friend; and which, when, some 9 or 10 years afterwards, the whole of the Sonnets addressed to this friend were given to the world, were appended to them by the Editor, without note or comment, as part of the general collection. Now if there were no other connexion between those Sonnets addressed to the Poet's mistress, and the earlier Sonnets addressed to his friend, than that of contemporaneousness, the former might very well retain this place at the head of the collection. In this case the plan would be to print the first 126 of the collection as "Sonnets addressed by the poet to his friend" and the last 28 as "additional Sonnets to and concerning the poet's mistress." But seeing that, as has been pointed out in the Introduction, there is a more important connexion between the two sets of Sonnets, seeing that they were not only written about the same time but contain reference to each other and form portions of the same history, another arrangement must be resorted to. Instead of allowing the Sonnets written to and concerning the Poet's mistress to lie over to the end there to be printed as "additional Sonnets" we shall produce them at this point, where most suitably of

all, they will assist in the evolution of the story. Hence the title of "Intercalated Paper" which we have prefixed to this part of the volume.

Farther; the Editor of the original Edition, whoever he was, seems, after printing continuously the one set of Sonnets -- those addressed to the supposed Mr. W. H., to have added the others in a mass, without any attempt to put them in order. It is quite intelligible for instance, that, while the one series, as being supplied by Mr. W. H. himself, might come to the printer's hands arranged in their natural order, the other series, procured circuitously and in morsels, might have no such advantage. This, indeed, is proved by the appearance of the last 28 Sonnets as they stand printed in the common editions. One Sonnet is gay and playful in its tone; the next is bitter and resolute. Nor is this the result of mere natural variation of mood from day to day. Facts are alluded to in some of the bitter sonnets which render it impossible that the gay sonnets which follow them, could, if they were written to, or concerning the same person, have been written after them. For these reasons we shall, in the case of this "Intercalated Paper" (and in this case only) deviate from the printed order of former editions, and arrange them on what, supposing that they were addressed to the same person* we conceive to be their historical principle. The first few Sonnets of the series represent our Poet as a happy, pleased, even playful lover. Thus:

We can conceive that exception might be taken to this supposition. Sonnets CXLV, CLIII, CLIV, etc might be considered, not without plausibility, as casual Sonnets of the author that had crept into the collection. Even if this were the case, however, the amount of error committed by retaining them, along with the others would be small; for as being general sonnets of playful gallantry, they would even in this case, come in very appropriately to represent the poet's manner in the initial and smooth stage of the little drama of error, with which we are now concerned.

Sonnet CXXVII.

Of my mistress, that she is black-eyed.

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:
For since each hand hath put on nature's power,
Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem
At such, who not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says, beauty should look so.

Sonnet CXXVIII.

To my mistress, playing music.

How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st,
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks, that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest
reap,

At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
To be so tickled, they would change their state.
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more bless'd than living lips.
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

Sonnet CXXX.

To my mistress, that there are fairer things than she.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, -- yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go, --
My mistress when she walks, treads on the ground;
And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,
As any she bely'd with false compare.

Sonnet CLIII.

A conceit of my mistress.

Cupid laid by his brand, and fell asleep:
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground;
Which borrowed from this holy fire of love
A dateless lively heat, still to endure;
And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.
But at my mistress' eye love's brand new-fired,
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast;
I sick withal, the help of bath desir'd,
And thither hied, a sad distempered guest,
But found no cure; the bath for my help lies
Where Cupid got new fire: my mistress' eyes.

Sonnet CLIV.

The same.

The little love-god lying once asleep,
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep,
Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand
The fairest votary took up that fire
Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd;
And so the general of hot desire
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
Which from love's fire took heat perpetual,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy
For men diseases'd; but I, my mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure, and this by that I prove,
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

Sonnet CXLV.²

A pretty saying of my mistress.

Those lips that Love's own hand did make,
Breath'd forth the sound that said, I hate
To me that languish'd for her sake;
But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue, that ever sweet
Was us'd in giving gentle doom;
And taught it thus anew to greet:
I hate she alter'd with an end,
That follow'd it as gentle day
Doth follow night, who like a fiend

From heaven to hell is flown away.
I hate from hate away she threw,
And sav'd my life, saying -- not you.

After these we shall place the three celebrated punning
Sonnets; the first of which seems to defy very precise
interpretation.

Sonnet CXXXV.²

The Poet, Will, to his mistress.

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy will,
And will to boot, and will in overplus;
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
Shall will in others seem right gracious,
And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou, being rich in will, add to thy will
One will of mine, to make thy large will more.
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one, and me in that one Will.

Sonnet CXXXVI

To my mistress, that she would have her Will.

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,

Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy Will,
And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there;
Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfill.
Will will fulfill the treasure of thy love,
{with} Ay, fill it full of wills, and my will one,
In things of great receipt with ease we
prove; Among a number one is reckon'd none.
Then in the number let me pass untold,
Though in thy stores' account I one must be;
For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
That nothing me, a something sweet to thee:
Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
And then thou lov'st me, -- for my name is Will.

Sonnet CXLIII.

The Poet Will in pursuit of his mistress.

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feather'd creatures broke away,
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift dispatch
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay;
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent
To follow that which flies before her face,
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent;
So run'st thou after that which flies from thee,
Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind;
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind:

So will I pray thou may'st have thy Will,
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still.

As yet there have been no indications of the nature of the Poet's love, or of the character of her who is the object of it. Such however, now come; and the tone of the poet's language becomes more serious.

Sonnet CXXXI

To my cruel mistress that the world denies her beauty.

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan:
To say they err, I dare not be so bold,
Although I swear it to myself alone.
And, to be sure that is not false I swear,
A thousand groans, but thinking on thy face,
One on another's neck, do witness bear,
Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
In nothing art thou black, save in thy deeds,
And thence this slander, as I think proceeds.

Sonnet CXXXII

To my mistress that she would pity me.

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,

Knowing thy heart, torment me with disdain;
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.
And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even,
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part.
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

In these two Sonnets we have those particulars alleged respecting the poet's mistress to which reference has been made in the Introduction; namely, that she was dark-complexioned, black-eyed, and not reputed beautiful. Regarding her conduct -- now the poet discovered her unfaithfulness, and with what mingled feelings of anger, grief, and self-contempt, the discovery filled him, -- we have soon a harsh revelation. At first all is vague and general -- a confession that the poet knows his mistress to be false, to be even scandalously unworthy; and that yet, meanly he clings to her.

Sonnet CXXXVII

The poet of his false mistress.

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine

eyes, That they behold, and see not what they see?
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is, take the worst to be.
If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,
Be anchor'd in the bay where all men ride,
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
Whereto the judgment of my heart is ty'd?
Why should my heart think that a several plot
Which my heart knows the wide world's common
place?

Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?
In things right true my heart and eyes have err'd,
And to this false plague are they now transferr'd.

This Sonnet strong and decided, as if written in a moment of special self-disgust is followed by others in which the poet seems again to relent.

Sonnet CXXXVIII.

Of my mistress and me, that we cheat each other.

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies;
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtilties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.

But wherefore says she not, she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I, that I am old?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told:
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

[How curious and yet how natural the trait of his love here revealed! Shakespeare pretending to believe his love while she protests her faithfulness, in order that by this seeming trustfulness, he may appear still young and innocent in her eyes! Each knows that the other is cheating; yet they keep up the deception. "O love's best habit is in seeming trust" -- a saying of much meaning! This Sonnet is one of the two printed by Jaggard in 1599; in his edition, supposed to be pirated, of the little collection of Shakespeare's pieces entitled "The Passionate Pilgrim." As Jaggard's copy of the Sonnet differs somewhat from the above, we subjoin it, that the reader may compare the two.

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
Unskilful in the world's false forgeries.
Thus vainly thinking, that she thinks me young,
Although I know my years be past the best,
I, smiling credit her false-speaking tongue
Outfacing fault in love with love's ill-rest.
But wherefore says my love that she is young?
And wherefore say not I, that I am old?

O! love's best habit is a soothing tongue
And age in love, loves not to have years told,
Therefore I'll lie with love, and love with me,
Since that our faults in love thus smothered be.

How the variations between the two versions originated, -- whether from the pen of Shakespeare in the interval between 1599 and 1609, or from Jaggard's carelessness at first in accepting a copy that was not authentic -- it is impossible to determine; but probably the latter is the true supposition.]

Sonnet CXXXIX

To my mistress, bestowing her glances upon others.

O, call not me to justify the wrong,
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;
Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue;
Use power with power, and slay me not by art.
Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight,
Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside.
What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy
might

Is more than my o'erpress'd defence can 'bide?
Let me excuse thee; ah! my love well knows
Her pretty looks have been my enemies;
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries:
Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,
Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.

How interesting the picture here suggested! Shakespeare in the company of his love, watching her, receiving no glance, seeing her cunningly looking any way but towards him, becoming irritated and jealous.

Sonnet CXL

To my mistress, that she ought at least to pretend to love me.

Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press
My tongue-ty'd patience with too much disdain;
Lest sorrow lend me words, and words express
The manner of my pity-wanting pain.
If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
Though not to love, yet, love, to tell me so;
(As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,
No news but health from their physicians know;)
For, if I should despair, I should grow mad,
And in my madness might speak ill of thee:
Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be.
That I may not be so, nor thou bely'd,
Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart
go wide.

Vain are these solicitations; the fair one is obdurate. Shakespeare becomes flippant, careless, thinks himself a fool; reproaches himself with meanness for continuing to love such a person -- one whom he knows to be neither

beautiful nor good.

Sonnet CXLI

To my mistress that I am infatuated in loving her.

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note;
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
Who in despite of view is pleas'd to dote
Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune
delighted;
Nor tender feeling, to base touches prone,
Nor taste nor smell, desire to be invited
To any sensual feast with thee alone:
But my five wits, nor my five senses can
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
Who leaves unsway'd the likeness of a man,
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be:
Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
That she that makes me sin, awards me pain.

Still she is sullen; nay even takes refuge in virtue,
conceals her growing coldness towards the poet under the
general pretext of respect for moral obligation; bids him
reflect, apparently that he is a married man. To this
insinuation either verbally made or implied by her behavior,
Shakespeare replies.

Sonnet CXLII

To my mistress, who rebukes me as sinful.

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, groundd on sinful loving;
O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
Or if it do, not from those lips of thine,
That have profan'd their scarlet ornaments,
And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine;
Robb'd others' beds revenues of their rents.
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee:
Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows,
Thy pity may deserve to pity'd be:
If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
By self-example may'st thou be deny'd.

Even yet there is no relenting on her part; and Shakespeare recurs to the feeling of his own abjectness and infatuation in persevering in such a suit.

Sonnet CXLVIII

On my blindness that I do love against judgment.

O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight?
Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
That censures falsely what they see aright?
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
What means the world to say it is not so?
If it be not, then love doth well denote
Love's eye is not so true as all men's no,

How can it? O how can Love's eye be true,
That is so vex'd with watching and with tears?
No marvel then though I mistake my view;
The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears.
O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.

Now, apparently, there is a slight symptom of change on her part. She says he does not love her; she is sure he does not, notwithstanding all he says. Treacherous assertion made for want of anything else to say, and to which the provoked lover replies with some heat!:

Sonnet CXLIX

To my mistress saying I do not love her.

Canst thou O cruel! say I love thee not,
When I, against myself, with thee partake?³
Do I not think on thee, when I forgot
Am of myself, all tyrant, for thy sake?
Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?
Nay if thou low'rst on me, do I not spend
Revenge upon myself with present moan?
What merit do I in myself respect,
That is so proud thy service to despise,
When all my best doth worship thy defect,
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?
But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind;
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.

All arguments are at length exhausted; the traitress remains cold; and Shakespeare again curses his weakness.

Sonnet CL

To my mistress, that even in her badness there is a spell.

O, from what power hast thou this powerful might,
With insufficiency my heart to sway?
To make me give the lie to my true sight,
And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds,
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
That in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
O, though I love what others do abhor,
With others thou should'st not abhor my state;
If thy unworthiness rais'd love in me,
More worthy I to be belov'd of thee.

Here, it would seem the old plea of conscience is revived against him; and Shakespeare already reckless, for the moment becomes coarse.

Sonnet CLI

To my mistress, reproaching me of sin.

Love is too young to know what conscience is;
Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love?

Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove.
For thou betraying me, I do betray
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
My soul doth tell my body that he may
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason,
But rising at thy name, doth point out thee,
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her love, for whose dear love I rise and fall.

More serious, but also more bitter, is the following:

Sonnet CLII

To my mistress that I am more perjured than she.

In loving thee, thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing,
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
When I break twenty? I am perjur'd most;
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,
Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy;
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
Or made them swear against the thing they see;

{eye} For I have sworn thee fair; more perjur'd I,
 To swear, against the truth, so foul a lie!

And so we have reached the lowest depth of this painful story. Mutual recrimination, estrangement; confirmed aversion on her part; bitter anger and self disgust on the part of the poet. Meanwhile his noble nature has not ceased to whisper to him of better things. Many his repentant thoughts, doubtless, during the progress of his unlawful love; many his remorseful moments when the storm of its termination came. In a soul like his, conversant with the dear stars of heaven, and pondering ever on the awful facts of Life, Death and a mystic Hereafter, the silver bell of conscience could not seldom ring. To testify what were his secret feelings in such moments, two written fragments remain. The first, indeed, is but a general utterance of his divine melancholy; but its occurrence, where it does occur, speaks much.

Sonnet CXLVI

To my soul, careful for many things.

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,
{[....]} Why dost thou pine within, or suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?

Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death, once dead, there's no more dying then.

More express and special is the following unparalled
sweet(?)

Sonnet CXXIX

Of Lust.

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoy'd no sooner, but despised straight;
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
Past reason hated; as a swallow'd bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
Had, having, and in quest to have extreme;
A bliss in proof -- and prov'd, a very woe;
Before, a joy propos'd: behind a dream;
All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

Hitherto there has been no allusion to any connexion between
the poet's mistress and his friend, such as that which our

readers have been prepared to expect in these Sonnets. All has been vague and undefined -- mere resentment against the poet's mistress on account of general and gross unfaithfulness. Now, however, comes the catastrophe; the revelation of that cause of distrust and estrangement which has probably been latent all through the story. The intimation is first made in the form, so to speak, of a metrical entry in the poet's diary.

Sonnet CXLIV.

Of the two powers that sway me.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit, a woman color'd ill.
To win me soon to hell my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
Suspect I may, but not directly tell
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

[This is the other sonnet printed by Jaggard in 1599.
Between his version and the above there are one or two
verbal discrepancies; the chief of which are that Jaggard

has "fair" for "foul" in line 8th, and "to me" for "from me" in line 11th.]

Of the fact thus enigmatically hinted, a more detailed statement is afforded by two Sonnets addressed on the occasion to the "worser spirit --the woman color'd ill."

Sonnet CXXXIII

To my mistress who has robbed me of my friend.

Beshrew that heart, that makes my heart to groan
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!
Is't not enough to torture me alone,
But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
And my next self thou harder hast engross'd;
Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken;
A torment thrice three-fold thus to be cross'd
Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail
Who e'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard;
Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail;
And yet thou wilt; for I, being pent in thee,
Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.

Sonnet CXXXIV

To my mistress resigning my friend to her.

So now I have confessed that he is thine,
And I myself am mortgag'd to thy will;
Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine

Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still:
But thou wilt not; nor he will not be free,
For thou art covetous, and he is kind;
He learn'd, but surety-like, to write for me,
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
Thou usurer, that put'st forth all to use,
And sue a friend, came debtor for my sake:
So him I lose through my unkind abuse.
Him have I lost; thou hast both him and me;
He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.

From the language of this Sonnet -- "He learned, but surety-like to write for me," and "came a debtor for my sake," one is led to infer that it was through an imprudent confidence on the part of Shakespeare himself that his mistress and his friend became acquainted. This connexion once formed; she, through her wits having ensnared the youth, and he through his "kindness" having yielded; the treason probably remained long concealed from Shakespeare; and this, it may have been was all along the secret cause of those recriminations between Shakespeare and his mistress, with which we have been occupied. His friend, on the one hand, would avoid him, conscious of the wrong he had done him; his mistress, on the other, occupied with this new and more pleasing passion, would begin for a similar reason to hate him, and would be unable not to show it. And thus for a time, those pains, complaints, and unexplained accusations on the part of the poet. At length, however, the denouement

comes; the double treason is discovered. Wounded as he is to the quick, Shakespeare behaves well. After one spasm of resentment, he becomes calm; consumes his feelings in silence; leaves the lovers together, relinquishes once and forever, her who had deceived him; and resumes his better activity. That the struggle was a severe one, however, appears from the following Sonnet, in which, as it were, the curtain falls on a protracted scene of violence and grief.

Sonnet CXLVII

A farewell to a false mistress.

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve,
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,
At random from the truth vainly express'd;
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee
 bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

With such words Shakespeare tears himself away from his guilty love. No more did the black eyes rest on his gentle

form; no longer did his footstep cross the familiar threshold! Forsaken for ever of the greatest of Earth's sons, this nameless London lady whose charms had won him to her side, and in whose presence he had wasted millions of little sayings which the world might still grudge her that she heard! As yet however she regrets him not. Why should she? She has exchanged her elderly Player-lover for a darling youth with a peachy cheek - that is all! For this youth, notwithstanding all that has happened, Shakespeare still retains his extraordinary affection; and he hopes soon to see him free, and to renew their friendship under better auspices. Meanwhile, however, to revive his own spirits, he goes into the country.

Marginal Notations

¹The metre shows this sonnet not to belong to the rest

²The friend's name being also "Will" then sonnets
become plainer. Furnivall Introd. to Leopold Shaks.

³ = part take

Third Paper

being

A number of Sonnets written to the Poet's friend, during a country journey.

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Shakespeare, we have just said, seems after the catastrophe of his love affair, to have undertaken a journey into the country, for the sake, as we would now express it, of change of scene. This is an inference from various allusions which occur throughout the series of Sonnets from XXXIIII to LV, inclusive. These 23 Sonnets although by no means continuous in language or feeling, yet evidently belong to one period, and were all written during one general mood or condition of the poet's mind. We have concluded that they were all written during the poet's absence from town on the occasion now under notice. Of a considerable portion of them this is indubitable; as regards the first few, however, it is not so clear; and possibly these may have been written before his departure, and contemporaneously with the last 3 or 4 Sonnets of the preceding paper. With the materials before them, our readers will on this point judge for themselves.

The first 3 Sonnets of the series seem to have been written together; and may very well be read as a single poem in the Sonnet-stanza. Thus:

Sonnets XXXIIII-XXXV.

To my friend, a forgiving reproach.

Full many a glorious morning have I seen,

Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace;
Even so my sun one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendour on my brow:
But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud had mask'd him from me now.
{no} Yet him for this my love not whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's
sun staineth.

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?
'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break,
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace:
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's cross.
Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love
sheds,

And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorising thy trespass with compare,
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are:
For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,
(Thy adverse party is thy advocate)
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:
Such civil war is in my love and hate,
That I an accessory needs must be,
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

[In this piece the allusions of course are to the wrong which had been done to the poet to his friend. How beautiful and how characteristic at the same time of that love for ingenious and even quaint conception for which Shakespeare is remarkable -- is the turn given to the last Sonnet of the three. "Do not be grieved for what thou hast done: all things have their faults --even I, for instance, in thus justifying thee and palliating thy offence, do wrong." And how touching in the Sonnet preceding are the lines

For no man well of such a salve can speak,
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace.

We see clearly that the Poet still felt the smart, and that his must have been a deep, gentle, and forgiving nature that could so readily crush its anger, and hold out again the hand of friendship.]

Notwithstanding that the poet has forgiven his friend, still there are moments when he feels that what has occurred must sever their open friendship.¹ Thus in the following Sonnet, the language of which plainly intimates that the person addressed was a youth of high station.

Sonnet XXXVI.

To my friend, that we must be strangers to each other.

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves are one:
So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help, by me be borne alone.
In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite,
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.
I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt² should do thee shame;
Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
Unless thou take that honour from thy name:
But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

Another thing which the language of this Sonnet seems to import is that the circumstances of their recent rivalry

were likely, if known, to become an occasion of public scandal. Soon, however, all these thoughts appear to have quitted the poet's mind for the Sonnets which follow are full of unmixed confidence and affection.

Sonnet XXXVII

To my friend, that his worth is my wealth.

As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So, I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth;
For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more,
Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,
I make my love engrafted to this store;
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despis'd,
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give,
That I in thy abundance am suffic'd,
And by a part of all thy glory live.
Look what is best; that best I wish in thee,
This wish I have; then ten times happy me!

[We see nothing in this Sonnet to support the fancy of some that Shakespeare was one of the lame poets, and that like Byron or Walter Scott he limped along the street. "Lame" in the foregoing lines seems a mere synonym for "humbly-circumstanced"; and was probably suggested by the image of the "decrepit father" already in Shakespeare's mind.]

Sonnet XXXVIII.

To my friend, that he is my muse.

How can my muse want subject to invent,
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my
verse, Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me
Worthy perusal stand against the sight;
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth muse, ten times more in worth
Than those old nine, which rhymers invoke,
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to outlive long date.
If my slight muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

From this Sonnet one would infer that Shakespeare, now absent in the country, and his quiet of mind somewhat restored, was resuming his poetic pen, and finding solace in work. Which of his plays was he writing? Can it have been his "Two Gentlemen of Verona"? Critics have considered this one of his earliest plays; as it was not published, however, till 1623 when the folio edition of the poet's works was issued, the only ground for this supposition, lies in the fact that this is one of the plays mentioned by an obscure author, named Francis Meres, in a passage eulogistic of Shakespeare which occurs in a book entitled "Wit's Treasury" published by him in 1598. This notice of the play proves

that it had been produced on the stage before 1598. Seeing, however, that of the 12 plays of Shakespeare mentioned by Meres, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" is named first, one may suppose that it was freshest in his recollection; and therefore, that it was being acted either late in 1597 or early in 1598. This would bring it precisely to the time at which, according to the considerations addressed in the Introduction, the earlier Sonnets must have been written. But if we thus find that on purely external evidence, the date of the composition of the earlier Sonnets may be regarded as nearly coincident with that of the composition of the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," is there not something in the very character of that play to arrest our attention, and make us enquire farther? What is the subject of that play? Valentine a noble youth with heart still free, quits his native Verona for Milan, leaving his bosom-friend Proteus madly in love with the fair-haired Julia. Proteus has just won Julia, when his peremptory father sends him off to bear Valentine company at the court of Milan. Proteus heavily departs; Julia, unable to bear his loss, follows him in disguise. Arrived at Milan, Proteus finds his friend Valentine in love with the Duke's beautiful daughter, Silvia, and on the eve of eloping with her. He himself, however, sees Silvia and, forgetting his oaths to Julia, he transfers his fickle affection to the betrothed of his friend. In his jealousy he betrays his friend, and reveals to the Duke Valentine's project for carrying away his daughter. Valentine is banished; and Proteus, whose treachery is unsuspected, remains at Milan, devising means

to obtain the love of Silvia. Meanwhile poor Julia arrives in her disguise; enters the service of her faithless lover, and is employed by him to carry letters to her rival. Silvia despises his treachery and rejects his suit; she escapes from Milan under the escort of Eglamour a gentleman of the court who is to conduct her to Mantua in search of Valentine. Proteus, with Julia and attendants, hurries off in pursuit. In the vicinity of Mantua is a wood infested by a band of outlaws. Valentine who has fallen into their hands, has, reckless of life and law, become their captain; and Silvia in her journey through the wood with Eglamour, having been seized by some of his men, they are bringing her before him, when Proteus comes up and rescues her. Having her in his power, Proteus now presses his suit, and when she resists and pleads her love for his friend Valentine, threatens force. Valentine, who, from behind a tree has overheard all, rushes forward.

Val. Ruffian, let go that rude uncivil touch;
 Thou friend of an ill fashion!

Pro. Valentine!

Val. Thou common friend, that's without faith or
 love
 (For such is a friend now/ treacherous man!
 Thou hast beguiled my hopes; nought but mine
 eye
 Could have persuaded me. Now I dare not say
 I have one friend alive; thou wouldst
 disprove me.
 Who should be trusted when one's own right

hand

Is perjured to the bosom? Proteus, I am sorry
I must never trust thee more,
But count the world a stranger for thy sake.
The private wound is deepest.
O time most accursed! 'Mongst all foes, that
a friend should be the worst!

Pro. My shame and guilt confound me.
Forgive me Valentine. If hearty sorrow
Be a sufficient ransom for offence
I tender it here. I do as truly suffer
As e'er I did commit.

Val. Then, I am paid;
And once again I do receive thee honest.
Who by repentance is not satisfied
Is not of Heaven nor Earth, for these are
pleased;
By penitence the Eternal's wrath's appeased:
And that my love may appear plain and free
All that was mine in Silvia I give thee.

What is this but a dramatic representation of those very feelings which we have seen expressed in the Sonnets recently quoted. "For such a friend is now" "Who should be trusted when one's own right hand is perjured to the bosom" "The private wound is deepest" "Proteus, I am sorry I must never trust thee more" -- in these expressions one seems to discern secret references of the poet to his own case. And in the gradual softening of Valentine's tone of anger and passion into a readiness to forgive his friend that appears

almost womanly, have we not an almost literal description by Shakespeare of his own conduct in similar circumstances. The sudden reconciliation of Valentine to a friend who has wronged him so grossly, has been objected to by critics; such generosity, they say, is romantic and unnatural; and the poet seems to have tolerated it, only to save himself trouble. Little did the critics know that Shakespeare in this scene was his own Valentine, and that as generous as he made Valentine, so generous had he been himself. That even to himself the ease with which Valentine pardons his friend appeared liable to such comments as the critics have since made, one may infer from the glorious words which he has put into Valentine's mouth as if in abstract justification of his conduct.

Who by repentance is not satisfied

Is not of Heaven, nor Earth.

-- a passage which is but another version of the lines in S.XXXIV.

Ah! but those tears are pearl that thy love
sheds;

And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

Lastly it has been objected by the critics that Valentine's renunciation of Silvia, when he knows that after all she will not renounce him, is an excess of chivalry, or rather an empty ostentation. Now, certainly, so far as the necessities of the mere story are concerned, these words of Valentine

All that was mine in Silvia, I give thee
which seem to serve no other purpose than that of making

poor Julia faint in her boy's clothes -- might have been spared. Can it have been, however, that Shakespeare was carried along by his own recollections, so as, having already made Valentine resemble himself so far, not to be able to refrain from completing the likeness to the very letter. He had resigned his mistress -Valentine must in almost the same words resign his Silvia!

Well might Shakespeare in the Sonnet to which we have appended these remarks call his friend his Muse! Well might he say

How can my muse want subject to invent
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my
verse

Thine own sweet argument?

-- words that were true in another sense than met the eye. In short, if these fancies of ours be correct, the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" was in part a dramatic transcript of certain of Shakespeare's own feelings, and a nearly contemporary dramatic representation of certain passages in his own life. Thus in the opening discussion of Love between Valentine and Proteus, the whole of which sounds as if it came from a wounded heart, there occurs this simile

As in the sweetest bud
The early canker dwells, so eating love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all.

which is but a repetition of the line in Sonnet xxxv.

And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
And if our supposition as to the date of the composition of this play be correct, may not the following lines which

express Valentine's resignation to his new mode of life as a forest outlaw, have been written by Shakespeare at the time with more than mere poetic sympathy.

How use doth breed a habit in a man!
This shadowy desert, unfrequented woods,
I better brook than flourishing peopled towns;
How can I sit alone, unseen of any,
And to the nightingale's complaining notes
Tune my distresses, and record my woes.
O, thou that dost inhabit in my breast,
Leave not the mansion so long tenantless
Lest growing ruinous, the building fall.

Not, by any means that we would present the picture of Shakespeare as a pining man, seeking the shade of woods at moonlight; but only that this Shakespeare, who to us now is a mere conception, was once a living person, every successive moment of whose existence was thoroughly felt as it came, and that in such circumstances as those which the Sonnets reveal to us, his feelings must of necessity have been such as we have described.

In the country, therefore, walking often in the unfrequented woods, we are to conceive Shakespeare writing these Sonnets. How in his absence his thoughts recurred to the friend who had injured him we have already seen; the following Sonnet indicates the same more clearly.

Sonnet XXXIX.

To my friend, that we should remain apart.

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,

When thou art all the better part of me?
What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
And what is't but mine own, when I praise thee?
Even for this let us divided live,
And our dear love lose name of single one,
That by this separation I may give
That due to thee, which thou deserv'st alone.
O absence, what a torment would'st thou prove,
Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave
To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
(Which time and thoughts so sweetly dost deceive,)
And that thou teachest how to make one twain,
By praising him here, who doth hence remain.

Again, however, he recurs to the sore subject -- his
friend's treachery.

Sonnet XL.

To my friend, that he is forgiven.

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
No love, my love, that thou may'st true love call;
All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more.
Then if for my love thou my love receivest,
I cannot blame thee, for my love thou usest;
But yet be blam'd, if thou thyself deceivest
By wilful taste of what thyself refusest.
I do forgive thy robbery gentle thief,
Although thou steal thee all my poverty;

And yet love knows, it is a greater grief
To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury.
Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
Kill me with spites; yet we must not be foes.

He cannot even yet leave the subject; and the bitter feeling of the wrong done him seems still to ooze up through his kindness. Thus the following Sonnet, begun gently ends with a reproach.

Sonnet XLI

To my friend, a reproach.

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits,
When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,
For still temptation follows where thou art.
Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,
Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd;
And when a woman woos, what woman's son
Will sourly leave her till she have prevail'd?
Ah me! but yet thou might'st my seat forbear,
And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
Who lead thee in their riot even there,
Where thou art forc'd to break a twofold truth;
Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.

In the next, the feeling is evidently far less keen.

Sonnet XLII.

My friend and my mistress excused.
 That thou hast her, it is not all my grief.
 And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly;
 That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief,
 A loss of love that touches me more nearly.
 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye:
 Thou dost love her, because thou knew'st
 I love her; And for my sake even so doth she abuse
 me,
 Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her.
 If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,
 And losing her, my friend hath found that loss;
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,
 And both for my sake lay on me this cross:
 But here's the joy; my friend and I are one;
 Sweet flattery! then she loves but me alone.

This is the last Sonnet in which there is any express
 allusion to the injury done to Shakespeare by his friend.
 After this that circumstance having by common consent, as it
 were, been cast into oblivion, the story of the Sonnet wends
 forward, through new scenes and incidents.

Shakespeare still, as we suppose, in the country, or on
 a journey, continues to apostrophize his absent friend in
 Sonnets of affection. Of those which immediately follow
 that last quoted, a general explanation has been given in
 the Introduction. The first three declare how the thoughts
 of the poet will travel to his friend.

Sonnet XLIII

To my friend, that I see him in dreams.

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected:
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed;
Then thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with the much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?
How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
All days are nights to see, till I see thee,
And nights, bright days, when dreams do show thee
me.

Sonnets XLIV and XLV.

To my friend, that I grieve for his absence.

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way;
For then, despite of space, I would be brought
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.
No matter then, although my foot did stand
Upon the farthest earth remov'd from thee,
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
As soon as think the place where he would be.

But ah! thought kills me, that I am not thought,
To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
But that, so much of earth and water wrought,
I must attend time's leisure with my moan;
Receiving nought by elements so slow
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
The first my thought, the other my desire,
These present-absent with swift motion slide.
For when these quicker elements are gone,
In tender embassy of love to thee,
My life being made of four, with two alone,
Sinks down to death, oppress'd with melancholy;
Until life's composition be recur'd
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
Who even but now come back again, assur'd
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:
Till told, I joy; but then no longer glad,
I send them back again, and straight grow sad.

[The conceit of this piece is: If the substance of the poet's flesh were thought, he would be always with his friend; but being composed of 4 elements, earth, water, air, and fire, two of which are dull and motionless, and only two -- air and fire -- free and volatile, he can succeed only partially in overleaping the distance.]

Sonnets XLVI and XLVII.

Of my friend's portrait, which I have with me.

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,
How to divide the conquest of thy sight:
Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would bar
My heart mine eye the freedom of that right.
My heart doth plead, that thou in him dost lie,
(A closet never pierc'd with crystal eyes,)
But the defendant doth that plea deny,
And says in him thy fair appearance lies.
To 'cide this title is impanelled
A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart;
And by their verdict is determined
The clear eye's moiety, and the dear heart's part:
{{thy}} As thus; mine eye's due is thine outward part,
{{thy}} And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other:
When that mine eye is famish'd for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,
And to the painted banquet bids my heart;
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part:
So either by thy picture or my love,
Thyself away are present still with me;
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,
And I am still with them, and they with thee;

Or if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.

[Of these two Sonnets, which although written probably at the same time, do not properly form a single poem, but only two versions of the same poetic fancy, the literal meaning is this: that between the poet's eye and his heart there has been a law-suit respecting his friend's portrait, each at first having contended that it was his property, and that the other had no right to it, but both having ultimately agreed to the following compromise: That the portrait shall ostensibly belong to the eye, but that when the eye is famished for a look, it shall invite the heart to the banquet; in return for which the eye shall be the guest of the heart whenever the heart is solacing itself with thoughts of Love.]

This portrait of his friend, of which the poet speaks, was probably contained in the little trunk or knapsack, which he carried with him on his journey. The frequent sight of this article of travel, it seems to have been, that suggested the train of thought that appears in the following Sonnet.

Sonnet XLVIII

To my friend, that I have not himself under lock and key.

How careful was I when I took my way,
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That, to my use, it might unused to stay
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust!

But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,
Thou, best of dearest, and mine only care,
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.
Thee have I not lock'd up in any chest,
Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,
Within the gentle closure of my breast.
From whence at pleasure thou may'st come and part;
And even thence thou wilt be stolen I fear,
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

[How pleasant the picture here suggested! Shakespeare the Player, the night before his departure from London, in all the confusion of preparation for a journey! Chests on the floor of his lodging; daggers, rapiers, stage-jewels; stage dresses, books etc all to be packed in those chests which were to remain in town; a smaller selection of articles to be placed in others that he was to take with him. Not slovenly even in these affairs, it appears, was our poetic Jupiter! "How careful was I etc"!]

The fear expressed in the conclusion of the foregoing Sonnet, that, not having his friend, in safe keeping, he might eventually lose him, seems to have run over into the following additional piece, in which, however, there is no allusion to the circumstances in which it was written.

Sonnet XLIX.

To my friend, if ever I should lose his love.

Against that time, if ever that time come,

When I shall see thee frown on my defects,
When as thy love hast cast his utmost sum,
Call'd to that audit by advis'd respects;
Against that time, when thou shalt strangely pass,
And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,
When love, converted from the thing it was,
Shall reasons find of settled gravity;
Against that time do I ensconce me here
Within the knowledge of mine own desert,
And this my hand against myself uprear,
To guard the lawful reasons on thy part:
To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,
Since, why to love, I can allege no cause.

The following Sonnets possess a curious kind of
interest which is indicated in the title we give to them.

Sonnets L and LI.

To the Poet's friend, composed on horseback, during a
journey.

How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek, -- my weary travel's end, --
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
'Thus far the miles are measur'd from thy friend!'
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider lov'd not speed, being made from thee:
The bloody spur cannot provoke him on

That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide,
Which heavily he answers with a groan,
More sharp to me than spurring to his side;
For that same groan doth put this in my mind,
My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.

Thus can my love excuse the slow offence
Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed:
From where thou art why should I haste me thence?
Till I return, of posting is no need.
O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,
When swift extremity can seem but slow?
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind;
In winged speed no motion shall I know:
Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
{perfect'st} Therefore desire, of perfect love being made,
Shall neigh (no dull flesh) in his fiery race;
But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade;
Since from thee going he went wilful slow,
Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave to go.

To these Sonnets which one needs not fear to accept as a
literal portrait of Shakespeare riding moodily along a
country road, there succeeds a cheerful afterthought. After
all, the poet thinks, this absence from my friend, will only
make it sweeter to meet him again. Thus:

Sonnet LII.

To my friend, that absence makes him precious.

So am I as the rich, whose blessed key
 Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
 The which he will not every hour survey,
 For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.
 Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
 Since seldom coming, in the long year set,
 Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
 Or captain jewels in the carcanet.
 So is the time that keeps you, as my chest,
 Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
 To make some special instant special blest,
 By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.
 Blessed are you, whose worthiness gives scope,
 Being had, to triumph, being lack'd, to hope.

This fine Sonnet written, the Poet brings the Third Paper to
 a close. Thus:

Sonnets LIII. LIV. LV.

To my friend, some closing verses.

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
 That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
 {one} Since every one hath, every one, one's shade,
 And you, but one, can every shadow lend.
 Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
 Is poorly imitated after you;
 On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
 And you in Grecian tires are painted new:
 Speak of the spring and foison of the year;

The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye,
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly.
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:
But, for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwoo'd, and unrespected fade;
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made;
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall fade, by verse distils your truth.

Not marble, not the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.

'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find
room Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

Although we have printed these three Sonnets as
consecutive verses of a poem, it is not necessary to suppose
that this was intended by the author. They may very well be
read as separate Sonnets, appended successively by the poet
to the foregoing Paper before he sent it to the person
addressed. In what circumstances the Paper was thus
concluded and dispatched it is in vain to enquire. All we
know is that at some period not very long after the above
lines were written, Shakespeare returned to town.

Marginal Notations

¹S speaks of his own "bewailed guilt" not of his friend. ²x

Fourth Paper

being

A collection of miscellaneous Sonnets addressed to the Poet's friend after an interval of silence.

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Of the Sonnets which constitute this paper, it is impossible to give any precise general description. From internal evidence it may be inferred that they were written by the Poet in town, when, after an interval of absence, he had renewed his habit of intimacy with his friend. The lady of the previous Sonnets, the cause of their estrangement, seems by this time to have been forgotten; at least there is no allusion to her throughout the paper. Shakespeare has resumed it appears, his ordinary avocations; and, his affection for his friend still retaining its force, it is his custom as before, to jot down for presentation to him in the form of verse, little memorials of his various moods as they occur. The result, after a little while, is a collection of Sonnets nearly as large as any of the preceding.

The first Sonnet seems purely Introductory; as if the Poet, after the interval of silence of which we have spoken, had sat down, pen in hand, to begin again the written converse in which he took so much pleasure.

Sonnet LVI.

A renewal of Love with my friend.

Sweet love, renew thy force; be it not said,
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,

Which but today by feeding is allay'd,
To-morrow sharpen'd in his former might:
So, love, be thou; although to-day thou fill
Thy hungry eyes, even till they wink with fulness,
To-morrow see again, and do not kill
The spirit of love with a perpetual dulness.
Let this sad interim like the ocean be
Which parts the shore, where two contracted-new
Come daily to the banks, that, when they see
Return of love, more blest may be the view;
Or call it winter, which, being full of care,
Makes summer's welcome thrice more wish'd, more
rare.

It would seem however, that these expressions of renewed affection were not reciprocated by the poet's friend so warmly or so readily as he was entitled to expect. The two Sonnets which follow look as if they were written at a time when the poet had reason to complain of his friend's coldness and the loss of his society; and are worded, indeed, as to create the impression that his friend had, at some time or other, refused to see him.

Sonnets LVII and LVIII.

To my friend, who denies me his presence.

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require.

Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
When you have bid your servant once adieux;
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought,
Save, where you are how happy you make those;
So true a fool is love, that in your will
[Though you do anything] he thinks no ill.

That God forbid, that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of
 pleasure,
Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,
Being your vassal, bound to stay your leisure!
O, let me suffer (being at your beck)
The imprison'd absence of your liberty,
And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each check
Without accusing you of injury.
Be where you list; your charter is so strong,
That you yourself may privilege your time:

{To} Do what you will, to you it doth belong
Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime.
I am to wait, though waiting so be hell;
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.

[How strange this language addressed by a man like
Shakespeare to a nameless youth; and how exactly does it

resemble that of a lover reproaching his beloved that she has willingly been invisible for several successive evenings! Sad it is to pay the accustomed visit to the loved one's house; to sit in the accustomed chair; and thence to send the imagination roving through the lamp-lit city in jealous quest of her who has cruelly preferred that evening some hot and buzzing drawing-room to the still window-niche, and her lover's low-drawn breath! And such almost precisely is the feeling which the foregoing Sonnets imply.]

The next Sonnet stands apart; and is interesting as exhibiting a tendency in Shakespeare's mind to think of Literature in the manner peculiar to one who is professionally engaged in it.

Sonnet LIX.

To my friend, whether our modern pens can do him justice.

If there be nothing new, but that, which is,
Hath been before, how are our brains beguil'd,
Which labouring for invention bear amiss
The second burthen of a former child!
O, that record could with a backward look,
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some antique book,
Since mind at first in character was done!
That I might see what the old world could say
To this composed wonder of your frame;
Whether we are mended, or whe'er better they,
Or whether revolution be the same.

O! sure I am, the wits of former days
To subjects worse have given admiring praise.

[The poet we may conceive, has, in reading some old author, been struck with some passage full of meaning, not yet obsolete. This begets the thought in his mind, that, after all, little that is absolutely new can occur to any single mind, -- little that is to say, that has not in some shape, been felt or thought by men in former ages. How then, are our brains beguiled! After all their pains they bring forth but a second time that which was born before! With this thought in his mind, the poet begins to speculate how the writers of antiquity would have celebrated the beauty (and virtues) of his friend -- whether better than himself, or worse; and this leads him into the more general question whether art has improved or degenerated with the progress of time.]

The foregoing Sonnet may possibly have suggested its successor, in which after a summary of the ravages of Time, the poet predicts the immortality of his own verses.

Sonnet LX.

To my friend, that my praises of him will last forever.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,

Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And time that gave, doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow;
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

The following Sonnet does not seem to have any
connexion with the preceding.

Sonnet LXI.

To my friend, why his image is always with me.

Is it thy will, thy image should keep open
My heavy eyelids to the weary night?
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
While shadows, like to thee, do mock my sight?
Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
So far from home, into my deeds to pry;
To find out shames and idle hours in me,
{tenure} The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?
O no! thy love, though much, is not so great;
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake;
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
To play the watchman ever for thy sake:
For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
From me far off, with others all too near.

[How impressive to hear Shakespeare confess to "shames and idle hours" and how admirably do these words express the forms of sin peculiar to the solitary literary life! How curious also, in a poetico-scientific point of view, is the query of the Sonnet itself -- whether the production of a dream depends on the state of mind of the dreamer, or whether it does not depend also, in some degree, on the state of mind at the moment, of the person dreamt of!]

The next Sonnet is one of those conceits or tricks of conception of which Shakespeare in common with the poets of his age, was so fond.

Sonnet LXII.

To my friend, of my self-love.

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
And all my soul, and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine
No shape so true, no truth of such account,
And for myself mine own worth so define,
As I all other in all worths surmount.
But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read,
Self so self-loving were iniquity.
'Tis thee (myself) that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

The allusion in this Sonnet to the age of the poet, and his personal appearance, "beated and chopped with tanned antiquity" seems to have suggested the following.

Sonnet LXIII.

To my friend, that I prepare against that time when he, too,
shall be old.

Against my love shall be, as I am now,
With time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn;
When hours have drain'd his blood, and fill'd his
brow,
With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn
Hath travell'd on to age's steepy night;
And all those beauties, whereof now he's king,
Are vanishing or vanish'd out of sight,
Stealing away the treasure of his spring;
For such a time do I now fortify
Against confounding age's cruel knife,
That he shall never cut from memory
My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life.
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.

[The references to Shakespeare's age in this, and the foregoing Sonnet are not to be interpreted too literally. At the time they were written he cannot have passed his 37th year. The apparent exaggeration on this point is to be explained by the fact that the presentiment of approaching old age is usually strongest at the period of fully attained

manhood, as well as by the fact in these Sonnets the poet seems to view everything through a sombre medium. From the minute character of some of the allusions, however, as, for instance,

But when my glass shows me myself indeed
Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity
Against my love shall be as I am now
With time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn,
When hours have drain'd his blood and fill'd his
brow
With lines and wrinkles.

we should conclude that they do, in one respect, possess a literal descriptive value. The common portraits of Shakespeare not all the portraits however, represent him as a smooth-faced man with an unruffled, almost meaning-less expression; and this corresponds exactly with the ordinary representation of his character as a calm clear-seeing vates, penetrating the complex phenomena of human life by the power of a limpid poetic intuition which cost him no pain, but issued from him like a magnetic atmosphere. Now, precisely as the result of our enquiries into the meaning and history of these Sonnets, has been to rectify this latter impression, and to show that Shakespeare, to whatever degree of calmness and repose he may have attained, was after all a man of the keenest emotions and sensibilities, who not only earned his strength by severe personal experience, but even made direct use of this experience as matter of art --so, according to our understanding of the allusions now under notice, they should correct our common

portraiture of Shakespeare's countenance. The features doubtless, and the general shape are accurately given in the common likeness of the poet; but the "lines and wrinkles" with which it was "beated and chopped" and the "tanned" hue which it wore, are wanting.]

Once launched on his favorite topic, the swiftness and destructiveness of Time, Shakespeare cannot easily quit it. The two following Sonnets were evidently written together:

Sonnets LXIV and LXV

To my friend, that my verses shall make him immortal.

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defac'd
The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometimes lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal, slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate --
That time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless
sea, But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,

Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
 O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
 Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
 Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
 O fearful meditation! Where, alack!
 Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
 O none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

The three Sonnets which follow constitute a little
 poem, and are among the finest and most interesting of the
 whole collection.

Sonnets LXVI, LXVII and LXVIII

To my friend, that he lives in degenerate times.

Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry, --
 As, to behold desert a beggar born,
 And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
 And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
 And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,
 And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
 {right} And rich perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
 And strength by limping sway disabled,
 And art made tongue-tied by authority,
 And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
 And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,

And captive good attending captain ill;
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

Ah! wherefore with infection should he live,
And with his presence grace impiety,
That sin by him advantage should achieve,
And lace itself with his society?
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
And steal dead seeing of his living hue?
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek,
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?
Why should he live now nature bankrupt is,
Beggar'd of blood to blush through lively veins?
For she hath no exchequer now but his,
And proud of many, lives upon his gains.
O! him she stores to show what wealth she had,
In days long since, before these last so bad.

Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
When beauty liv'd and died as flowers do now,
Before these bastard signs of fair were borne,
Or durst inhabit on a living brow;
Before the golden tresses of the dead,
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
To live a second life on second head,
Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay:
In him those holy antique hours are seen,
Without all ornament, itself, and true,

Making no summer of another's green,
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
And him as for a map doth nature store,
To show false art what beauty was of yore.

[The idea of this little complimentary poem is very peculiar; and the poem itself is perhaps the nearest approach to an expression of political and social dissatisfaction that occurs anywhere in the writings of Shakespeare. Ostensibly the piece is a tribute to the poet's friend; really it is a satire on the condition of English society at the close of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It is somewhat curious to listen to Shakespeare uttering, regarding his own age very nearly the same complaints of decrepitude and frivolity, with which earnest writers assail our own. With what a tone of scorn does the poet enumerate the social spectacles that afflicted his soul, and almost made him loathe life -- merit born a beggar; pretence¹ finely arrayed; purest faith forsworn; honour shamefully misplaced; maiden virtue rudely strumpeted; wisdom and goodness wrongfully kept down; strength disabled by limping rule; art tongue-tied by a wretched censorship; folly invested with power over skill; simple and natural taste scorned as silliness; ill, in all hands, domineering over Good! A striking glimpse this into the heart of Shakespeare! What, it has been asked, by a powerful pen, are likely to have been the thoughts of the two London citizens, Bacon and Shakespeare, on any of those days when the crowded streets and the tolling bell announced

that some poor nonconformist was to be buried alive in Smithfield? As regards Shakespeare, have we not an answer in the lines just quoted? Not a lover of revolt he, as witness his picture of Jack Cade's riots; yet in the noble manner natural to such a man, he also could feel and denounce what was socially wrong. And who shall tell what may have been his secret thoughts on many an occasion of public moment; what even might have been his declared opinions had not his art been made tongue-tied by authority? "I am a Poet" said Goethe to Eckermann, "and I ought not to be accused, because I hold myself aloof from present parties and interests. The eagle in the sky descrying a hare on the ground, swoops downward; nor thinks, in seizing the prey, on which side of the frontier it is. So with me as a Poet." True; and Shakespeare, therefore, as the type to all time of the poetic mind, could never in any circumstances have been a fanatic or dogmatist. But even in the mind of the artist the feeling of wrong exists -- and exercises a deep and essential although latent function; and there are times when, the higher abstractions being violated on which truth itself depends, the poetic soul also catches fire, and disdaining for the moment the mere power of picture or representation, interrogates its inner sense and pours itself out in ignorant song. That assistance which the poet Chaucer rendered to the reformer Wycliff, Shakespeare might in similar circumstances, without in any greater degree becoming a man of specialty, have rendered to his great active contemporaries.

After his striking enumeration of the signs of social

disorder, Shakespeare proceeds in the following stanzas to ask why a life so good and beautiful as that of his friend, should have fallen in such evil days. Wherefore, he enquires, should such an one live in the midst of the infection, or grace impiety with his presence; so that, like fine lace on a foul garment, he should adorn what is in itself unworthy? Why should he live now Nature is bankrupt (Nature bankrupt in the year 1597-8!) beggared of noble and gentle blood? The reason is plain. Nature preserves him as a specimen to these degenerate times of what she could once produce. His cheek is as it were a map of days bygone, when beauty lived and died as flowers do; and before loveliness came within the scope of artifice.

Before those bastard signs of fair were borne
Or durst inhabit on a living brow,
Before the golden tresses of the dead
The right of sepulchres were shorn away
To live a second time on second head.

Here the poet, as in the first stanza he had enumerated the social vices which grieved him; so now, condescends a Titan-Addison, to attack the more venial faults of his age -- its artificiality, --its foppery in dress etc. That these allusions are not merely casual; but that they indicate a real sensitiveness on Shakespeare's part to such offences against truth and taste, may be inferred from the fact that a passage almost exactly parallel occurs in "The Merchant of Venice," which was written, it is believed, about 1597. In this play, Bassanio commenting on the three caskets, says of the golden one

Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight;
Which therein works a miracle in Nature,
Making them lightest that wear most of it.
So are those crisped snaky golden locks,
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind
Upon supposed fairness, often known
To be the dowry of a second head
The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.

[One might almost fancy that the pitiless definition of wigs thus given by Shakespeare in two distinct passages of his writings, was an intentional expression, of personal dislike to them.]

Sonnets LXIX and LXX.

To my friend, that he is maligned.

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth
view,
Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend:
All tongues (the voice of souls) give thee that
due,

Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend.

{Thy} Thine outward thus with outward praise is crown'd;
But those same tongues that give thee so thine
own,

In other accents do this praise confound;
By seeing farther than the eye hath shown.
They look into the beauty of thy mind.
And that, in guess, they measure by thy deeds;

Then (churls) their thoughts, although their eyes
were kind,
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds:
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,
{[soil]} The solve is this, -- that thou dost common grow.

That thou art blam'd shall not be thy defect,
In slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
The ornament of beauty is suspect,
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
So thou be good, slander doth but approve,
Thy worth the greater, being woo'd of time:
For canker vice the sweetest buds doth love.
And thou present'st a pure unstained prime.
Thou hast pass'd by the ambush of young days,
Either not assail'd, or victor being charg'd:
Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,
To tie up envy, evermore enlarg'd:
If some suspect of ill mask'd not thy show,
Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts should'st owe.

After this, the poet again recurs, in some despondent,
almost hypochondriac mood, to his characteristic forebodings
of Death.

Sonnet LXXI.

To my friend, that when I am dead, he would forget me.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell

Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O if (I say) you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
But let your love even with my life decay:
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

Sonnet LXXII.

To my friend, that after my death, he would speak of me no
more.

O, lest the world should task you to recite
What merit liv'd in me, that you should love
After my death, -- dear love, forget me quite,
For you in me can nothing worthy prove:
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
To do more for me than mine own desert,
And hang more praise upon deceased I
Than niggard truth would willingly impart;
O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor you.

For I am sham'd by that which I bring forth,
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

What a profound spirit of melancholy and self-abasement breathe through these two Sonnets. However, it was caused, the sad mood seems to have prolonged itself; and the little piece which follows was probably written under its gloomy influence.

Sonnets LXXIII and LXXIV.

To my friend, that I must soon leave him.

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds
sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day,
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more
strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

But be contented: when that fell arrest

Without all bail shall carry me away,
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
When thou review'st this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee
The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me:
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead;
The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be remembered.
The worth of that, is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.

[It is again to be remarked that the language in the first stanza, respecting the poet's age is not to be understood in too literal a manner. In Sonnet CXXXVIII there are similar allusions, such as, "my days are past the best," and "wherefore say not I that I am old;" and yet, as this Sonnet was published by Jaggard in 1599, we know that Shakespeare cannot have passed his 35th year when he wrote it. The exaggeration arises from the melancholy of the poet.]

The next sonnet is simply a reiteration of the Poet's affection for his friend.

Sonnet LXXV.

To my friend that he is my all.

So are you to my thoughts, as food to life,
Or as sweet season'd showers are to the ground;

And for the peace of you I hold such strife
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found:
Now proud as an enjoyer and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure:
Sometime, all full with feasting on your sight
And by and by clean starved for a look;
Possessing or pursuing no delight,
Save what is had or must from you be took.
Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

The Sonnet which follows, is a very remarkable one.

Sonnet LXXVI.

Of the monotony of my style.

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quick change?
Why, with the time, do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth, and where they did proceed?
O know, sweet love, I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument;
So all my best in dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent:

For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.

[The manner in which the train of thought that appears in this Sonnet, originated in the mind of Shakespeare, seems to have been as follows: Having now accumulated 20 Sonnets (LVI-LXXV) he proposes to send the little manuscript containing them to his friend. Before doing so, however, he reads them over, and is struck, as his readers now are, with a certain heavy monotony which hums through them -- a clear Shakespearian cadence mingling at intervals with the natural languor of the Sonnet-rhythm, slow as the murmur in a sea-side shell. This observation he forthwith extends to his general poetic style; in particular, no doubt, to his dramas, in which his ear, as well as ours, must have detected the same Shakespearian cadence, freed now however from the languid amplexus of the Sonnet-rhythm, like his own Adonis nimble from the ivory arms of Venus. Whence, he asks, does this sameness arise? To this question, turning his self-intuism like all his other thoughts and observations to the account of his friendship, he answers

O know, sweet love, I always write of you

And you and love are still my argument.²

-- an express confession, be it deserved, from Shakespeare's own pen, that he drew on his experience for his poetic matter. It is evident that this Sonnet is not a mere piece of self-intuism, it is clearly also Shakespeare's report of the opinions current about himself in literary circles. That there was a severe critical spirit abroad in the days

of Shakespeare is well known; and in the various little clubs of writers and players that used to meet in taverns or other places, there can be no doubt that the style of so conspicuous a member of the Elizabethan fraternity of poets as Shakespeare was must have been a frequent subject of comment. Ten or twelve years of residence and assiduous authorship in London had lifted the humble adventurer from Stratford, above the criticisms with which he had at first been assailed by Greene and others; and had established him at the head of the popular school of dramatists. By this time the ear of the play-going public must have caught his peculiar cadence; and there must have been pit critics that would boast of being able at once to discriminate a verse of Shakespeare's. It is curious to observe the epithets applied to Shakespeare as a poet in those contemporary notices of him that remain. "Sweet" "honey-tongued" and such like seem to be the favourite ones. Thus in Barnfield's *Cynthia*, published in 1595:

And Shakespeare, thou, whose honey-flowing vein
Pleasing the world, thy praises doth obtain.

and again in Meres' *"Wit's Treasury"* already referred to:
"As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras,
so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and
honey-tongued Shakespeare; witness his *"Venus and Adonis"*
his *"Lucrece"* his sugared Sonnets among his private friends.
As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and
tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English
is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage. x x As
Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus's

tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine-filed phrase if they would speak English." With these notices of Shakespeare's style as a writer compare Ben Jonson's gossip respecting him with Drummond of Hawthornden. In talking with Drummond of Shakespeare, Jonson dwelt particularly on what we would call his fluency --his spontaneous abundance of language. This criticism seems to have had reference both to Shakespeare's writings and to his conversations. How true the remark was of his writings, especially of his dramatic writings, anyone may convince himself. Fluency, ease, redundance, a plenitude of sound and imagery, which were the intellect at work only a little less fertile of matter, would sometimes be called bombast, are characteristic of Shakespeare's blank verse. Nothing is suppressed, nothing omitted, nothing cancelled. Overmastered as it were, by a fine phrensy, the poet abandons himself to his thick-coming fancies, and, scarcely capable of writing his words so fast as they crowd to his pen, rises and falls, secure in his old experience on the waves of a pre-established cadence. Thus:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine

Making the green one red -- Macbeth

or again

Forgive my general and exceptless rashness

Perpetual sober Gods -- Timon of Athens

Let it be observed also that a very great number of Shakespeare's fine passages --those to wit, which are always

listened for with special expectation in our theatres -- close exactly as the two sentences just quoted; that is with an imperfect line cut short at the sixth syllable, or rather after the third accent. This caesura after the sixth syllable or third accent is characteristic of Shakespeare's versification; and seeing how admirably adapted experience proves it to be for effective elocution, we may conclude that it came naturally to the poet's ear, already trained on the stage; or even that it was his habit to repeat his lines as he wrote them, sotto voce, assuming mentally for the moment the attitude of the speaker. Certainly, at least, his experiences, unlike that of a mere writer, never speaks deluge-like over mere extent of surface but always flows forward in musical sequence and measure. "He sometimes required stopping" said Ben Jonson of his talk; and to us this little saying appears the most descriptive and characteristic of all the notices that are extant concerning Shakespeare. How well it agrees too with that other piece of information respecting him, which we also derive from Jonson that in writing "he never blotted a line." These notices indicate his fluency, his copiousness, whether in conversation with his friends, or when engaged alone at his writing-table; and when in connexion with this we remember the epithets "sweet" "mellifluous," "honey-tongued" applied to him by his contemporaries, we obtain probably as definite an idea as is now attainable of his personal and literary peculiarities. Familiar to us now, Shakespeare's manner and style must have been at least equally familiar to his contemporaries. To use his own words "he kept his invention

in a noted weed" clothed it, that is to say, in a well known costume, so that "every word almost told his name" -- an indirect allusion, possibly, to innumerable puns and quibbles to which his name, too easily bisected, had been subjected by the wits of the theatrical circles. What those "new-found methods" and "strange compounds" were to which he says he refused to "glance aside" with the time, is not very clear. Possibly, as Ulrici hints, he alludes to the growth of the new and didactic school of art of which Ben Jonson became the most distinguished representative.]

And now, having brought the Paper to a close in the foregoing Sonnet, the poet dispatches it to his friend, adding the following by way of Envoy.

Sonnet LXXVII.

To my friend, with a note-book.

Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste;
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,
And of this book this learning may'st thou taste.
The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show,
Of mouthed graves will give thee memory;
Thou by thy dial's shady stealth may'st know
Time's thievish progress to eternity.
Look, what thy memory cannot contain,
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
Those children nurs'd, deliver'd from thy brain,
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,

Shall profit thee, and much enrich thy book.

[It is not clear whether the note-book thus sent by the poet to his friend was the same manuscript that contained the foregoing Sonnets, or another intended simply as a present by itself. If the former, the phrases "vacant leaves" and "waste blanks" refer to the parts of the note-book not written on; if the other, they are a mere synonym for the book itself. How finely the poet expresses the uses of such a commonplace book: "Commit what thy memory cannot contain to these waste blanks, and then shalt find that the thoughts thus set down will when read afterwards, take a new acquaintance with the mind that gave them birth." Was this assertion a statement of the poet's own experience?]

Marginal Notations

¹(emptiness)

²S. means rather sameness of subject and argument than
of
cadence

Fifth Paper

being

A collection of Sonnets, addressed on divers occasions to
the Poet's friend

=====

This Paper includes the Sonnets from LXXVIII to XCIX inclusive. Mr. Brown indeed considers that Sonnets LXXVIII - CL inclusive form a continuous poem in the Sonnet-stanza; but a glance at the commencement of Sonnet C

Where art thou Muse, that thou forget'st so long
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?
shows this supposition to be untenable. Sonnet C instead of being the penultimate stanza, is evidently the opening stanza of a series.

On examining, moreover, the Sonnets from LXXVIII to XCIX it becomes manifest that they do not form a whole that could be designated by even so vague and composite a title as that which Mr. Brown proposes -- "To his friend, complaining that he prefers another poet's praises, and reproving him for faults that may injure his character." On the contrary, the Paper plainly divides itself into at least 4 distinct groups of Sonnets; the first, from LXXVIII to LXXXVI inclusive, containing allusions to this mysterious "other poet"; the second, from LXXXVII to XCIII, describing a quarrel or temporary estrangement between Shakespeare and his friend, probably connected with the intrusion upon their friendship of this "other poet"; the third, from XCIV to XCVI, reproving his friend for certain faults that are giving the world occasion to speak ill of him; and the

fourth, from XCVII to XCIX, -an independent little triad of Sonnets, relating to some visit of Shakespeare's to the country during the summer.

Shakespeare still residing in town, has come to know that he is not the only Poet, that has addressed verses to his friend. Rich, and high in station, as appears from the whole tenor of the Sonnets, the young man is surrounded, we may suppose, by many of the notable wits of the day, anxious to enjoy the favour of so distinguished and accomplished a patron. Some of these have even used his name to give credit to their performances. One there is in particular a Poet of no mean reputation, who has become intimate with him, and has publicly addressed compliments to him as his literary patron. Now in ordinary circumstances all this would matter nothing to Shakespeare. But situated as he is, attached to this youth by so singular and strong a feeling of affection, he cannot bear this rivalry; a sentiment galls him, which we can only describe by comparing it to jealousy; and, as a lover would address sonnets of complaint to his mistress round whom his rivals were permitted too freely to circle, so the Poet fretfully accuses his friend of unsteadiness, and asserts his own claims to be more affectionately regarded by him than any one else.

Sonnet LXXVIII.

To my friend, that he ought to prefer me to all other Poets.

So oft have I invok'd thee for my muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,

And under thee their poesy disperse.
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
Have added feathers to the learned's wing,
And given grace a double majesty.
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee:
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
And arts with thy sweet graces graced be;
But thou art all my art, and dost advance
As high as learning my rude ignorance.

[Of this Sonnet, which is somewhat obscure, the following is a paraphrase: "I have invoked thee for my muse so often, and have experienced such benefit in doing so, that strangers have discovered the secret of my success, and are, now beginning to use thy name to give currency to their productions. Seeing how, under thy inspiration, even I, dumb and ignorant as I am, have been able to do something as a Poet, men of learning and gifts, have bethought themselves how much more they could effect under the same influence. Yet, notwithstanding the compliments thus paid thee, thou oughtst to be prouder of my poetry than of theirs, for in their writings thou fillest but a subordinate part, they themselves supplying the matter out of the treasures of their erudition, and deriving only the first polish of their style from thee; whereas thou art all my art, matter and style both." -- In this sonnet we have another example of Shakespeare's fondness for embodying even an earnest meaning

in the form of an intellectual conceit, not literally true. The general feeling of the sonnet is perfectly sincere; but the expression of humility is exaggerated, and according to the conventional receipt.]

The next two Sonnets are in the same strain.

Sonnet LXXIX.

To my friend, that there is little merit in writing well of him.

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace;
But now my gracious numbers are decay'd,
And my sick muse doth give another place.
I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen;
Yet what of thee thy poet doth invent,
He robs thee of, and pays it thee again.
He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word
From thy behavior; beauty doth he give,
And found it in thy cheek; he can afford
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.
Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.

Sonnet LXXX.

To my friend, that my rival need not displace me.

O, how I faint when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,

And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
 To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!
 But since your worth (wide, as the ocean is,)

{humble} The humblest as the proudest sail doth bear,
 My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
 On your broad main doth wilfully appear,
 Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
 Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride;
 Or, being wreck'd, I am a worthless boat,
 He of tall building, and of goodly pride:
 Then if he thrive, and I be cast away,
 The worst was this; -- my love was my decay.

[Neither in this Sonnet, exaggerated as is its expression,
 of humility, is it necessary to suppose that there is the
 slightest affectation. To explain the feeling and
 appreciate its peculiarity in being essentially true and yet
 literally not true, we must go to the analogous case of
 love. The Lover, we all know, writes despondingly, to the
 cause of his pain; dispraises himself; exaggerates the
 praises of his rivals. Yet he usually rallies at the close
 of the letter, and contrives, without retracting a word that
 he has said in commendation of his rivals and in
 depreciation of himself, to suggest certain subtle
 considerations that ought to weigh to his advantage in the
 comparison. Precisely, in this delicate manner, does
 Shakespeare proceed in these Sonnets of complaint to his
 friend, respecting his kindness to his rival or rivals.]

In the following Sonnet the rival is for the moment

forgotten; and the poet relapses into an old train of thought. He is evidently under agitation, for the words roll nobly. The preceding Sonnet apparently has excited him and he writes while the excitement lasts.

Sonnet LXXXI.

To my friend, that I give him immortality.

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;
From hence your memory death cannot take,
Although in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die:
The earth can yield me but a common grave,
When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen,)
Where breath most breathes -- even in the mouths
of men.

[This is one of the Sonnets through which we can most easily figure Shakespeare as he was when an earnest thought moved him. "When I in earth am rotten." "Though I, once gone, to all the world must die." "When all the breathers of this world are dead" -- in these words, evidently penned in true phrensy, one sees the poet: eye brightening; his lips

quivering; and his breast heaving with the emotion that had come upon him. There is a magnetic power in passages so written; the music in them seems to over-roll the meaning.]

Some slight pause occurs after the foregoing Sonnet; and in that which follows, the Poet again refers to his rival.

Sonnet LXXXII.

To my friend, of my rival and me.

I grant thou wert not married to my muse,
And therefore may'st without attaint o'erlook
The dedicated words which writers use
Of their fair subject, blessing every book.
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise;
And therefore art enforc'd to seek anew
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days.
And do so, love; yet when they have devis'd
What strained touches rhetorick can lend,
Thou truly fair wert truly sympathiz'd
In true plain words, by thy true-telling friend;
And their gross painting might be better us'd
Where cheeks need blood; in thee it is abus'd.

["Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue etc." The meaning here is, "Thou, as skilled in Literature as thou art beautiful, findest me incompetent to the subject I have undertaken i.e., thy praises; therefore, thou art obliged to seek out a poet of a newer school, one who writes after

improved methods." -- "Yet when they have devised etc";
here one perceives a touch of bitterness, of sarcasm; indeed
there is latent irony in the Sonnet throughout.]

But for the sudden exchange of the pronominal form,
Thou for that of You, it might have been supposed that the
two Sonnets that follow were written along with the
preceding. The idea of "gross painting," at all events, is
continued.

Sonnets LXXXIII and LXXXIV.

To my friend, of his two poets.

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set.
I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
The barren tender of a poet's debt:
And therefore have I slept in your report,
That you yourself, being extant, well might show
How far a modern quill doth come too short,
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow.
This silence for my sin you did impute,
Which shall be most my glory, being dumb,
For I impair not beauty being mute,
When others would give life, and bring a tomb.
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
Than both your poets can in praise devise.

Who is it that says most? Which can say more,
Than this rich praise, -- that you alone are you?
In whose confine immured is the store

Which should example where your equal grew.
Lean penury within that pen doth dwell,
That to his subject lends not some small glory;
But he that writes of you, if he can tell
That you are you, so dignifies his story,
Let him but copy what in you is writ,
Not making worse what nature made so clear,
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,
Making his style admired everywhere.
You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
Being fond on praise, which makes your praises
worse.

[It is from this little piece that we can learn that Shakespeare had given offence to his friend by a period of silence; and that this was perhaps the cause of the favorable reception given to the advances of the other Poet. The last two lines are somewhat obscure; they seem to mean "You of whom the best praise is simply to describe you as you are, do injustice to your merits by being fond of praise like that of my rival-poet which, attempting too gross painting, really injures and misrepresents you.]"

The Poet again excuses his silence by an ingenious conceit.

Sonnet LXXXV.

To my friend, that though silent, I listen, and think.

My tongue-tied muse in manners holds her still,
While comments of your praise, richly compil'd,

Reserve their character with golden quill,
And precious phrase by all the muses fil'd.
I think good thoughts, while others write good
words,
And, like unletter'd clerk, still cry Amen
To every hymn that able spirit affords,
In polish'd form of well-refin'd pen.
Hearing you prais'd, I say, 'tis so, 'tis true,
And to the most of praise add something more;
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,
Though words come hindmost, holds his rank before.
Then others for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

What, he enquires in the following Sonnet, can have
been the cause of his silence?

Sonnet LXXXVI.

To my friend, accounting for my silence.

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
He, nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,

As victors, of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence.
But when your countenance fil'd up his line,
Then lack'd I matter, that enfeebled mine.

[On the meaning of this Sonnet, which certainly as it stands, is one of the least intelligible of the collection, witness such phrases as "his spirit, by spirits taught to write," "his compeers by night" "that affable familiar ghost etc" -- we hope to throw some light in the Appendix.]

All these complaints, accusations, and excuses seem to have failed in producing the effect intended; the offended youth still remains obdurate, rejects the advances of renewed friendship; and the Poet, stung by such conduct, becomes proud and reckless, as a too sorely-used Lover sometimes will.

Sonnet LXXXVII.

To my friend, that he may justly retract his friendship.

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate;
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting?
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not
knowing, Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else

mistaking.

So thy great gift, upon misprison growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making.
Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
In sleep a king, but waking, no such matter.

[This Sonnet, so full of legal phraseology, and legal notions with which mere citizens are not usually acquainted, might furnish argument in support of the idea held by some, that Shakespeare had at one time been in a country attorney's office, or some similar situation.]

The same general condition of feeling remaining, modified only by a lover-like revulsion of affection, the Poet continues:

Sonnets LXXXVIII and LXXXIX.

To my unkind friend, that I will join him against myself.

When thou shalt be dispos'd to set me light,
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,
Upon thy side against myself I'll fight,
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn.
With mine own weakness being best acquainted,
Upon thy part I can set down a story
Of faults conceal'd, wherein I am attainted;
That thou in losing me, shall win much glory:
And I by this will be a gainer too;
For bending all my loving thoughts on thee,
The injuries that to myself I do,
Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me.

Such is my love, to thee I so belong,
That for thy right myself will bear all wrong.

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
And I will comment upon that offence;
Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt;
Against thy reasons making no defence.
Thou canst not, love, disgrace me half so ill,
To set a form upon desired change,
As I'll myself disgrace, knowing thy will,
I will acquaintance strangle, and look strange;
Be absent from thy walks; and in my tongue
Thy sweet-beloved name no more shall dwell;
Lest I (too much profane) should do it wrong,
And haply of an old acquaintance tell.
For thee, against myself I'll vow debate,
For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate.

[How abject the tone here!

Knowing thy will

I will acquaintance strangle, and look strange;
Be absent from thy walks.

It ought to have been clear to every critic that the feeling that could use these words was no mere subservience to a young and rich patron; but some earnest and singularly deep affection of friendship.]

The following Sonnet, ought, very probably, to be read as the concluding stanza of the little piece. It is however, even as a separate Sonnet, one of the noblest of

the collection.

Sonnet XC

To my friend, that he would hate me now.

Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;
Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross;
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss;
Ah! do not when my heart hath scap'd this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purpos'd overthrow:
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come: so shall I taste
At first the very worst of fortune's might;
And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
Compar'd with loss of thee, will not seem so.

[To what misfortune or series of misfortunes does Shakespeare allude in this Sonnet? "The world bent my deeds to cross" "when my heart hath 'scaped thy sorrow," "a conquered woe." -- all these phrases indicate some griefs or difficulties as pressing upon the poet, and in the "onset of which" and not after they have abated, he wishes his friend's unkindness to come. Were matters succeeding ill at the Globe and the Blackfriars? Shakespeare we must remember, lived 53 years, all the moments of which had to be transacted in due succession, each as intensely felt by him

while it lasted, as any moment in our own lives is felt by us. That life of his, which is to us a finished whole, was to himself an infinite series of small advances through a medium of circumstances. There are pains, pleasures, fears, hopes, irritations, at every step --all these in our retrospective conception of Shakespeare's life, are melted down into what is most easy and single, for ourselves to think of.]

Following this we have a little continuous piece of 3 stanzas, written apparently after some meeting of reconciliation, which, while it did not altogether remove from Shakespeare's mind the impression that had been produced by his friend's coldness, yet pleased and soothed him.

Sonnets XCI - XCIII

To my friend, a consolation under his unkindness.

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force;
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill:
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their
horse; And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:
But these particulars are not my measure,
All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
Of more delight than hawks or horses be;
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast.

Wretched in this alone, that thou may'st take
All this away, and me most wretched make.

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
For term of life thou art assured mine;
And life no longer than thy love will stay,
For it depends upon that love of thine.
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
When in the least of them my life hath end.
I see a better state to me belongs
Than that which on thy humour doth depend.
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
O what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die!
But what's so blessed-fair that fears no blot? --
Thou may'st be false, and yet I know it not.

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,
Like a deceived husband; so love's face
May still seem love to me, though alter'd-new;
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place:
For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change.
In many's looks the false heart's history
Is writ, in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange;
But Heaven in thy creation did decree,
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell;
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,

Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness
tell.

How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!

After these stanzas we hear nothing more of the quarrel, between the poet and his friend. In the 3 Sonnets that follow, --evidently written continuously, and at the distance of some little interval from the reconciliation which we have supposed to have been effected -- the Poet assumes a part that he can hardly be said to have assumed before -- that of Mentor to this young Telemachus.

Sonnets XCIV-XCVI

To my friend, of whom I have heard ill reports.

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmov'd, cold, and to temptation slow;
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die;
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed out braves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame,
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins inclose!
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise,
Naming thy name blesses an ill report.
O what a mansion have those vices got,
Which for their habitation chose out thee!
Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turn to fair, that eyes can see!
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege,
The hardest knife ill-us'd doth lose his edge.

Some say, thy fault is youth, some wantonness;
Some say, thy grace is youth and gentle sport;
Both grace and faults are lov'd of more and less:
Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort.
{the} As on a finger of a throned queen,
The basest jewel will be well-esteem'd;
So are those errors that in thee are seen,
To truths translated, and for true things deem'd.
How many lambs might the stern wolf betray,
If like a lamb he could his looks translate!
How many gazers might thou lead away,
If thou would'st use the strength of all thy
state!

But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

[The origin of this exquisite moral lecture, for such it may be called, from the pen of Shakespeare, seems to have been as follows: The Poet in his privacy is hearing ill reports of his friend's conduct. Persons come about him, telling this and the other story of youthful frolics in which his friend is indulging. Some say his fault is youth, some wantonness; and even those who speak of his faults, -- "making lascivious comments on his sport" do it as if they liked him all the better for them. To the Poet, however, the things seem serious. Seeing his friend, in whom he feels so extraordinary an interest, yielding to the temptations of his age and station, and abandoning himself, a modern Alcibiades, to the zest for pleasure, he begins to fear that the consequence may be a permanent deterioration of his character. Hence the foregoing stanzas.

In palliation of his friend's conduct, the gentle poet reflects that his very attractions and accomplishments expose him to a double amount of temptation, and render it doubly difficult for him to be virtuous. And this leads him to the speculation, how noble that form of character would be, which, while thus provoking against itself a double force of attack, could yet stand firm in the midst of it.

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow.

It is only men of this stamp, he says, men that carry their spirit erect and with facility through the consequences of their own popularity, -- it is only they that rightly "inherit heaven's graces." They "husband Nature's riches from expense," they only are "masters of their faces"; other men, plastic and easily moved, are but stewards of their own capacities. This observation, specially applied here to popularity with the fair sex; how true it is of all popularity whatever! How admirably does the first stanza describe the calmness desirable for the true artist and so splendidly studied by Goethe. How nearly did the stately German answer the picture of the man "moving others, and himself as stone." Shakespeare it is clear to us, never attained this statue-like hardness himself; and yet said Goethe of Shakespeare "I do not compare myself with him; I venerate him as a being of superior nature." Ah! there are heights beyond heights in these things; and all theory is shallow; if the fact be great!

The graceful expression of the foregoing stanzas cannot but be noticed, as well as the fine pure feeling that breathes through them. How beautiful the close of the first 1 and how fond Shakespeare seems to have been of the simile of the canker in the rose, and of the corruption of the flower, sweet for its own sweet sake! The concluding lines of the last stanza, it may be noted, are from a previous Sonnet -- Sonnet XXXVI.]

The three Sonnets that follow seem to have been written, as has already been stated, during, or at least concerning a summer, or rather spring visit of the Poet to

the country. They are Sonnets of the fancy, exceedingly sweet and flowing, but devoid of special biographical interest.

Sonnet XCVII

To my friend, how I missed his society.

How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
What old December's bareness everywhere!
And yet this time remov'd was summer's time;
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,
Like widow'd wombs after their lord's decease:
Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me
But hope of orphans, and unfather'd fruit;
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
And thou away, the very birds are mute;
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer,
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

Sonnets XCVIII and XCIX

To my friend, how I remembered him in my absence.

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell

{odor} Of different flowers in order and in hue,
 Could make me any summer's story tell,
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they
 grew;
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

The forward violet thus did I chide: --
Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet
 that smells,
If not from my love's breath? The purple pride
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,
In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dy'd.
The lily I condemned for thy hand,
And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair:
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair;
A third nor red nor white, had stolen of both,
And to his robbery had annex'd thy breath;
But for his theft, in pride of all his growth
A vengeful canker eat him up to death.
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.

Here we assume that the Fifth Paper closes. It must be

admitted, however, that the evidence for this is not so strong, as that which settles the closing points of the preceding papers. There is no Envoy Sonnet,¹ here, marking the dispatch, of the Paper; and it is only from the opening Sonnet C that we make the inference that Sonnet XCIX was separated from it by an interval of time. Indeed, it might be plausible to suppose some disarrangement of the Sonnets at this point, out of their chronological order. Nothing, however, is to be got by such a supposition; and it will serve the purposes of clearness to proceed on the view we have advanced.

Marginal notation

¹Sonnet LXXXI, which seems out of place among the Sonnets about the rival poet, may have been the envoy.

Sixth Paper

being

A short epistle of Sonnets addressed by the Poet to his friend.

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From the manner in which this Paper opens it is clearly to be inferred that the Poet has for some time refrained from paying to his friendship the customary tribute of verse. Like all other human feeling, this affection of the Poet, for his friend, is subject to change. Sometime it rises into incomprehensible fervor; at others, it sinks, so that the poet begins to be ashamed of his former extravagancies relating to it, and to question whether after all it is not a hallucination. One of these colder and more critical periods, it would seem has followed that during which the Fifth Paper was composed. The Poet, pushing aside in this matter-of-fact mood, the thoughts that have been clinging to him, plunges into commoner themes. He has been busy, probably on his "Twelfth Night," or his "Merry Wives of Windsor," both of which seem to have been written about this time. Still frequently seeing his friend, as we will suppose, he has for some time written nothing to him. Suddenly, however, he takes up his pen and commits to paper a new Sonnet, the first of another series.

Sonnet C.

To my Muse, a reproach.

Where art thou Muse, that thou forget'st so long
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?

Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,
 Darkening thy power, to lend base subjects light?
 Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem
 In gentle numbers time so idly spent;
 Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,
 And gives thy pen both skill and argument.
 {resty} Rise restive Muse, my love's sweet face survey,
 If Time have any wrinkle graven there;
 If any, be a satire to decay,
 And make Time's spoils despised everywhere.
 Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life;
 So thou prevent'st his scythe, and crooked knife.

[Can the base subjects here alluded to be the two jovial
 knights Sir Toby Belch and Sir John Falstaff? Would
 "Twelfth Night" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor" come in
 Shakespeare's mind, within the category of "worthless
 song?"]

The Muse does not yet escape; she is rated in another
 Sonnet.

Sonnet CI

To my truant Muse.

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends,
 For thy neglect of truth in beauty dy'd?
 Both truth and beauty on my love depends;
 So dost thou too, and therein dignify'd.
 Make answer, Muse, wilt thou not haply say,
 Truth needs no colour with his colour fix'd,

Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay;
But best is best, if never intermix'd? --
Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse not silence so; for it lies in thee
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,
And to be prais'd of ages yet to be.
Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee, how
To make him seem long hence as he shows now.

From the tone of this Sonnet and its predecessor, light and fanciful as they both are, one perceives that the Poet's friendship is not in the same earnest and vigorous mood in which we have so often witnessed it. His friend apparently has of late been occupying less of his thoughts. It is probably, indeed, a complaint made to him by his friend on this very score, that has prompted him to take up his pen; for in the Sonnet that follows we have an express, and though very pretty, scarcely sufficient apology for his seeming neglect.

Sonnet CII.

To my friend that I love him as much as ever.

My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in
seeming;
I love not less, though less the show appear;
That love is merchandis'd, whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.
Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
When I was wont to greet it with my lays;

As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:
Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
But that wild music burthens every bough,
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue,
Because I would not dull you with my song.

[In the finely intellectual aptness of this excuse, one perceives a lack of sincerity. His friend apparently has complained that he loves him less now than he did at first; at least that he shows his love less, having ceased his poetical proofs of it. "Ah!" says Shakespeare, "as the nightingale sings in early summer, but ceases to sing as the season advances, when every bough being burthened with music, her sweet song would be wasted; so I who wrote so much to you while our love was in the spring, think it less necessary to write often to you now. This, however, is no sign of diminished love."]

"Ay, but it is" the youth might have replied with justice. It is clear in fact, that Shakespeare, half unconsciously, is beginning to release himself from the slavery of affection in which he has been long held. His Muse, he himself finds, is jaded; and he requires to stir her up. Thus in the next Sonnet, he again begs to be excused for his default of expression; and in the same uneasy manner.

Sonnet CIII.

To my friend, that my verses are needless.

Alack, what poverty my muse brings forth,
That having such a scope to show her pride,
The argument, all bare, is of more worth,
Than when it hath my added praise beside.
O blame me not if I no more can write!
Look in your glass, and there appears a face
That over-goes my blunt invention quite,
Dulling my lines, and doing me disgrace.
Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,
To mar the subject that before was well?
For to no other pass my verses tend,
Than of your graces and your gifts to tell;
And more, much more, than in my verse can sit,
Your own glass shows you, when you look in it.

The complaints of his friend, and the comparisons instituted between the assiduity of his Muse at the commencement of their friendship, and recent idleness, are still evidently in the mind of the Poet. Looking back, he remembers that it is now three years since this friendship began. His friend is three years older than he was then; and those early Sonnets which he wrote persuading him to marriage would be now very inapplicable. Since that time his friend has worn off the bloom of his boyish innocence, has mingled with the world, partaken of its follies, and even, as we have seen, been tainted with its vices. All this is in the poet's mind, when he writes as follows:

Sonnet CIV

To my friend, that his beauty lasts.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were, when first your eye I ey'd,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
Have from the forest shook three summer's pride;
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd,
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh which yet are green.
Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd.
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth
stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceiv'd.
For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred,
Ere you were born, was beauty's summer dead.

[On the importance of this sonnet, as determining, in connexion with Sonnet CII, the continuity and common tendency of the whole collection of Sonnets, and disproving the idea that they are a mere aggregation of heterogeneous pieces, and also as fixing the period of Shakespeare's life over which they extend, we have remarked at sufficient length in the Preliminary Exposition.]

Still we see the poet is speculating on the condition of his own mind. Nay, in the calmer and more common sense state of feeling into which he has fallen, he begins to have

a consciousness that in these Sonnets to his friend so hyperbolic, so exaggerated, he has laid himself open to the charge of arrant insanity. Foreseeing this judgment of posterity, he replies to it by anticipation. Thus:

Sonnet CV

That my love is not idolatry.

Let not my love be called idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be,
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
Kind is my love today, to-morrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse to constancy confin'd,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
Fair, kind, and true, have often liv'd alone,
Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

[Here also, we have a protest from the Poet's own pen against hypothesis that these Sonnets are a mere collection of fugitive pieces, without necessary connexion. "All his songs and praises" he says, "are to one, of one, and still the same -- for the argument does not vary" -- a fact which any person, not blind, reading the Sonnets, will see for himself.]

Thus criticising his own manner of writing of his friend, it occurs to the Poet to think of such descriptions of beauty as he had read in books. Hence the following Sonnet.

Sonnet CVI

To my friend, that the ancients foresaw him.

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights,
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
They had not still enough your worth to sing:
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

The Sonnets of this Paper, hitherto, seem all to have arisen out of the supposed state of mind of the Poet, when accused of forgetting his friend. That which follows, however, looks as if it had been written independently, as an appendage or Envoy to the preceding.

Sonnet CVII

That in this happy time, my Friendship blooms afresh.

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Suppos'd as forfeit to a confin'd doom.
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

[This is a very remarkable Sonnet. The allusions in Shakespeare's writings to contemporary events, are, we all know, very rare. He seems to have interested himself only in the general, the permanent; and to have let the great current of things rush unheeded past him. It is only in this way that we can account for the fact that so little information respecting his life remains. Has Shakespeare either commemorated his relations with outward society, as Ben Jonson did, by innumerable critical comments on men and things, seized as they floated past his vision, or had he acted so that society would have been obliged to commemorate its relations with him; we should have known much more of him, than we now do. As it was, however, he came in contact

with society only in so far as it was necessary to live; and the object of his life was to disguise in universal language all that he thus learnt at his personal expense. Yet a diligent critic of the writings of Shakespeare will detect references in them to external circumstances as they affected their author. The present Sonnet, as we sought to indicate by the title prefixed to it, is of this nature. We have not been able to identify the newspaper allusions, if they may be so-called, which it contains -- the "balmy time," the "incertainties crowned assured," the "peace proclaimed." Evidently, however, there is a reference to some happy condition of the public and political mind of England, during the last years of the reign of Elizabeth. The exact determination of the date will depend on the possibility of verifying by research into the history of the period, certain more minute particulars mentioned in the Sonnet. There is an allusion it will be observed, to an eclipse of the moon, that had been made the subject of some daring astrological predictions. So, at least, we interpret the Sonnet; nor is it possible, as we imagine, to make sense of it in any other way. The Sonnet, in our reading of it, casts itself into the following shape. "Neither my own fears, nor the prophetic soul of the world dreaming of future things can affect the duration of my love, destined, as they were lately telling us, to be suddenly abridged. The prophets were in the wrong. The eclipse of the moon, which they told us, was to be accompanied by such convulsions in Nature, and such disasters to the state, is past; and the prophets are yet alive to mock their own

presage. Things that, a while ago, being uncertain, have now come to pass; and the happy condition in which we now find ourselves, assures us that our old world has yet many years of existence before it. Under these genial influences my love looks fresh, and Death still yields to my prowess as a poet, seeing that, though I am to be taken away myself, there are still to be future generations of mankind, to which I may speak of thee through this which I have written."]

Seventh Paper

being

Some Sonnets addressed by the Poet to his friend, after a period of estrangement.

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Not long after the composition of the 8 Sonnets constituting the preceding Paper, the Poet, as we imagine, undertook a journey into the northern parts of the island in his professional character as a Player. It may even be assumed, if the arguments adduced in the Preliminary Exposition possess any weight, that he was in Scotland; that he played before King James in Edinburgh; that he visited Aberdeen with his company, supped with the magistrates there, when his friend Laurence Fletcher was made a burghess of the good town; and that in the course of this tour he picked up a few Scottish words, and fag-ends of ballads, listened to the accounts of many Scottish trials for witchcraft, and in the whole collected a sufficient amount of knowledge and tradition to serve him for his Macbeth, where, some two years afterwards, he should propose to himself that Scottish subject for a drama.

This journey, we will suppose, consumes the summer and autumn of 1601; and Shakespeare returns to London as the winter of 1601-2 sets in. If, as we learn from the Paper sixth (which, as we have seen, was probably written in 1600-1) the Poet, before his departure had given his friend reason to complain of a declension of his friendship; he even deliberately evades his friend's society, on the strength of what, as he himself describes it, appears to

have been a mere whim. This is resented by his friend; and for a while the two are strangers. At length, however, they are brought together, again; and in reply to his friend's severe reproaches, the Poet musters his reasons and excuses in a number of Sonnets, constituting almost a continuous series; so evidently are they the produce of one protracted state of feeling.

The first Sonnet of the series indicates, by the manner in which it opens, that it breaks a silence of some length.

Sonnet CVIII

To my friend, that to praise him, has become a habit.

What's in the brain that ink may character,
Which hath not figur'd to thee my true spirit?
What's new to speak, what new to register,
That may express my love, or thy dear merit?
Nothing, sweet boy; but yet, like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same;
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Even as when first I hallow'd thy fair name.
So that eternal love in love's fresh case,
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page;
Finding the first conceit of love there bred,
Where time and outward form would show it dead.

It is in the following Sonnet that the Poet makes the first allusion to his absence. The allusion, however, is

somewhat vague.

Sonnet CIX

To my friend, accusing me of abated affection.

O, never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify!
As easy might I from myself depart,
As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie:
That is my home of love; if I have rang'd,
Like him that travels. I return again;
Just to the time, not with the time exchang'd, --
So that myself bring water for my stain.
Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stain'd,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all.

The Poet's friend, it seems, makes some accusation against him to the effect, that, in his professional travels he has found opportunities to forget him. To this the Poet replies.

Sonnet CX

To my friend, accusing me ungenerously.

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

dear,
 Made old offences of affections new.
 Most true it is, that I have look'd on truth
 Askance and strangely; but by all above,
 These blenches gave my heart another youth,
 And worse essays prov'd thee my best of love.
 {have} Now all is done, save what shall have no end:
 Mine appetite I never more will grind
 On newer proof, to try an older friend,
 A God in love, to whom I am confin'd.
 Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
 Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.

[Nothing could more strongly express Shakespeare's disgust with the life of an actor, than the words he has chosen in this wonderful Sonnet. To go here and there -- a poor strolling player! To make oneself a motley to the view -- to appear that is, on a stage dressed in black, yellow scarlet etc! Gored his own thoughts --drawn his heart's blood, that is, in order to furnish matter for his dramas; or, it may be, -- mis-acted his own creations! Sold cheap what is most dear -- lavished in a line or two, experience, that it may have cost him bitter years to acquire! Made old offences of affections new -- insinuated, that is, his own personal history into the conceptions of his dramas, with their Kings and Queens and Prosperos and Laertes; or, in the language of modern criticism, made the subjective seem objective!² In all this, in the reduction of the manifold realities of a hard and stern life to the requirements of

audiences seeking mere amusement, he had no doubt looked on truth askance and strangely --yielded, sometimes, to the craving for stage-effect, and done a Dumas thing or two. But these blenches of the last few weeks had given his heart another youth; that is, out of the artificiality and gross companionship with which he had been environed for a time, he had returned eagerly to the freshness of Nature, and the feelings of his solitary boyhood in the green woods of the Avon.² And now etc.]

The sore subject of his professional life having been started, Shakespeare cannot easily quit it. The two Sonnets that follow may be read either separately or together.

Sonnet CXI

To my friend, a complaint of my worldly estate.

O, for my sake do you with fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means, which publick manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd,
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
Pity me then, and wish I were renew'd;
Whilst like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eysell 'gainst my strong infection;
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance, to correct correction.
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.

[Here a double reason is assigned by Shakespeare for his dislike to the stage; its being a proscribed and branded profession at that time and therefore repugnant to his sense of personal dignity as a citizen, and his own experience of its bad effects on one's whole manner of life and thought -- the mind taking its colour from the material it works in, as the dyer's hand from the stuff in which it paddles.]

Sonnet CXII.

To my friend, appended to the foregoing.

Your love and pity doth the impression fill³
Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow;
For what care I who calls me well or ill,
So you o'ergreen my bad, my good allow?
You are my all-the-world, and I must strive
To know my shames and praises from your tongue;
None else to me, nor I to none alive,
That my steel'd sense or changes, right or wrong.⁴
In so profound abysm I throw all care
Of other's voices, that my adder's sense
To critic and to flatter stopped are.
Mark how with my neglect I do dispense:
You are so strongly in my purpose bred,
That all the world besides methinks are dead.

[From the language of this Sonnet one is led to infer that, although the relationship between Shakespeare and his friend was one of strict equality, yet the position which his

friend occupied in society was such that his intimacy with the poet, would have the appearance of patronage to indifferent observers. The general reference of the Sonnet, however, is not to the rank of the person addressed, but to his affection for the Poet.]

The two Sonnets that follow evidently go together, or seem as if though inserted here, they had been originally written during the journey to which allusion has been made.

Sonnets CXIII-CXIV

To my friend, that wherever I go, I am full of him.

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
And that which governs me to go about,
Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
Seems seeing, but effectually is out;
For it no form delivers to the heart
Of bird, of flower, or shape, which it doth latch^a
Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch;
For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
The most sweet favour, or deform'st creature,
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,
The crow or dove, it shapes them to your feature.
Incapable of more, replete with you,
My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.

Or whether doth my mind, being crown'd with you,
Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery,
Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,

And that your love taught it this alchemy,
To make of monsters and things indigest,
Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble,
Creating every bad a perfect best,
As fast as objects to his beams assemble?
O, 'tis the first; 'tis flattery in my seeing,
And my great mind most kingly drinks it up:
Mine eye well knows what with his^s gust is
 'greeing,
And to his palate doth prepare the cup;
If it be poison'd, 'tis the lesser sin
That mine eye loves it, and doth first begin.

[In this little piece, and especially in the second stanza, we have an example, of Shakespeare's inordinate fondness for representing his meaning to himself and to others through some analogy appropriate only by a sort of intellectual strain or sufferance. The tenor of the piece is as follows: "Since I left you my eye seems to have parted with its function, for whatever it sees, beauty or ugliness, mountain or sea, day or night, crow, dove, or flower -- it shapes them all to your feature. Why is this? Is it that my eyes, seeing how my mind is crowned with you, act as the courtiers of all crowned persons do, and present nothing but flatteries for its acceptance, or is it that my eyesight is true, and that my mind is gifted with this power {to} transmute all forms into your semblance. O, it is the first; it is my eye that acts the flatterer. Knowing well the taste of my mind, my eye, its courtier, is careful to

prepare what is best suited for its palate; it hands the cup humbly inward."

"And my great mind most kingly drinks it up." Let not this noble line be misinterpreted! The "great mind" and the "most kingly" are it will be observed, not bursts of conscious greatness from the Poet as an individual, but mere parts of an extraordinary simile that he chances to be prosecuting at the moment.

If we understand the piece as literally true, how ideal must have been the attachment between the Poet and his friend.

There's no a bonnie flower that blaws
By fountain, shaw, or stream,
There's no a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean.

So says Burns of his love; but here Shakespeare claims the same magic power over Nature for his friendship.

Another thing is to be observed in this little piece; namely that it corroborates the notion, rendered probable by other arguments, that Shakespeare's tour was no mere excursion in the neighborhood of London. Note the natural objects which he singles out for specification, when he speaks of the power of his eye to shape all appearances to the likeness of his friend.

The rud'st or gentlest sight
The most sweet favour, or deform'd creature
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,
The crow or dove.

By no means the likeliest assemblage of things in the

thoughts of a traveller in the south-east of England; but almost precisely the inventory that a tourist would make who had been travelling all day along a Scottish road.]

In the next Sonnet, the Poet resumes his declarations that his love is not diminished.

Sonnet CXV

That I was wrong when I said I could not love my friend.

Those lines that I before have writ, do lie,
Even those that said I could not love you dearer;
Yet then my judgment knew no reason why
My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.
But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
Divert strong minds to the course of altering
things; Alas! why, fearing of time's tyranny,
Might I not then say, now I love you best,
When I was certain o'er incertainty,
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?
Love is a babe; then might I not say so,
To give full growth to that which still doth grow?

[What "those lines" are to which reference is made in this Sonnet -whether any of the preceding Sonnets, or any other Sonnet now lost -- it is impossible to say. "But" in the fifth line seems to mean "without."]]

In the following Sonnet, one of the noblest of the collection, the same subject is continued:

Sonnet CXVI

That love is eternal.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:⁷
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and
cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Lover alters not with his brief hour and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

In the two Sonnets that follow, the fact that there had been some decided estrangement between the two friends is more closely signified than in any of the preceding; as well as the fact that this estrangement had been occasioned, not as in the former case, by fickleness and petulance on the part of the youth, but by some unaccountable resolution on the part of Shakespeare, to adopt, temporarily at least, a totally new line of conduct, in all that concerned his relation with his friend.

Sonnets CXVII and CXVIII.

To my friend, whom I have wronged, my excuse.

Accuse me thus; that I have scanted all
Wherein I should your great deserts repay;
Forgot upon your dearest love to call,
Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day;
That I have frequent been with unknown minds,
And given to time your own dear-purchas'd right;
That I have hoisted sail to all the winds
Which should transport me farthest from your
sight.

Book both my wilfulness and errors down,
And on just proof, surmise accumulate,
Bring me within the level of your frown,
But shoot not at me in your waken'd hate:
Since my appeal says, I did strive to prove
The constancy and virtue of your love.

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,
With eager compounds we our palate urge:
As, to prevent our maladies unseen,
We sicken to shun sickness, when we purge;
Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying
sweetness,
To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding,
And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness
To be diseas'd, ere that there was true needing.
Thus policy in love, to anticipate

The illls that were not, grew to faults assur'd,
And brought to medicine a heathful state,
Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be cured.
But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

A continuation of the foregoing, and possibly intended to be read in connexion with it; are the 2 Sonnets that immediately follow.

Sonnets CXIX-CXX

To my friend, whom I have wronged, my repentance.

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears,
Distill'd from limbecs foul as hell within,
Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,
Still losing when I saw myself to win!
What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never!
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been
fitted, In the distraction of this madding fever!
O benefit of ill! now I find true
That better is by evil still made better;
And ruin'd love, when it is built anew,
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far
greater.

So I return rebuk'd to my content,
And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.

That you were once unkind, befriends me now,

And for that sorrow, which I then did feel,
Needs must I under my transgression bow,
Unless my nerves were brass or hammer'd steel.
For if you were by my unkindness shaken,
As I by yours, you have pass'd a hell of time:
And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken
To weigh how once I suffer'd in your crime.
O that our night of woe might have remember'd
My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,
And soon to you, as you to me, then tender'd
The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits!
But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

[Let us pause a little over these and the two preceding Sonnets, so as, if possible, fairly to penetrate their meaning. Can any of our readers recollect a moment in his own life when he was unaccountably moved to take some particular resolution; which resolution he then persisted in keeping, with a sort of listless tenacity for many weeks or months, cherishing all the while a vague assurance that matters would end precisely as this resolution rendered it next to impossible that they should? Remember, reader, if thou canst, the place and the hour when such a resolution was whispered to thee by the fiend -- the dark bridge, for instance, with the waters rushing underneath, walking over which at midnight, thou didst vow, no more for weeks to see her who had that evening offended thee, and whose mild eyes thou hadst parted with so coldly! Thy conviction doubtless

was, that some unknown good would come of this grand resolve of thine! But wert thou not outwitted by the result? And are not that hour and spot now accursed in thy memory? O, there is nothing more sure to bring its punishment than such a whim-resolve, that breaks the being of man out of all harmony, suffering the imagination still to revel, where the feet can no more go! Yet often we play such tricks with our own welfare. Sometimes it is a feeling of momentary anger that prompts the resolution; sometimes it is a politic device to gain a special end; sometimes it is mere impatience of affairs as they are, and a desire to appeal to the chapter of accidents. Then, the resolution having been preserved^e in for a time, pride persuades its continuance. Meanwhile the difficulty of resuming the position that one has quitted, becomes every day greater. O, the absurdity of expecting that events will shape themselves to one's purposes, in any other way than through one's own activity present in the midst of them to modify them as they arise!

Precisely, such a whim-resolution as we have thus fortitiously described, was that which caused the temporary estrangement between Shakespeare and his friend, referred to in the Sonnets under notice. First in Sonnet CXVII we have the fact of the estrangement distinctly indicated.

Accuse me thus; that I have scanted all
Wherein I should your great deserts repay
Forgot upon your dearest love to call
Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day
That I etc

Then, that the estrangement originated in a whim-resolution

on the part of Shakespeare, appears from his own confession,
in Sonnet CXVIII.

Like as to make our appetites more keen
With eager compounds we our palate urge
As, to prevent our maladies unseen
We sicken to shun sickness, when we purge,
Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying
sweetness,

To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding,
And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness,
To be diseas'd, ere that there was true needing.

The issue was as might have been expected, for Nature will
not permit such rash experiments in the powers of
sufferance.

Thus policy in love, to anticipate
The ills that were not, grew to faults assur'd,
And brought to medicine a heathful state.

And again in Sonnet CXIX

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears
Distill'd from limbecs foul as hell within
Applying fears to hopes etc

Fortunately, however, the bow was not bent so far as to
break; and the history of Shakespeare's whim-resolution,
ended more genially than often happens in similar cases.

O, benefit of ill! now I find true
That better is by evil still made better;
And ruin'd love when it is built anew,
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far
greater.

So I return rebuk'd, to my content

And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.

In his experience, the Poet it will be observed, derives consolation from the remembrance of a former occasion, on which he had suffered in a similar manner from his friend's unkindness. Thus, in Sonnet CXX

That you were once unkind, befriends me now

And for that sorrow, which I then did feel

Needs must I etc

and again

O that our night of woe might have remember'd⁹

My deepest sense etc

The allusion here, probably, is to the time at which owing to the interposition of the other Poet, Shakespeare lost his friend's society.]

Another thing, however, now becomes clear to us respecting this difference between the Poet and his friend, namely that malevolent reports regarding the Poet have been reaching his friend. What company the Poet was keeping, and how he was occupying his time, have evidently been matters of the deepest interest to his friend, and regarding which he has been forming conjectures and seeking information. Thus, in Sonnet CXVII

Book both my wilfulness and errors down

And on just proof, surmise accumulate

But far more explicit is the statement in the following extraordinary Sonnet.

Sonnet CXXI

To my friend, against those that malign me to him.

'Tis better to be vile, than vile esteem'd,
When not to be receives reproach of being,
And the just pleasure lost, which is so deem'd
Not by our feeling, but by others' seeing.
For why should others' false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive blood?
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
Which in their wills count bad what I think good?
No --I am that I am; and they that level
At my abuses, reckon up their own:
I may be straight, though they themselves be
bevel;
By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown;
Unless this general evil they maintain, --
All men are bad, and in their badness reign.

[As Shakespeare himself, on a former occasion, had doubtless listened with jealous credulity to reports brought him concerning the behavior of his friend whom he could not see, and who was lavishing on others the kindness which he conceived to belong only to himself, so it appears, the youth had now, with similar credulity been listening to evil reports concerning the Poet. He was moving about freely through Society, they would tell him, indulging in various follies -- a thorough man of the world. That story, for instance, of the trick played by Shakespeare to Burbidge, that was told by Mr. Tooley to the anonymous member of one of the inns of court whose diary is quoted by Mr. Collier,

and in which diary the story is entered under the date of March 13th 1601 -- could this or any similar story of the Poet have been reported to his friend to aggravate the feeling caused by his prolonged unkindness; would this have been again reported to Shakespeare; and could the present Sonnet be Shakespeare's denial of the truth of any such story? From the peculiar language employed in the Sonnet we should decidedly say yes!]

From the Sonnet that follows, we learn an additional particular that cannot fail to interest us:

Sonnet CXXII.

An excuse for parting with my friend's gift.

Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain
Full character'd with lasting memory,
Which shall above that idle rank remain,
Beyond all date, even to eternity:
Or at the least so long as brain and heart
Have faculty by nature to subsist;
Till each to raz'd oblivion yield his part
Of thee, thy record never can be miss'd.
That poor retention could not so much hold,
Nor need I tallies, thy dear love to score;
Therefore to give them from me was I bold,
To trust those tables that receive thee more;
To keep an adjunct to remember thee,
Were to import forgetfulness in me.

[This Sonnet, according to our interpretation of it, is plainly Shakespeare's answer to a question put to him by his

friend, as to what has become of a little gift -- a memorandum book or set of ivory writing tablets -- with which his friend had once presented him, but which was not now in his possession. Whether the youth had himself seen his gift to Shakespeare, in other hands, or whether he had merely learnt casually that the Poet had parted with it, cannot be known; but the probability, at all events is, that he showed his mortification on account of the circumstance in such a way as to make the foregoing apology necessary on the part of the Poet -- an apology, however, which will hardly exonerate him in the eyes of those that like to be careful even of withered rose-leaves if from friendly fingers. "There are tablets in his brain," he says, "fully written over with recollections of his friend; these would last forever; the ivory tablets, therefore, were of less consequence, and might readily be spared."]

The chief purpose of the 7th Paper of Sonnets seems to be to assert the endurance of the Poet's affection for his friend, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary and to this topic the Poet now returns.

Sonnet CXXIII and CXXIV.

To my friend, that my love is perpetual.

No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change:
The pyramids built up with newer might
To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
They are but dressings of a former sight.
Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
What thou dost foist upon us that is old;

And rather make them born to our desire,
Than think that we before have heard them told.
Thy registers and thee I both defy,
Not wondering at the present nor the past;
For thy records and what we see do lie,
Made more or less by thy continual haste:
This I do vow, and this shall ever be,
I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.

If my dear love were but the child of state,
It might for fortune's bastard be unfather'd
As subject to time's love, or to time's hate,
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers
gather'd.

No, it was builded far from accident;
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
Under the blow of thrall'd discontent,
Whereto the inviting time our fashion calls:
It fears not policy, that heretick,
Which works on leases, of short-number'd hours,
But all alone stands hugely politick,
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with
showers.

To this I witness call the fools of time,
Which die for goodness, who have liv'd for crime.

[In the second of these stanzas there are evident allusions to the state of public affairs at the time. Can the Poet refer to any of those instances of infidelity in friendship,

brought out by the downfall of the popular Earl of Essex, who had been executed for high treason in the beginning of 1601. Viewing the conduct of some of the Earl's former friends on this occasion, he might well say of a true friendship like his own

No, it was builded far from accident
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
Under the blow of thrall'd discontent
Whereto the inviting time our fashion calls.

The reference, however, may be to some other event of the time.]

The next Sonnet seems to have been written under the same feeling that prompted the preceding; but the wording of it is much more obscure.

Sonnet CXXV.

To my friend, that my love is not founded on interest.

Were it aught to me I bore the canopy,
With my extern the outward honouring,
Or laid great bases for eternity,
Which prove more short than waste or ruining?
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
Lose all, and more, by paying too much rent,
For compound sweet forgoing simple savour,
Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent?
No; let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
Which is not mix'd with seconds, knows no art,
But mutual render, only me for thee.

Hence, thou suborn'd informer! a true soul,
When most impeach'd, stands least in thy control.

[Who is the "suborn'd informer"; and what was the occasion that rendered such a declaration from Shakespeare of the disinterestedness of his friendship necessary?]

With this Sonnet apparently the Paper ends; and it is some time afterwards that Shakespeare reviewing it all, we will suppose, in some calm mood, adds the following little piece of 12 lines --partly as an Envoy to the Paper, partly as a superscription to the entire collection of Sonnets now purposely brought to a close. The piece, it will be observed, is not properly a Sonnet at all, even after the Shakespeare model; it is a mere appendage of six disticks in the decasyllabic metre -- a change which seems significant of the author's intention to wind up all that he has written to his friend with this little morsel. We entitle the piece accordingly,

Sonnet CXXVI.

Being a superscription to all the Sonnets I have written to my friend.

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour;
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
Thy lover's withering, as thy sweet self grow'st!
If nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill,

May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill.
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure
She may detain, but not still keep her treasure:
Her audit, though delayed, answer'd must be,
And her quietus is to render thee.

=====

And thus the curtain drops. These words were written
in 1601-2 when Shakespeare was in his 39th year; and in 1616
he died at the age of 53:

The noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of Time.

=====

Marginal Notations

²His disgust is with play acting and perhaps "the incidents of his professional tour" (pp. 155/6 {of m.s.; pp. 122-24 of this text}) not with writing his plays tho his "hearts blood" may be in them - (see two following sonnets)
-I find the suggestion abominable

²his return is to his friend -- not to the woods of
Avon

³fill up

efface

⁴(?)

⁵lay hold of

⁶his = my mind's

⁷x

⁸persevered

⁹reminded

Part III

Supplement of Historical Particulars

Hitherto we have conducted our interpretation of the Sonnets almost entirely from within outwards, making their story appear, as far as possible, out of the various portions of the collection, individually, and as they throw light upon each other. It remains to undertake a supplementary enquiry, of which the aim shall be to collect out of the history of the period any such particulars as may illustrate the meaning of the Sonnets still more, by enabling us to fill in the local and personal associations. In other words, we are to ascertain how far it is possible to fix down on actual persons known to have existed, and actual incidents known to have occurred, the various allusions contained in the Sonnets.

There are three main questions over which the curiosity of the reader will naturally divide itself: 1. Who was the youth so largely referred to throughout all the Sonnets, and to whom the first 126 of them were addressed? 2. Who was the woman so notably alluded to in some of these Sonnets, and addressed in the others? 3. Who was the "other Poet" mentioned in Sonnets LXXVIII-LXXXVI?

As regards the second of these questions, we are still totally in the dark, and shall probably always remain so; considerable approaches, however, have been made towards a solution of the other two. As the credit of the first

attempt thoroughly to evolve the meaning of the Sonnets from within, is due to Mr. Brown, so the credit of the first plausible identification by research, of two of the persons alluded to in the sonnets with names actually known in history, belongs to another enquirer -- Mr. James Boaden.

The clue used by Mr. Boaden, and indeed by all that have prosecuted the same investigation, is that afforded by the short dedication prefixed by the publisher, Thomas Thorpe, to the original Edition of the Sonnets:

"To the

Only begetter of these ensuing Sonnets,

Mr. W. H.

All happiness and that eternity promised by our ever-living
Poet, wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth,

T. T."

The natural impression on reading these words is that the Mr. W. H., whoever he was, to whom T. T. thus dedicates the Sonnets, was known by T. T. to be the subject of them, or at least of the greater proportion of them. This is the plain meaning of the term "only begetter" as applied to Mr. W. H. Those, however, that deny the unity of the collection, and maintain the thrice preposterous supposition that the Sonnets are a medley of fugitive pieces are, of course, obliged to avoid this interpretation. Accordingly they explain "only begetter" to mean "only procurer" or "only gather-up of." Mr. W. H., according to this view, is the person who, either of his own accord, or as agent of the publisher, collected the Sonnets out of the albums etc in which they lay scattered about, and carried them, twos and

threes at a time, to the printing office! In consideration of this editorial labour, (miserably ill-performed, we must say,) the generous publisher thought it requisite to dedicate the collection to Mr. W. H., wishing him "all happiness and" -- here lies the stumbling block -- "that eternity promised by our ever-living Poet"! --In short, the supposition is absurd.

We must abide, therefore, by our original impression that the Mr. W. H. of the dedication was the actual person addressed in so many of the Sonnets; and that it was probably he that furnished copies of them, if not the original manuscripts to the bookseller. It certainly follows, on this supposition, that the publisher erred when he called Mr. W. H. the "only begetter" of the Sonnets; a portion of them having been plainly "begotten" by a woman. But if we imagine Mr. W. H. to have had in his possession copies of the twenty eight sonnets that had been addressed to this woman, as well as the originals of those that had been addressed to himself, and to have furnished the whole at once to the publisher -- this error will seem the more excusable. Or, again, it is possible that the twenty eight may have found their way into the publisher's hands, while the others were in their progress through the press, and that, having already printed off the dedication, he may not have thought it worth while to alter it. In either case we suppose --what, however, is by no means certain -- that Shakespeare himself had no concern with the publication.

Who, then, was this mysterious Mr. W. H. that has been cheated so long of that immortality promised by our ever-

living Poet?

Till lately there were eager individuals who claimed the honor for a certain nephew, a sister's son of the Poet, whose existence had been revealed by independent research, and whose name was William Harte. A slight objection to this hypothesis is to be found in the fact that the young gentleman in question was not born till 1600; and that, consequently, he must have been precisely nine years of age when the Sonnets were dedicated to him, and at that very peculiar age, which would be expressed mathematically as -- 3 years, when his uncle advised him to marry, and beget another like himself.

No other actual Mr. W. H. appearing, some have conjured up an imaginary William or Walter Hughes, justifying the license by referring to a line that occurs in Sonnet XX

A man in hue, all hues in his controlling.
printed in the original edition thus:

A man in hew, all Hews in his controlling.
just as in the punning Sonnets CXXXV, CXXXVI, CXLIII, the poet's own name of Will is italicised and printed with an initial capital. This, however, seems to be a very insufficient reason for bringing an additional individual named Hughes into so wicked a world; especially, as after all, the line that he was created to explain, would remain unintelligible.

The critic Chalmers had a notion that Mr. W. H. could be no other than Queen Elizabeth -- a supposition, than which it may be said the force of nonsense could go no farther. Others, arguing that the nearest thing to Mr. W.

H. is Mr. H. W. have contended that the person to whom the Sonnets were addressed was Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton. This idea, it must be admitted had something in its favor. It was to the Earl of Southampton that Shakespeare had dedicated only several years before his two poems "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece"; and that he was on terms of intimate friendship with this nobleman is proved as well by these dedications as by the celebrated letters of Lord Southampton (if that be genuine) to Lord Chancellor Ellesmere. "The love I dedicate to your lordship," says Shakespeare in the dedication to his "Rape of Lucrece" published in 1594 "is without end, whereof this pamphlet without beginning is a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honorable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship, to whom I wish my life, still lengthened with happiness -- your Lordship's in all duty -- William Shakespeare." This certainly indicates that the poet was on terms of intimacy with the Earl; and why, it is asked, should not this Earl, to whom he thus wrote in 1594, be the person to whom the Sonnets were addressed some years later?

Unfortunately, however, even should the transposition of the initials W. H. be tolerated, the age of the Earl of Southampton, and the known circumstances of his life do not correspond sufficiently with the picture that the Sonnets themselves present of the person who was their subject.

Born in 1573, the Earl could scarcely have been called a "lovely boy" in 1601-2; and even so early as 1596, he was engaged in public services of such importance, that it is scarcely possible that Shakespeare could have addressed him merely as a youth of promise.

Sweeping the ground of all these suppositions, Mr. Boaden has planted one of his own instead; namely, that the Mr. W. H. of these Sonnets was William Herbert, eldest son of Henry third {second} Earl of Pembroke, and Lady Mary, the sister of the brave Sir Philip Sidney. Born on the 8th of April 1580, this nobleman entered Oxford in 1592; succeeded his father in the Earldom the 19th Jan. 1601-2, and, after a life of distinguished activity, during which he held high posts under the crown, and was regarded as one of the most liberal patrons of literature among the English peers died in April 1630, "the most universally esteemed and beloved" says the historian Clarendon, "of any man of that age."

The case in favor of the Earl of Pembroke, is, even as it has been left by Mr. Boaden, a strong one. The age of the Earl, it will be observed, is precisely that required. In 1597-8 he would be a youth of seventeen or eighteen, not yet entered on public life; and in 1601-2, at which period we have seen that the Sonnets close, he would "still be green." In other points, too, the correspondence is equally close. Portraits of him, still preserved, prove, what we learn otherwise, that he was possessed of singular personal beauty; and of his fine disposition and accomplishments there is abundant evidence in the various notices of him that remain -- all of them in a strain similar to that of

Clarendon. The fault attributed to him, as a blemish on his otherwise admirable character, is that he had a love of pleasure "in exorbitant proportion"; and this, too, answers to a feature indicated by some of the Sonnets as belonging to their subject. Lastly, that the Earl of Pembroke, known to be a patron of literature generally, had specially shown an interest in Shakespeare during his life, is clear from the fact that it was to this nobleman in conjunction with his younger brother, the Earl of Montgomery, that Heminge and Condell, the literary executors of the Poet dedicated the collected edition of his works, published in 1619. In the preface, they expressly state that their reason for selecting these two noblemen in such circumstances, was, that they had been friends of the Poet when alive.

Against these arguments in support of the view that the future Earl of Pembroke was the subject of Shakespeare's Sonnets -- there is but one objection of moment -- the extreme unlikelihood, namely, that the publisher of the Sonnets would have omitted the Earl's titles in his dedication, had he been the person meant. Even before his accession to his father's peerage, the proper designation of the person in question would have been Lord Herbert, or Lord William Herbert; and after that accession, he should have been addressed by his style and title, as, the Right Honorable William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke.

Now, certainly no publisher of that day or of this would address a peer of the realm by the style and title of a mere Commoner, unless by permission and with some special design. It is possible, however, as Mr. Boaden suggests,

that the titles may have been omitted at the instance of the Earl himself, who may have been induced by many considerations to prefer, in such a case, the incognito, as it would be to all except the initiated of the plain "Mr. W. H." The only effect of the objection stated, therefore, is to lessen the probability otherwise raised; and it remains, if possible, to bring forward additional particulars that will make up for this, and build the probability still higher.

As Mr. Boaden supposes the youth addressed in the Sonnets to have been William Lord Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke; so he supposes the "other Poet" to have been Shakespeare's contemporary, Samuel Daniel, who was born at Tarenton in Somersetshire in 1562 and who died in 1619. In support of this conjecture he cites such facts respecting Daniel as that he was a poet of the highest repute in his day; that he belonged to the learned school of poetry; that he was on terms of intimate acquaintance with the Countess of Pembroke, the mother of Lord Herbert, and herself a highly accomplished lady and an authoress; and, most important of all, that in 1602 he dedicated to the young Earl a pamphlet entitled "A Defense of Rhyne," which was afterwards bound up with an edition of his poems, published in 1603. Out of these and some other particulars Mr. Boaden tries to make out a case in favor of Daniel.

It is unnecessary to say that, the question of the identity of the "other Poet" being so bound up with that of the identity of the youth addressed in the Sonnets, the one must fall under the other, and be prosecuted along with it.

This being the case, the best method of procedure with a view either to confirm or confute Mr. Boaden's hypothesis that Daniel is the poet alluded to by Shakespeare, will be to collect such particulars as are now accessible, relative to the private history, at the period in question, of the Pembroke family, and especially of the young Lord, whom this honour seems even to await in addition to all that he bore in the eyes of the heralds -- that he was the dearest friend of the Player Shakespeare.

William Herbert, the first Earl of Pembroke, and descended, according to the genealogists either from Herbert a natural son of Henry I or from Henry Fitz-Herbert, Chamberlain to that king, acquired his title by new creation of Edward VI in 1551, the ancient peerage of Pembroke having fallen extinct. He died in April 1569, and was succeeded by his son Henry, the second Earl, and the father of the subject of our memoir.

Henry Earl of Pembroke was thrice times married. His third wife, by whom alone he had children, was Lady Mary, the daughter of Sir Henry Sidney, a knight highly distinguished for his public services under both Mary and Elizabeth, by the latter of whom he had been appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland and Lord President of Wales. The marriage of the Earl of Pembroke with this lady was brought about by her maternal uncle Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the favorite of Queen Elizabeth; and in the "Sidney Papers" we find a curious passage referring to the marriage in a letter

written to the Earl by Sir Henry Sidney. The letter which is dated "Dundalk 4th Feb. 1576, proceeds as follows: "Your Lordship's later-written letter I received the same day I did the first, together with one from my Lord of Pembroke to your Lordship; by both which I find, to my great comfort, the likelihood of a marriage between his Lordship and my daughter, which great honor to me, may mean lineage and kin, I attribute to my match in your noble house, for which I acknowledge myself bound to honour and serve the same to the uttermost of my power: Yea, so joyfully have I at heart that my dear child's so happy an advancement as this is, as, in truth, I would lie a year in close prison rather than it should break. But, alas! my dearest Lord mine ability answereth not to my hearty desire. I am poor: mine estate as well in livelihood as moveable is not unknown to your Lordship, which wanteth much to make me able to equal that which I know my Lord of Pembroke may have. L2000 I confess I have bequeathed to her, which your Lordship knoweth I might better spare her when dead than L1000, living; and, in truth, my Lord, I have it not. But borrow it I must, and so I will; and if your Lordship will give me leave that I may feed my eyes with that joyful sight of their coupling, I will give her a cup, worth L500. Good my Lord, bear with my poverty; for, if I had it, little would I regard any sum of money, but willingly would give it; protesting before Almighty God, that if He and all the powers of Earth would give me my choice for a husband for her, I would choose the Earl of Pembroke."

The Sidney Papers, 2 vols folio, Edited by Arthur

Collins, London 1746, vol I. 89. -----

Much to the good knight's satisfaction the marriage was almost immediately concluded. The families of the Sidneys and the Herberts became in this manner closely connected. On the one hand, the mansion of the Sidneys at Penshurst, in Kent, would be frequently visited by the Earl of Pembroke and his lady; and on the other, Sir Henry's three sons, Philip, Robert and Thomas, would have the liberty of their brother-in-law the Earl's town-residence, Baynard's Castle in Thames Street, and would sometimes be his guests at his chief seat, Wilton House in Wiltshire, where he and his Countess usually lived. It was in the calm retirement of Wilton House, and in the society of his accomplished sister, that in the year 1580, Sir Philip Sidney planned and wrote part of his Arcadia. In that very year, on the 8th of April, his nephew, the subject of our memoir was born. Named William, after his grandfather, he inherited, as the heir to the Earldom, the title-expectant of Lord Herbert; leaving the plainer designation of Mr. to his brother Philip, who was born two years after him. A daughter, Anne, born after this Philip, completed the family circle.

The year 1586 was an important one to the family at Wilton House. Early in the year Sir Henry Sidney died; and his son-in-law the Earl of Pembroke was appointed to succeed him in the distinguished office of "President of Wales," or, as the title was more fully written, "Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales." In October in the same year the gallant Sir Philip Sidney met a brave death in Holland, whither he had been sent by Elizabeth in the

capacity of Governor of Flushing, to assist the Dutch in their war against the Spaniards. Seldom was a death so lamented. All ranks, from the Queen to the meanest Englishman, mourned the loss of a knight so young and so chivalrous; to whom also the Literature of his country had looked as one of its ornaments.

Six years of age at the time of his distinguished uncle's death, the young Lord Herbert seems to have remained at Wilton House till his thirteenth year, when he was admitted as a nobleman of New College, Oxford. He continued at the University but two years; after which, instead of travelling, as was at that time usual for youths of his rank, he appears to have returned to Wilton House to complete his education privately under the eye of his mother. Here doubtless he imbibed that taste for literature, which, characteristic as it was of all the Sidney's, particularly distinguished the Countess of Pembroke. A poetess herself, a Hebrew scholar, and the editor of her deceased brother's Arcadia, she became recognised as one of the most competent patronesses of literature, then living; and various of the writers of the day established relations with her as such; and, both by praising her poems, and composing poems of their own of which she was the subject, endeavoured to cultivate her good opinion. Among these are mentioned Harvey, Daniel, Fraunce, Lock, Fitzjeffrey, Lanyer, Stradling, and Davies. Even Spenser spared a line for the accomplished Countess. He speaks of her as

The greatest Shephardess that lived that day

And most resembling both in shape and spirit
Her brother dear.

Educated in such an atmosphere as that of Wilton House, the young Lord Herbert must necessarily have acquired his mother's fondness for literature and the society of its votaries. Of superior natural abilities, he would doubtless attempt verses and other literary exercises himself after the fashion of a young nobleman of culture and taste. Amiable in disposition, the careful and private manner in which he had been educated had preserved in him, we must suppose, a gentleness and innocence charming to those who knew him. Add to this a singularly beautiful countenance and a handsome person, and we have a picture, such as the imagination can form, of the young Lord Herbert, as he was, when about to step into public life.

Fortunately, however, we are not left to imagination. Authentic notices of the young Lord remain to assist us in our picture. After the death of Sir Philip Sidney, the task of supporting the name and honor of the family had devolved on his younger brother Robert, who had accompanied him to the Netherlands and seen him fall on the field of Zutphen. Knighted by his uncle the Earl of Leicester on the day of the battle, and having inherited his brother's property he was at length, in July 1588, appointed to the post of Governor of Flushing, which his brother had also held. Marked out by his name and his abilities for promotion he received various appointments in addition; but for many years the Netherlands continued to be the chief scene of his activity. "Being curious however," according to the account

given of him by Collins "in laying out for intelligence of the remarkable events of the time, he kept up a correspondence with Rowland Whyte, the Postmaster, a notable busy man; who constantly writ over to him at Flushing, when he was resident there as governor, the news and intrigues of the Court." It does not seem, indeed, to have been mere curiosity that induced Sir Robert to carry on this correspondence. In those days it was necessary for a man who wished to get on in public life, to look sharply after his interests at Court, taking care to have his merits stated, and any schemes that his enemies might set on foot for his injury counterworked; consequently during Sir Robert's absence abroad it was essential that he should have some agent in London on whose activity and fidelity he could rely. Exactly such a man was Rowland Whyte, of whose zeal in behalf of his employer and skill in procuring information there is ample evidence in his letters published in the "Sidney Papers." It is not however, with the tenor of these letters, that we are here concerned; but with occasional references that occur throughout them to Sir Robert's kinsmen of the Pembroke family and especially to his nephew the young Lord Herbert.

The first notice of the young Lord that occurs in Rowland Whyte's letters bears date the 8th of October 1595; at which time Lord Herbert would be in his 16th year. The passage is as follows:

"Sanford"(the Earl of Pembroke's man of business)
"is come up to follow his causes; and my Lord" (Pembroke)
"himself with my Lord Herbert come up to see the Queen, and

as I hear, to deal in the matter of a marriage with Sir George Carey's daughter." London Wednesday night 8th Oct. 1595. -- Sidney Papers. I. 353.

About this business of a match between the young Lord, yet a mere boy², and the daughter of a rising courtier Sir George Carey, the Earl of Pembroke remained in town nearly six weeks. During this time it would seem that he did not show that attention to his sister-in-law, Lady Sidney, that might have been expected; for writing to Sir Robert on the 16th of November Rowland Whyte says "My Lord of Pembroke never sent but once to see my Lady, my Lord Herbert came once to visit her." From a letter written about three weeks later, we learn that the Earl left town with his son without accomplishing his errand. Thus:

"Sir George Carey takes it very unkindly, that my Lord of Pembroke broke off the match intended between my Lord Herbert and his daughter, and told the Queen it was because he would not assure him L1000 a year, which comes to his daughter as next akin to Queen Ann Bullen. He hath now concluded a marriage between his daughter and my Lord Berkeley's son and heir. The Queen used my Lord of Pembroke very well at his departure, and sent my Lady your sister a jewel; but hath not granted my Lord Herbert his suit for Clarendon. Truly, I heard that if my Lord of Pembroke should die, who is now very pursive and maladive, the tribe of Hunsdon" (the Carey kindred) "do lay wait for the wardship of the brave young Lord." Friday, 5th, Dec. 1595. -- Sidney Papers -- I. 372. About the same time, it would appear, the Earl of Pembroke was involved in a dispute with

a more formidable personage than Sir George Carey --to wit, Elizabeth's favorite, the Earl of Essex. One of his reasons for coming to town had been to attempt a settlement of this dispute; the subject of which was a certain bargain between him and Essex about the estate of Norwood Park. Rowland Whyte thus alluded to the matter in a letter to Sir Robert Sidney.

"My Lord, I signified the cause of unkindness between 1000 "(Earl of Essex)" and 2000 "(Earl of Pembroke)" which yet continues; but the Queen takes the matter in hand and mightily favors the Western Knight (Sir Henry Berkeley who was involved in the affair), is angry with 1000(Essex) for taking so violent a course, and tells 2000(Pembroke) he shall go without the thing in question; who sware unto her Majesty that he would never deliver up the covenants and assurances he had, and that to be denied the course of law was an injury done to the meanest subject. But away is he gone; being at his departure graciously used and a jewel sent to C____(the Countess of Pembroke). But, since, here are like many storms to fall upon him, by complaints growing upon some of his proceedings in his government (of Wales); and here hath he now no friend to lean unto; 500(Sir George Carey) truly touched with a scorn, as he thinks, done unto him by refusal of the intended marriage, and indeed bent to favour all that are his adversaries." London. Monday night 8th Dec. 1595 -- Sidney Papers I. 374 --

The quarrel, it appears, was not to be easily made up; for on the 20th December, Rowland Whyte again writes. "The unkindness doth continue between 1000(Essex) and

2000(Pembroke), and for the cause I writ unto you --
2000(Pembroke) by no means, will release those bonds and
covenants the other entered into; who now says he was drawn
to do he knew not what himself. But 1500(the Queen) is much
offended with all; and says 2000(Pembroke) shall do it."
Sidney Papers I. 382.

For about sixteen months we hear no more of the Earl of
Pembroke or his family from Rowland Whyte. They seem to
have been residing during this interval at Wilton House; the
Earl thence carrying on through his agent Sanford his
dispute with Essex. In a letter of Whyte's, however, dated
the 19th of April 1597, we have another interesting notice
of the subject of our memoir. The Earl, who seems to have
been bent on marrying his son early, had now a scheme on
foot for wedding his second son, Mr. Philip Herbert, then
about fifteen years of age to his distant cousin, Miss
Herbert of St. Julian's in Monmouthshire, a descendant of
the first Earl of Pembroke of the first creation. Rowland
Whyte thus relates the news to his patron:

"My Lady Herbert of St Julian's is dead. My Lord
of Worcester's eldest son (also a Herbert) made means to
have access to the daughter; which the young gentlewoman
refused, and would not see him. Little Mr. Philip Herbert
is gone towards her; my Lord of Pembroke gives him a
lordship joining to her lands worth L500 a year, and L3000
in ready money. The young gentlewoman, as I hear, accepts
of it, and will have no other husband but him. My Lord
Herbert hath, with much ado, brought his father to consent
that he may live at London; yet not before the next spring."

Tuesday 19th April 1597. Sidney Papers. II. 43.

Notwithstanding Rowland Whyte's belief that the match between little Mr. Philip Herbert and the heiress of St. Julian's would be brought about, it was broken off as the former had been; and the young gentlewoman remained single for some time longer -- ultimately to become the wife of a Herbert still more distinguished than either of her present suitors -- Sir Edward Herbert afterwards Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

The notice respecting the Earl of Pembroke's elder son in the passage just quoted is extremely important for our purpose. Tired of the retirement of Wilton House, and anxious to see a little more of the world, the young Lord, had persuaded his father, not without much entreaty, to let him live in London. Where this promise was granted does not appear; but it is by no means improbable that it was repeated during a short visit of himself and his father to town in the spring of 1597; for in another letter of Rowland Whyte's, dated Wednesday the 27th, of April 1597, it is stated that the dispute between the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Essex, had at length been brought to a close, "my Lord Essex's officers {did} pay L4000 to my Lord of Pembroke in Baynard's Castle" on the Monday preceding. "My Lord of Essex" says the faithful agent again alluding to the transaction in a letter of the 8th of May, to Sir Robert Sidney, "hath paid my Lord of Pembroke the L4000 he owed him; which laid in this town, and turned to no use. I would your Lordship had of it what you want." -- "The way to work it is by your letter to my lady your sister" is his sly

addition.

According to the promise made to Lord Herbert by his father he was to come to London in the spring of 1597-8. Certain circumstances, however, make it not unlikely that he arrived in town somewhat earlier than had been fixed -- probably in the winter of 1597. Assuming this, let us connect the fact with the following entries in the diary of Philip Henslowe, a well-known theatre proprietor and money-lender of the day, whose step-daughter was the wife of the celebrated player Edward Alleyn.

"A just account of all such money as I have received of my lord Admiral's and my Lord of Pembroke's men, as followeth, beginning the 21st of October 1597: Rec^d the 21st Oct. L5.1.6; Ditto the 28th of Oct L3.11.10; Ditto the 30th L3; Ditto the 5th of Nov. L.-8/10; Ditto the 12th Nov. L2.7/; Ditto the 19th L2.8.8; Ditto the 26th L2.4/; Ditto the 3rd Dec. L2.4/; Ditto the 30th Dec (being Christmas week) L7.16/; Ditto 7th Jan. 1597-8 L1.10/; Ditto 14th ./1; Ditto 21st L3.9/; Ditto 28th L1.7.9; Ditto 4th Feb L5.; Ditto 11th .16/4; Ditto 18th L3.9/; Ditto 25th L 4.15/; Ditto 4th March L5.11.3."

"Sent unto Robert Shaw"(a player in the Lord's Admiral's Company) "the 23rd Oct. 1597 to buy a book for the Company of my Lord Admiral's men and my Lord of Pembroke's the sum of 40/- called 'the Cobbler'(the name of some play) -- witness E. Alleyn."

"Lent unto Robert Shaw the 5th of Nov. 1597, to buy a book of young Horton"(William Haughton a dramatic author)"for the company of my Lord Admiral's men, and my

Lord of Pembroke's, the sum of 10/ -- witness E. Alleyn." Diary of Philip Henslowe from 1591 to 1609. Edited by J. P. Collier.

Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the historians of the theatre tell us "players were always attached to the establishment either of the Court or of some wealthy subject, whose badge and livery they wore, and whose superintendence was presumed to control any excesses that might be injurious to the public; but when their services were not required by those to whom they especially belonged it was usual for such persons to wander about the country, exhibiting their performances for gain." Among the wealthy subjects, it appears whose livery was thus worn in the last years of Elizabeth by a company of players was the Earl of Pembroke; and from the foregoing entries in the diary of Henslowe we are to infer that from October 1597 to March 1598, this company was performing in London possibly with another company which bore the livery of the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Nottingham. Now it is not to be concluded that, because this company was performing in London at the time in question, their patron must necessarily have been in town to witness their performances. Their coalition with the Lord Admiral's Company and their pecuniary transactions with Henslowe, were doubtless, affairs of their own in which their patron took no special interest. Still, it is worthy of remark that if their patron's eldest son came, as he had intended, to reside in London in the spring of 1597-8, he must have arrived during their theatrical season, and must, as a matter of course have come into connexion with them.

Even if he only arrived in February or March, 1598 this must have been the case; it is possible, however, if our supposition is correct, that he may have arrived in time to see young Haughton's play acted, or even to laugh at the performance of "The Cobbler." At all events we are to fancy him established as a resident in London in the season of 1597-8. At this time he would be in his 18th year. From this time until the month of August 1599 we lose sight of him in Rowland Whyte's letters, in whose correspondence indeed, an interruption seems to have been occasioned by a visit of his patron to England. During these 18 or 19 months we are to suppose Lord Herbert living in town or its neighborhood, (usually, it is probable, at the family residence of Baynard's Castle), forming acquaintanceships both at Court and in general society, and generally fulfilling what was expected of him as a young nobleman, heir apparent to the Earldom of Pembroke. This manner of life seems partly to have pleased him, and at the date of the next notices of him by Rowland Whyte, he was full of a resolution to join the army and the active service.

"My Lord Herbert means to follow the camp, and bids me write unto you that if yourself come not over, he means to make bold with you and send for Bayleigh (a horse so-called) to Penshurst to serve upon. If you have any armour or pistols that may stead him for himself only, he desires he may have the use of them till your return." 4th August 1599 -- Sidney Papers II. 113. The resolution seems to have taken some little time; for a week later Rowland Whyte thus writes.

"My Lord Herbert is to have 200 horse sent up by his father to attend her Majesty's person. He sent over to my lady (Lady Sidney) to borrow Bayleigh. She returned this answer that he shall have it, but conditionally that, if you come over, or send for it to Flushing, he may restore it; which he agrees unto." Saturday 11th Aug. 1599 -- Sidney Papers II.115. And again --

"My Lord Herbert hath been away from Court these seven days in London, swaggering it amongst the men of war, and viewing the manner of the musters." Saturday 18th Aug. 1599. Sidney Papers II. 118.

These military plans and recreations of Lord Herbert were, however, suddenly interrupted by the illness of his father, announced to Sir Robert Sidney by his correspondent in the following terms.

"My Lord of Pembroke is fallen sick again; I fear of his old disease. Goodruch(the physician) has gone down in all haste. I see the danger that approaches by the delay of the matter you wrote of; which, living, might easily be compassed, but, being dead, it will hardly be obtained. My Lady Pembroke hath kept in these three weeks. My Lord Herbert is a continual courtier, but doth not follow his business with that ease that is fit. He is too cold in a matter of such greatness." Baynard's Castle 8th Sept. 1599. Sidney Papers II. 120.

The matter relating to the private interests of Sir Robert Sidney, that is spoken of in the foregoing as being put in jeopardy by the illness of his brother-in-law the Earl, was a scheme for obtaining the office of President of

Wales by persuading the Earl to resign it in his favour. Sir Robert seems to have set his heart on procuring the post, which his father had held during a great part of his life, and to which he conceived himself to have on this, and other grounds, a good claim. His chance, however, lay in the possibility of inducing the Earl of Pembroke to stir in the affair; of inducing him in short to make this office over to him, with the Queen's consent. To this chance the death of the Earl would prove fatal; as in that event some other claimant would step forward before Sir Robert's case could be duly prepared, or the Queen sounded in his behalf. If the Earl recovered, there would be leisure to go about the matter with due care and caution. The illness of the Earl is consequently a topic of great interest to Sir Robert; and his correspondent does not fail to keep him informed thereupon.

"In my last I writ unto you that my Lord of Pembroke had sent for Goodruch because he was ill. Now my Lord is very ill; and my Lord Herbert gone in post to see him, leaving me to observe what suitors might be for the many places he holds under her Majesty. x x x x x x Now that my Lord Herbert is gone, he is much blamed for his cold and weak manner of pursuing her Majesty's favour, having had so good steps to lead him unto it. There is want of spirit and courage laid to his charge, and that he is a melancholy young man. Young Carey follows it with more care and boldness. I protest unto you that I did from time to time advise his Lordship to a more careful course, assuring him that to go back would prove disgraceful unto him, and that

this young competitor might purposely start up to try what he would do. It is not yet too late, if he stay not long in the country. Some jealousy I had that you were sent away because you should not be here to counsel him in a matter of such greatness, for surely it would be to your good to see him a favourite." Nonsuch 12th Sept. 1599 -- Sidney Papers II. 122.

From the letter that follows we learn that the Earl of Pembroke had in the mean time, been pronounced out of danger.

"I give diligent attendance as desired by your honourable nephew the Lord Herbert, whom I greatly honour, because I see and know he loves you dearly. I received yesternight letters from him, that my Lord, his father, hath been cut, and is past all danger. Here had been strange and cunning courses held with him if his father had died; but his recovery hath put all out of bias. The motion I meant to make from myself to my Lord Admiral, I will now forbear, and also the other I proposed to offer to my Lord Treasurer, to procure you the place desired; but will urge a resignation according to our first intent, or to be joined in patent with him. I am glad, for my Lord Herbert's sake, that this qualm is past. I hope he (Lord Pembroke) will live to see his son of full years. I have done my Lord Herbert some agreeable service in his absence, and I hope, upon his return he will with more life and care undertake the great matter which he hath been so cold in, which I know he shall have good success in, being discreetly and warily handled." Nonsuch. 13th Sept. 1599 -- Sidney Papers II.

In the next extract we are informed of an additional circumstance relating to Lord Herbert.

"I perceive that 600(the Earl of Nottingham) would be glad to have 9000(Lord Herbert) match in his house. I will, as occasion may serve, if it be moved unto me, advise it may be wrought by you. Touching the office in Wales, you had missed it if the Earl had died. It must be done while he lives, if it be done at all." Penshurst 20 Sep. 1599. Sidney Papers II. 126.

The purport of the above is that it would be for the interest of Sir Robert Sidney in the matter for the Welch presidency, to secure the favour of the Earl of Nottingham, who, as Lord High Admiral, possessed considerable influence with the Queen; and that a good way to effect this would be for Sir Robert to promote the Earl's scheme for the marriage of Lord Herbert with his daughter. Lord Herbert's absence, it would appear from the extract next following, was not unobserved by the Queen.

"My Lord Herbert was sent for by the Queen's commandment, whose pleasure was signified by Sir John Stanhope; but his Lordship's father will not suffer him to go away; I believe it is in respect of his expenses. But all is well at Wilton again; and Goodruch hath done a great cure." Court. Nonsuch Michaelmas day 1599. Sidney Papers II. 128.

The Queen's order, however, was at length complied with; for writing from Baynard's Castle, London on the 4th of Nov. Rowland Whyte announces his expectation of Lord

Herbert's arrival. "I hope" he adds, "that by him you shall find a ladder to go up to that honour you are worthy of." Sir Robert now, it would seem, had a new plan on foot, with respect to the Welch Presidency. This was to obtain, if possible, leave of absence from his government in the Netherlands, in order, by his own presence and activity in London and at Court, to farther his view the more effectually. Leave of absence, however, the Queen was not likely to grant without good cause shown; and in the letters that follow there is abundant evidence of the amount of diplomacy that was necessary to compass it. Lord Herbert being now in town his services were of course called into requisition. "Your leave is afoot" writes Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert from Baynard's Castle on the 15th of Nov. "the Lord Admiral assuring me he will not be denied; and you have the noble Lord Herbert a most careful solicitor for your return, which he unmeasurably longs for." Again, about a fortnight later, "My Lord Herbert is exceedingly beloved at court of all men. He is careful for your leave and puts 200(Sir Robert Cecil) and 600(Earl of Nottingham) oft in mind of it. He goes to Ramsbury to see his father on Wednesday next." Connected with this visit to Ramsbury we have another longer extract.

"9000(Lord Herbert) is highly favoured by 1500(the Queen) for at his departure he had access unto her, and was private an hour; but he greatly wants advice, and extremely begs for you here. This day he is gone to see 2000(Earl of Pembroke) but will be here again before Christmas. He bids me assure you privately that he will undertake to bring

2000(Earl of Pembroke) to resign over unto you presently the place desired by you, if you found yourself strong in friends at 160(Court) to compass it. x x x 9000(Lord Herbert) is very well beloved here of all, especially 200(Cecil) and 40() who protest in all places they love him." Baynard's Castle 29th Nov. 1599. Sidney Papers II. 144.

After two other notices, one to the effect Lord Herbert was expected to return to town in about a week, and another that Rowland Whyte had written to him "for that Spanish 'Amadis de Gaul'" Sir Robert Sidney had spoken of in some previous letter, apparently with a view to have it restored; -- we find the following:

"Mr. Sanford is here and tells me 9000(Lord Herbert) hath brought 2000(Earl of Pembroke) to be willing to resign his place unto you. x x x My Lord Herbert is not yet come up according to his appointment, and writes unto me that he is sick of an ague; but, if it be possible, that he will be here before Christmas or New year's day. There passes most kind letters between him and 40 x x x and I find 40 most willing to do him any service. 2000(Earl of Pembroke) is very well recovered; he hath not been so well these seven years. All this serves best for your desire about his place." Baynard's Castle. Sat night 22nd Dec. 1599. Sidney Papers. II. 152.

Lord Herbert's illness lasted longer than Rowland Whyte had anticipated. He had left London on the 29th of Nov. and on the 26th of Jan. following he was still at Ramsbury. "Even now" writes Rowland Whyte in a letter of that date "I

open a letter from my Lord Herbert to me, who says that he hath a continual pain in his head, and finds no manner of ease but by taking tobacco. He writes me to commend him to you, and to signify that you cannot send him a more pleasing gift than excellent tobacco. The like request I make from my Lady Pembroke."

On the 26th of Feb. 1599 (we should now write it 1600, according to the alteration made in the style) Rowland Whyte sends the following news. "My Lord Herbert is well again. They all remove on Saturday to Wilton to the race. When that is ended my Lord Herbert comes up (to town)."

Agreeably to this intimation we find the same correspondent writing from Baynard's Castle on the 13th of March, "My Lord Herbert came on Wednesday night; and within this hour he goes to court. I find him exceedingly desirous to see you. He will do his best to get you over." After which, there follows at intervals various allusions to Lord Herbert's movements at Court and to the progress of Sir Robert's suit for leave of absence. As they require no farther explanation we shall simply print them in their order.

"My Lord Herbert is at Court, and desires me to salute you very kindly from him. I doubt not but you will have great comfort by him, and I believe he will prove a great man in Court. He is very well beloved, and truly deserves it." Baynard's Castle Easter Eve 22 March 1599(1600) Sidney Papers. II. 182.

"Mr. Philip Herbert is here, and one of the forwardest courtiers that ever I saw in my time; for he had not been here two hours but he grew as bold as the best.

Upon Tuesday he goes back again full sore against his will.
My Lord Herbert received your packet." Baynard's Castle 26
April 1600. Sidney Papers II. 190.

"My Lord of Pembroke is much troubled to
understand of a consultation here about the reforming of his
government in the Marches (Wales) and the altering of some
points in the Instructions. My Lord Herbert very carefully
doth what in him lies to prevent it, as a matter touching
his father, much to his honour. It appears that his
(Pembroke's) authority in many things shall be lessened."
Baynard's Castle Sat. 10th May 1600. Sidney Papers II. 193.

"Sir Richard Lewknor the new chief Justice of the
Marches is gone towards Ludlow, but with such alteration and
reformation in the government as takes from my Lord Pembroke
much authority; which is thought will move him to give it
over; and my Lord Herbert fears his father will send for him
away from Court." Baynard's Castle. Friday 16th May 1600.
Sidney Papers II. 195.

"This morning my Lord Herbert and Sir Charles
Danvers have taken water and gone to see my Lady Rich and
Lady Southampton almost as far as Gravesend; it will be
thursday ere they return." Court 26th May 1600. Sidney
Papers II. 197.

After this, there follows in July, a long visit of Lord
Herbert to Wilton; but on the 26th of Sept. Rowland Whyte
again speaks of him as having returned to town.

"My Lord Herbert resolves this year to show
himself a man-at-arms, and prepares for it; and, because it
is the first time of running (at tournament) it were good he

came in with some excellent device. I make it known to your Lordship, that, if you please, to honour my Lord Herbert with your advice; my fear is that Mr. Sanford will in his humour persuade my Lord to some pedantic invention."

Strand. Friday. 26th Sept. 1600. Sidney Papers II. 216.

"My Lord Herbert will be all the next week at Greenwich, to practice at tilt." (against the Coronation day; which it seems was to be graced by a tournament) "He often wishes you here. Believe me, my Lord, he is a very gallant gentleman, and indeed wants much such a friend as you are, near unto him." Penshurst. Sat. 18th Oct. 1600. Sidney Papers II. 218.

At length the long-pressed suit to the Queen, for leave of absence is granted; and Rowland Whyte, in the first flush of satisfaction, writes thus to Sir Robert.

"My Lord, your leave is now granted; but with such ado as I never knew the like. x x x In few words, you had not come over at all if Mr Secretary had not assured upon his honour, that you were very ill and that there you could have no remedy to prevent the danger of your sickness. x x x My Lord Herbert is practising at Greenwich. I sent him word of this (of the leave of absence); he leaps, he dances, he sings, he gives counterbuffs, he makes his horse run with more speed; he thanks me, and means to be exceeding merry with you this winter in Baynard's Castle, where you must take physic." Court. Thursday 30th Oct. 1600. Sidney Papers. II. 219-220.

Here, accordingly, Rowland Whyte's letters cease; and we derive no farther information respecting Lord Herbert's

movements from that quarter. Sir Robert Sidney, we are to suppose, returns from the Netherlands immediately; meets his nephew in town; and divides his time between Baynard's Castle, and his own seat at Penshurst. Lord Herbert remains in London, and spends, as he had intended, a merry winter.

Only so far, however, can the winter have been a merry one. On 19th of Jan. 1600(N.S.1601), that is scarcely three months after the foregoing letter of Rowland Whyte had been penned, the Earl of Pembroke died at Wilton, leaving his accomplished Countess, a widow, and his son Lord Herbert, who had not yet completed his twenty-first year, heir to the Earldom. This event, unexpected as it seems to have been, must have affected the interests of Sir Robert Sidney. The Welch Presidency, at least, for which he had been so long intriguing and negotiating, was bestowed on another, and the shrewd knight was left to work his way to promotion by other means.

It was at this time, too, that the people of London and of England generally were thrown into such excitement by the attempted insurrection of the Earl of Essex against the Queen's ministers; and his consequent imprisonment, trial, and execution. Goaded to phrensy by the studied coldness exhibited towards him by his royal mistress since his return from the unfortunate Irish expedition in Sep. 1599, and attributing his loss of favour, to the enmity of the Queen's counsellors, Cecil, Cobham, and Raleigh, this haughty but popular nobleman endeavored on Sunday the 8th of Feb. 1600-1 to rouse a tumult of the citizens in his behalf with a view to remove the obnoxious ministers by force. Failing in the

attempt, he and his adherents, among whom was Shakespeare's friend, the Earl of Southampton, were arrested. On the 19th of the same month Essex was brought to trial; and on the 25th he died on the scaffold.

It was in the midst of these events, rendered all the more interesting to him and his uncle by their personal connexions with Essex and Southampton, that the subject of our memoir attained his majority and entered on his new dignities as one of the chief peers of the realm. The only other notice relating to this period of his life, that we have been able to discover, consists in a letter --one of the first penned by him after his accession to the Earldom - - from which it is clear that during his residence in London as a minor, he had contracted debts on his private account. The letter which is addressed to Sir Michael Hicks the Secretary to Lord Burghleigh, is preserved among the Lansdowne M.S.S. in the British Museum, and is to the following effect.

"Sir,

If you will renew the bonds for that money that will shortly be due unto you from me, for six months longer, you shall have your interest truly paid at the day, and the same security which you have already, and besides you shall do me a very extraordinary kindness which I will strive to deserve by ever being

your most affectionate friend

Pembroke.

Whitehall, this 8th of May(1601)"

Under such auspices did the young nobleman, in the beginning of the year 1601 assume his peerage; and during the whole of that year, as well as the next, we are to imagine him a resident, for the most part in London, fulfilling the duties of a courtier in his new capacity.

Having thus, by the help of Rowland Whyte's letters, and a few other stray notices, ascertained a straggling succession of incidents in the life of Lord Herbert from the year 1597 to the year 1602, during which period, according to arguments adduced in a preliminary part of this volume, we understand the Sonnets of Shakespeare to have been composed; it remains to consider how far this appeal to actual history corroborates the notion that Lord Herbert was the person addressed in the majority of those Sonnets.

And in the first place, it will be observed, there is the requisite accordance in point of time and situation. The person to whom Shakespeare addressed his Sonnets must have been in London in 1597-8; and must have had London for his chief or at least frequent place of residence from that time till 1601-2. That Lord Herbert was precisely in such circumstances Rowland Whyte's letters prove. He came up to town from Wilton, in all probability in the winter of 1597-8; and during the four years that followed he continued to make town his head-quarters, residing as is likely, for the most part in Baynard's Castle, Thames street. From the very first, too, it is to be inferred from those references in Henslowe's diary, already quoted, to the Lord Pembroke's men, he would come in contact with the players of the town, and form the acquaintance of some of them.

Again, as regards the age of the reputed subject of the Sonnets, there is a perfect coincidence. In 1597-8, when the first Sonnets of the series were written, Lord Herbert would be in his 18th year; and in 1601-2, when the last of them were written, he would be 21 -- a computation which tallies exactly with the general tenor or the express statements of the Sonnets as to the extreme youth of him to whom they were dedicated.

Farther, it will have been remarked, the general picture of Lord Herbert's appearance and the general impression of his character, left by Rowland Whyte's notices of him, correspond exactly with the preconceptions that have been formed of the subject of the Sonnets from the Sonnets themselves. Lord Herbert was a brave young Lord, universally beloved, but a cold courtier, and said by many to be a "melancholy young man"; he was a lover of literature, and could read a Spanish Amadis de Gaul; he was somewhat sudden and changeful in his tastes, now "swaggering it among the men of war"; now, planning an excursion by water to Gravesend; and altogether his disposition had a cast of enthusiasm and special freshness in it, answering to the description given in the Sonnets. Painting the unknown youth from the hints afforded by the Sonnets, we should unconsciously paint Lord Herbert as Rowland Whyte has represented him. We should have the same beauty, the same gentleness, the same petulance, the same patrician elegance, the same disposition to melancholy, the same liability to be tempted astray, by a glance of false eyes.

Lastly, there are various minute coincidences between

this historical delineation of Lord Herbert, and the ideal portrait painted in the Sonnets. For example, in the manner in which the series of Sonnets opens, in earnest and repeated arguments, --namely, that the youth who is the subject of them, should marry, there is at first sight something, that seems out of place and unnatural; but if Lord Herbert were the youth in question, then we should have a sufficient explanation of the fact in the real circumstances of that young nobleman's life. In 1595, as we have seen, while he was yet only in his 16th year, his father had arranged a marriage between him and a young heiress; and again, in 1599, a new scheme for marrying him was on the tapis. Between these two dates, therefore, wherever Lord Herbert was talked of, the probability of his marrying this or that heiress would be one of the topics; and what so natural as for this topic to assume a prominence in Shakespeare's thoughts, when, in 1597-8, he actually formed the acquaintance of the young nobleman, and began to address him in verse.

Again; we think we can detect recurring here and there, throughout the Sonnets, allusions not only to the high rank of the person addressed, but to his position as a minor, and the heir expectant to an Earldom. Thus in Sonnet XXXVI.

Let me confess that we two must be twain
Although our undivided lives are one
So shall those blots that do with me remain
Without thy help by me be borne alone,
In our two lives there is but one respect
Though in our lives a separable spite

Which though it alter not love's sole effect
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight
I may not evermore acknowledge thee
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame
Nor thou with public kindness honour me
Unless thou take that honour from thy name.

The secret references in this Sonnet, as already explained, are to the attachment of the poet to his mistress, with which the youth had become so fatally connected; and the meaning construed in the light of our present supposition, seems to be this: There is a separating spite in our lives, and henceforth we must be strangers to each other. You are a minor and the heir to an Earldom; I a poor player, earning my living in a proscribed profession. After this sad affair, it is impossible that we can continue to acknowledge each other. If I acknowledge you, I may bring upon you the scandal of publicity, and have it said that you have been entrapped by a player's mistress; or, if you honour me with public kindness the result may be the same. In either way it would reach the ear of your father that his son's chief companion in London is a common player.

In a similar spirit, although without the secret reference which makes the foregoing language so intense and bitter, Sonnet XLIX, seems to have been written.

Against that time, if ever that time come
When I shall see thee frown on my defects
When as thy love hast cast his utmost sum
Called to that audit by advised respects
Against that time, when thou shall strangely pass,

And scarcely greet with that sun, thine eye,
When love, converted from the thing it was,
Shall reasons find of settled gravity.

Against that time do I etc-----

Here, interpreting the words on the same suppositions as before, the meaning would be: Against that time, when the "advised respects" i.e. the established etiquette of society shall cause you to alter your manner towards me, when, no longer an eager and enthusiastic youth, willing to be the friend of a player, but a peer of the realm called to higher duties and more strict observances, you shall find it necessary to increase the distance between us; against that time do I etc. Now this time, here anticipated, by the poet, did at length arrive, and that before he had concluded the series of Sonnets, when the foregoing words were written, their subject was still a minor; but before the period at which the seventh paper of Sonnets was composed, he had, if our hypothesis as to his identity be correct, acceded to the Earldom of Pembroke. Are there now any allusions in that paper that could be supposed to apply to this circumstance? Explicit allusions of this sort are certainly wanting; but an ingenious imagination would doubtless {focus} on such sonnets as the 124th and 125th, as if they contained something to the purpose. Thus in Sonnet CXXIV

If my dear love were but the child of state
It might for fortune's bastard be unfathered,
As subject to time's love or to time's hate,
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers

gathered,

No, it was builded far from accident
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor fails
Under the blow of thrall'd discontent
Whereto the inviting time our fashion calls.

and again in Sonnet CXXV.

Were it aught to me I bore the canopy
With my extern the outward honouring,
Or laid great bases for eternity
Which prove more short than waste or ruining?
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
Lose all, and more, by paying too much rent
For compound sweet foregoing simple savour
Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent?
No; let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor, but free,
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,
But mutual render, only me for thee.

Hence thou suborn'd informer! a true soul

When most impeached, stands least in thy control.

We already in our annotations on these obscure Sonnets, hinted that they contain reference to the fall of Essex, and the conduct of his former friends on that occasion. The words "thrall'd discontent," for example, are exactly descriptive of the whole Essex movement. But what if, in addition to this, the Sonnets contain references to another event contemporary with the fall of Essex; the accession namely of Lord Herbert to his father's peerage? Had any "suborned informer" accused the Poet of interested motives

in attaching himself to a young and noble patron, now become Earl; and does the Poet here resent the accusation and proclaim that his friendship is free and genuine; a mutual render "me for thee"; no courtship of power or favour, but the independent oblation of a true heart?

Nor in recounting the coincidences between the historical character of Lord Herbert, and the picture of the young Patrician described in Shakespeare's Sonnets, must we omit these two -- the fondness attributed to both for literature and literary society; and the popularity of both with those among whom they moved.

In Sonnet XXXII, Shakespeare addresses his friend thus:

If thou survive my well contented day,
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall
cover, And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover
Compare them with the bettering of the time
And though they be outstripp'd by every pen
Reserve them etc

Again, in Sonnet LXXII

For I am shamed by that which I bring forth
And so should you to love things nothing worth.

And again, in Sonnet LXXXII

Thou art as gain in knowledge as in hue
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise
And therefore art enforc'd to seek anew
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days.

all, it will be observed, distinct references to the Poet's friend as a person of literary taste and accustomed to

literary society. But to what young nobleman of the last years of Elizabeth's reign, would such references be so applicable as to the son of the accomplished and learned Countess of Pembroke, the nephew of the distinguished and chivalrous Sir Philip Sidney? As regards Sir Herbert's popularity, are not Rowland Whyte's notices on this point -- now that he was "very well beloved, and truly deserved it," and now that he was even on the liking of the Queen and her chief courtiers -- but transcript into prose of Shakespeare's own allusions. As for instance in Sonnet LXIX

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view
Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend
All tongues (the voice of souls) give thee that
due,

Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend.

or again in Sonnet XCV

That tongue that tells the story of thy days
Making lascivious comments on thy sport
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise.

or lastly in the Sonnet that follows

Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport.

These are clearly allusions to public reports concerning the Poet's friend; and certainly indicate that he must have occupied a conspicuous place in the society of the day. Evidently however, if Lord Herbert is the subject, there are references to little scandals concerning him of which we have heard nothing from the punctual Rowland Whyte.

Thus, out of a variety of coincidences, some of them

more and some less significant, there has been built up something like a probability in favour of the supposition that the Mr. W. H. of Shakespeare's Sonnets was no other than William Lord Herbert, son and heir of Henry, second Earl of Pembroke. One coincidence, however, still remains, to be dropped in as the keystone making the argument firm and complete. We have already remarked how enquirers into the subject of Mr. W. H. and his identity have been puzzled by a particular line in Sonnet XX. We quote the passage in which the line occurs.

A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false woman's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in
rolling, Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth,
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling
Which steals men's eyes, and women's souls
amazeth.

Observing that the line here italicised was printed in the original edition, thus

A man in hew, all Hews in his controlling,
hasty critics have, as has been already stated, leapt at the hypothesis that some Mr. William or Mr. Walter Hughes, was the subject of the Sonnets; totally careless of the fact that, in any such hypothesis, the line becomes not only a bad pun, but absolute nonsense. Here, therefore, we would offer another explanation, which while it preserves the pun obviously intended by Shakespeare, at once makes the line

intelligible and derives from it a curious and as one would say, a neat confirmation of the claim that has been advanced in favour of Lord Herbert. Let us modernise the spelling of the line in question, retaining the peculiarities of the original printing, and it becomes:

A man in hue, all Hughs in his controlling;
Is it a far fetched supposition that Shakespeare here, remembering that the youth to whom he was writing, was the son of the Lord President in Wales, voluntarily perpetrated one of his favorite puns by using the proper name Hugh, as a synonym for Welchmen? *

Upon the whole, therefore, all things considered, we should regard it as a hypothesis more probable than any other that can be given, that the young Lord Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, was the friend of Shakespeare to whom he addressed his Sonnets. It was this young nobleman in all likelihood, that he felt related to by that singular tie of a romantic friendship inconceivable to us modern men, and souls of duller make. No longer imaginary, therefore, if this hypothesis be true, are that street and that residence in old London towards which our Poet's footsteps were so often bent. The banks of the Thames, and

* "One novelty, however, is his reading of 'A man in hue all hues in his conntrolling.' To Masson this much interpreted line recalls that the Earl of Pembroke was the son of the Lord President of Wales; therefore the pun on the 'name Hugh, as a synonym for Welchman.' This pun had escaped previous commentators" (Schoenbaum 440).

there, conspicuous among the meaner houses, the castle of the Lords of Pembroke -- such we are to suppose, was the neighborhood, and such the precise spot made sacred to Shakespeare by these his visits of affection. It was to the young heir of this mansion, that he dedicated his thoughts of love and his hours of leisure; it was towards him, of all the thousands of men and things with which London teemed, that he felt most cordially and mystically drawn; it was he that he trusted most, and from whom he received the severest blow that friendship could deal; it was in his presence that he poured out his richest fancies, and laid open both his depths and his weaknesses, now agitated and oracular as a God; and again petulant and moody as a child; and lastly it was in the form of fragments of verse addressed to him that he wrote down those revelations concerning himself and his inner consciousness, that have survived to enlighten and to puzzle us forever.

In order to complete our conception, however, of the singular romance that now begins to clothe itself, under our investigation with the appearance of actual history it remains to examine, whether in the known life of Lord Herbert, there were any circumstances that could be conceived to have furnished Shakespeare with the text for those mysterious or jealous allusions of his to some poet that was his rival. Should this enquiry be conducted to a satisfactory issue, we shall have gone as near as possible to perfect that important contribution to the biography of Shakespeare which is to be derived from his Sonnets.

In commencing this enquiry, the method one naturally

adopts is to cast about first for a list of those poets of the Elizabethan age, besides Shakespeare, that in any way or at any time were related to the Pembroke family. By a little research one gets together a number of names as coming under this description. Of these the more prominent are Spenser, Daniel, Fitzjeffrey, Davies, Lock, Stradling, Harvey, and Jonson.

As Spenser's death took place before the period at which the story of the Sonnets is understood to open, he cannot have been the poet referred to by Shakespeare. Ben Jonson, on the other hand, did not come to have any literary connexion with the subject of our memoir or his accomplished mother, until some time after the period in question; and accordingly, his name may also be struck off the list.

Respecting the names that remain, it has already been mentioned that the poets who bore them were among the literary acquaintances of the Countess of Pembroke during her residence at Wilton; and of all of them it is probable that they knew Lord Herbert and were known to him about the time when he persuaded his father to let him live in London.

Shakespeare's acquaintance, we have concluded he must have formed after he had settled in town, through some of those theatrical personages bearing his father's livery, to whose society, his introduction, immediately on his arrival, was all but inevitable. It is likely, therefore, that Shakespeare was by no means the earliest literary associate of the young Lord Herbert. Before Shakespeare and he can have become acquainted with each other, it must have been the custom of Daniel, Davies, Shadling, Fitzjeffrey, and

others of the literary friends and clients of his mother, to pay their respects to him at Baynard's Castle; and Shakespeare can have been received at first only as a new member of a small Pembroke clique, already formed. Nothing is more likely, therefore, than that wherever Shakespeare appears, in the Sonnets LXXVIII-LXXXVI, to refer to rival poets in the plural (and in more than one passage such is the case) he refers to the various poets of this clique, not one of whom probably but had addressed verses to their young patron or otherwise studied to please him before he had seen Shakespeare.

But it is clear that Shakespeare in the Sonnets in question refers to one poet in particular. Which poet of the clique, or what poet out of the clique was he? Proceeding on the supposition, which the language employed by Shakespeare not only warrants but requires, to wit that he was a poet of some pretension, Mr. Boaden has declared in favour of Samuel Daniel, who of all the clients of the Countess of Pembroke, that have been named, certainly attained as a poet, the greatest distinction among his contemporaries. Let us see how this hypothesis will suit.

Samuel Daniel "the most noted poet and historian of his time" as he is called by Wood in his Athenae Oxonienses "was born of a wealthy family of Somersetshire; and at seventeen years of age, in 1579, became a commoner of Magdalen College, Oxford, where he continued about three years and improved himself much in academic learning, by the benefit of an excellent tutor. But his geny being more prone to easier and smoother studies than in pecking and hewing of

logic, he left the University, without the honour of a degree, and exercised it much on English History and Poetry, of which he gave several ingenious specimens." Already a highly popular poet before the death of Elizabeth in 1603, he attained still greater celebrity under James I, to whose wife Anne, he was appointed a groom of the chamber. Wood says, that he succeeded Spenser as poet-laureate, and was succeeded by Ben Jonson; and though the assertion is incorrect it gives an idea of the kind of poetic reputation which he possessed during the period which it marks out; that is, from 1598 to 1619. His death took place in the last mentioned year.

Of Daniel's works the following are the most important: Sonnets to Delia, being fifty-seven in all, addressed at various times to the Countess of Pembroke, and published in 1594; The Complaint of Rosamond, a Pastoral; Hymen's Triumph and the Queen's Arcadia, Pastoral Tragi-Comedies; Cleopatra and Philotas, classic Tragedies; Musophilus, or a general Defense of Learning, a poetic Decalogue published in 1599; a History of the Civil Wars of York and Lancaster, a heroic poem in eight books; published in parts between 1595 and 1609 and dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke; a prose composition entitled A defense of Rhyme; and lastly, certain poetical Epistles and Miscellanies. His chief work and that by which his reputation was principally caused was his "History of the Civil Wars."

That which creates a presumption in favour of Daniel in the present instance, is the fact of his close intimacy with the Pembroke family towards the close of the 16th century --

a fact signalised by the dedication of his chief work to the Countess, and the tribute of so many gallant Sonnets to the same lady. "To whom, and to whose noble family," are the closing words of the dedication of 1609, "I hold myself ever bound, and will labour to do you all the honour and service I can." And more explicit still of his regard, or indeed of his affection for the Countess are his fifty-seven Sentimental Sonnets, the first of which begins thus:

Unto the boundless ocean of thy beauty
Runs this poor river, charged with streams of zeal
Returning thee the tribute of my duty
Which here my love, my youth, my complaints reveal.

Of these Sonnets of Daniel it is interesting to remark that they are, as regards the versification precisely after the same model as Shakespeare's; and that sometimes one of them overflows into its successor, exactly as we have seen happen with Shakespeare's also. Possibly Shakespeare may have adopted the stanza from Daniel.

But this connexion of Daniel with the Countess of Pembroke could matter little for our present purpose, unless there were also some distinct memorial of a similar literary tie between him and her son. And such a memorial does exist. The circumstances are these:

In the year 1602 there was published in London by an author of repute named Thomas Campion, a small volume, dedicated to Lord Buckhurst, and entitled "Observations on the Art of English Poesy; wherein it is demonstratively proven, and by example confirmed, that the English tongue will receive right several kinds of numbers proper to

itself; which are in this book set forth, and were never before this time by any man attempted." In this little brochure the object of which is to introduce new English metres, such as Hexameters, and Sapphics, after the classic mode, Campion attacks Rhyme as "a vulgar and unartificial custom, which has deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English Poetry."

No sooner had this pamphlet appeared, than, as was natural, the poets of the day took arms in behalf of the established system of metres. Among those that did so was Daniel; who in 1603 published "A defense of Rhyme against a pamphlet entitled 'Observations etc'; wherein it is demonstratively proven that Rhyme is the fittest harmony of words that comports with our language." The important circumstances for us in connection with this little work of Daniel's is that it is inscribed to the subject of our memoir, William Herbert, now Earl of Pembroke.

In the Preface which is addressed to "all the worthy and learned Professors of Rhyme within his Majesty's dominions" the author says: "Worthy gentlemen, about a year since upon the great reproach given to the profession of Rhyme, and the use thereof I wrote a private letter, as a defense of my own undertakings on that kind to a learned gentleman a great friend of mine, then in Court. Which I did rather to confirm myself in mine own courses, and to hold him from being won from us, than with any desire to publish the same to the world. But now, seeing the times to promise a more regard to the present condition of our writings, in respect of our Sovereign's happy inclination

that way, x x I have now given a greater body to the same argument and here present it to your view under the patronage of a noble Earl who in blood and nature is interested to take our part in this cause."

The Letter thus opens: "To the right Honourable William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke etc: The general custom and use of Rhyme in this kingdom, noble Lord, having been so long (as if from a grant of Nature) held unquestionable, made me imagine that it lay altogether out of the way of contradiction. x x x We are told now that our measures go wrong, and all rhyming is gross, vulgar, barbarous. Which, if it be so, we have lost much labour to no purpose; and for mine own particular, I cannot but blame the fortune of the times and mine own genius, that cast me upon so wrong a course, drawn with the current of culture, and an unexamined example. Having been first encouraged and framed thereunto by your most worthy and honourable Mother, and received the first notion of the formal ordering of those compositions at Wilton, which I must ever acknowledge to have been my best school, and thereof always am to hold a feeling and grateful memory. Afterward drawn farther on by the well-liking and approbation of my worthy lord, the fosterer of me and my muse, I adventured to bestow all my powers therein." After this introduction, the author proceeds, with a considerable show of learning, and in a style that might be mistaken for that of a much more modern pen, so judicious is the method, and such lucidity and generality are there in the expressions, -- to make out his case in favour of the use of Rhyme. Two extracts will serve to give an idea of the

pamphlet, and its author.

Speaking of the example of Antiquity as bearing on the question, Daniel says.

"Methinks we should not so soon yield our consents captive to the authority of Antiquity unless we saw more cause. All our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy. We are the children of Nature as well as they; we are not so placed out of the way of judgment but that the same sun of discretion shineth upon us. We have our portion of the same virtues as well as of the same vices.

'Et Catilinam

Quocunque in populo videas, quocunque sub axe.' Time and the turn of things bring about their faculties according to the present estimation; and 'Res temporibus, non tempora rebus servire oportet.' So that we must never rebel against use.

Quem penes arbitrium est et vis et norma loquendi. It is not the observing of trochaics or Iambics that will make our writings aught the wiser. All their poesie, all their Philosophy is nothing unless we bring the discerning light of Concept with us to apply it to use. It is not books, but only the great book of the world, and the all-overspreading grace of Heaven that makes men truly judicial. Nor can it but touch of arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation barbarous, these or those times gross, considering how this manifold creature Man, wheresoever he stand in the world, hath always some disposition of worth, entertains the order of society, affects what is most in

use, and is eminent in some one thing or other, that fits his humour and the times."

In another part of the pamphlet, making a small concession to his opponent, he lays down a really beautiful rationale of the Sonnet, as an established form of verse.

"And indeed I have wished there were not that multiplicity of rhymes, as is used by many in Sonnets. Which yet we see in some so happily to succeed and hath been so far from hindering their invention, as it hath begot conceits beyond expectation, and comparable to the best inventions of the world. For sure in an eminent spirit whom Nature hath fitted for that mystery, Rhyme is no impediment to his concept, but rather gives him wings to mount and carries him not out of his course, but, as it were, beyond his power, a far happier flight. All excellencies being sold as at the hard price of labour, it follows where we bestow most thereof, we buy the best success; and Rhyme, being far more laborious than loose measures (whatsoever is objected) must needs, meeting with wit and industry, breed greater and worthier effects in our language. So that if our labours have wrought out a manumission from bondage, and that we go at greater liberty notwithstanding these ties, we are no longer the slaves of Rhyme, but we make it a most excellent instrument to serve us. Nor is this certain limit observed in Sonnets any tyrannical bounding of the concept, but rather a reducing it in gyrum and a just form, rather² too long for the shortest project, nor too short for the longest, being but only employed for a present passion. For the body of our imagination being as an unformed chaos,

without fashion, without day, if by the divine power of the spirit it be wrought into an orb of some order and form, is it not more pleasing to Nature, which desires a certainty and comports not with that which is infinite, to have these closes rather than not to know where to end, or how far to go?"

From these passages it must be apparent that, whatever Daniel was as a Poet, he was a man of clear and even powerful intellect, and, for his day, an admirable writer of English prose. What we are more particularly concerned with at present, however, is the supposition that has been advanced, that Daniel was the rival poet alluded to by Shakespeare in the opening Sonnets of the Fifth Paper, and that this very pamphlet of his, "The Defense of Rhyme" forms the subject of some of Shakespeare's complaints in those Sonnets. This inference is drawn specially from Sonnet LXXXII.

I grant thou wert not married to my muse,
And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook
The dedicated words which writers use
Of their fair subject blessing every book

The reference here it is said, is to the dedication by Daniel of his "Defense of Rhyme" to the Earl of Pembroke. Nay, farther, in the words of a preceding Sonnet (LXXVIII)

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse
And found such fair assistance in my verse
As every alien pen hath got my use
And under thee their Poesy disperse

it is argued, or at least, it might be argued, Shakespeare

must allude to the circumstance that Daniel has his "Defense of Rhyme" bound up with an Edition of his Poems published in 1603, thus metaphorically "dispersing his poetry" under the Earl of Pembroke.

These arguments however, will, we think, all give way before the following considerations, which tend to show that Daniel cannot have been the poet to whom Shakespeare refers in Sonnets LXXVIII-LXXXVI.

In the first place these Sonnets were written according to a conclusion previously arrived at, during the year 1599-1600, or thereby; but Daniel's "Defense of Rhyme" was not published till 1603. It is true, Daniel himself tells us that the substance of it was in writing a year before; but even supposing that the gentleman to whom the private letter was addressed of which the pamphlet was a subsequent enlargement, was the Earl of Pembroke, this letter cannot have been in the nobleman's hands, before 1602, and consequently cannot have formed the ground of Shakespeare's complaints. Moreover, even if this pamphlet had been in existence so early as 1599, it could hardly have occasioned such a strong feeling of jealousy as that displayed by Shakespeare, when he speaks of the "dedicated words" used by his rivals. The tone of Daniel's dedication is so plain and simple, that, with all allowance for the exaggerating power of the peculiar condition of mind in which Shakespeare was at the moment, his language, if applied to it, would seem out of proportion with the occasion.

Again there are explicit allusions in the Sonnets in question to eulogistic verses or poems that had been

addressed by the rival bard to Shakespeare's friend; but in all Daniel's poetical works no stanza can be found that is addressed to the Earl of Pembroke. It may, indeed, be said that there may have existed such stanzas in manuscript which Shakespeare may have seen though they have since perished. Against this notion, however, besides that it is entirely gratuitous, it is to be alleged that the criticisms employed by Shakespeare in those passages where he refers to his rival, are not at all descriptive of Daniel's peculiarities, but plainly indicate a poet of a different character. Daniel doubtless might be reckoned by Shakespeare among the "learned poets"; and the allusions to his rival's learning would therefore not be inapplicable to him. But learning is not the only characteristic mentioned. Thus, in Sonnet LXXXII.

Yet, when they have devis'd
What strained touches rhetoric can lend,
Thou truly fair wert truly sympathised,
In true plain words, by thy true-telling friend;
And their gross painting might be better used
Where cheeks need blood; in thee it is abused.

Again in Sonnet LXXXVI.

Was it the proud sail of his great verse
Bound for the prize of all too precious you,
That etc

In these passages there are charges by Shakespeare against his rival, in the one of pedantry and affectation, in the other of a fondness for the sonorous and a tendency to bombast; but against no poet of the day would such charges

be so false as against Daniel, whose very merit as a poet, is that he is frank and simple, and his very fault that he is flat and prosaic. Of Daniel it might be said that he was an able and cultivated man who would have written much valuable prose had he not imagined that clear and tasteful expression in metre would be good poetry.

But lastly, there is a distinct biographical circumstance mentioned by Shakespeare as defining the rival poet, to which we find nothing corresponding in what is known of Daniel. The allusion occurs in Sonnet LXXXVI.

Was it his spirit by spirits taught to write,
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night,
Giving him aid, my verse astonished;
He, nor that affable familiar ghost,
Which nightly gulls him, with intelligence,
As victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence.

The inference from these words clearly is that the poet referred to either believed or was reputed to believe in apparitions or unseen spiritual agents, by whose aid he wrote, or from whom he received knowledge. No other than this literal interpretation is possible. Now no such fact is known regarding Daniel as that he professed to see apparitions. Mr. Boaden, indeed, expanding a hint of Steevens, has suggested that Daniel, as a friend of the Countess of Pembroke, must have been acquainted with Dr. John Dee the famous astrologer and ghost-seer of the day, whom the Countess and her family are said to have

patronised. But even admitting that Daniel had formed an acquaintance with this singular personage, of which however we have not been able to discover any evidence, it would not by any means follow that he had become his disciple; and the less so that he was a man of an intellect and manner of thinking altogether calm and sober.

For all these reasons we are of opinion that Mr. Boaden's supposition that Samuel Daniel is the Poet referred to by Shakespeare, in Sonnets LXXVIII-LXXXVI, is totally untenable. Is there, then, any other Poet for whom there can be made out a strong case? We think there is; and we now propose to show that the poet referred to by Shakespeare in the Sonnets in question was John Davies, called by his contemporaries John Davies of Hereford.

A sketch of the life of this writer is given by Wood in his Athenae Oxonienses. "John Davies," he says, "who writes himself of Hereford, because he was born in that city, was from the grammar-school there sent to this University; but to what house of learning therein I know not. After he had remained with us for some years without the taking of a degree, he retired for a time to his native country, having then among scholars the character of a good poet; as by those poems which he made, and were shortly afterwards published was manifested. But our author finding not a subsistence by poetry, he set up for a writing master, first in his own country, and afterwards in London, where at length he was esteemed the greatest master of his pen that England in his age beheld; the first for fast-writing, for fair-writing which looked as if it had been printed, for

close-writing, and for various-writing as Secretary, Roman, Court, and text-hand. Sometimes he made pretty excursions into poetry, and could flourish matter with his fancy as well as letters with his pen. x x x He died about the year 1618, and was buried, as one tells us, within the precincts of St Giles' in the fields, near London. One John Dunbar, a Latin poet of Scotland hath an epigram which may serve for an epitaph wherein he tells us that he was another Martial, and that he outstript in poetry, Samuel Daniel, John Sylvester etc."

The works of Davies as enumerated by Wood and his editors are as follows: Mirum in Modum, a glimpse of God's glory and the soul's shape, London, 4to, 1602; Microcosmos; the Discovery of the little world with the government thereof -- Oxf. 1603; The Holy Roode, or Christ's Cross, containing Christ crucified described in a speaking picture, London, 4to, 1609; to which are appended some Sonnets; Humour's Heaven on Earth, with the Civil Wars of Death and Fortune, and the Triumph of Death, or the Picture of the Plague according to the life as it was in An. 1603, London 1609; Wits Pilgrimage (by Poetical Essays) through a world of amorous Sonnets, soul-passions, and other passages, Divine, philosophical, poetical, and political, London 4to; no date; Muses' Sacrifice or Divine Meditations, London 12mo, 1612; Muses' Tears etc for Prince Henry of Wales' untimely death, London 4to 1613; Eclogues, London 8vo 1614; A select second Husband to Sir Tho^r Overbury's Wife, now a matchless widow, London 8vo 1616; Summa Fatalis, or all in all, and the same for ever, London 4to 1607; Bien Venu,

Great Britain's welcome to her great friends and dear brethren the Danes, London, 4to 1606; The Scourge of Folly, consisting of satirical epigrams and others in honour of many noble and worthy persons of our land, London 8vo no date, but probably published about 1611; Wit's Bedlam, and a variety of smaller pieces, published at various times from 1595 to 1618.

From the foregoing list it will be seen that Davies was a very voluminous writer. The probability, with respect to some of his smaller works at least, is that they were circulated first in manuscript, as specimens both of the author's powers as a poet, and of his unrivalled skill as a penman; and that they were afterwards collected and printed. "Wit's Pilgrimage, and The Scourge of Folly, for example, are evidently collections of innumerable little pieces that had long been circulating singly among the friends of Davies. valued by them doubtless as autographs of the celebrated poet and writing master. That Davies had obtained celebrity as a poet, is evident not only from the tone of Wood's memoir, but from various notices that remain of him by his contemporaries. Meres for instance, names him in his Palladis Tamia, as the prince of English epigrammatists; a circumstance which proves that, although none of his printed works bear an earlier date than 1602, many of his stray verses must have been in circulation before 1598. To various of his printed works, too, are appended eulogistic Sonnets by the minor poets and critics of his day; all anxious, it would seem, to show their zeal for his reputation as one of the ornaments of English

literature.

The works of Davies being now scarce, we have not been able to form an acquaintance with them all; but even out of such as we have obtained access to, evidence may be elicited, in support of the fact that he is the poet alluded to by Shakespeare in the opening Sonnets of the Sixth Paper.

And first, that Davies was one of the earliest members of what we have designated the Pembroke clique of Poets, distinctly appears from one of the short pieces appended to his Microcosmos published in 1603. The piece is entitled "A Damp upon the Death of the most noble Henry, late Earl of Pembroke"; and must have been written in 1600-1, immediately after the Earl's decease. We copy some of the lines.

Death hath deprived me of my dearest friend;
My dearest friend is dead and laid in grave;
In grave he rests until the world shall end,
The world shall end, and all things end shall
have.

x x x x x x x

My joys surceased, even as my friend did die,
My friend did die, and so would God might I!

These lines are certainly bald enough; but they prove that Davies must have been one of the clients of the Pembroke family, during the youth of the subject of our memoir, and the literary presidency of his mother at Wilton House. Accordingly throughout his works there are other evidences of this connexion, far stronger than could be adduced out of Daniel's works to prove his connexion with the same family, although that is undoubted. Thus annexed to the

Microcosmos, is the following Sonnet, which, from the style of the dedicatory sentence, must almost certainly have been written, prior to the death of Earl Henry.

"To the right Honourable and highly-renowned lady, Countess of Pembroke, the virtuous lady Anne, her daughter, and the right worthy and worshipful Philip Herbert Esq her son:

Thus must poor debtors pay their creditors,
And share a little where the due is more.
I owe myself to you, great favourers,
And I am little; so are great ones poor.
I owe myself unto myself, and so
Do I to those whom as myself I love;
I owe you more - the Three-in-one below,
Which I have honoured most next that above.
If more, what more, sith that's more than I have?
(For I am not so much mine own as yours.)
More, by as much as what I else might crave!
I wish it mine for you, for in your powers
All that and more, if more could be possesst,
Should, while you held me yours, yours firmly
rest.

J. D."

As these three members of the Pembroke family were thus addressed jointly by Davies, so afterwards were they, or at least the survivors of them, addressed singly. More than one other Sonnet is to be found in the volumes of the writing master, inscribed to his patroness the Countess of

Pembroke, after she had become a widow; and besides also inscribing one or two Sonnets to her younger son, Philip, Davies paid that young nobleman the compliment after his elevation in 1605 to the Earldom of Montgomery, of dedicating to him his published Miscellany called "Wit's Pilgrimage."

While Davies was thus paying his court to the other members of the Pembroke family it is not to be supposed that he would omit the eldest son and hopeful heir of the house, whom, if ever he was a guest at Wilton, he must have seen and known in his boyhood. On the contrary, it is natural to suppose that the young heir to the Earldom would receive a double share of his attention. Accordingly, of all the members of the Pembroke family no one occupies so considerable a figure in the poems of Davies, as the subject of our memoir. Immediately preceding the Sonnet last quoted, are two connected Sonnets addressed to him. They are as follows.

Dear lord, if so I could, I would make known
How much I long to keep thee still alive.
These lines, though short, so long shall be thine
own

As they have power vitality to give.
I consecrate this mite of my devotion
To the rich treasury of thy dear fame;
Which shall serve, though nought else worth, as a
notion

In time to sever thy fame from thy name.
William, Son's son of William, dreaded Earl

Of Pembroke, made by England's dreadfull'st King;
Nephew to Sidney, rarest worth's rare pearl,
That to this land the fairest fame did bring --
These worthies' worths are treasured in thee;
To three in one makes one as dear as three.

Within my soul I sensibly do feel
A notion which my mind's attention marks;
That is to strike Love's flint against truth's
steel,
More hard, to kindle thy love by the sparks;
But if the fire come not so freely forth,
As may inflame the tinder of thy love,
The tinder of my zeal shall be henceforth
Offered in flames, that to thy grace shall move,
Which is the sphere where they desire to rest;
And resting there they will in glory shine.
I am thine own by double interest,
Since once I vowed myself to thee and thine.
O then had I but single love of you
I should be double bound to W!

Your honour's peculiar

John Davies."

Although this piece bears, as printed in 1603, the superscription "To the right noble, and no less learned and judicious lord William Earl of Pembroke etc" we are convinced by its proximity to the Sonnet last quoted, as well as from its own tenor, that it had been written while

its subject was still a minor, and that the superscription was changed on its publication, the title of Earl of Pembroke being substituted for that of Lord Herbert. But if this supposition be correct, the piece will have been addressed to Lord Herbert during that very residence in London from 1597 to 1601, of which we have been able, by means of Rowland Whyte's letters, to furnish some account; and very possibly, therefore, it may be one of those complimentary poems addressed to the young nobleman, of which Shakespeare took such jealous notice. If so, may it not have been with reference to those very stanzas, that Shakespeare penned Sonnets LXXXIII and LXXXIV. Note the opening words of Davies

Dear lord, if so I could, I would make known
How much I long to keep thee still alive
and compare them with the apology which Shakespeare in Sonnet LXXXIII, makes for his silence.

This silence for my sin you did impute
Which shall be most my glory being dumb;
For I impair not beauty being mute
While others would give life, and bring a tomb
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes,
Than both your poets can in praise devise.

Again, may not one perceive a reference to the congratulations offered by Davies to the young Lord on the line of his descent from "William dreaded Earl of Pembroke" and his relationship to Sir Philip Sidney in the opening words of Sonnet LXXXIV?

Who is it that says most? Which can say more

Than this rich praise, that you alone are you?
In whose confine immured is all store
Which should example where your equal grew?
Lean penury within that pen doth dwell
That to his subject lends not some small glory
But he that writes of you, if he can tell
That you are you, so dignifies his story.

In short, we figure this part of the story of the Sonnets thus: Davies, as already a recognised retainer of the Pembroke family, is naturally one of the first to pay his respects to the young Lord Herbert, when in the winter of 1597-8 he comes to reside in town. Not long after this there springs up between Shakespeare and the young nobleman that romantic intimacy which it is the purpose of these pages to illustrate. Of the Sonnets sent to the young lord by Shakespeare, some are seen by Davies, and by others of the literary clique that visit at Baynard's Castle. By no means of a strict or truthful disposition, as may have been gathered from his "Damp on the Death of Earl Henry," and especially from its concluding lines, Davies sees no reason why he should not address sonnets to the young Lord, constructed after the same model. Accordingly, adopting the hyperbolic strain, without possessing a particle of the feeling that had made this strain natural, he produced those sluggish stanzas, that have been quoted, and offered them as a tribute to his young patron. These clumsy imitations of his own earnest metrical effusions came under Shakespeare's notice in return; and in the singular condition of mind in which he then is, he resents the intrusion.

It will increase the likelihood of such a conception of the case, if it can be shown that Davies was personally familiar with Shakespeare. Of this there are various proofs; but it will be sufficient to adduce one --to wit, an epigram written by Davies on the great dramatist. It is printed in his Scourge of Folly, as Epigram 159th, and was, in all probability written about the time with which we are now concerned:

To our English Terence -- Mr. William Shakespeare.

Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,
Hadst thou not played some kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst been a companion for a king,
And been a king among the meaner sort.
Some others rail; but, rail as they think fit,
Thou hast no railing but a reigning wit,
And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reap,
So, to increase their stock which they do keep.

What is the exact meaning of the epigram, and whether it depends for its point on any secret allusion to the Poet's history (as for instance, to the joke of Burbidge and Richard III) it is scarcely possible to discover; it proves however, that Davies knew Shakespeare, and was accustomed, in a somewhat complacent manner, to exchange civilities with him, and discuss his claims to a place in the gallery of great poets.

But if our surmise be true that Davies was induced to address his young patron in such Sonnets as the foregoing by having previously seen some that Shakespeare had written, it

is natural to suppose that he did not confine himself to one or two trials. Many fair copies of verses besides those quoted were doubtless carried to Baynard's Castle by the assiduous writing-master, whose very skill in mechanical matter of penmanship would prompt him to be continually writing something. Thus, appended to the same Scourge of Folly that contains the epigram on Shakespeare, there is printed another Sonnet to the young Lord of Pembroke, of which it is equally credible as in the former case, that it was composed on his accession to that title.

Learned and judicious lord, if I should balk
Thine honoured name, it being in my way,
My muse unworthy were of such a walk,
Where honour's branches make it ever May.
O! could my might with may proportion hold,
My May should be so glorious in effect,
That it should work what might and glory could,
Wherewith thy glory's style should still be
decked.

But, though I may, I cannot, wanting might,
Which makes my may to work as cold as bare;
So then, like winter, I must pinch thy right,
Although to right thee be my Muses' care.
But when the sun of favour shines on me,
My May may then have might to flourish thee.

What is this absurd jingle of puns but a wretched version of Shakespeare's 26th Sonnet?

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage

Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
 To thee I send this written embassage,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit.
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it;
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it;
 Till whatsoever, star that guides by moving
 Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
 And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect.
 Thee may I dare to boast how I do love thee;
 Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove
 me.

There is still another poetical piece of Davies extant,
 that was addressed to the subject of our memoir; and if
 there has been any doubt in the case of the others as to the
 fact of their having been written precisely at the date we
 have assigned (1597-1601) this doubt fortunately cannot
 extend to the piece in question. It occurs in the
 Miscellany called Wit's Pilgrimage etc; and bears the
 following superscription "written to the right Honourable
 and most judicious lord, William Earl of Pembroke that now
is" -- a superscription, which plainly denotes, it will be
 observed, that at the time when the poem was composed, its
 subject bore another title. We copy the piece entire.

Look, lord, with those sharp eyes of thine with
 which, though barely open
 In seeing, thou seest the least o'ersights, old,

new, or done, or spoken;
Look on this seal of simple zeal, which, though
but coarsely carved,
Contains the impress of thy praise, thy virtues
have deserved.
Truth's hands, wealth's arms, wit's eyes, art's
tongue, and wisdom's listening ears
Prevent Time's course; young years, conceiving,
bring forth many years.
Fair-featured soul, well-shapen spirit, in which
subsisting be
Grace, goodness, glory, three in one, and one
including three,
Grace goodness gives, to glory guides; such grace,
such guide, such glory.
God gave, you have; yet, having, hold unsure, to
shun vain-glory.
So, so, sweet lord, so should it be; so was true
Sapience source,
More wise than all, more wise in this, knew things
had but their course.
Who goes to glory, glory shuns; so shuns, so goes,
that yet,
Vain-glory shunned, true glory gained, may him in
glory set.
Read, note, search, try, know, show, muse, mount,
aspire, again descend,
The lower souls sink in themselves the higher they
ascend.

Tell mounting wit's that's too too light that
wisdom makes not weighty;
Tell motion it is worse than mad, whose motor's
not Almighty;
Tell world it is but the wayward maze where man is
mazed and lost;
Tell State it stands on airy props by storms still
turned and tost;
Tell wisdom she is base if she mounts not above
the moon;
Tell Humours and tell Humorists their humours
change too soon,
Tell Learning it is dark as hell, not mixed with
light of grace,
Tell Counsel and tell Counsellors they oft mistake
their case;
Tell Books, though ever-blest some be, yet are
they but informers
Tell them they should more blessed be, if they
were still reformers;
Tell Arts they ask too much for Art in asking all
our time;
Tell Arms they do but work their harms by arms and
harms that climb,
Tell Earthly hopes they make us seek for that one
cannot find;
Tell, tell world's bliss it wanteth force to breed
true bliss in mind;
Tell sport it spoileth precious Time; tell Time

he's falsely true,
True in his course, in's custom false -- away
steals, yet pursues;
Tell Kaisers though they Cesars are, their
nostrils bound their breath;
Tell Life, though during like the sun, it subject
is to Death;
Tell Wealth it wastes with earthly pomp; tell pomp
its but a puff;
Tell glory she must bide the gird of Envy's
counter-buff;
Tell, tell fair words, from foul mouths sent, they
feed but fatten fools;
Tell Friends true Friendship's nowhere learnt but
in true virtue's schools;
Tell Love that he an idol is, found, forged,
adored by fancy;
Tell flesh-enraging Lust she is a soul confounding
phrensy;
Tell favours they are copper-gilt, uncertain true,
if true;
Tell Fools when shadows come before, their
substance will ensue;
Tell looks where love in triumph tilts against
unfenced eyes;
They looks allure, by looks like lures, which seem
true, yet are lies;
Tell All that all is, all in all, beneath the
heavenly cope;

And lastly tell thy thoughts, sweet lord, they in
an harr[?] must rest,
That honour holds for life, and lives to die ere
dispossest.
Here "Sur Minervane" mayst them say, 'Tis true;
yet say not so;
Because it comes from him that lives to die upon
thy foe.

J. D.

Of this rigmarole it is to be supposed that it was sent to Lord Herbert in Baynard's Castle, beautifully written out, on the finest paper, and in the fairest text, and what is perhaps more likely in the most artistic possible variety of texts. The style, it will have been observed, is a singular combination of that of the old copybooks used in writing-schools, with that of the composition of the stiffer Elizabethan poets; and Davies in presenting it to the young lord, doubtless meant to convey wholesome prudential advice, at the same time that he paid a poetic compliment.

This piece also we suppose to have originated in a desire on the part of Davies to do what he saw Shakespeare doing. Not only may one or two Shakespearian expressions be detected in it; but of all the pieces of Davies addressed to the Earl of Pembroke, this corresponds most closely with Shakespeare's own description of his rival's verses given in the nine Sonnets in which he makes allusion to him. Thus in Sonnet LXXXVI

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse

Bound for the prize of all too-precious you
That did etc

literal, though semi-satirical, description, it will be observed, of Davies' sounding Heptameters!³ Again in Sonnet LXXXII

Yet when they have devised
What strained touches rhetoric can lend
which is also a criticism, strictly such as any sensible person would make, of the style of Davies!⁴ To the matter of the foregoing piece also one might fancy an allusion in those lines of Sonnet LXXIX

Yet what of thee thy poet doth invent,
He robs thee of and pays it thee again.
He lends thee virtue and he stole that word
From thy behaviour; beauty doth he give
And found it in thy cheek. He can afford
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.

Thus far, then, the case is very much in favour of Davies. But if as yet Davies has the preference over Daniels, what is to be said of that allusion in Sonnet LXXXII to "dedicated words" upon which the claim was founded in behalf of the latter poet?

Here also, we are luckily able to say, there is a point of superiority for the poet whose name we have brought forward. Daniel's "Defense of Rhyme" as we have seen was inscribed to the Earl of Pembroke in 1603. But in the year previous to this, a poem of Davies, was published, with a dedication to the same Earl, in conjunction with two of his relatives. The poem in question, was the "Mirum in Modum";

a glimpse of God's glory and the soul's shape; and the dedication was as follows:

"To the most noble, judicious, and my best beloved Lord, William, Earl of Pembroke; the most honourable Sir Robert Sidney Knight-Lord governor of Flushing; and the right worshipful Edward Herbert of Montgomery Esquire my most honoured and respected friends.

To subdivide souls indivisible,
Being wholly in the whole, and in each part,
For me were more than most impossible,
Though I were Art itself and more than Art.
Yet must I make my soul a Trinity,
So to divide the same between you three;
For Understanding, Will, and Memory
Makes but one Soul, yet they three virtues be.
The Understanding being first I give
Unto the first, for order so doth crave;
And Will, good-will, the second shall receive;
Then Memory the last shall ever have
And as I part my soul, my book I part,
Betwixt you three, that share my broken heart.

All yours wholly, and to you

most humbly devoted

John Davies."

The allusions in this dedication are to the contents of the book itself, which is a sort of poetico-metaphysical medley about all things human and divine, thrown into the form of an analysis of the Mind of Man, into understanding, will, memory etc. What we have here to observe, however, is how

exactly the following reference in Shakespeare to the
"dedicated words" answers to the lines just quoted.

I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,
And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook
The dedicated words that writers use,
Of their fair subject blessing every book.
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise,
And therefore art enforced to seek anew
Some feebler stamp of the time-bettering days.

True the Mirum in Modum was not published till 1602;
while the Sonnet under notice was written as we calculate,
in 1599-1600; but it was much more common then than it is
now to circulate compositions in manuscript; and with no
author would this system of preparatory publication be so
customary as with one who was known far and wide as the best
penman of his age. It would be the pleasure of such a man
to show himself independent of the art of printing by
multiplying manuscript copies of his own writings; and if we
suppose a few such manuscript copies of the Mirum in Modum
to have been in circulation during the two years preceding
its publication in print, this would bring back the
composition of the poem and its dedication exactly to the
date required. There seems even to be a distinct allusion
to these manuscript copies of poems of Davies in the opening
lines of Sonnet LXXVIII:

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse
As every alien pen hath got my use

And under thee their Poesy disperse

Thus at every point the case for Davies is shown to be much more plausible than that for Daniel. All that Daniel did, Davies did, in circumstances too much more nearly corresponding to those which the Sonnets of the Fifth Paper indicate; and what Daniel cannot be shown to have done at all, i.e., address such poems to Lord Herbert as Shakespeare mentions, Davies did profusely.

Meanwhile an objection must have been suggesting itself to the mind of the reader. Can this versifier, this writing-master, this John Davies of Hereford, whose effusions one would hardly now read at the rate of a shilling a line, have been the Poet of whom Shakespeare was jealous, and of whom as compared with himself, he could speak in such terms as he has employed in more than one Sonnet. Thus in Sonnet LXXVIII:

Thine eyes that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
Have added feathers to the learned's wing,
And given grace a double Majesty.

or again in Sonnet LXXIX.

I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen.

or, most extravagantly of all, in Sonnet LXXX

O, how I faint when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!
But since your worth, wide as the ocean is,

The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth wilfully appear.

Let it be remarked, however, in the first place, in reply to this objection, that such language from Shakespeare would have been equally extravagant to whichever of all his contemporary poets he had referred; just as unity bears the same proportion to infinity that an hundred does. Again the singular condition of mind under which Shakespeare was labouring must be taken into account, a condition of mind the essential peculiarity of which was, that like jealousy, it distorted all objects out of their due magnitude and proportion, tormenting itself with its own exaggerations.⁵

Nor after all was it so extraordinary that Shakespeare should, in mentioning Davies, or even in thinking of him, treat him with more respect than we would pay him now. Davies was a poet of high name in his day; he was eulogised by Drayton and other men of ability; and there can be little doubt from the tone of an epigram already quoted, that he regarded himself as belonging to a class of writers superior to that which included Shakespeare. All this would affect Shakespeare's estimate of him; for, let the mind that forms the estimate be ever so strong, the circumstances that surround a man always count for something in these cases. With what respect, for instance, at least usually, did Burns speak of Hugh Blair and other small Edinburgh critics, among whom he was cast for a time; and with what complacence did they write letters of kindly advice to the great black-browed ploughman whose fortunes they had taken in hand.

Only in the reckless audacity of his inspired moments, did Burns break out into contempt of these prigs of Literature, and know himself among them all. So doubtless, it was with Shakespeare. For the Blacklocks and Hugh Blairs of his day, the writers, that is, who had enjoyed an academic education, he would, doubtless, yield, and even feel a considerable degree of reverence, which would only disappear, when, on any occasion of intercourse or of conflict with them, his mind became hot, aggressive, and inventive. When his mind was passive, he may even have envied these men, and imagined himself beneath them. We are apt to entertain a misconception on this point. To us the soul of Shakespeare is as some vast spheric mass that we see behind us at a distance. We admire, as we look back, the bulk and the brilliance of the ball; but we know not what it was that filled it with golden bosses.

The peculiarities of Davies, as a writer, it must be added, were such as would be most apt to seize in his favour, any natural diffidence that there was in Shakespeare. It is not indeed, certain, as Wood asserts, that he was educated at Oxford. But that he belonged to the class of "learned poets" a quotation or two from his Mirum in Modum will sufficiently prove. Thus:

Yet judgment's function is of great effect,
Which sorts particulars from generals,
Then generals from generals elect,
And so from specials parteth specials;
Then all confers, and as she can select
The good from bad, and spirits from corporals,

This by her power she able is to do,
Especially if God gives aim thereto.
Or, again, speaking of Contemplation, or the faculty of
discerning abstract Truth:

She, divine power, consociates powers divine,
Gliding through heaven, on her celestial wings,
And to the Angel's hymns her ears incline,
And all the host of heaven together brings,
At once to view those bright eye-blinding things;
Yet stays not here, but doth herself intrude
Into the presence of the King of Kings,
To see the objective sole Beatitude,
That of the Cherubins cannot be viewed.

Or, again, in the same poem:

Arithmetic from unity proceeds,
Even as from Punctum flows Geometry;
Musick the symphony of sounds succeeds,
And Architecture uniformity;
Perspective at one point looks diversely;
Physic doth aim at health, and that's no more
But humours' well-consorted unity;
The Law looks at one right, whose only lore
Is to conjoin what wrong unjoined before.

Certainly if such expository stuff put in metre passed for
poetry, there is little wonder that Shakespeare, in his
desponding moments should begin to question whether he, with
none of these academic gifts, was a poet at all. And yet we
can detect that, if in those moments, he paid Davies more
respect than was his due, he yet had a sound conviction in

his own mind, that whatever the world thought of such metre, it was after all little better than rubbish. In his more competent moods, as for instance, in those social meetings at the Mitre, he would doubtless come down harder upon poor Davies, declaring as Jonson did of Daniel, that "he was a good, honest man, but no poet." As it was, however, this academic versifier stood within the sphere of his personal interests and emotions, and assumed importance, in consequence.

The case in favour of Daniel, it will be remembered, broke down on a particular allusion occurring in Sonnet LXXXVI; which seemed to demand it as a characteristic of whatever poet was brought forward as probably the one we were in quest of, that he should have believed, or been reported to believe, in apparitions. Does Davies fulfil this condition? We think it can be proved that he does, more decidedly, at least, than the same can be proved of Daniel. In the first place, whatever value there is in the supposition that Daniel may, through the Countess of Pembroke, have formed an acquaintance with the celebrated astrologer and converser with spirits, Dr. John Dee; to all this Davies can lay equal claim. But farther, the style of thought exhibited in the writings of Davies is much more consistent with the belief in apparitions than the clear and sensible mind that appears through the writings of Daniel. All the poems of Davies are obscure, heavy, cabalistic, and enigmatical, with some thread of allegory or other undiscoverable meaning pervading them. In the words of one of his contemporary admirers and eulogists:

With the weighty matter so he loads his lines
As to dim sights they oft seem dark as hell.
They are not unlike in this respect, although inferior to
some verses that we have seen of the eccentric painter,
Blake, who, as is well known, (and we cite his name for the
sake of the coincidence) was so subject to ocular illusions
that he used to paint from the spectres that stood by his
easel. Finally there occur throughout the writings of
Davies, various passages that appear to indicate a
disposition on his part to these spectral fancies. That his
imagination at least was familiar with the horrible and
Dantesque, will appear from the following stanzas which
occur in his "Humour's Heaven on Earth." He is describing
Hell at great length, and commences thus:

A ruinous room, whose bottom's most profound;
A pit infernal, full of endless dole;
A loathsome lake, where choking damps abound;
A dungeon deep; a dreadful, darksome hole.

Then, after two other stanzas:

The walls are hung with cobwebs, which contain
Soul-catching hell-hounds, clad in spider's shape;
The roof of burning brass which drops like rain,
From which no one below could ere escape;
The pavements full of groundless gulfs of pain,
Which though they still devour, they still do
gape, Whose glowing maws cannot concoct the meat,
Which there lies boiling, in a hell of heat.

Here, you may see a goblin, grisly, grim,

With hook and line stand fishing for a soul,
Which in those boiling seas, do sinking swim,
Baiting their hooks with salamanders foul;
Which, being hanged, he hauls it to the brim,
And all the while, as hunger-band doth howl;
Which fingered, forthwith, in the devil's name,
In go the fangs, that inch-meal tear the same.

Here in a chimney, all of burning bricks,
Sits Grimness, and a red-hot spit doth turn,
Whereon a human creature, melting, sticks,
Whose grease doth make the fire the more to burn;
Which turnspit oft his filthy fingers licks,
And with this liquor doth his lips adorn,
Basting the roast with what most torment gives,
Whiles the poor creature dies because it lives.

This though gravely written, may possibly be nothing more than fancy-work; but the same cannot be said of certain passages, where, the intercourse between spirits and human beings seems to be asserted purely, as a matter of science. Omitting various such passages that might be quoted, we shall copy a few lines of one poem, printed in his Wit's Pilgrimage, and bearing the special title "Upon Apparitions in the Night.":

Ye grisly ghosts that walk in shades of Night,
Like shades whose substance, though quite
matterless,
The daily foul-offender doth affright,

Why make ye darkness paper for your press?
Do you imprint on blackness blacker forms
Of matters worse? or in our fantasy
Impress ye figures raising horror's storms?
Or how in darkness come you to the eye?
Do you but show? or show in substances?
Thicker the sir, and so a shape assume?
Or creep you in some corporal essences?
Or else the sight deceive with less than fume?
And why, O hell-hounds, range you in the night
Out of Earth's centre, your infernal hold?

X X X X

And yet, O passion, tax not all for some!
Some are so far from being friends, that they
Are saints and angels!

There certainly appears to be nothing strained in the supposition that the man who wrote this had personally some such belief in the power of conversing with spirits as Shakespeare seems to indicate in the lines that have already been quoted from Sonnet LXXXVI.

Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.

May there not also be some similar allusion in the following eulogistic stanza by the forgotten poetaster Nicolas Deeble, prefixed to his friend Davies poem of Christ's Cross?

Write on and have the palm. Continue still
In sacred style to treat of powers divine;

Invoke no mortal grace, for angels will
From heaven descend to grace this tract of thine,
Changing each black into a golden line.

It does not seem at all unlikely, even, that in some biographical notice of Davies still extant, it may be mentioned as a fact that he believed in apparitions and the power of human beings to hold intercourse with spirits. No such notice having been brought to our knowledge by the research we have been able to bestow, we must now leave the case as it is, having, as we think, made the required fact at least probable. To compensate, however, for whatever blank in the proof the omission may cause, there is in favour of our hypothesis with regard to Davies, one evidence more. There is one of Shakespeare's sonnets of reference to the other poet, that we have not yet quoted. It is Sonnet LXXXV, which begins thus:

My tongue-tied muse in manners holds her still,
While comments of your praise, richly compiled
Reserve their character with golden quill,
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed;
I think good thoughts, while others write good
words,
And like unlettered clerk, still cry "Amen"
To every hymn that able spirit affords,
In polished form of well-refined pen.

Hitherto we have necessarily read this passage, and one or two that resemble it in the other Sonnets, as mere allusions to the peculiar poetic style of the rival versifier. But what if the reference is more personal and curious -- to

wit, to the fame of John Davies as the finest penman in England, and to the care he had taken, on the occasion in question, to make a display of his art, by using his "golden quill" and his colored inks, and by sending his manuscripts "richly compiled," that it to say, done up in beautiful binding, to the young heir of Baynard's Castle.

That Davies was the man to do this, will seem the more probable, if we recollect how much of his reputation depended on his penmanship alone. We have already quoted Wood on this point, but to show that he has not exaggerated the fame of Davies as a penman, we shall quote his authority, the quaint Thomas Fuller. "John Davies of Hereford" says Fuller in his Worthies of Herefordshire, "was the greatest master of the pen that England in his age beheld for 1st Fast-writing, so incredible his expedition, 2nd Fair-writing, some minutes consideration being required to decide whether his lines were written or printed, 3rd close-writing, a mystery indeed, and too dark for my dim eyes to discover, and 4th various writing, secretary, Roman, Court, and text. The poetic fiction of Briareus the giant which had a hundred hands found a moral in him, who could so cunningly and copiously disguise his aforesaid elemental hands, that, by mixing, he could make them appear an hundred, and if not so many sorts, so many degrees of writing. Yet had he lived longer he would modestly have acknowledged Mr. Gething, who was his scholar, and also born in this county, to excel him in that faculty; whilst the other would own no such odious eminence, but rather gratefully return the credit to his master again. Sure I am

when two such transcendent pen-masters shall again come to be born in the same shire, they may even serve fairly to engross the will and testament of the expiring universe."

This notice, it will seem, serves to make all that we have advanced regarding Davies, and the private circulation of his manuscripts more probable.

X X X X X X X X X X

Having thus, as far as possible, filled in from history, the local and personal associations that were required to complete our conception of the story of the Sonnets, extending as it does from the year 1597, to the year 1602, or from Shakespeare's thirty-fourth year, to his thirty-ninth, we have now only to give such a brief sketch of the life of the Earl of Pembroke, from that date forward, as will serve to suggest, how the romance of those few years may be supposed to have continued itself; whether it lasted, whether it changed its character, or whether it died away. Shakespeare lived at least fourteen years after he had written the last of his Sonnets; what was the history of his friendship during that period?

In the spring of 1603, James 1st succeeded Elizabeth on the throne of England; and the two kingdoms became united under the name of "Great Britain." At the time when this happy event took place, Shakespeare was still a resident in London. A curious notice of him, recently discovered, exhibits him moving about in ordinary society in the month of October immediately. The wife of Edward Alleyn the player, (Henslowe's step-daughter) writing on the 20th, of that month, from her house in Southwark, to her husband,

then absent on a strolling-excursion in the provinces, sends him the following piece of news.

"About a week ago there came a youth, who said he was Mr. Francis Chaloner, would have borrowed L10, to have bought things for x x and said he was known unto you and Mr. Shakespeare of the Globe, who came x x x said he knew him not, only he heard of him that he was a rogue, so he was glad we did not lend him the money." Collier's Memoirs of Alleyn.

Precisely about the time that this youth was going about the Liberty of the Chick in Southwark, trying to procure money on false pretences by using Shakespeare's name, the tragedy of Macbeth must have been in progress. It would be acted in the season of 1603-4; and a few months afterwards, the probability is, Shakespeare relinquished the stage and retired to Stratford.

Ere he left town he would hear of a circumstance that would interest him much. Of all the young courtiers of Elizabeth that had taken their allegiance to her pedantic successor, perhaps none had been so graciously received, by him, as the Earl of Pembroke, who was but just out of his minority, and his younger brother now no longer "little Mr. Philip Herbert," but a handsome and fair-proportioned youth, and (by his Majesty's favour) a knight of the Garter. On what affectionate terms with each other the brothers lived, and how willingly the elder contributed to the comfort and advancement of the younger, appears from a fact stated by Clarendon in his posthumous notice of the latter. "Being a young man" says the historian, "scarce of age at the

entrance of King James, he had the good fortune, by the comeliness of his person, and his skill and indefatigable industry in hunting, to be the first who drew the King's eyes towards him with affection; which was quickly so far improved that he had the reputation of a favourite. He was generally known and as generally esteemed, being the son of one Earl of Pembroke, and younger brother to another, who liberally supplied his expense beyond what his annuity from his father would bear. He pretended to no other qualification than to understand horses and dogs very well, which his master loved him the better for, and to be believed honest and generous; which made him many friends, and left him no enemy."

Altogether a more accomplished person than his sportsman brother, the Earl of Pembroke, likewise, though in a different way, attracted the king's notice; and the first mark of favour that he received was his elevation to the knighthood of the Garter in 1603.

The circumstance to which we have alluded as likely to interest Shakespeare about the time of his withdrawal from the stage, was the approaching marriage of his friend, the Earl of Pembroke, with Lady Mary Talbot, the eldest daughter of Gilbert Earl of Shrewsbury. Anticipated for a considerable period, this event took place towards the end of the year 1604. Some particulars connected with it we learn from our old friend Rowland Whyte. Still attached to the Pembroke family and usually residing at Baynard's Castle, this faithful agent had necessarily been connected with the negotiations in the matter of the marriage. This

had brought him into correspondence with the Earl of Shrewsbury; to whom at his seat of Sheffield Lodge we find him writing thus in Oct. 1604.

"I most humbly thank you for the most honourable kind letter I received from you in answer to two of mine. You have gained the love and service of a poor gent towards you and your honourable daughter. My Lord of Pembroke is very well, and hath resolved to set out from hence upon Thursday the 1st of Nov. That night he will lie at Royston; the second at Bever;" (Belvoir, in Lincolnshire, a seat of the Earls of Rutland); "the third with your Lordship. It were not amiss that Lady Mary sent a coach to meet him at Newark (for after so long a posting it will much refresh him) if Newark be on his way from Bever Castle" (no small error for a postmaster to make) "to Sheffield. x x x With my Lord of Pembroke my Lord Sidney" (his uncle, our former acquaintance Sir Robert, now Baron Sidney) "and Sir Philip Herbert determined to come; but since they sat in council, and found it no discretion for them all to be away at once." "The Court at Whitehall. Wednesday 24 Oct. 1604" -- Talbot Papers printed in Lodge's illustrations of British History. Vol III. pp. 241-2.

This letter of Rowland Whyte had been preceded about a week by one from the Earl himself to his intended father-in-law, in which he intimates another fact of importance; the betrothal namely of his younger brother to Lady Susan, daughter of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. The letter proceeds as follows: "My Lord, though I had no direct messenger to send unto your Lordship, I rather chose to

write by post, than leave you unadvertised of that which is as joyful unto me, as anything that ever fell out since my birth. I cannot now write you all the circumstances, but at my coming down your Lordship shall know as much as myself. The matter, in brief, is that, after long love and many changes, my brother, on Friday last was privately contracted to my Lady Susan, without the knowledge of any of his or her friends. On Saturday, she acquainted her uncle with it; and he me." "At Hampton Court, the 16th Oct 1604." Talbot Papers, Lodge's Illustr. III. 238-9.

To this piece of intelligence Rowland Whyte also refers in his letters just quoted. "There is no day set down," he says "for Sir Philip Herbert's marriage; only it is thought it shall be in the Xmas holidays." The marriages of the two brothers, therefore, were nearly contemporaneous. The Earl of Pembroke and his bride would scarcely have returned to town when Sir Philip Herbert and Lady Susan de Vere, fulfilled their contract by a public marriage. The influence of the king seems to have been exerted in reconciling Lady Susan's relatives to her match with his favourite; and, accordingly, on the 27th of December 1604, the wedding was solemnised we are told "with great honour, the king and queen assisting to the same in the chapel," the king giving the bride away, and the "charge for the gloves and garters given" on the occasion "amounting to well near a thousand pounds."

Somewhat more than a month after this, we find Rowland Whyte, writing to the Earl of Shrewsbury, news of both the brothers.

"My Lord of Pembroke is well, and surely is as honourable a kind husband as any in Great Britain. My Lady much joys in it, and gives him every day more cause to increase it. God bless them both with children, and long life! My Lady is much honoured by all his friends, and all strive who shall love her best. To me this is a great comfort; and my Lady shall ever find me an humble servant unto her, and one that shall well observe her. My Lord Pembroke's favour with the king is more than he will make show of; and the young worthy Sir Philip grows great in his Majesty's favour, and carries it without envy, for he is very humble to the great Lords, is desirous to do all men good, and hurts no man." "Court of Whitehall 4th Feb. 1604." (N.S.1605) Talbot Papers. Lodge's Illustr. III. 258.

All this, if our Pembroke hypothesis be correct must have been extremely interesting to Shakespeare. At length he would have his wish gratified in seeing happily wedded the youth to whom six years before he had addressed those fanciful persuasions to marriage, whose aversion to the marriage-state had been since noted by others of his friends. It was probably not long after the Earl's marriage that Shakespeare went to live at Stratford.

And thus the two friends are separated by those "advised respects" the power of which Shakespeare had foreseen, by those necessities, namely, of life and forward motion, each in his own course, by which so many romances are trampled out, and love-vows riven in twain. "One must live" says Goethe, in apology for what seems the heartless parting with the poor Risa whose love he had won; and

whatever regrets there may have been on the part of our two friends that they also had at length attained a point whence their paths in life must conclusively diverge, with some such consolation as this must they too have solved them. Shakespeare's was precisely the mind to which such an adage as that of Goethe would in those circumstances occur; save that (and we would fain hope something of the kind of Goethe, too) he would only use it a vast intellectual brag with which, as it were, to cheat his softer soul into a belief in its own firmness. Be this as it may, the two friends part; with a hearty farewell we will suppose; - the one to pen dramas and roll his great thoughts alone, amid the still woods of the Avon; the other to live on where he was, a great man and a courtier.

Shakespeare would not be without intelligence of the movements of his friend. Of direct correspondence between them we are able to say nothing; but there were many channels through which news from the court would reach Shakespeare at Stratford. Some Sunday, for instance, going to church, he would hear from a neighbor that Sir Philip Herbert had been created Earl of Montgomery, or his uncle, Lord Sidney, Viscount Lisle, a step preparatory in the latter case, to the attainment of the Earldom of Leicester. Of the tilts and pageants that were taking place at court in the years 1605, and 1606, Shakespeare would likewise receive accounts, the general tenor of which would doubtless be corroborative of the rhyme in which Rowland Whyte sums up the news of the town in one of his letters to the Earl of Shrewsbury:

The Herberts every cock-pit day
Do carry away
The gold and glory of the fray.

One piece of intelligence that would reach Stratford in September 1608, must according to our fancy have possessed peculiar interest for the wealthy proprietor of the New House. This was the news of the quarrel between the Earl of Pembroke and Sir George Wharton, the same knight who was killed in the following year in a duel with his friend Sir James Stuart. The story, which we shall quote as illustrative of the character of the supposed friend of Shakespeare, is thus minutely told in a letter from Thomas Coke to the Countess of Shrewsbury, the Earl's mother-in-law.

"I do not doubt but your Ladyship hath heard before this what honour my Lord of Pembroke hath got by his discreet and punctual proceeding in the question betwixt Sir George Wharton and him; yet for that I have understood it by Mr. Morgan and others particularly, I adventure to advertise your Ladyship. On friday was se'en night my Lord and Sir George with others played at cards; 'Sir George, I have loved you long, and desire still to do so; but, by your manner in playing, you lay it upon me either to leave to love you, or to leave to play with you; wherefore, choosing to love you still, I will never play with you more.' The next day they hunted with the king; and my Lord of Pembroke's page galloping after his Lordship, Sir George came up to him, and lashed him over the face with his rod. The boy told his Lordship; who finding by strict examination

that the boy did not deserve it, demanded of Sir George why he did strike his boy. Sir George answered he meant nothing towards his Lordship. My Lord said he asked not that, but what the cause was why he did strike the boy. 'I did not strike him' answered Sir George. 'Then, I am satisfied' said the Earl. 'God's blood!' said Sir George, 'I say it not to satisfy you.' 'But Sir,' said the Earl, 'whoso striketh my boy without cause shall give me an account of it; and therefore, I tell you, it was foolishly done of you.' 'You are a fool' said Sir George. 'You lie in your throat,' said the Earl. And thus the Duke of Lenox, the Earl of Mar, and others coming in, this rested, and everyone began to gallop away in hunting; and the Earl being gone about six or eight yards {minutes}, Sir George spurred his horse with all speed up to him, which was observed by the Earl of Montgomery who crying, 'Brother, take heed; you will be stricken,' neither party having weapon, the Earl instantly received him with a sound backward blow over the face, which drove him almost back from his horse's croup. But, company being present, they galloped again till, in the end, the stag died in Bagshot town. Where, Sir George, taking opportunity to write, came afterwards to the Earl, and offered him a paper, protesting there was nothing in it unfit for his Lordship to read. The Earl said, 'Sir George give me no papers here, where all they see us who know what hath passed, if you mean to do yourself right; but tell me is not the purport of it a challenge to me?' 'Yes,' said Sir George, 'Well,' said the Earl, 'this night you shall have answer; now let us talk of the -----.' And after calling

Sir John Lee unto him, willed him to tell Sir George that that night he should bring him the length of his Lordship's sword. After being come home, and divers coming to his chamber, and Sir John Lee, among the rest, only privy to his Lordship's intent, 'O, Sir John,' said his Lordship, 'you are come for the sword which I promised you'; and commanded his page to deliver unto him the sword which my Lord of Devonshire gave him which he receiving as given, went according to his former directions to Sir George; told him that that was the Earl's sword, the next day (being Sunday) the time when they would fight; and therefore willed him to withdraw himself and take measure of the sword; 'No,' said Sir George, 'it shall not need; I will have no other sword but this at my side.' 'Advise yourself,' said Sir John, 'That is shorter than this; and do not think that the Earl will take an hairsbreadth of an advantage at your hands.' Upon this Sir George was first sent for" (by the king) "and afterwards the Earl; the king's commandment laid upon them not to stir. After which Sir George came to Sir John Lee, and told him that if my Lord would break the king's commandment he would do the like. Sir John said he knew the Earl was very scrupulous of breaking any of the king's commandments; but yet he would undertake upon his life to bring Sir George where the Earl should be all alone with that sword by his side, where, if Sir George would draw upon him, his Lordship should either defend himself or abide the hazard. But soon after, Sir George came to Sir John Lee, and told him he had received another commandment from his Majesty, and resolved to obey the same. After, they were

both convened before the Lords, and last before the King; and it was, as I hear, required that my Lord should give him (Sir George) satisfaction, which his Lordship said he would do thus: If Sir George would confess that he did not intend to have offended him, he would acknowledge that he was sorry that he had stricken him. And so the matter is ended."

17th Sep. 1608. Talbot Papers. Lodge's Illustr. III. 359-361.

It is very probable that during the four years that had now elapsed since his retirement from the stage, Shakespeare had more than once paid a visit to his acquaintances in London. In 1609, at all events, we find him again a resident in the Liberty of the Chick in Southwark, and paying poor's rates in the parish. Curiously enough, as has been remarked in another place, this was the year in which his Sonnets were published; and the probability accordingly, is, that, if he did not superintend the publication, he was at any rate aware of it, in time to have interfered had he thought it necessary. There is no reason, therefore, for supposing that the sonnets were published against his will. By whatever means they were collected and sent to the press, whether at the instance of the Earl of Pembroke, or only with his consent at the suit of the bookseller, who had heard of their existence and wished to make a speculation of them, cannot now be ascertained; but in whatever way the affair was managed, it can hardly have been kept a secret from the person most interested.

If Shakespeare saw the sheets of his Sonnets as they passed through the press, strange must have been his

thoughts! How altered everything was since they were written! The virgin-queen was dead and gone; and a Scotchman sat on the throne; the youth, "the lovely boy" of the earlier sonnets was now a full-grown man in his thirtieth year and a stately courtier; and he himself, the poet, was forty-five years of age and a grandfather! Seven years of change if they had not alienated him from the friend he had so loved, had inevitably blunted and sobered their relation to each other; and if, still, of all the wealthy mansions in town, Baynard's Castle was that which the poet oftenest visited, and where he was surest of a hearty welcome, yet this was but as if some tale begun in fantastic verse were concluded in common prose. And now to have the fantastic verse brought before his eyes again! To peruse line by line the Sonnets that he had written seven, eight, or ten years before! The perusal at the same distance of time, of a packet of one's old love-letters would scarcely bring an equal flush of strangeness over one. The hyperbolic style of the Sonnets, their braggardism of word and metaphor their total dissimilarity to anything that a human pen had ever written before, -- all this would now be clearly, although with a curious mixture of sensations, discerned by Shakespeare. At some parts colored pictures of the past would start vividly forth upon the canvas of memory, and in the rush of keen emotion, the romance that had vanished would seem more real; at others, the present would prevail, and the poet, reading incredulously what he had once written would smile and blush by turns at his own extravagance. Of the former kind would be the passages

relating to his guilty love for the dark-eyed lady; and all those Sonnets in which mounting from some petty incident of the time now forgotten he had soared into the high and the general; of the latter kind would be the passages in which he had commemorated his jealousy of poor Davies, or otherwise made mountains of trifles.

Nevertheless Shakespeare while thus reading his own effusions with peculiar feelings as a man, would also judge them as a critic. That they were artistic compositions, pregnant with thought, and comparable in point of expression and literary neatness with any collection of Sonnets that existed in the language, he could not but know. This condition of fine literary form being fulfilled, he would see that those strange feelings of surprise, and shame, with which he had been affected in reperusing them, were private matters of his own, with which the world had no business; and regarding which, provided they liked the Sonnets as compositions, they would never give themselves any trouble. If for instance the sickly sentimentalism of Daniel's Sonnets, considered as auto-biographical revelations, was no reason why they should not have been given to the public, if there was a likelihood that their literary merits would make them popular; much less, Shakespeare would feel, ought his Sonnets to be suppressed on account of their strange and unusual character. Every word of them had been sincere once; even as they stood there was a sufficient amount of real and permanent matter in them to give the whole series a purpose and a value; as for the rest, although he would not write the same now, it was sufficiently well-expressed; let

it go for what it was worth! Nothing that had sprung out of a real state of feeling, but would find its use; and that once in the world's history the autobiographic memorials of so rare and recondite a course of thought and emotion as that depicted by those Sonnets should be fully laid open to the inspection of the curious, might be no mean addition to the stock of general knowledge.

Such, as we venture to imagine, might be the reasons that would induce Shakespeare, if he was aware of the intention to publish his Sonnets, to give his consent added to which there may have been this more potent one, that copies of them having been multiplied, it would have been useless to withhold it. Certain precautions, however, would in this case be taken by Shakespeare, or by the Earl for him. For obvious reasons it would have been injudicious to annex the Earl's name to the volume; nor would there be dignity in an open encounter through the pages with Davies the writing-master. The dark-eyed lady, too, may still have been alive. Hence (besides that very possibly some sonnets may have been altogether cancelled) the device of the dedication to Mr. W. H., and the plan of printing the Sonnets in a continuous series without divisions and without headings or titles to elucidate their meaning. The purpose probably was to veil the fact of their interconnexion and autobiographic tenor, and to make them look as like as possible to a mere collection of detached Sonnets. If so, the ruse was successful. Only in the present generation, after the Sonnets have been in print for two hundred and fifty years, has the attempt been made to elicit the story

they contain. That this is difficult, and that after all the Sonnets cannot be made to cohere more closely, may arise from the fact, just surmised, that some may have been omitted, expressly because they contained references that were too clear and explicit. All this, however, we offer but as conjecture.

Shakespeare lived seven years after the publication of his Sonnets. During these seven years 1609-1616, he appears to have resided almost constantly, at Stratford. Meanwhile the Earl of Pembroke and his brother were advancing at Court and becoming more and more conspicuous in the field of public life. Of the character of the Earl, and the reputation borne by him now that, leaving his youth behind him, he entered on his mature age, the following elaborate description of him from Clarendon's history will give the best idea. In some points, the historian is probably delineating him as he was at a still later period of life; the general features of his character, however, were already, such as they are here represented.

"William, Earl of Pembroke, was the most universally beloved and esteemed of any man of the age; and having a great office in the Court, he made the court itself better esteemed and more revered in the country; and as he had a great number of friends of the best men, so no man had even the confidence to avow himself to be his enemy. He was a man very well bred, and of excellent parts and a graceful speech upon any subject, having a good proportion of learning and a ready wit to apply it and enlarge upon it; of a pleasant and facetious humour, and a disposition,

affable, generous, and magnificent. He was master of a great fortune from his ancestors, and had a great addition by his wife, daughter and heir of the Earl of Shrewsbury, which he enjoyed during his life, she outliving him, but all served not his expense, which was only limited by his great mind, and occasions to use it nobly. He lived many years about the Court, before in it; being rather regarded and esteemed by King James, than loved or favoured. x x x x As he spent and lived upon his own fortune, so he stood upon his own feet, without any other support than of his proper virtue and merit. x x He was exceedingly beloved in Court because he never desired to get that for himself which others laboured for; but was still ready to promote the pretences of worthy men. And he was equally beloved in the country for having received no obligation from the court that might corrupt or sway his affections and judgment. X X X

He was a great lover of his country, and of the religion and justice which he believed could only support it, and his friendships were only with men of those principles. And as his conversation was most with men of the most pregnant parts and understandings, so towards any such who needed support or encouragement, though unknown, if fairly recommended to him, he was very liberal. Sure never man was planted in a court that was fitter for that soil, or brought better qualities with him to purify that air.

Yet his memory must be flattered that his virtues and good indications may be believed. He was not without some alloy of evil, and without being clouded with great infirmities, which he had in too exorbitant a proportion, he

indulged in himself the pleasures of all kinds, almost in all excesses. To women, whether out of his natural constitution, or for want of his domestic content and delight (in which he was most unhappy, for he paid much too dear for his wife's fortune by taking her person into the bargain) he was immoderately given up. But therein he retained such a power and jurisdiction over his very appetite that he was not so much transported with beauty and outward amusements, as with those advantages of the mind, as manifested in extraordinary wit, and spirit, and knowledge, and administered great pleasure in the conversation. To these he sacrificed himself, his precious time, and much of his fortune; and some who were nearest his trust and friendship were not without apprehension that his natural vivacity and vigour of mind began to lessen and decline by these excessive indulgences."

It is needless to point out how exactly, at all points, this character of the Earl of Pembroke in his mature years corresponds with the picture that one would form of Shakespeare's friend, conceived as, having, advanced out of youth, into fully developed manhood. Fascinating and accomplished as a youth he would become as a man precisely such a person as Clarendon has described; retaining the same weakness in the same special direction. The notices of the Earl by Antony Wood, "the very picture and viva effigies of nobility; a person truly generous; a singular lover of learning, and the professors thereof. His mind was purely heroic, often stout, but never disloyal; and so vehement an opponent of the Spaniard that when that match (the proposed

marriage of the heir-apparent afterwards Charles I with a Spanish princess) fell under consideration in the latter end of the reign of King James, he would sometimes rouse to the trepidation of that King." In his appearance, too, a change had been wrought in keeping with the growth of his age and character. "His person," says Wood, "was rather majestic than elegant, and his presence, whether quiet or in motion was full of stately gravity." The portraits of him that remain, all of them taken at about this period, bear out this description.

Among the men of "pregnant parts and understandings" that gathered round the Earl and enjoyed his friendship, were all the poets of the day; and if it had been at this period of his life that those Sonnets of Shakespeare had been addressed to him, that accused him of accepting dedications and flattering verses from other literary men, we should have had to search for the offender through a crowd and for the pages of offence through an entire shelf of a library. Daniel, Davies, and the other survivors of the Wilton House clique were still, doubtless frequent guests at Baynard's Castle, where, besides the Earl and his Lady, they would often find seated in an arm-chair their old patroness and hostess the Earl's accomplished mother, now the Countess Dowager of Pembroke. But to the poets of the old clique, there would be numerous additions in the circle at Baynard's Castle. All men of parts, even if unknown, says Clarendon, were sure of encouragement from the generous Pembroke. To Ben Jonson, in particular, he was ever a warm and liberal friend. "Every first day of the year" Ben

himself told Drummond of Hawthornden in 1619, "I have L20 sent me by the Earl of Pembroke to buy books"; and that the gift was from a friend to a friend, and not as from a patron to a dependent appears from another entry in Drummond's diary in which the intimate footing on which Jonson was received at the Earl's mansion is clearly indicated.

"Pembroke and his Lady" writes Drummond, "discoursing, the Earl said, women were men's shadows, and she maintained them. Both appealing to Jonson, he affirmed it true; for which my Lady gave a penance to prove it in verse." Exactly on such a familiar footing, we are to suppose, had Shakespeare always been with his noble admirer, and precisely in such a pretty sportful way would the Countess show her liking for him, whenever on a visit to town, he came to see them, unless, indeed, she felt towards him more reverentially than it was possible she could feel towards the "rocky Ben."

Rare, however, must such interviews have been. The man (according to our hypothesis) whom of all his contemporaries, the Earl must still have loved and respected most, and in whose love and respect in return he must have felt that he still held a chief place, was now spending a quiet evening of life, aloof from literature and the bustle of theatres. An occasional letter from the one to the other, or now and then a gift committed to safe conveyance, such would be the only intercourse between the two friends that had been once inseparable. Often, doubtless, the proprietor of the New Place in Stratford, would send his thoughts towards the spot where he had known and loved his

friend; nor on the other hand, whether in Baynard's Castle, or at Wilton House, would the Earl, be forgetful of the man of genius, so venerable to his youth. To the nobleman, too, there would be a source of frequent and pleasurable recollections of his friend, in those new dramatic productions, which arriving periodically from Stratford, would come under his notice, first of all in his capacity as Lord Chamberlain, and then drawing crowds to the Globe Theatre, would give him and the town a new taste of the well-known brewage of their favourite.

Even this, too, must end. In April 1616 the news would reach London that the favourite play-writer for the Globe was dead. His death would be talked over at Baynard's Castle; where all, including Jonson, Davies, Daniel, and many others whom it has not been necessary for us to name, would protest how much they "loved the man," and how they did "honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any." Little would the Earl say; but not the less full surely would his great heart be, as he thought of his friend now removed. All his friendship would come back; all the hours that they had spent together long years ago; all that the one had said, while the other listened. Or, if those papers were near, now saved as a gift from the dead, would they not be reverently taken out, and gazed at? And if, glancing over the inky memorials, that the fingers now cold in Death had traced, the eye should have read:

No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell,
Give warning to the world that I am fled

From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell;
Nay if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it.

Here would not even the Courtier's practised soul have given way to tears? "Gone, gone" he would say, "so humble, so great!" And if, turning again, after a pause, to the guests assembled, the Jonsons, the Fletchers, and the Daniels, he had silently surveyed the talking group, lifting his glance from face to face, in search of the truest soul, would not his feeling have been, "ye are shadows all!"

Heu! quanto minus hinc me
Juvabit cum aliis versari,
Tuum tui meminisse!
{Alas! henceforth how much less time from me
He will be able to stay young with another
It is your duty to be mindful of yourself!}

Within three years after the death of Shakespeare, Daniel and Davies were likewise removed! Two years later still, on the 25th September 1621, the Dowager Countess Pembroke died at an advanced age in London. She was buried in her husband's grave, in Salisbury Cathedral, and Ben Jonson wrote for her epitaph these lines.

Underneath this marble hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death! Ere thou hast slain another
Wise and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

Pembroke and his brother Montgomery lived on; still among

the most popular of the Courtiers of King James, and still the greatest patrons of literature among the English peers. On the part of the Earl of Montgomery this disposition to patronise literature must have been purely a testimony of respect for the habits of other members of his family, for if the notices of him that remain do not misrepresent him (which, however, is very possible, seeing that he lived to act a part against Royalty in the civil wars) he was of somewhat boorish tastes himself. "This Philip" says Wood "was quite different in temper from his brother, for he was esteemed by all that knew him, or had to do with him, a very choleric man, a frequent swearer, and so illiterate, that, if the report be true, he could scarcely write his name." That there must, however, have been good points, too, about this nobleman, is proved by many facts; and that he cannot have been totally deficient in all kind of interest in literature, will be believed when it is remembered that it was to him in conjunction with his elder brother, that the players Heminge and Condell paid the honour in the year 1623 of dedicating their complete Edition of Shakespeare's plays, from the theatre copies. It will be wrong to omit this dedication, in such a memoir as the present.

"To the most noble and incomparable pair of brethren, William, Earl of Pembroke, etc Lord Chamberlain to the King's most excellent Majesty, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, etc Gentleman of his Majesty's bed-chamber; both Knights of the most noble order of the Garter, and our singular good Lords.

Right honourable,

Whilst we study to be thankful in our particular for the many favours we have received from your L. L., we are fallen upon the ill fortune to mingle two the most diverse things that can be, fear and rashness; rashness in the enterprise, and fear of the success. For, when we value the places your H. H. sustain, we cannot but know their dignity greater then to descend to the reading of these trifles^e; and while we name them trifles, we have deprived ourselves, of the defense of our dedication. But since your L. L. have been pleased to think these trifles something heretofore, and have prosecuted both them and their author living with so much favour, we hope that (they outliving him, and he not having the fate common with some to be executor to his own writings) you will use the like indulgence toward them you have done unto their parent. There is a great difference whether any book choose his patrons, or find them. This hath done both. For so much were your L. L. likings of the several parts when they were acted, as, before they were published, the volume asked to be yours. We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead to procure his orphans guardians, without ambition either of self-profit or fame, only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his plays to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we have justly observed, no man to come near your L. L. but with a kind of religious address, it hath been the height of our care, who are the presenters, to make the present worthy of your H. H. by the perfection. But there, we must also crave our abilities to be considered, my

Lords. We cannot go beyond our own powers. Courtly hands reach forth milk, cream, fruits, or what they have; and many nations (we have heard) that had not gums and incense, obtained their requests with a leavened cake. It was no fault to approach their Gods by what means they could; and the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to temples. In that name, therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H. H. these remains of your servant Shakespeare; that what delight is in them, may be ever your L. L.; the reputation his, and the faults ours, if any be committed by a pair so careful, to show their gratitude both to the living and the dead, as is, your Lordships' most bounden, --

John Heminge,
Henry Condell."

It must have been with peculiar satisfaction, and with a smile, as he read it, that the Earl of Pembroke received this respectful dedication of his friend's works, at the hands of the two honest players; and of no book in his library would he be so fond, as of the goodly folio thus added to it, with its rough prefixed portrait of Shakespeare.

In 1625 James I was succeeded by his son Charles I. In the first year of the new reign the Earl of Pembroke resigned the office of Lord Chamberlain in favour of his brother, accepting that of Lord Steward instead. About the same time, he was elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford; an office which he filled with distinguished reputation till his death. That event took place suddenly at Baynard's Castle, on the 10th of April 1630. There was a

story abroad at the time, that his death on that day had been foretold many years before by Thomas Allen, the Astrologer; and Clarendon relates the fact as indubitable. He left no direct heir, two children whom he had by his wife having died young. The Earldom and estates of Pembroke, passed, accordingly, into the hands of his brother the Earl of Montgomery.

One other fact remains to be mentioned respecting the Earl of Pembroke; namely, that he was himself a poet. Among those ladies remarkable for their wit, spirit, and accomplishments, towards whom as Clarendon tells us, the married Courtier of James I was liable to be too powerfully attracted, was Christian, the Countess Dowager of Devonshire, the daughter of Lord Bruce. To the Lady, he was in the habit of addressing Sonnets, and other little pieces of verse, in the gallant style of the period. The Lady, it appears, preserved them carefully; and in her old age, about thirty years after his death, gave them, with other similar papers, to Donne, the son of the famous metaphysical poet of that name, that they might be published. Donne did as he was requested, and in the year 1660, there appeared in print dedicated to the Countess, a small volume with the following title, "Poems written by the Right Honourable William, Earl of Pembroke, Lord Steward of his Majesty's household, whereof many are answered by way of Repartee by Sir Benjamin Ruddier, Knight, with several distinct poems written by them occasionally and apart." To this volume the Editor does not seem to have done his duty well; for several of the poems, and those, too, that would be pronounced the best of the

collection, are known to have been written by Raleigh and Carew. These are distinguished in a pretty reprint of Donne's volume, published in 1817, by Sir Egerton Brydges. Of the poems in this volume, that undoubtedly were written by Pembroke, all that can be said is, that they are graceful, smooth, and tasteful.

Marginal Notations

¹(of 15!)

²neither

³"The proud full sail of his great verse" pay a fine compliment, not applicable to the rubbish of poor Davies.

⁴rigmarole (p.91 {of m.s.; pp.365-68 of this text})
better description than rhetoric

⁵not so absurd to Daniel or Chapman as to poor Davies
as to Chapman see Furnivall's Introduction to Leopold
Shakespeare p lxv note

⁶x

Chapter IV. Glossary of Proper Names

Aubrey, John (c.1627-1697) antiquary who assisted Wood in researching the Athenae Oxonienses. He wrote Brief Lives, which is interesting for its anecdotal and gossipy comments about its subjects rather than for factual biography

Ausonius, Decius Magnus (c.310-c.394) poet, rhetorician and tutor to the future Emperor, Gratian

Barnfield, Richard (1574-1627) minor Elizabethan poet

Beranger, de Jean Paul (1780-1857) French poet

Blacklock, Thomas (1721-1791) blind Scottish poet

Blair, Hugh (1718-1800) Scotch clergyman and professor

Boaden, James (1762-1839) literary critic and Shakespearean researcher

Brydges, Sir Samuel Egerton, bart (1762-1837) editor

Brougham, Henry afterwards Lord Chancellor (1778-1868) one of the founders of The Edinburgh Review and Critical Journal in October 1802

Brown, Charles Armitage (1786-1842) Victorian critic and close friend of Keats

Burbage {Burbidge}, Richard (c.1567-1619) actor-colleague of Shakespeare

Cade, Jack (d.1450) Kentish Captain who led uprising against Henry VI

Chalmers, Alexander (1759-1834) Scottish biographer and editor

Chapman, George (1559-1634) poet, dramatist and translator

Chettle, Henry (c.1560-c.1607) printer-playwright; Robert Greene's literary executor

Clarendon, First Earl of (see Hyde, Edward)

Claudianus, Claudius (c.365-c.408) Latin poet whose works included panegyrics, epigrams and versified history

Collier, John Payne (1789-1833) editor and Shakespearean researcher

Condell, Henry (d.1627) actor-colleague of Shakespeare, who, together with John Heminge, edited the First Folio published in 1623

Davenant, Sir William (1606-1668) became poet laureate in 1637; purported to be Shakespeare's godfather

Drayton, Michael (1563-1631) poet known for his Idea (1594) which made fun of the sonneteering epidemic of the time

Drummond, William of Hawthornden (1585-1649) sonneteer who wrote in the years between Shakespeare and Milton

Eckermann, Johann Peter (1792-1854) German writer

Euphorbus brave Trojan warrior whose soul Pythagoras asserted had transmigrated to himself

Fitzjeffrey {Fitzgeoffrey}, Charles (fl.1596-1634) minor poet

Fraunce, Abraham (fl.1587-1633) minor poet and rhetorician, retainer of the Countess of Pembroke

Fuller, Thomas (1608-1661) antiquarian and divine

Furnivall, Frederick James (1825-1910) literary critic

Gething, Richard (c.1585-c.1652) calligrapher

Gifford, William (1756-1826) literary critic

Greene, Robert (1560-1592) poet and dramatist who wrote
romances and various pamphlets, many autobiographical

Haterius, Quintus (d.26 A.D.) Roman rhetorician and senator
during Augustus and Tiberius's rule

Heminge, John (c.1556-1630) actor-colleague of Shakespeare,
who, together with Henry Condell, edited the First
Folio published in 1623

Herder, von Johann Gottfried (1744-1803) German philosopher
and writer

Hyde, Edward (1609-1674) first Earl of Clarendon;
distinguished statesman and historian

Jaggard, William (c.1568-1623) publisher who printed The
Passionate Pilgrim in 1599 as Shakespeare's poems

Knight, Charles (1791-1873) Victorian journalist and
publisher who pioneered cheap literature

Lanyer, Aemilia [or Lanier, Emilia] (fl.161) religious poet

Lock, {Locke or Lok} Henry (fl.1597) sonneteer

Lucanus, Marcus Annaeus (39-65 A.D.) Roman poet who took
part in a conspiracy against Nero

Martial(is), Marcus Valerius (43-c.104 A.D.) Spanish Latin
satirist who wrote poems which commented on the social
life and people of the 1st century of the Roman Empire

Meres, Francis (1565-1647) critic who first published a list
of Shakespeare's earliest works in his Palladis Tamia,
or Wits Treasury 1598

Peele, George (1556-1596) dramatist and poet who was of the
London University Wits

Percy, Thomas (1729-1811) bishop of Dromore and editor of

Reliques of Ancient English Poetry consisting of old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier poets, together with some few of later date, 1765

Plautus, Titus Maccius (c.254-184 B.C.) Latin comedy writer and model for Elizabethan comedy dramatists

Phocylides (b.c.560 B.C.) Greek epic and elegaic poet of whose work only a few fragments remain

Pythagoras (c.582-c.500 B.C.) Greek philosopher and mathematician credited with the doctrine of the transmigration of souls

Richter, Jean Paul Friedrich (1763-1825) German writer and poet

Roscius, Quintus (d.62 B.C.) famous Roman actor and friend of Cicero

Slaves persons belonging by race to a large group of peoples inhabiting Eastern Europe and comprising the Russians, Bulgarians, Serbo-Croats, Slovenes, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, etc

Seneca (c.3 B.C.-65 A.D.) Roman dramatist and moralist, model of early Elizabethan writers of tragedy

Shadwell, Thomas (c.1642-1692) poet and dramatist; 1688 became poet laureate and historiographer royal

Silius Italicus, Caius (b.c.25 A.D.) Roman poet and statesman who wrote Punica, a 17 book epic on the 2nd Punic War, which is far inferior to the Aeneid

Southampton, Earl of (1573-1624) Henry Wriothesley, Shakespeare's patron

Steevens, George (1736-1800) one of the chief editors of Shakespeare in the 18 century

Stolo, Epius {Stilo, Aelius Praeconinus} Roman grammarian
who taught Varro, a Roman scholar, and Cicero

Stradling, Sir John 1st bart (1563-1637) minor Elizabethan
poet

Terence, Publius Terentius Afer (c.190-159 B.C.) Roman comic
playwright who had been born a slave

Thorpe, Thomas (c.1570-c.1635) published Shakespeare's
sonnets in 1609

Tibullus, Albius (c.54 B.C.-c.18 B.C.) Roman elegaic poet
who wrote about love and addressed his works to his
mistress Delia

Ulrici, Hermann (1806-1884) German critic

Warner, William (c.1558-1609) poet who wrote in "fourteener"
couplets and converted history and quasi-historical
fable into literature

Werter Protagonist in Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werter
(1774)

Wilhelm Meister work by Goethe, translated by Carlyle

Wood, Anthony à (1632-1695) antiquary who compiled massive
facts about 17 century Oxford and whose chief fame lies
in his Athenae Oxonienses (1692)

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