THE

PLAYS AND POEMS

OF

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE

WITH NOTES

CRITICAL, HISTORICAL AND EXPLANATORY,

SELECTED FROM THE MOST EMINENT COMMENTATORS

BY

THE LATE EDMOND MALONE.

THE ALTO RELIEVO
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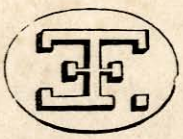
WITH

DR. JOHNSONS PREFACE,

A LIFE OF THE POET BY A. CHALMERS

AND

A COPIOUS GLOSSARY.



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NOTICES

AND

ARGUMENTS.

I.

DR. JOHNSON'S PREFACE.[1])

THAT praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and that the honours due only to excellence are paid to antiquity, is a complaint likely to be always continued by those, who, being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox; or those, who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients, are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy, will be at last bestowed by time.

Antiquity, like every other quality that attracts the notice of mankind, has undoubtedly votaries that reverence it, not from reason, but from prejudice. Some seem to admire indiscriminately whatever has been long preserved, without considering that time has sometimes co-operated with chance; all perhaps are more willing to honour past than present excellence: and the mind contemplates genius through the shades of age, as the eye surveys the sun through artificial opacity. The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns, and the beauties of the ancients. While an author is yet living, we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best.

To works, however, of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long possessed they have often examined and compared, and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favour. As among the works of nature, no man can properly call a river deep, or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains, and many rivers; so in the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind. Demonstration immediately displays its power, and has nothing to hope or fear from the flux of years; but works tentative and experimental must be estimated by their proportion to the general and collective ability of man, as it is discovered in a long succession of endeavours. Of the first building that was raised, it might be with certainty determined that it was round or square; but whether it was spacious or lofty must have been referred to time. The Pythagorean scale of numbers was at once discovered to be perfect; but the poems of Homer we yet know not to transcend the common limits of human intelligence, but by remarking, that nation after nation, and century after century, has been able to do little more than transpose his incidents, new name his characters, and paraphrase his sentiments.

The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted arises therefore not from any credulous confidence in the superior wisdom of past ages, or gloomy persuasion of the degeneracy of mankind, but is the consequence of acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what has been longest known hast been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood.

The poet, of whose works I have undertaken the revision, may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has long outlived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit. Whatever advantages he might once derive from personal allusions, local customs, or temporary opinions, have for many years been lost; and every topic of merriment or motive of sorrow, which the modes of artificial life afforded him, now only obscure the scenes which they once illuminated. The effects of favour and competition are at an end; the tradition of his friendships and his enmities has perished; his works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with invectives; they can neither indulge vanity, nor gratify malignity; but are read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are therefore praised only as pleasure is obtained; yet, thus unassisted by interest or passion, they have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honours at every transmission.

1) First printed separately in 1765.

But because human judgment, though it be gradually gaining upon certainty, never becomes infallible; and approbation, though long continued, may yet be only the approbation of prejudice or fashion; it is proper to inquire, by what peculiarities of excellence Shakspeare has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen.

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

Shakspeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakspeare it is commonly a species.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakspeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept; and it may be said of Shakspeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and œconomical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the tenor of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

It will not easily be imagined how much Shakspeare excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authors. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation, that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied to every stage but that of Shakspeare. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences.

Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady, and a rival into the fable; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other; to make them meet in rapture, and part in agony; to fill their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered, is the business of a modern dramatist. For this, probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions, and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet, who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew, that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say with Pope, that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristical; but, perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectation of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakspeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion; even where the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakspeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shown human nature

as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.

This therefore is the praise of Shakspeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstacies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

His adherence to general nature has exposed him to the censure of critics, who form their judgments upon narrower principles. Dennis and Rymer think his Romans not sufficiently Roman, and Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended, that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakspeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon, he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to show an usurper and a murderer not only odious, but despicable; he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds; a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.

The censure which he has incurred by mixing comic and tragic scenes, as it extends to all his works, deserves more consideration. Let the fact be first stated, and then examined.

Shakspeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another: and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Out of this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties, the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrors of distress, and some the gaieties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation, known by the names of *tragedy* and *comedy*, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied, that I do not recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.

Shakspeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in one composition. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alternations of exhibition, and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life, by showing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the high and the low co-operate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation.

It is objected, that by this change of scenes the passions are interrupted in their progression, and that the principal event, being not advanced by a due gradation of preparatory incidents, wants at last the power to move, which constitutes the perfection of dramatic poetry. This reasoning is so specious, that it is received as true even by those who in daily experience feel it to be false. The interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction cannot move so much, but that the attention may be easily transferred; and though it must be allowed that pleasing melancholy be sometimes interrupted by unwelcome levity, yet let it be considered likewise, that melancholy is often not pleasing, and that the disturbance of one man may be the relief of another; that different auditors have different habitudes; and that, upon the whole, all pleasure consists in variety.

The players, who in their edition divided our author's works into comedies, histories, and tragedies, seem not to have distinguished the three kinds, by any very exact or definite ideas.

An action which ended happily to the principal persons, however serious or distressful through its intermediate incidents, in their opinion constituted a comedy. This idea of a comedy continued long amongst us, and plays were written, which, by changing the catastrophe, were tragedies to-day, and comedies to-morrow.

Tragedy was not in those times a poem of more general dignity or elevation than comedy; it re-

quired only a calamitous conclusion, with which the common criticism of that age was satisfied, whatever lighter pleasure it afforded in its progress.

History was a series of actions, with no other than chronological succession, independent on each other, and without any tendency to introduce and regulate the conclusion. It is not always very nicely distinguished from tragedy. There is not much nearer approach to unity of action in the tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra*, than in the history of *Richard the Second*. But a history might be continued through many plays; as it had no plan, it had no limits.

Through all these denominations of the drama, Shakspeare's mode of composition is the same; an interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time, and exhilarated at another. But whatever be his purpose, whether to gladden or depress, or to conduct the story, without vehemence or emotion, through tracts of easy and familiar dialogue, he never fails to attain his purpose; as he commands us, we laugh or mourn, or sit silent with quiet expectation, in tranquillity without indifference.

When Shakspeare's plan is understood, most of the criticisms of Rymer and Voltaire vanish away. The play of *Hamlet* is opened, without impropriety, by two centinels; Iago bellows at Brabantio's window, without injury to the scheme of the play, though in terms which a modern audience would not easily endure; the character of Polonius is seasonable and useful; and the Gravediggers themselves may be heard with applause.

Shakspeare engaged in dramatic poetry with the world open before him; the rules of the ancients were yet known to few; the public judgment was unformed; he had no example of such fame as might force him upon imitation, nor critics of such authority as might restrain his extravagance: he therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rymer has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study, what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comic scenes, he seems to produce without labour, what no labour can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comic, but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable: the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits, are only superficial dies, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakspeare.

If there be, what I believe there is, in every nation, a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language, as to remain settled and unaltered; this style is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition of elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned depart from established forms of speech, in hope of finding or making better; those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right: but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comic dialogue. He is therefore more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other author equally remote, and among his other excellencies deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language.

These observations are to be considered not as unexceptionably constant, but as containing general and predominant truth. Shakspeare's familiar dialogue is affirmed to be smooth and clear, yet not wholly without ruggedness or difficulty: as a country may be eminently fruitful, though it has spots unfit for cultivation: his characters are praised as natural, though their sentiments are sometimes forced, and their actions improbable; as the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protuberances and cavities.

Shakspeare with his excellences has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall show them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candour higher than truth.

His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place.

The plots are often so loosely formed, that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued, that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design. He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting, which the train of his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which are more easy.

It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour, to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

He had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expence not only of likelihood, but of possibility. These faults Pope has endeavoured with more zeal than judgment, to transfer to his imagined interpolators. We need not to wonder to find Hector quoting Aristotle, when we see the loves of Theseus and Hyppolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of fairies. Shakspeare, indeed, was not the only violator of chronology, for in the same age Sidney, who wanted not the advantages of learning, has, in his *Arcadia*, confounded the pastoral with the feudal times, the days of innocence, quiet, and security, with those of turbulence, violence, and adventure.

In his comic scenes, he is seldom very successful, when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contests of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners. Whether he represented the real conversation of his time is not easy to determine; the reign of Elizabeth is commonly supposed to have been a time of stateliness, formality, and reserve, yet perhaps the relaxations of that severity were not very elegant. There must, however, have been always some modes of gaiety preferable to others, and a writer ought to choose the best.

In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse, as his labour is more. The effusions of passion, which exigence forces out, are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction, and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakspeare found it an incumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendor.

His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of nature; when he endeavoured, like other tragic writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

Not that always where the language is intricate, the thought is subtle, or the image always great where the line is bulky; the equality of words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

But the admirers of this great poet have most reason to complain when he approaches nearest to his highest excellence, and seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move, than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity.

A quibble is to Shakspeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or pro-

fundity of his disquisitions, whether he be enlarging knowledge, or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchanting it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

It will be thought strange, that, in enumerating the defects of this writer, I have not yet mentioned his neglect of the unities; his violation of those laws which have been instituted and established by the joint authority of poets and of critics.

For his other deviations from the art of writing I resign him to critical justice, without making any other demand in his favour, than that which must be indulged to all human excellence; that his virtues be rated with his failings; but, from the censure which this irregularity may bring upon him, I shall, with due reverence to that learning which I must oppose, adventure to try how I can defend him.

His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.

In his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. He has not, indeed, an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unravelled; he does not endeavour to hide his design only to discover it, for this is seldom the order of real events, and Shakspeare is the poet of nature: but his plan has commonly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence. There are perhaps some incidents that might be spared, and in other poets there is much talk that only fills up time upon the stage; but the general system makes gradual advances, and the end of the play is the end of expectation.

To the unities of time and place he has shown no regard: and perhaps a nearer view of the principles on which they stand will diminish their value, and withdraw from them the veneration which, from the time of Corneille, they have very generally received, by discovering that they have given more trouble to the poet, than pleasure to the auditor.

The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The critics hold it impossible, that an action of months or years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours; or that the spectator can suppose himself to sit in the theatre, while ambassadors go and return between distant kings, while armies are levied and towns besieged, while an exile wanders and returns, or till he whom they saw courting his mistress, shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality.

From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Medea could in so short a time, have transported him; he knows with certainty that he has not changed his place; and he knows that place cannot change itself; that what was a house cannot become a plain; that what was Thebes can never be Persepolis.

Such is the triumphant language with which a critic exults over the misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance or reply. It is time therefore to tell him, by the authority of Shakspeare, that he assumes, as an unquestionable principle, a position, which, while his breath is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false. It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited.

The objection arising from the impossibility of passing the first hour at Alexandria, and the next at Rome, supposes, that when the play opens, the spectator really imagines himself at Alexandria, and believes that his walk to the theatre has been a voyage to Egypt, and that he lives in the days of Antony and Cleopatra. Surely he that imagines this may imagine more. He that can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies, may take it in half an hour for the promontory of Actium. Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation; if the spectator can be once persuaded, that his old acquaintance are Alexander and Cæsar, that a room illuminated with candles is the plain of Pharsalia, or the banks of Granicus, he is in a state of elevation above the reach of reason, or of truth, and from the heights of empyrean poetry, may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature. There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in ecstasy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other: and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first

Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?

By supposition, as place is introduced, time may be extended; the time required by the fable elapses for the most part between the acts; for, of so much of the action as is represented, the real and poetical duration is the same. If, in the first act, preparations for war against Mithridates are represented to be made in Rome, the event of the war may, without absurdity, be represented, in the catastrophe, as happening in Pontus; we know that there is neither war, nor preparation for war; we know that we are neither in Rome nor Pontus: that neither Mithridates nor Lucullus are before us. The drama exhibits successive imitations of successive actions, and why may not the second imitation represent an action that happened years after the first; if it be so connected with it, that nothing but time can be supposed to intervene? Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.

It will be asked, how the drama moves, if it is not credited. It is credited with all the credit due to a drama. It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel, if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done. The reflection that strikes the heart is not, that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed. If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players, but that we fancy ourselves unhappy for a moment; but we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her babe, when she remembers that death may take it from her. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more.

Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider, how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of *Henry the Fifth*, yet no man takes his book for the field of Agincourt. A dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre, than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of Petruchio may be heightened by grimace; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato?

A play read affects the mind like a play acted. It is therefore evident, that the action is not supposed to be real; and it follows, that between the acts a longer or shorter time may be allowed to pass, and that no more account of space or duration is to be taken by the auditor of a drama, than by the reader of a narrative, before whom may pass in an hour the life of a hero, or the revolutions of an empire.

Whether Shakspeare knew the unities, and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide, and useless to inquire. We may reasonably suppose, that, when he rose to notice, he did not want the counsels and admonitions of scholars and critics, and that he at last deliberately persisted in a practice, which he might have begun by chance. As nothing is essential to the fable, but unity of action, and as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions, and, by circumscribing the extent of the drama, lessen its variety, I cannot think it much to be lamented, that they were not known by him, or not observed: nor, if such another poet could arise, should I very vehemently reproach him, that his first act passed at Venice, and his next in Cyprus. Such violations of rules merely positive, become the comprehensive genius of Shakspeare, and such censures are suitable to the minute and slender criticism of Voltaire:

> "Non usque adeo permiscuit imis
> Longus summa dies, ut non, si voce Metelli
> Serventur leges, malint a Cæsare tolli."

Yet when I speak thus slightly of dramatic rules, I cannot but recollect how much wit and learning may be produced against me; before such authorities I am afraid to stand; not that I think the present question one of those that are to be decided by mere authority, but because it is to be suspected, that these precepts have not been so easily received, but for better reasons than I have yet been able to find. The result of my inquiries, in which it would be ludicrous to boast of impartiality, is, that the unities of time and place are not essential to a just drama; that though they may sometimes conduce to pleasure, they are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties of variety and instruction; and that a play, written with nice observation of critical rules, is to be contemplated as an elaborate curiosity, as the product of superfluous and ostentatious art, by which is shown, rather what is possible, than what is necessary.

He that, without diminution of any other excellence, shall preserve all the unities unbroken, deserves the like applause with the architect, who shall display all the orders of architecture in a citadel, without any deduction from its strength: but the principal beauty of a citadel is to exclude the enemy; and the greatest graces of a play are to copy nature, and instruct life.

Perhaps, what I have here not dogmatically but deliberately written, may recall the principles of the drama to a new examination. I am almost frighted at my own temerity; and when I estimate the fame and the strength of those that maintain the contrary opinion, am ready to sink down in reverential silence; as Æneas withdrew from the defence of Troy, when he saw Neptune shaking the wall, and Juno heading the besiegers.

Those whom my arguments cannot persuade to give their approbation to the judgment of Shakspeare, will easily, if they consider the condition of his life, make some allowance for his ignorance.

Every man's performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared to the state of the age in which he lived, and with his own particular opportunities; and though to a reader a book be not worse or better for the circumstances of the author, yet as there is always a silent reference of human works to human abilities, and as the enquiry, how far man may extend his designs, or how high he may rate his native force, is of far greater dignity than in what rank we shall place any particular performance, curiosity is always busy to discover the instruments, as well as to survey the workmanship, to know how much is to be ascribed to original powers, and how much to casual and adventitious help. The palaces of Peru or Mexico were certainly mean and incommodious habitations, if compared to the houses of European monarchs; yet who could forbear to view them with astonishment, who remembered that they were built without the use of iron?

The English nation, in the time of Shakspeare, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity. The philology of Italy had been transplanted hither in the reign of Henry the Eighth; and the learned languages had been successfully cultivated by Lilly, Linacre, and More; by Pole, Cheke, and Gardiner; and afterwards by Smith, Clerk, Haddon, and Ascham. Greek was now taught to boys in the principal schools; and those who united elegance with learning, read, with great diligence, the Italian and Spanish poets. But literature was yet confined to professed scholars, or to men and women of high rank. The public was gross and dark; and to be able to read and write, was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity.

Nations, like individuals, have their infancy. A people newly awakened to literary curiosity, being yet unacquainted with the true state of things, knows not how to judge of that which is proposed as its resemblance. Whatever is remote from common appearances is always welcome to vulgar, as to childish credulity; and of a country unenlightened by learning, the whole people is the vulgar. The study of those who then aspired to plebeian learning was laid out upon adventures, giants, dragons, and enchantments. *The Death of Arthur* was the favourite volume.

The mind, which has feasted on the luxurious wonders of fiction, has no taste of the insipidity of truth. A play which imitated only the common occurrences of the world, would, upon the admirers of *Palmerin* and *Guy of Warwick*, have made little impression; he that wrote for such an audience was under the necessity of looking round for strange events and fabulous transactions, and that incredibility, by which maturer knowledge is offended, was the chief recommendation of writings, to unskilful curiosity.

Our author's plots are generally borrowed from novels; and it is reasonable to suppose, that he chose the most popular, such as were read by many, and related by more; for his audience could not have followed him through the intricacies of the drama, had they not held the thread of the story in their hands.

The stories, which we now find only in remoter authors, were in his time accessible and familiar. The fable of *As you like it*, which is supposed to be copied from Chaucer's *Gamelyn*, was a little pamphlet of those times; and old Mr. Cibber remembered the tale of *Hamlet* in plain English prose, which the critics have now to seek in *Saxo Grammaticus*.

His English histories he took from English chronicles and English ballads; and as the ancient writers were made known to his countrymen by versions, they supplied him with new subjects; he dilated some of Plutarch's lives into plays, when they had been translated by North.

His plots, whether historical or fabulous, are always crowded with incidents, by which the attention of a rude people was more easily caught than by sentiment or argumentation; and such is the power of the marvellous, even over those who despise it, that every man finds his mind more strongly seized by the tragedies of Shakspeare than of any other writer; others please us by particular speeches, but he always makes us anxious for the event, and has perhaps excelled all but Homer in securing the first purpose of a writer, by exciting restless and unquenchable curiosity, and compelling him that reads his work to read it through.

The shows and bustle with which his plays abound have the same original. As knowledge advances, pleasure passes from the eye to the ear, but returns, as it declines, from the ear to the eye. Those to whom our author's labours were exhibited had more skill in pomps or processions than in poetical language, and perhaps wanted some visible and discriminated events, as comments on the dialogue. He knew how he should most please; and whether his practice is more agreeable to nature, or whether his example has prejudiced the nation, we still find that on our stage something must be done as well as said, and inactive declamation is very coldly heard, however musical or elegant, passionate or sublime.

Voltaire expresses his wonder, that our author's extravagancies are endured by a nation, which has seen the tragedy of *Cato*. Let him be answered, that Addison speaks the language of poets, and Shakspeare of men. We find in *Cato* innumerable beauties which enamour us of its author, but we see nothing that acquaints us with human sentiments or human actions; we place it with the fairest and noblest progeny which judgment propagates by conjunction with learning; but *Othello* is the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation impregnated by genius. *Cato* affords a splendid exhibition of artificial and fictitious manners, and delivers just and noble sentiments, in diction easy, elevated, and harmonious, but its hopes and fears communicate no vibration to the heart; the composition refers us only to the writer; we pronounce the name of *Cato*, but we think on *Addison*.

The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades and scented with flowers; the composition of Shakspeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished into brightness. Shakspeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in unexhaustable plenty, though clouded by incrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner minerals.

It has been much disputed, whether Shakspeare owed his excellence to his own native force, or whether he had the common helps of scholastic education, the precepts of critical science, and the examples of ancient authors.

There has always prevailed a tradition, that Shakspeare wanted learning, that he had no regular education, nor much skill in the dead languages. Jonson, his friend, affirms, that *he had small Latin, and less Greek;* who, besides that he had no imaginable temptation to falsehood, wrote at a time when the character and acquisitions of Shakspeare were known to multitudes. His evidence ought therefore to decide the controversy, unless some testimony of equal force could be opposed.

Some have imagined, that they have discovered deep learning in many imitations of old writers; but the examples which I have known urged, were drawn from books translated in his time; or were such easy coincidences of thoughts, as will happen to all who consider the same subjects; or such remarks on life or axioms of morality as float in conversation, and are transmitted through the world in proverbial sentences.

I have found it remarked, that in this important sentence, *Go before, I'll follow*, we read a translation of, *I prae, sequar*. I have been told, that when Caliban, after a pleasing dream, says, *I cried to sleep again*, the author imitates Anacreon, who had, like every other man, the same wish on the same occasion.

There are a few passages which may pass for imitations, but so few, that the exception only confirms the rule; he obtained them from accidental quotations, or by oral communication, and as he used what he had, would have used more if he had obtained it.

The *Comedy of Errors* is confessedly taken from the *Menæchmi* of *Plautus;* from the only play of Plautus which was then in English. What can be more probable, than that he who copied that, would have copied more; but that those which were not translated were inaccessible?

Whether he knew the modern languages is uncertain. That his plays have some French scenes proves but little; he might easily procure them to be written, and probably, even though he had known the language in the common degree, he could not have written it without assistance. In the story of *Romeo and Juliet* he is observed to have followed the English translation, where it deviates from the Italian; but this on the other part proves nothing against his knowledge of the original. He was to copy, not what he knew himself, but what was known to his audience.

It is most likely that he had learned Latin sufficiently to make him acquainted with construction, but that he never advanced to an easy perusal of the Roman authors. Concerning his skill in modern languages, I can find no sufficient ground of determination; but as no imitations of French or Italian authors have been discovered, though the Italian poetry was then high in esteem, I am inclined to believe, that he read little more than English, and chose for his fables only such tales as he found translated.

That much knowledge is scattered over his works is very justly observed by Pope, but it is often such knowledge as books did not supply. He that will understand Shakspeare, must not be content to study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field, and sometimes among the manufactures of the shop.

There is, however, proof enough that he was a very diligent reader, nor was our language then so indigent of books, but that he might very liberally indulge his curiosity without excursion into foreign literature. Many of the Roman authors were translated, and some of the Greek; the Reformation had filled the kingdom with theological learning; most of the topics of human disquisition had found English writers; and poetry had been cultivated, not only with diligence, but success. This was a stock of knowledge sufficient for a mind so capable of appropriating and improving it.

But the greater part of his excellence was the product of his own genius. He found the English

stage in a state of the utmost rudeness; no essays either in tragedy or comedy had appeared, from which it could be discovered to what degree of delight either one or other might be carried. Neither character nor dialogue were yet understood. Shakspeare may be truly said to have introduced them both amongst us, and in some of his happier scenes to have carried them both to the utmost height.

By what gradations of improvement he proceeded, is not easily known; for the chronology of his works is yet unsettled. Rowe is of opinion, that *perhaps we are not to look for his beginning, like those of other writers, in his least perfect works; art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that for aught I know*, says he, *the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, were the best.* But the power of nature is only the power of using to any certain purpose the materials which diligence procures, or opportunity supplies. Nature gives no man knowledge, and when images are collected by study and experience, can only assist in combining or applying them. Shakspeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned; and as he must encrease his ideas, like other mortals, by gradual acquisition, he, like them, grew wiser as he grew older, could display life better, as he knew it more, and instruct with more efficacy, as he was himself more amply instructed.

There is a vigilance of observation and accuracy of distinction which books and precepts cannot confer; from this almost all original and native excellence proceeds. Shakspeare must have looked upon mankind with perspicacity, in the highest degree curious and attentive. Other writers borrow their characters from preceding writers, and diversify them only by the accidental appendages of present manners; the dress is a little varied, but the body is the same. Our author had both matter and form to provide; for, except the characters of Chaucer, to whom I think he is not much indebted, there were no writers in English, and perhaps not many in other modern languages, which showed life in its native colours.

The contest about the original benevolence or malignity of man had not yet commenced. Speculation had not yet attempted to analyse the mind, to trace the passions to their sources, to unfold the seminal principles of vice and virtue, or sound the depths of the heart for the motives of action. All those enquiries, which from that time that human nature became the fashionable study, have been made sometimes with nice discernment, but often with idle subtilty, were yet unattempted. The tales, with which the infancy of learning was satisfied, exhibited only the superficial appearances of action, related the events, but omitted the causes, and were formed for such as delighted in wonders rather than in truth. Mankind was not then to be studied in the closet; he that would know the world, was under the necessity of gleaning his own remarks, by mingling as he could in its business and amusements.

Boyle congratulated himself upon his high birth, because it favoured his curiosity, by facilitating his access. Shakspeare had no such advantage; he came to London a needy adventurer, and lived for a time by very mean employments. Many works of genius and learning have been performed in states of life that appear very little favourable to thought or to enquiry: so many, that he who considers them is inclined to think that he sees enterprize and perseverance predominating over all external agency, and bidding help and hindrance vanish before them. The genius of Shakspeare was not to be depressed by the weight of poverty, nor limited by the narrow conversation to which men in want are inevitably condemned: the incumbrances of his fortune were shaken from his mind, *as dew drops from a lion's mane.*

Though he had so many difficulties to encounter, and so little assistance to surmount them, he has been able to obtain an exact knowledge of many modes of life, and many casts of native dispositions; to vary them with great multiplicity; to mark them by nice distinctions; and to show them in full view by proper combinations. In this part of his performances he had none to imitate, but has himself been imitated by all succeeding writers; and it may be doubted, whether from all his successors more maxims of theoretical knowledge, or more rules of practical prudence, can be collected, than he alone has given to his country.

Nor was his attention confined to the actions of men; he was an exact surveyor of the inanimate world; his descriptions have always some peculiarities, gathered by contemplating things as they really exist. It may be observed, that the oldest poets of many nations preserve their reputation, and that the following generations of wit, after a short celebrity, sink into oblivion. The first, whoever they be, must take their sentiments and descriptions immediately from knowledge; the resemblance is therefore just, their descriptions are verified by every eye, and their sentiments acknowledged by every breast. Those whom their fame invites to the same studies, copy partly them, and partly nature, till the books of one age gain such authority, as to stand in the place of nature to another, and imitation, always deviating a little, becomes at last capricious and casual. Shakspeare, whether life or nature be his subject, shows plainly, that he has seen with his own eyes; he gives the image which he receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind; the ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are complete.

Perhaps it would not be easy to find any author, except Homer, who invented so much as Shakspeare, who so much advanced the studies which

he cultivated, or effused so much novelty upon his age or country. The form, the characters, the language, and the shows of the English drama are his. *He seems*, says Dennis, *to have been the very original of our English tragical harmony, that is, the harmony of blank verse, diversified often by dissyllable and trisyllable terminations. For the diversity distinguishes it from heroic harmony, and by bringing it nearer to common use makes it more proper to gain attention, and more fit for action and dialogue. Such verse we make when we are writing prose; we make such verse in common conversation.*

I know not whether this praise is rigorously just. The dissyllable termination, which the critic rightly appropriates to the drama, is to be found, though, I think, not in *Gorboduc*, which is confessedly before our author; yet in *Hieronymo*, of which the date is not certain, [2]) but which there is reason to believe at least as old as his earliest plays. This however is certain, that he is the first who taught either tragedy or comedy to please, there being no theatrical piece of any older writer, of which the name is known, except to antiquaries and collectors of books, which are sought because they are scarce, and would not have been scarce had they been much esteemed.

To him we must ascribe the praise, unless Spenser may divide it with him, of having first discovered to how much smoothness and harmony the English language could be softened. He has speeches, perhaps sometimes scenes, which have all the delicacy of Rowe, without his effeminacy. He endeavours indeed commonly to strike by the force and vigour of his dialogue, but he never executes his purpose better than when he tries to smooth by softness.

Yet it must be at last confessed, that as we owe every thing to him, he owes something to us; that, if much of his praise is paid by perception and judgment, much is likewise given by custom and veneration. We fix our eyes upon his graces, and turn them from his deformities, and endure in him what we should in another loath or despise. If we endured without praising, respect for the father of our drama might excuse us; but I have seen, in the book of some modern critic, a collection of anomalies, which show that he has corrupted language by every mode of depravation, but which his admirer has accumulated as a monument of honour.

He has scenes of undoubted and perpetual excellence, but perhaps not one play, which, if it were now exhibited as the work of a contemporary writer, would be heard to the conclusion. I am indeed far from thinking, that his works were wrought to his own ideas of perfection; when they were such as would satisfy the audience, they satisfied the writer. It is seldom that authors, though more studious of fame than Shakspeare, rise much above the standard of their own age; to add a little to what is best will always be sufficient for present praise, and those who find themselves exalted into fame, are willing to credit their encomiasts, and to spare the labour of contending with themselves.

It does not appear, that Shakspeare thought his works worthy of posterity, that he levied any ideal tribute upon future times, or had any further prospect than of present popularity and present profit. When his plays had been acted, his hope was at an end; he solicited no addition of honour from the reader. He therefore made no scruple to repeat the same jests in many dialogues, or to entangle different plots by the same knot of perplexity, which may be at least forgiven him, by those who recollect, that of Congreve's four comedies, two are concluded by a marriage in a mask, by a deception, which perhaps never happened, and which, whether likely or not, he did not invent.

So careless was this great poet of future fame, that, though he retired to ease and plenty, while he was yet little *declined into the vale of years*, before he could be disgusted with fatigue, or disabled by infirmity, he made no collection of his works, nor desired to rescue those that had been already published from the depravations that obscured them, or secure to the rest a better destiny, by giving them to the world in their genuine state.

Of the plays which bear the name of Shakspeare in the late editions, the greater part were not published till about seven years after his death, and the few which appeared in his life are apparently thrust into the world without the care of the author, and therefore probably without his knowledge.

Of all the publishers, clandestine or professed, the negligence and unskilfulness has by the late revisers been sufficiently shown. The faults of all are indeed numerous and gross, and have not only corrupted many passages perhaps beyond recovery, but have brought others into suspicion, which are only obscured by obsolete phraseology, or by the writer's unskilfulness and affectation. To alter is more easy than to explain, and temerity is a more common quality than diligence. Those who saw that they must employ conjecture to a certain degree, were willing to indulge it a little further. Had the author published his own works, we should have sat quietly down to disentangle his intricacies, and clear his obscurities; but now we tear what we cannot loose, and eject what we happen not to understand.

The faults are more than could have happened without the concurrence of many causes. The style of Shakspeare was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed, and obscure; his works were transcribed for the players by those who may be supposed to have seldom understood them; they were transmitted by copiers equally unskilful, who still multiplied errors; they were perhaps sometimes mu-

2) It appears to have been acted before 1590.

tilated by the actors, for the sake of shortening the speeches: and were at last printed without correction of the press.

In this state they remained, not as Dr. Warburton supposes, because they were unregarded, but because the editor's art was not yet applied to modern languages, and our ancestors were accustomed to so much negligence of English printers, that they could very patiently endure it. At last an edition was undertaken by Rowe; not because a poet was to be published by a poet, for Rowe seems to have thought very little on correction or explanation, but that our author's works might appear like those of his fraternity, with the appendages of a life and recommendatory preface. Rowe has been clamorously blamed for not performing what he did not undertake, and it is time that justice be done him, by confessing, that though he seems to have had no thought of corruption beyond the printer's errors, yet he has made many emendations, if they were not made before, which his successors have received without acknowledgment, and which, if they had produced them, would have filled pages and pages with censures of the stupidity by which the faults were committed, with displays of the absurdities which they involved, with ostentatious expositions of the new reading, and self-congratulations on the happiness of discovering it.

As of the other editors I have preserved the prefaces, I have likewise borrowed the author's life from Rowe, though not written with much elegance or spirit; it relates, however, what is now to be known, and therefore deserves to pass through all succeeding publications.

The nation had been for many years content enough with Mr. Rowe's performance, when Mr. Pope made them acquainted with the true state of Shakspeare's text, showed that it was extremely corrupt, and gave reason to hope that there were means of reforming it. He collated the old copies, which none had thought to examine before, and restored many lines to their integrity; but by a very compendious criticism, he rejected whatever he disliked, and thought more of amputation than of cure.

I know not why he is commended by Dr. Warburton for distinguishing the genuine from the spurious plays. In this choice he exerted no judgment of his own; the plays which he received, were given by Hemings and Condel, the first editors; and those which he rejected, though, according to the licentiousness of the press in those times, they were printed during Shakspeare's life, with his name, had been omitted by his friends, and were never added to his works before the edition of 1664, from which they were copied by the later printers.

This was a work which Pope seems to have thought unworthy of his abilities, being not able to suppress his contempt of *the dull duty of an editor*. He understood but half his undertaking. The duty of a collator is indeed dull, yet, like other tedious tasks, is very necessary; but an emendatory critic would ill discharge his duty, without qualities very different from dulness. In perusing a corrupted piece, he must have before him all possibilities of meaning, with all possibilities of expression. Such must be his comprehension of thought, and such his copiousness of language. Out of many readings possible, he must be able to select that which best suits with the state, opinions, and modes of language prevailing in every age, and with his author's particular cast of thought, and turn of expression. Such must be his knowledge, and such his taste. Conjectural criticism demands more than humanity possesses, and he that exercises it with most praise, has very frequent need of indulgence. Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor.

Confidence is the common consequence of success. They whose excellence of any kind has been loudly celebrated, are ready to conclude, that their powers are universal. Pope's edition fell below his own expectations, and he was so much offended, when he was found to have left any thing for others to do, that he passed the latter part of his life in a state of hostility with verbal criticism.

I have retained all his notes, that no fragment of so great a writer may be lost; his preface, valuable alike for elegance of composition and justness of remark, and containing a general criticism on his author, so extensive that little can be added, and so exact, that little can be disputed, every editor has an interest to suppress, but that every reader would demand its insertion.

Pope was succeeded by Theobald, a man of narrow comprehension, and small acquisitions, with no native and intrinsic splendor of genius, with little of the artificial light of learning, but zealous for minute accuracy, and not negligent in pursuing it. He collated the ancient copies, and rectified many errors. A man so anxiously scrupulous might have been expected to do more, but what little he did was commonly right.

In his reports of copies and editions, he is not to be trusted without examination. He speaks sometimes indefinitely of copies, when he has only one. In his enumeration of editions, he mentions the two first folios as of high, and the third folio as of middle authority; but the truth is, that the first is equivalent to all others, and that the rest only deviate from it by the printer's negligence. Whoever has any of the folios has all, excepting those diversities which mere reiteration of editions will produce. I collated them all at the beginning, but afterwards used only the first.

Of his notes I have generally retained those which he retained himself in his second edition, except when they were confuted by subsequent annotators, or were too minute to merit preservation. I have sometimes adopted his restoration of a comma, without inserting the panegyric in which he

celebrated himself for his achievement. The exuberant excrescence of his diction I have often lopped, his triumphant exultations over Pope and Rowe I have sometimes suppressed, and his contemptible ostentation I have frequently concealed; but I have in some places shown him, as he would have shown himself for the reader's diversion, that the inflated emptiness of some notes may justify or excuse the contraction of the rest.

Theobald, thus weak and ignorant, thus mean and faithless, thus petulant and ostentatious, by the good luck of having Pope for his enemy, has escaped, and escaped alone, with reputation, from this undertaking. So willingly does the world support those who solicit favour, against those who command reverence; and so easily is he praised, whom no man can envy.

Our author fell then into the hands of Sir Thomas Hanmer, the Oxford editor, a man, in my opinion, eminently qualified by nature for such studies. He had, what is the first requisite to emendatory criticism, that intuition by which the poet's intention is immediately discovered, and that dexterity of intellect which despatches its work by the easiest means. He had undoubtedly read much: his acquaintance with customs, opinions, and traditions, seems to have been large; and he is often learned without show. He seldom passes what he does not understand, without an attempt to find or to make a meaning, and sometimes hastily makes what a little more attention would have found. He is solicitous to reduce to grammar, what he could not be sure that his author intended to be grammatical. Shakspeare regarded more the series of ideas than of words; and his language, not being designed for the reader's desk, was all that he desired it to be, if it conveyed his meaning to the audience.

Hanmer's care of the metre has been too violently censured. He found the measure reformed in so many passages, by the silent labours of some editors, with the silent acquiescence of the rest, that he thought himself allowed to extend a little further the licence, which had already been carried so far without reprehension; and of his corrections in general, it must be confessed, that they are often just, and made commonly with the least possible violation of the text.

But by inserting his emendations, whether invented or borrowed, into the page, without any notice of varying copies, he has appropriated the labour of his predecessors, and made his own edition of little authority. His confidence, indeed, both in himself and others, was too great; he supposes all to be right that was done by Pope and Theobald; he seems not to suspect a critic of fallibility, and it was but reasonable that he should claim what he so liberally granted.

As he never writes without careful enquiry and diligent consideration, I have received all his notes, and believe that every reader will wish for more.

Of the last editor it is more difficult to speak. Respect is due to high place, tenderness to living reputation, and veneration to genius and learning; but he cannot be justly offended at that liberty of which he has himself so frequently given an example, nor very solicitous what is thought of notes which he ought never to have considered as part of his serious employments, and which, I suppose, since the ardour of composition is remitted, he no longer numbers among his happy effusions.

The original and predominant error of his commentary, is acquiescence in his first thoughts; that precipitation which is produced by consciousness of quick discernment; and that confidence which presumes to do, by surveying the surface, what labour only can perform, by penetrating the bottom. His notes exhibit sometimes perverse interpretations, and sometimes improbable conjectures; he at one time gives the author more profundity of meaning than the sentence admits, and at another discovers absurdities, where the sense is plain to every other reader. But his emendations are likewise often happy and just: and his interpretation of obscure passages learned and sagacious.

Of his notes, I have commonly rejected those, against which the general voice of the public has exclaimed, or which their own incongruity immediately condemns, and which, I suppose, the author himself would desire to be forgotten. Of the rest, to part I have given the highest approbation, by inserting the offered reading in the text; part I have left to the judgment of the reader, as doubtful, though specious; and part I have censured without reserve, but I am sure without bitterness of malice, and, I hope, without wantonness of insult.

It is no pleasure to me, in revising my volumes, to observe how much paper is wasted in confutation. Whoever considers the revolutions of learning, and the various questions of greater or less importance, upon which wit and reason have exercised their powers, must lament the unsuccessfulness of enquiry, and the slow advances of truth, when he reflects, that great part of the labour of every writer, is only the destruction of those that went before him. The first care of the builder of a new system is to demolish the fabrics which are standing. The chief desire of him that comments an author, is to show how much other commentators have corrupted and obscured him. The opinions prevalent in one age, as truths above the reach of controversy, are confuted and rejected in another, and rise again to reception in remoter times. Thus the human mind is kept in motion without progress. Thus sometimes truth and error, and sometimes contrarieties of error, take each other's place by reciprocal invasion. The tide of seeming knowledge which is poured over one generation, retires and leaves another naked and barren; the sudden meteors of intelligence, which for a while appear to shoot their beams into the regions of obscurity, on

a sudden withdraw their lustre, and leave mortals again to grope their way.

These elevations and depressions of renown, and the contradictions to which all improvers of knowledge must for ever be exposed, since they are not escaped by the highest and brightest of mankind, may surely be endured with patience by critics and annotators, who can rank themselves but as the satellites of their authors. How canst thou beg for life, says Homer's hero [3]) to his captive, when thou knowest that thou art now to suffer only what must another day be suffered by Achilles?

Dr. Warburton had a name sufficient to confer celebrity on those who could exalt themselves into antagonists, and his notes have raised a clamour too loud to be distinct. His chief assailants are the authors of *The Canons of Criticism*, [4]) and of *The Revisal of Shakspeare's Text;* [5]) of whom one ridicules his errors with airy petulance, suitable enough to the levity of the controversy; the other attacks them with gloomy malignity, as if he were dragging to justice an assassin or incendiary. The one stings like a fly, sucks a little blood, takes a gay flutter, and returns for more; the other bites like a viper, and would be glad to leave inflammations and gangrene behind him. When I think on one, with his confederates, I remember the danger of Coriolanus, who was afraid that *girls with spits, and boys with stones, should slay him in puny battle;* when the other crosses my imagination, I remember the prodigy in *Macbeth:*

> "A falcon tow'ring in his pride of place,
> Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd."

Let me however do them justice. One is a wit, and one a scholar. They have both shown acuteness sufficient in the discovery of faults, and have both advanced some probable interpretations of obscure passages; but when they aspire to conjecture and emendation, it appears how falsely we all estimate our own abilities, and the little which they have been able to perform might have taught them more candour to the endeavours of others.

Before Dr. Warburton's edition, *Critical Observations on Shakspeare* had been published by Mr. Upton, a man skilled in languages, and acquainted with books, but who seems to have had no great vigour of genius or nicety of taste. Many of his explanations are curious and useful, but he, likewise, though he professed to oppose the licentious confidence of editors, and adhere to the old copies, is unable to restrain the rage of emendation, though his ardour is ill seconded by his skill. Every cold empiric, when his heart is expanded by a successful experiment, swells into a theorist, and the laborious collator at some unlucky moment frolics in conjecture.

3) "Achilles." Orig. Edit. 1765.
4) Mr. Edwards.
5) Mr. Heath.

Critical, historical, and explanatory Notes have been likewise published upon Shakspeare by Dr. Grey, whose diligent perusal of the old English writers has enabled him to make some useful observations. What he undertook he has well enough performed, but as he neither attempts judicial nor emendatory criticism, he employs rather his memory than his sagacity. It were to be wished that all would endeavour to imitate his modesty, who have not been able to surpass his knowledge.

I can say with great sincerity of all my predecessors, what I hope will hereafter be said of me, that not one has left Shakspeare without improvement, nor is there one to whom I have not been indebted for assistance and information. Whatever I have taken from them, it was my intention to refer to its original author, and it is certain, that what I have not given to another, I believed when I wrote it to be my own. In some perhaps I have been anticipated; but if I am ever found to encroach upon the remarks of any other commentator, I am willing that the honour, be it more or less, should be transferred to the first claimant, for his right, and his alone, stands above dispute; the second can prove his pretensions only to himself, nor can himself always distinguish invention, with sufficient certainty, from recollection.

They have all been treated by me with candour, which they have not been careful of observing to one another. It is not easy to discover from what cause the acrimony of a scholiast can naturally proceed. The subjects to be discussed by him are of very small importance; they involve neither property nor liberty; nor favour the interest of sect or party. The various readings of copies, and different interpretations of a passage, seem to be questions that might exercise the wit, without engaging the passions. But whether it be, that *small things make mean men proud*, and vanity catches small occasions; or that all contrariety of opinion, even in those that can defend it no longer, makes proud men angry; there is often found in commentaries a spontaneous train of invective and contempt, more eager and venomous than is vented by the most furious controvertist in politics against those whom he is hired to defame.

Perhaps the lightness of the matter may conduce to the vehemence of the agency; when the truth to be investigated is so near to inexistence, as to escape attention, its bulk is to be enlarged by rage and exclamation: that to which all would be indifferent in its original state, may attract notice when the fate of a name is appended to it. A commentator has indeed great temptations to supply by turbulence what he wants of dignity, to beat his little gold to a spacious surface, to work that to foam which no art or diligence can exalt to spirit.

The notes which I have borrowed or written are either illustrative, by which difficulties are explained; or judicial, by which faults and beauties are remarked; or emendatory, by which depravations are corrected.

The explanations transcribed from others, if I do not subjoin any other interpretation, I suppose commonly to be right, at least I intend by acquiescence to confess, that I have nothing better to propose.

After the labours of all the editors, I found many passages which appeared to me likely to obstruct the greater number of readers, and thought it my duty to facilitate their passage. It is impossible for an expositor not to write too little for some, and too much for others. He can only judge what is necessary by his own experience; and how long soever he may deliberate, will at last explain many lines which the learned will think impossible to be mistaken, and omit many for which the ignorant will want his help. These are censures merely relative, and must be quietly endured. I have endeavoured to be neither superfluously copious, nor scrupulously reserved, and hope that I have made my author's meaning accessible to many, who before were frighted from perusing him, and contributed something to the public by diffusing innocent and rational pleasure.

The complete explanation of an author not systematic and consequential, but desultory and vagrant, abounding in casual allusions and light hints, is not to be expected from any single scholiast. All personal reflections, when names are suppressed, must be in a few years irrecoverably obliterated; and customs, too minute to attract the notice of law, such as modes of dress, formalities of conversation, rules of visits, disposition of furniture, and practices of ceremony, which naturally find places in familiar dialogue, are so fugitive and unsubstantial, that they are not easily retained or recovered. What can be known will be collected by chance, from the recesses of obscure and obsolete papers, perused commonly with some other view. Of this knowledge every man has some, and none has much; but when an author has engaged the public attention, those who can add any thing to his illustration, communicate their discoveries, and time produces what had eluded diligence.

To time I have been obliged to resign many passages, which, though I did not understand them, will perhaps hereafter be explained, having, I hope, illustrated some, which others have neglected or mistaken, sometimes by short remarks, or marginal directions, such as every editor has added at his will, and often by comments more laborious than the matter will seem to deserve; but that which is most difficult is not always most important, and to an editor nothing is a trifle by which his author is obscured.

The poetical beauties or defects I have not been very diligent to observe. Some plays have more, and some fewer judicial observations, not in proportion to their difference of merit, but because I give this part of my design to chance and to caprice. The reader, I believe, is seldom pleased to find his opinion anticipated; it is natural to delight more in what we find or make, than in what we receive. Judgment, like other faculties, is improved by practice, and its advancement is hindered by submission to dictatorial decisions, as the memory grows torpid by the use of a table-book. Some initiation is however necessary; of all skill, part is infused by precept, and part is obtained by habit; I have therefore shown so much as may enable the candidate of criticism to discover the rest.

To the end of most plays I have added short strictures, containing a general censure of faults, or praise of excellence; in which I know not how much I have concurred with the current opinion; but I have not by any affectation of singularity deviated from it. Nothing is minutely and particularly examined, and therefore it is to be supposed, that in the plays which are condemned there is much to be praised, and in those which are praised much to be condemned.

The part of criticism in which the whole succession of editors has laboured with the greatest diligence, which has occasioned the most arrogant ostentation, and excited the keenest acrimony, is the emendation of corrupted passages, to which the public attention having been first drawn by the violence of the contention between Pope and Theobald, has been continued by the persecution, which, with a kind of conspiracy, has been since raised against all the publishers of Shakspeare.

That many passages have passed in a state of depravation through all the editions is indubitably certain; of these, the restoration is only to be attempted by collation of copies, or sagacity of conjecture. The collator's province is safe and easy, the conjecturer's perilous and difficult. Yet as the greater part of the plays are extant only in one copy, the peril must not be avoided, nor the difficulty refused.

Of the readings which this emulation of amendment has hitherto produced, some from the labours of every publisher I have advanced into the text; those are to be considered as in my opinion sufficiently supported; some I have rejected without mention, as evidently erroneous; some I have left in the notes without censure or approbation, as resting in equipoise between objection and defence; and some, which seemed specious but not right, I have inserted with a subsequent animadversion.

Having classed the observations of others, I was at last to try what I could substitute for their mistakes, and how I could supply their omissions. I collated such copies as I could procure, and wished for more, but have not found the collectors of these rarities very communicative. Of the editions which chance or kindness put into my hands

I have given an enumeration, that I may not be blamed for neglecting what I had not the power to do.

By examining the old copies, I soon found that the later publishers, with all their boasts of diligence, suffered many passages to stand unauthorized, and contented themselves with Rowe's regulation of the text, even where they knew it to be arbitrary, and with a little consideration might have found it to be wrong. Some of these alterations are only the ejection of a word for one that appeared to him more elegant or more intelligible. These corruptions I have often silently rectified; for the history of our language, and the true force of our words, can only be preserved, by keeping the text of authors free from adulteration. Others, and those very frequent, smoothed the cadence, or regulated the measure; on these I have not exercised the same rigour; if only a word was transposed, or a particle inserted or omitted, I have sometimes suffered the line to stand; for the inconstancy of the copies is such, as that some liberties may be easily permitted. But this practice I have not suffered to proceed far, having restored the primitive diction wherever it could for any reason be preferred.

The emendations, which comparison of copies supplied, I have inserted in the text; sometimes, where the improvement was slight, without notice, and sometimes with an account of the reasons of the change.

Conjecture, though it be sometimes unavoidable, I have not wantonly nor licentiously indulged. It has been my settled principle, that the reading of the ancient books is probably true, and therefore is not to be disturbed for the sake of elegance, perspicuity, or mere improvement of the sense. For though much credit is not due to the fidelity, nor any to the judgment of the first publishers, yet they who had the copy before their eyes were more likely to read it right, than we who read it only by imagination. But it is evident that they have often made strange mistakes by ignorance or negligence, and that therefore something may be properly attempted by criticism, keeping the middle way between presumption and timidity.

Such criticism I have attempted to practise, and where any passage appeared inextricably perplexed, have endeavoured to discover how it may be recalled to sense, with least violence. But my first labour is, always to turn the old text on every side, and try if there be any interstice, through which light can find its way; nor would Huetius himself condemn me, as refusing the trouble of research, for the ambition of alteration. In this modest industry I have not been unsuccessful. I have rescued many lines from the violations of temerity, and secured many scenes from the inroads of correction. I have adopted the Roman sentiment, that it is more honourable to save a citizen, than to kill an enemy, and have been more careful to protect than to attack.

I have preserved the common distribution of the plays into acts, though I believe it to be in almost all the plays void of authority. Some of those which are divided in the later editions have no division in the first folio, and some that are divided in the folio have no division in the preceding copies. The settled mode of the theatre requires four intervals in the play, but few, if any, of our author's compositions can be properly distributed in that manner. An act is so much of the drama as passes without intervention of time, or change of place. A pause makes a new act. In every real, and therefore in every imitative action, the intervals may be more or fewer, the restriction of five acts being accidental and arbitrary. This Shakspeare knew, and this he practised; his plays were written, and at first printed in one unbroken continuity, and ought now to be exhibited with short pauses, interposed as often as the scene is changed, or any considerable time is required to pass. This method would at once quell a thousand absurdities.

In restoring the author's works to their integrity, I have considered the punctuation as wholly in my power; for what could be their care of colons and commas, who corrupted words and sentences? Whatever could be done by adjusting points, is therefore silently performed, in some plays with much diligence, in others with less; it is hard to keep a busy eye steadily fixed upon evanescent atoms, or a discursive mind upon evanescent truth.

The same liberty has been taken with a few particles, or other words of slight effect. I have sometimes inserted or omitted them without notice. I have done that sometimes which the other editors have done always, and which indeed the state of the text may sufficiently justify.

The greater part of readers, instead of blaming us for passing trifles, will wonder that on mere trifles so much labour is expended, with such importance of debate, and such solemnity of diction. To these I answer with confidence, that they are judging of an art which they do not understand; yet cannot much reproach them with their ignorance, nor promise that they would become in general, by learning criticism, more useful, happier, or wiser.

As I practised conjecture more, I learned to trust it less; and after I had printed a few plays, resolved to insert none of my own readings in the text. Upon this caution I now congratulate myself, for every day encreases my doubt of my emendations.

Since I have confined my imagination to the margin, it must not be considered as very reprehensible, if I have suffered it to play some freaks in its own dominion. There is no danger in conjecture, if it be proposed as conjecture; and while the

text remains uninjured, those changes may be safely offered, which are not considered even by him that offers them as necessary or safe.

If my readings are of little value, they have not been ostentatiously displayed or importunately obtruded. I could have written longer notes, for the art of writing notes is not of difficult attainment. The work is performed, first by railing at the stupidity, negligence, ignorance, and asinine tastelessness of the former editors, showing, from all that goes before and all that follows, the inelegance and absurdity of the old reading; then by proposing something, which to superficial readers would seem specious, but which the editor rejects with indignation; then by producing the true reading, with a long paraphrase, and concluding with loud acclamations on the discovery, and a sober wish for the advancement and prosperity of genuine criticism.

All this may be done, and perhaps done sometimes without impropriety. But I have always suspected that the reading is right, which requires many words to prove it wrong; and the emendation wrong, that cannot without so much labour appear to be right. The justness of a happy restoration strikes at once, and the moral precept may be well applied to criticism, *quod dubitas ne feceris.*

To dread the shore which he sees spread with wrecks, is natural to the sailor. I had before my eye so many critical adventures ended in miscarriage, that caution was forced upon me. I encountered in every page wit struggling with its own sophistry, and learning confused by the multiplicity of its views. I was forced to censure those whom I admired, and could not but reflect, while I was dispossessing their emendations, how soon the same fate might happen to my own, and how many of the readings which I have corrected may be by some other editor defended and established.

> "Critics I saw, that others' names efface,
> And fix their own, with labour in the place;
> Their own, like others, soon their place resign'd,
> Or disappear'd, and left the first behind." POPE.

That a conjectural critic should often be mistaken, cannot be wonderful, either to others, or himself, if it be considered, that in his art there is no system, no principal and axiomatical truth that regulates subordinate positions. His chance of error is renewed at every attempt; an oblique view of the passage, a slight misapprehension of a phrase, a casual inattention to the parts connected, is sufficient to make him not only fail, but fail ridiculously; and when he succeeds best, he produces perhaps but one reading of many probable, and he that suggests another will always be able to dispute his claims.

It is an unhappy state, in which danger is hid under pleasure. The allurements of emendation are scarcely resistible. Conjecture has all the joy and all the pride of invention, and he that has once started a happy change, is too much delighted to consider what objections may rise against it.

Yet conjectural criticism has been of great use in the learned world; nor is it my intention to depreciate a study, that has exercised so many mighty minds, from the revival of learning to our own age, from the Bishop of Aleria [6]) to English Bentley. The critics on ancient authors have, in the exercise of their sagacity, many assistances, which the editor of Shakspeare is condemned to want. They are employed upon grammatical and settled languages, whose construction contributes so much to perspicuity, that Homer has fewer passages unintelligible than Chaucer. The words have not only a known regimen, but invariable quantities, which direct and confine the choice. There are commonly more manuscripts than one; and they do not often conspire in the same mistakes. Yet Scaliger could confess to Salmasius how little satisfaction his emendations gave him. *Illudunt nobis conjecturæ nostræ, quarum nos pudet, postea-quam in meliores codices incidimus.* And Lipsius could complain, that critics were making faults, by trying to remove them, *Ut olim vitiis, ita nunc remediis laboratur.* And indeed, when mere conjecture is to be used, the emendations of Scaliger and Lipsius, notwithstanding their wonderful sagacity and erudition, are often vague and disputable, like mine or Theobald's.

Perhaps I may not be more censured for doing wrong, than for doing little; for raising in the public expectations, which at last I have not answered. The expectation of ignorance is indefinite, and that of knowledge is often tyrannical. It is hard to satisfy those who know not what to demand, or those who demand by design what they think impossible to be done. I have indeed disappointed no opinion more than my own; yet I have endeavoured to perform my task with no slight solicitude. Not a single passage in the whole work has appeared to me corrupt, which I have not attempted to restore; or obscure, which I have not endeavoured to illustrate. In many I have failed like others; and from many, after all my efforts, I have retreated, and confessed the repulse. I have not passed over, with affected superiority, what is equally difficult to the reader and to myself, but where I could not instruct him, have owned my ignorance. I might easily have accumulated a mass of seeming learning upon easy scenes; but it ought not to be imputed to negligence, that where nothing was necessary, nothing has been done, or that, where others have said enough, I have said no more.

Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him, that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakspeare, and who desires to feel

6) John Andreas.

the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and of Pope. Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue, and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators.

Particular passages are cleared by notes, but the general effect of the work is weakened. The mind is refrigerated by interruption; the thoughts are diverted from the principal subject; the reader is weary, he suspects not why; and at last throws away the book which he has too diligently studied.

Parts are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed; there is a kind of intellectual remoteness necessary for the comprehension of any great work in its full design and in its true proportions; a close approach shows the smaller niceties, but the beauty of the whole is discerned no longer.

It is not very grateful to consider how little the succession of editors has added to this author's power of pleasing. He was read, admired, studied, and imitated, while he was yet deformed with all the improprieties which ignorance and neglect could accumulate upon him; while the reading was yet not rectified, nor his allusions understood; yet then did Dryden pronounce, "that Shakspeare was the man, who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those, who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation; he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is every where alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can say, he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

"'Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.'"

It is to be lamented, that such a writer should want a commentary; that his language should become obsolete, or his sentiments obscure. But it is vain to carry wishes beyond the condition of human things; that which must happen to all, has happened to Shakspeare, by accident and time; and more than has been suffered by any other writer since the use of types, has been suffered by him through his own negligence of fame, or perhaps by that superiority of mind, which despised its own performances, when it compared them with its powers, and judged those works unworthy to be preserved, which the critics of following ages were to contend for the fame of restoring and explaining.

Among these candidates of inferior fame, I am now to stand the judgment of the public: and wish that I could confidently produce my commentary as equal to the encouragement which I have had the honour of receiving. Every work of this kind is by its nature deficient, and I should feel little solicitude about the sentence, were it to be pronounced only by the skilful and the learned.

II.

SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE OF SHAKSPEARE,
BY
ALEX. CHALMERS.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, on the 23d day of April, 1564. Of the rank of his family it is not easy to form an opinion. Mr. Rowe says, that according to the register and certain public writings relating to Stratford, his ancestors were "of good figure and "fashion" in that town, and are mentioned as "gentle-"men;" but the result of the late as well as early inquiries made by Mr. Malone is, that the epithet *gentleman* was first applied to the poet, and even to him at a late period of his life. Mr. Malone's inclination to elevate Shakspeare's family cannot be doubted, yet he is obliged to confess that, after thirty years' labour, he could find no evidence to support it.

His father, John Shakspeare, according to Mr. Malone's conjecture, was born in or before the year 1530. John Shakspeare was not originally of Stratford, but, perhaps, says Mr. Malone, of Snitterfield, which is but three miles from Stratford. He came to Stratford not very long after the year 1550. Former accounts have reported him to have been a considerable dealer in wool, but Mr. Malone has discovered that he was a glover; and, to add importance to this discovery, [1]) he has given us a historical dissertation upon the state of the glove trade in queen Elizabeth's time. But, notwithstanding the flourishing state of that trade in Stratford, and a conjecture, that John Shakspeare furnished his customers with "leathern hose, aprons, belts, points, jerkins, pouches, wallets, satchels, and purses," Mr. Malone confesses, that from all this, the poet's father derived but a scanty maintenance.

John Shakspeare had been, in 1568, an officer or bailiff (high-bailiff or mayor) of the body corporate of Stratford, and chief alderman in 1571. At one time, it is said that he possessed lands and tenements to the amount of 500*l*., the reward of his grandfather's faithful and approved services to king Henry VII. This might account for his being elected to the magistracy, had it not been asserted upon very doubtful authority; but Mr. Malone is of opinion, that these "faithful and approved services" must be meant of some of the ancestors of his wife, one of the Ardens.

Whatever may have been his former wealth, it appears to have been greatly reduced in the latter part of his life, as it is found in the books of the corporation, that in 1579 he was excused the trifling weekly tax of fourpence, levied on all the aldermen; and that in 1586 another alderman was appointed in his room, in consequence of his declining to attend on the business of that office.

His wife, to whom he was married in 1557, was the youngest daughter and heiress of Robert Arden, of Wellingcote or Wilmecote, in the county of Warwick, by Agnes Webb his wife. Mary Arden's fortune, Mr. Malone has discovered, amounted to one hundred and ten pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence!

Mr. Arden is styled a "gentleman of worship," and the family of Arden is very ancient. Robert Arden of Bromich, Esq., is in the list of the Warwickshire gentry, returned by the commissioners in the twelfth year of king Henry V., A. D. 1433. Edward Arden was sheriff of the county in 1568. The woodland part of this county was anciently called *Ardern*, afterwards softened to *Arden*, and hence the name.

It was formerly said that John Shakspeare had ten children, and it was inferred, that the providing for so large a family must have embarrassed his circumstances; but Mr. Malone has reduced them to eight, five of whom only attained to the age of maturity, — four sons and a daughter. Our illustrious poet was the eldest of the eight, and received his education, however narrow or liberal, at the free-school founded at Stratford.

From this he appears to have been placed in the office of some country attorney, or the seneschal of some manor court, where, it is highly probable, he picked up those technical law phrases that frequently occur in his plays, and which could not have been in common use unless among professional men. It has been remarked, but the remark will probably be thought of no great value, that he derives none of his allusions from the other learned professions. Of amusements, his favourite appears to have been falconry. Very few, if any of his plays, are without some allusions to that sport; and archery, likewise, appears to have engaged much of his attention.

Mr. Capell conjectures, that his early marriage prevented his being sent to one of the universities.

1) "On the subject of the trade of John Shakspeare, I "am not under the necessity of relying on conjecture, being "enabled, after a *very tedious and troublesome search*, to "shut up this *long agitated question* for ever." Malone's Life of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 70. of his new edition of Shakspeare's Plays and Poems, 21 vols. 8vo. 1821. It does not appear where any *question* about the trade of John Shakspeare was ever *agitated*. His being a dealer in wool was first asserted by Mr. Rowe, and silently acquiesced in by all succeeding editors and commentators, Mr. Malone not excepted, until he discovered that John's trade was that of a glover; and then, in his imagination, he had the honour of shutting up a *long agitated* question *for ever*.

It appears, however, as Dr. Farmer observes, that his early life was incompatible with a course of education; and it is certain that "his contemporaries, "friends and foes, nay, and himself likewise, agree "in his want of what is usually termed literature." It is, indeed, a strong argument in favour of Shakspeare's illiterature, that it was maintained by all his contemporaries, many of whom have bestowed every other merit upon him, and by his successors, who lived nearest to his time, when "his memory "was green:" and that it has been denied only by Gildon, Sewell, and others, down to Upton, who could have no means of ascertaining the truth. Mr. Malone seems inclined to revive their opinion, but finds it impossible.

In his eighteenth year (1582) or perhaps a little sooner, he married ANNE HATHAWAY, who was seven years and a half older than himself. She was the daughter of one Hathaway, who is said to have been a substantial yeoman in the neighbourhood of Stratford. Of his domestic economy or professional occupation at this time, we have no information; but if we may credit former accounts, by Rowe, &c., it would appear, that both were in a considerable degree neglected, in consequence of his associating with a gang of deer-stealers.

It is said, that being detected with them in robbing the park, that is, stealing deer out of the park of sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, near Stratford, he was so rigorously prosecuted by that gentleman as to be obliged to leave his family and business, whatever that might be, and take shelter in London. Sir Thomas, on this occasion, was exasperated by a ballad which Shakspeare wrote, (probably his first essay in poetry,) of which the following stanza was communicated to Mr. Oldys: —

"A parliemente member, a justice of peace,
"At home a poor scare-crowe, at London an asse,
"If lowsie is Lucy, as some volke miscalle it,
"Then Lucy is lowsie, whatever befall it:
"He thinks himself greate,
"Yet an asse in his state
"We allowe by his ears but with asses to mate.
"If Lucy is lowsie, as some volke miscalle it,
"Sing lowsie Lucy, whatever befall it."

In our preceding edition, we remarked that these lines do no great honour to our poet, and the satire was probably unjust; for, although some of his admirers have exclaimed against sir Thomas as a "vain, "weak, and vindictive magistrate," he was certainly exerting no very violent act of oppression in protecting his property against a young man who was degrading the commonest rank of life, and who had at this time bespoke no indulgence by any display of superior talents. It was also added, that the ballad must have made some noise at sir Thomas's expence, for the author took care it should be affixed to his park gates, and liberally circulated among his neighbours.

In defence of Shakspeare, Mr. Malone attempts to prove that our poet could not have offended sir Thomas Lucy by stealing his deer: FIRST, because (granting for a moment that he did steal deer) stealing deer was a common youthful frolic, and therefore could not leave any very deep stain on his character: SECONDLY, it was a practice wholly unmixed with any sordid or lucrative motive, for the venison thus obtained was not sold, but freely participated at a convivial board: THIRDLY, that the ballad Shakspeare is said to have written in ridicule of sir Thomas Lucy is a forgery: and LASTLY, that sir Thomas Lucy had no park, and no deer.

After this very singular defence of Shakspeare, which occupies thirty of Mr. Malone's pages, besides some very prolix notes, he appears to be perplexed to know what to do with Shakspeare's resentment against sir Thomas Lucy. That he had a resentment against this gentleman is certain, and that he retained it for many years is equally certain, for he gave vent to it in 1601, when he wrote "The "Merry Wives of Windsor," about a year after sir Thomas's death.

Mr. Malone, after allowing that various passages in the first scene of the above-mentioned play, afford ground for believing that our author, on some account or other, had not the most profound respect for sir Thomas, adds, "the *dozen* white *luces*, however, which Shallow is made to commend as 'a "good coat,' was not sir Thomas Lucy's coat of "arms: though Mr. Theobald asserts that it is found "on the monument of one of the family, as represented by Dugdale. No such coat certainly is found, "either in Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire, "or in the church of Charlecote, where I in vain "sought for it. It is probable that the deviation "from the real coat of the Lucies, which was gules, "*three* lucies hariant, argent, was intentionally made "by our poet, that the application might not be too "direct, and give offence to sir Thomas Lucy's son, "who, when this play was written, was living, and "much respected, at Stratford."

As the deer-stealing story has hitherto been told in order to account for Shakspeare's arrival in London, it might have been expected that Mr. Malone would have been enabled to substitute some other reason, and to precede the arrival of our poet with some circumstances of more importance and of greater dignity; but nothing of this kind is to be found. We have lost the old tradition, with all its feasible accompaniments, but have got nothing in return. All that Mr. Malone ventures to conjecture, is, that when Shakspeare left Stratford, "he was involved in some "pecuniary difficulties."

On his arrival in London, which was probably in the year 1586, when he was only twenty-two years old, he is said to have made his first acquaintance in the play-house, to which idleness or taste may have directed him, and where his necessities, if tradition may be credited, obliged him to accept the office of call-boy, or prompter's assistant. This is a menial whose employment it is to give the performers notice to be ready to enter, as often as the business of the play requires their appearance on the stage. Pope, however, relates a story communicated to him by Rowe, but which Rowe did not think deserving of a place in the life which he wrote, that must a little retard the advancement of our poet to the office just mentioned. According to this story, Shakspeare's first employment was to wait at the door of the play-house, and hold the horses of those who had no servants, that they might be ready after the performance. But "I cannot," says his acute commentator, Mr. Steevens, "dismiss "this anecdote without observing that it seems to "want every mark of probability. Though Shak-"speare quitted Stratford on account of a juvenile "irregularity, we have no reason to suppose that he "had forfeited the protection of his father, who was "engaged in a lucrative business, or the love of his "wife, who had already brought him two children, "and was herself the daughter of a substantial yeo-"man. It is unlikely, therefore, when he was be-"yond the reach of his prosecutor, that he should "conceal his plan of life, or place of residence, from "those who, if he found himself distressed, could not

"fail to afford him such supplies as would have set "him above the necessity of *holding horses* for sub-"sistence. Mr. Malone has remarked, in his 'At-"tempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays "of Shakspeare were written,' that he might have "found an easy introduction to the stage: for Tho-"mas Green, a celebrated comedian of that period, "was his townsman, and perhaps his relation. The "genius of our author prompted him to write poetry; "his connexion with a player might have given his "productions a dramatic turn; or his own sagacity "might have taught him that fame was not incom-"patible with profit, and that the theatre was an "avenue to both. That it was once the general "custom to ride on horseback to the play I am like-"wise yet to learn. The most popular of the thea-"tres were on the Bankside; and we are told by "the satirical pamphleteers of that time, that the "usual mode of conveyance to these places of amuse-"ment was by water, but not a single writer so "much as hints at the custom of riding to them, or "at the practice of having horses held during the "hours of exhibition. Some allusion to this usage, "(if it had existed,) must, I think, have been dis-"covered in the course of our researches after con-"temporary fashions. Let it be remembered, too, "that we receive this tale on no higher authority "than that of Cibber's Lives of the Poets, vol. i. "p. 130. Sir William Davenant told it to Mr. Bet-"terton, who communicated it to Mr. Rowe, who, "according to Dr. Johnson, related it to Mr. Pope."

Mr. Malone concurs in opinion that this story stands on a very slender foundation, while he differs with Mr. Steevens as to the fact of gentlemen going to the theatre on horseback. With respect to Shakspeare's father "being engaged in a lucra-"tive business," we may remark that this could not have been the case at the time our author came to London. He is said to have arrived in London in 1586, the year in which his father resigned the office of alderman, and was in decayed circumstances.

But in whatever situation he was first employed at the theatre, he appears to have soon discovered those talents which afterwards made him

"The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage!"

Some distinction he probably first acquired as an actor, although Mr. Rowe was not able to discover any character in which he appeared to more advantage than that of the ghost in Hamlet. The instructions given to the players in that tragedy, and other passages of his works, show an intimate acquaintance with the skill of acting, and such as is scarcely surpassed in our own days. He appears to have studied nature in acting as much as in writing. Mr. Malone, however, does not believe that he played parts of the first rate, though he probably distinguished himself by whatever he performed; and the distinction which he obtained could only be in his own plays, in which he would be assisted by the novel appearance of author and actor combined. Before his time, it does not appear that any actor could avail himself of the wretched pieces represented on the stage.

Mr. Rowe regrets that he cannot inform us which was the first play he wrote, nor is that a point yet determined. Mr. Malone in his first edition, appears to have attained something conclusive; but in his last edition, he has changed the dates of so many of the plays, that we can only refer to the lists given at the end of his History of the Stage. The progress of Shakspeare's taste or genius, it seems to be impossible to ascertain with any certainty.

His plays, however, must have been not only popular, but approved by persons of the higher order, as we are certain that he enjoyed the gracious favour of queen Elizabeth, who was very fond of the stage; and the particular and affectionate patronage of the earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his poem of "Venus and Adonis," and his "Rape "of Lucrece." On sir William Davenant's authority, it has been asserted that this nobleman at one time gave him a thousand pounds to enable him to complete a purchase. This anecdote Mr. Malone thinks extravagantly exaggerated, and considers it as far more likely that he might have presented the poet with an hundred pounds in return for his dedications.

At the conclusion of the advertisement prefixed to Lintot's edition of Shakspeare's poems, it is said, "that most learned prince and great patron of learn-"ing, king James the First, was pleased with his "own hand to write an amicable letter to Mr. Shak-"speare: which letter, though now lost, remained "long in the hands of sir William D'Avenant, as a "credible person now living can testify." Dr. Farmer with great probability supposes, that this letter was written by king James in return for the compliment paid to him in Macbeth. The relator of this anecdote was Sheffield, duke of Buckingham. These brief notices, meagre as they are, may show that our author enjoyed high favour in his day. Whatever some may think of king James as a "learned prince," his patronage, as well as that of his predecessor, was sufficient to give celebrity to the founder of a new stage. It may be added, that Shakspeare's uncommon merit, his candour, and goodnature are supposed to have produced him the admiration and acquaintance of every person distinguished for such qualities. It is not difficult indeed to suppose that Shakspeare was a man of humour and a social companion, and probably excelled in that species of minor wit not ill adapted to conversation, of which it could have been wished he had been more sparing in his writings.

How long he acted has not been discovered, but he continued to write till the year 1614. During his dramatic career he acquired a property in the theatre, [2]) which he must have disposed of when he retired, as no mention of it occurs in his will. His connexion with Ben Jonson has been variously related. It is said that when Jonson was unknown to the world, he offered a play to the theatre, which was rejected after a very careless perusal, but that Shakspeare having accidentally cast his eye on it, conceived a favourable opinion of it, and afterwards recommended Jonson and his writings to the public. For this candour he is said to have been repaid by Jonson, when the latter became a poet of note, with an envious disrespect. Jonson acquired reputation by the variety of his pieces, and endeavoured to arrogate the supremacy in dramatic genius. Like a French critic, he insinuated Shakspeare's incorrectness, his careless manner of writing, and his want of judgment; and, as he was a remarkable slow writer himself, he could not endure the praise frequently bestowed on Shakspeare, viz. that he seldom altered or blotted out what he had written. Mr. Malone says, that "not long after the year 1600, "a coolness arose between Shakspeare and him, "which, however he may talk of his almost idola-"trous affection, produced, on his part, from that "time to the death of our author and for many

2) In 1603 he and several others obtained a licence from king James to exhibit comedies, tragedies, histories, &c. at the Globe Theatre and elsewhere.

"years afterwards, much clumsy sarcasm and many "malevolent reflections." But from these, which were until lately the commonly received traditions on this subject, the learned Dr. Farmer was inclined to depart, and to think Jonson's hostility to Shakspeare absolutely groundless: and this opinion has been amply confirmed by more recent critics.

Jonson had only one advantage over Shakspeare, that of superior learning, which might, in certain situations, give him a superior rank, but could never promote his rivalship with a man who attained the highest excellence without it. Nor will Shakspeare suffer by its being known, that all the dramatic poets before he appeared were scholars. Greene, Lodge, Peele, Marlow, Nashe, Lily, and Kid, had all, says Mr. Malone, a regular university education; and, as scholars in our universities, frequently composed and acted plays on historical subjects. [3])

The latter part of Shakspeare's life was spent in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends. He had accumulated considerable property, which Gildon (in his "Letters and Essays" in 1694,) stated to amount to 300*l. per annum;* a sum at least equal to 1000*l.* in our days; but Mr. Malone doubts whether all his property amounted to much more than 200*l. per annum,* which yet was a considerable fortune in those times; and it is supposed that he might have derived 200*l. per annum* from the theatre while connected with it.

He retired about four years (1611 or 1612) before his death, to a house in Stratford, of which it has been thought important to give the history. It was built by sir Hugh Clopton, a younger brother of an ancient family in that neighbourhood. Sir Hugh was sheriff of London in the reign of Richard III., and lord mayor in that of Henry VII. By his will he bequeathed to his elder brother's son his manor of Clopton, &c., and his house by the name of the *Great House* in Stratford. [4]) A good part of the estate was in possession of Edward Clopton, Esq. and sir Hugh Clopton, Knt. in 1733. The principal estate had been sold out of the Clopton family for above a century, at the time when Shakspeare became the purchaser; who, having repaired and modelled it to his own mind, changed the name to *New Place,* which the mansion-house, afterwards erected in the room of the poet's house, retained for many years. The house and lands belonging to it continued in the possession of Shakspeare's descendants to the time of the Restoration, when they were repurchased by the Clopton family. Here in May 1742, when Mr. Garrick, Mr. Macklin, and Mr. Delane, visited Stratford, they were hospitably entertained under Shakspeare's mulberry-tree by sir Hugh Clopton. He was a barrister-at-law, was knighted by king George I., and died in the 80th year of his age, in Dec. 1751. His executor, about the year 1752, sold *New Place* to the Rev. Mr. Gastrell, a man of large fortune, who resided in it but a few years in consequence of a disagreement with the inhabitants of Stratford: as he resided part of the year at Lichfield, he thought he was assessed too highly in the monthly rate towards the maintenance of the poor; but being very properly compelled by the magistrates of Stratford to pay the whole of what was levied on him, on the principle that his house was occupied by his servants in his absence, he peevishly declared, that *that* house should never be assessed again; and soon afterwards pulled it down, sold the materials, and left the town. He had some time before cut down Shakspeare's mulberry-tree, [5]) to save himself the trouble of showing it to those whose admiration of our great poet led them to visit the classic ground on which it stood. That Shakspeare planted this tree appears to be sufficiently authenticated. Where New Place stood is now a garden. — Before concluding this history, it may be necessary to mention that the poet's house was once honoured by the temporary residence of Henrietta Maria, queen to Charles I. Theobald has given an inaccurate account of this, as if she had been obliged to take refuge in Stratford from the rebels; but that was not the case. She marched from Newark, June 16, 1643, and entered Stratford triumphantly about the 22d of the same month, at the head of 3000 foot and 1,500 horse, with 150 waggons and a train of artillery. Here she was met by prince Rupert, accompanied by a large body of troops. She resided about three weeks at our poet's house, which was then possessed by his grand-daughter, Mrs. Nash, and her husband.

During Shakspeare's abode in this house, his pleasurable wit, and good-nature, says Mr. Rowe, engaged him the acquaintance, and entitled him to the friendship of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. This may readily be believed, for he was entitled to their respect. He had left his native place, poor, and almost unknown. He returned ennobled by fame, and enriched by fortune.

Mr. Rowe gives us a traditional story of a miser, or usurer, named Combe, who, in conversation with Shakspeare, said, he fancied the poet intended to write his epitaph if he should survive him, and desired to know what he meant to say. On this Shakspeare gave him the following, probably extempore: —

"Ten in the hundred lies here engrav'd,
"'Tis an hundred to ten his soul is not sav'd;
"If any man ask, who lies in this tombe?
"Oh! ho! quoth the devil, 'tis my John-a-Combe."

The sharpness of the satire is said to have stung the man so severely that he never forgave it. These lines, however, or some which nearly resembled them, appeared in various collections, both before and after the time they were said to have been composed; and the inquiries of Mr. Steevens and Mr. Malone satisfactorily prove that the whole story is a fabrication. Betterton is said to have heard it when he visited Warwickshire on purpose to collect anecdotes of our poet, and probably thought it of too much importance to be nicely examined. We know not whether it be worth adding of a story which we have rejected, that a *usurer,* in Shakspeare's time, did not mean one who took exorbitant, but any interest or usance for money, and that ten in the hundred, or ten *per cent,* was then the ordinary interest of money. It would have been of more consequence, however, to have here recorded the opinion of Mr. Malone, in his first edition, that Shakspeare, during his retirement, wrote the play of Twelfth Night; but unfortunately, in his last edition, he carried the date of this play back to the year 1607.

Shakspeare died on his birth-day, Tuesday, April 23, 1616, when he had exactly completed his fifty-second year, [6]) and was buried on the north side of the chancel, in the great church at Stratford, where a monument is placed in the wall, on which he is represented under an arch, in a sitting posture, a cushion placed before him, with a pen in his right hand, and his left rested on a scroll of paper. The following Latin distich is engraved under the cushion: —

Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, populus mœret, Olympus habet.

"The first syllable in 'Socratem,' says Mr. Stee-"vens, is here made short, which cannot be allowed. "Perhaps we should read 'Sophoclem.' Shakspeare "is then appositely compared with a dramatic author "among the ancients: but still it should be remem-"bered that the eulogium is lessened while the me-"tre is reformed; and it is well known that some "of our early writers of Latin poetry were uncom-"monly negligent in their prosody, especially in pro-"per names. The thought of this distich, as Mr. "Tollet observes, might have been taken from the "Faëry Queene of Spenser, B. II. c. ix. st. 48., and "c. x. st. 3.

"To this Latin inscription on Shakspeare may be "added the lines which are found underneath it on "his monument: —

"Stay, passenger, why dost thou go so fast?
"Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plac'd
"Within this monument; Shakspeare, with whom
"Quick nature dy'd; whose name doth deck the tomb
"Far more than cost; since all that he hath writ
"Leaves living art but page to serve his wit."
"Obiit An°. Dni. 1616.
æt. 53, die 23 Apri."

"It appears from the verses of Leonard Digges, "that our author's monument was erected before "the year 1623. It has been engraved by Vertue, "and done in mezzotinto by Miller."

On his grave-stone underneath are these lines, in an uncouth mixture of small and capital letters: —

"Good Friend for Iesus SAKE forbeare
"To digg T-E Dust EncloAsed HERe
"Blese be T-E Man $^{T}_{Y}$ spares T-Es Stones
"And curst be He $^{T}_{Y}$ moves my Bones."

It is uncertain whether this request and imprecation were written by Shakspeare, or by one of his friends. They probably allude to the custom of removing skeletons after a certain time, and depositing them in charnel-houses; and similar execrations are found in many ancient Latin epitaphs. Shakspeare's remains, however, have been ever carefully protected from injury. [7])

We have no account of the malady which at no very advanced age closed the life and labours of this unrivalled and incomparable genius.

His family consisted of two daughters, and a son named Hamnet, who died in 1596, in the twelfth year of his age. Susannah, the eldest daughter, and her father's favourite, was married, June 5, 1607, to Dr. John Hall, a physician, who died Nov. 1635, aged 60. Mrs. Hall died July 11, 1649, aged 66. They left only one child, Elizabeth, born 1607-8, and married April 22, 1626, to Thomas Nashe, Esq., who died in 1647, and afterwards to sir John Barnard, of Abingdon, in Northamptonshire, but died without issue by either husband. Judith, Shakspeare's youngest daughter, was married, February 10, 1615-16, to a Mr. Thomas Quiney, and died February 1661-62, in her 77th year. By Mr. Quiney she had three sons, Shakspeare, Richard, and Thomas, who all died unmarried, and here the descendants of our poet became extinct.

Sir Hugh Clopton, who was born, two years after the death of lady Barnard, which happened in 1669-70, related to Mr. Macklin, in 1742, an old tradition, that she had carried away with her from Stratford many of her grandfather's papers. On the death of sir John Barnard, Mr. Malone thought "these must have fallen into the hands of Mr. Ed-"ward Bagley, lady Barnard's executor, and if any "descendant of that gentleman be now living, in his "custody they probably remain." But Mr. Malone, in his last edition, tacitly confesses, that he has been able to make no discovery of such descendant, or such papers.

To this account of Shakspeare's family we have now to add, that among Oldys's papers is another traditional story of our illustrious poet's having been the father of sir William Davenant. Oldys's relation is thus given:

"If tradition may be trusted, Shakspeare often "baited at the Crown Inn or Tavern in Oxford, in "his journey to and from London; the landlady was "a woman of great beauty and sprightly wit, and "her husband, Mr. John Davenant (afterwards mayor "of that city,) a grave melancholy man; who, as "well as his wife, used much to delight in Shak-"speare's pleasant company. Their son, young Will. "Davenant, (afterwards sir William,) was then a "little school-boy in the town, of about seven or "eight years old, and so fond also of Shakspeare, "that whenever he heard of his arrival, he would "fly from school to see him. One day an old towns-"man observing the boy running homeward almost "out of breath, asked him whither he was posting "in that heat and hurry. He answered, to see his "*god*-father Shakspeare. There's a good boy, said "the other, but have a care that you don't take *God*'s "name in vain. This story Mr. Pope told me at "the earl of Oxford's table, upon occasion of some "discourse which arose about Shakspeare's monument, "then newly erected in Westminster Abbey."

This story appears to have originated with Anthony Wood, and it has been thought a presumption of its being true, that, after careful examination, Mr. Thomas Warton was inclined to believe it. Mr.

3) This was the practice in Milton's days. "One of his "objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, "is, that men designed for orders in the church were per-"mitted to act plays," &c. Johnson's Life of Milton.

4) The account of this house in Malone's Shakspeare, 1821, is the same which appeared in his edition of 1790, but which he probably would have corrected, had he seen some further information on the subject, by Mr. Wheler, in Gent. Mag. vol. lxxix. and vol. lxxx.

5) "As the curiosity of this house and tree brought much "fame, and more company and profit to the town, a certain "man, on some disgust, has pulled the house down, so as "not to leave one stone upon another, and cut down the "tree, and piled it as a stack of firewood, to the great vex-"ation, loss, and disappointment of the inhabitants; how-"ever, an honest silversmith bought the whole stack of "wood, and makes many odd things of this wood for the "curious." Letter in Annual Register, 1760. Of Mr. Gastrell and his Lady, see Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson, vol. ii. p. 456. edit. 1822. 4 vol.

6) The only notice we have of his person is from Aubrey, who says, "he was a handsome well-shaped man," and adds, "verie good company, and of a very ready, and pleasant, "and smooth wit."

7) Mr. Malone's causing the bust to be painted white has been severely censured; he did not live to defend it. See this and other information respecting this bust in Gent. Mag. vol. lxxxv. and lxxxvi.

Steevens, however, treats it with the utmost contempt, but does not perhaps argue with his usual attention to experience when he brings sir William Davenant's "heavy, vulgar, unmeaning face," as a proof that he could not be Shakspeare's son.

In the year 1741 a monument was erected to our poet in Westminster Abbey, by the direction of the earl of Burlington, Dr. Mead, Mr. Pope, and Mr. Martyn. It was the work of Scheemaker, (who received 300*l.* for it,) after a design of Kent, and was opened in January of that year, one hundred and twenty-five years after the death of him whom it commemorates, and whose genius appears to have been forgotten during almost the whole of that long period. The performers of each of the London theatres gave a benefit to defray the expences, and the dean and chapter of Westminster took nothing for the ground. The money received by the performance at Drury-lane theatre amounted to above 200*l.*, but the receipts at Covent-garden did not exceed 100*l.*

From these imperfect notices, which are all we have been able to collect from the labours of his biographers and commentators, our readers will perceive that less is known of Shakspeare than of almost any writer who has been considered as an object of laudable curiosity. Nothing could be more highly gratifying than an account of the early studies of this wonderful man, the progress of his pen, his moral and social qualities, his friendships, his failings, and whatever else constitutes personal history. But on all these topics his contemporaries and his immediate successors have been equally silent, and if aught can be hereafter discovered, it must be by exploring sources which have hitherto escaped the anxious researches of those who have devoted their whole lives, and their most vigorous talents, to revive his memory and illustrate his writings. In the sketch we have given, if the dates of his birth and death be excepted, what is there on which the reader can depend, or for which, if he contend eagerly, he may not be involved in controversy, and perplexed with contradictory opinions and authorities?

It is usually said that the life of an author can be little else than a history of his works; but this opinion is liable to many exceptions. If an author, indeed, has passed his days in retirement, his life can afford little more variety than that of any other man who has lived in retirement; but if, as is generally the case with writers of great celebrity, he has acquired a pre-eminence over his contemporaries, if he has excited rival contentions, and defeated the attacks of criticism or of malignity, or if he has plunged into the controversies of his age, and performed the part either of a tyrant or a hero in literature, his history may be rendered as interesting as that of any other public character. But whatever weight may be allowed to this remark, the decision will not be of much consequence in the case of Shakspeare. Unfortunately, we know as little of his writings as of his personal history. The industry of his illustrators for the last fifty years is such as, probably, never was surpassed in the annals of literary investigation; yet so far are we from information of the conclusive or satisfactory kind, that even the order in which his plays were written rests principally on conjecture, and of some plays usually printed among his works, it is not yet determined whether he wrote the whole or any part.

Much of our ignorance of every thing which it would be desirable to know respecting Shakspeare's works, must be imputed to the author himself. If we look merely at the state in which he left his productions, we should be apt to conclude, either that he was insensible of their value, or that while he was the greatest, he was at the same time the humblest dramatic writer the world ever produced: "that he thought his works unworthy of posterity, "that he levied no ideal tribute upon future times, "nor had any further prospect than that of present "popularity and present profit." [8]) And such an opinion, although it apparently partakes of the ease and looseness of conjecture, may not be far from probability. But before we allow it any higher merit, or attempt to decide upon the affection or indifference with which he reviewed his labours, it may be necessary to consider their precise nature, and certain circumstances in his situation which affected them; and, above all, we must take into our account the character and predominant occupations of the time in which he lived, and of that which followed his decease.

With respect to himself, it does not appear that he printed any one of his plays, and only eleven of them were printed in his life-time. The reason assigned for this is, that he wrote them for a particular theatre, sold them to the managers when only an actor, reserved them in manuscript when himself a manager, and when he disposed of his property in the theatre, they were still preserved in manuscript to prevent their being acted by the rival houses. Copies of some of them appear to have been surreptitiously obtained, and published in a very incorrect state; but we may suppose that it was wiser in the author or managers to overlook this fraud, than to publish a correct edition, and so destroy the exclusive property they enjoyed. It is clear therefore that any publication of his plays by himself would have interfered, at first with his own interest, and afterwards with the interest of those to whom he made over his share in them. But even had this obstacle been removed, we are not sure that he would have gained much by publication. If he had no other copies but those belonging to the theatre, the business of correction for the press must have been a toil which we are afraid the taste of the public at that time would have very poorly rewarded. We know not the exact portion of fame he enjoyed; it might be the highest which dramatic genius could confer, but dramatic genius was a new excellence, and not well understood. His claims were, probably, not heard beyond the jurisdiction of the master of the revels, certainly not much beyond the metropolis. When he died, the English public was approaching to a period in which matters of higher moment were to engage attention, and in which his works were nearly buried in oblivion, and not for more than a century afterwards, ranked among the productions of which the nation had reason to be proud.

Such, however, was Shakspeare's reputation, that we are told his name was put to pieces which he never wrote, and that he felt himself too confident of popular favour to undeceive the public. This was a singular resolution in a man who wrote so unequally, that even at this day, the test of internal evidence must be applied to his doubtful productions with the greatest caution. But still how far his character would have been elevated by an examination of his plays in the closet, in an age when the refinements of criticism were not understood, and the sympathies of taste were seldom felt, may admit of a question. "His language," says Dr. Johnson, "*not being designed for the reader's desk,*

8) Dr. Johnson's Preface.

"was all that he desired it to be if it conveyed his "meaning to the audience.

Shakspeare died in 1616, and seven years afterwards appeared the first edition of his plays, published at the charge of four booksellers; a circumstance from which Mr. Malone infers, "that no sin"gle publisher was at that time willing to risk his "money on a complete collection of our author's "plays." This edition was printed from the copies in the hands of his fellow-managers Heminge and Condell, which had been in a series of years frequently altered through convenience, caprice, or ignorance. Heminge and Condell had now retired from the stage, and, we may suppose, thought they were guilty of no injury to their successors, in printing what their own interest only had formerly withheld. Of this, although we have no documents amounting to demonstration, we may be convinced, by adverting to a circumstance, which will, in our days, appear very extraordinary, namely, the declension of Shakspeare's popularity. We have seen that the publication of his works was accounted a doubtful speculation; and it is yet more certain, so much had the public taste turned from him in quest of variety, that for several years after his death the plays of Fletcher were more frequently acted than his, and during the whole of the seventeenth century they were made to give place to performances, the greater part of which cannot now be endured. During the same period only four editions of his works were published, all in folio; and perhaps this unwieldy size of volume may be an additional proof that they were not popular; nor is it thought that the impressions were numerous.

These circumstances, which attach to our author and to his works, must be allowed a plausible weight in accounting for our deficiencies in his biography and literary career, but there were circumstances enough in the history of the times to suspend the progress of that more regular drama of which he had set the example, and may be considered as the founder. If we wonder why we know so much less of Shakspeare than of his contemporaries, let us recollect that his genius, however highly and justly we now rate it, took a direction which was not calculated for permanent admiration either in the age in which he lived, or in that which followed. Shakspeare was a writer of plays, a promoter of an amusement just emerging from barbarism; and an amusement which, although it has been classed among the schools of morality, has ever had such a strong tendency to deviate from moral purposes, that the force of law has in all ages been called in to preserve it within the bounds of common decency. The church has ever been unfriendly to the stage. A part of the injunctions of queen Elizabeth is particularly directed against the printing of plays; and, according to an entry in the books of the Stationers' Company, in the 41st year of her reign, it is ordered, that no plays be printed except allowed by persons in authority. Dr. Farmer also remarks, that in that age poetry and novels were destroyed publicly by the bishops, and privately by the puritans. The main transactions, indeed, of that period could not admit of much attention to matters of amusement. The Reformation required all the circumspection and policy of a long reign to render it so firmly established in popular favour as to brave the caprice of any succeeding sovereign. This was effected in a great measure by the diffusion of religious controversy, which was encouraged by the church, and especially by the puritans, who were the immediate teachers of the lower classes, were listened to with veneration, and usually inveighed against all public amusements, as inconsistent with the Christian profession. These controversies continued during the reign of James I., and were in a considerable degree promoted by him, although he, like Elizabeth, was a favourer of the stage, as an appendage to the grandeur and pleasures of the court. But the commotions which followed in the unhappy reign of king Charles I., when the stage was totally abolished, are alone sufficient to account for the oblivion thrown on the history and works of our great bard.

From this time no inquiry was made, until it was too late to obtain any information more satisfactory than the few hearsay scraps and contested traditions above detailed. "How little," says Mr. Steevens, "Shakspeare was once read, may be understood "from Tate, who, in his dedication to the altered "play of King Lear, speaks of the original as an "obscure piece, recommended to his notice by a "friend: and the author of the Tatler having oc"casion to quote a few lines out of Macbeth, was "content to receive them from D'Avenant's alteration "of that celebrated drama, in which almost every "original beauty is either awkwardly disguised, or "arbitrarily omitted." [9])

In fifty years after his death, Dryden mentions, that he was then become "a little obsolete." In the beginning of the last century, Lord Shaftesbury complains of his "rude unpolished style, and his an"tiquated phrase and wit." It is certain that, for nearly a hundred years after his death, partly owing to the immediate revolution and rebellion, and partly to the licentious taste encouraged in Charles the Second's time, and perhaps partly to the incorrect state of his works, he was almost entirely neglected. Mr. Malone has justly remarked, "that if he had "been read, admired, studied, and imitated, in the "same degree, as he is now, the enthusiasm of some "one or other of his admirers in the last age would "have induced him to make some inquiries concern"ing the history of his theatrical career, and the "anecdotes of his private life." [10])

His admirers, however, if he had admirers in that age, possessed no portion of such enthusiasm. That curiosity, which in our days has raised biography to the rank of an independent study, was scarcely known, and where known, was confined principally to the public transactions of eminent characters, principally divines, of whom a few brief notices were prefixed to their works; but we are not sure that any of these are of an older date than 1616. And if, in addition to the circumstances already stated, we consider how little is known of the personal history of Shakspeare's contemporaries, we may easily resolve the question, why, of all men who have ever claimed admiration by genius, wisdom, or valour, who have eminently contributed to enlarge the taste, promote the happiness, or increase the reputation of their country, we know the least of Shakspeare; and why, of the few particulars which seem entitled to credit, when simply related, and in which there is no manifest violation of probability or promise of importance, there is scarcely one which has not swelled into a controversy. After a careful examination of all that modern research has discovered, we know not how to trust our curiosity beyond the limits of those barren dates which afford no personal history. The nature of Shak-

9) Mr. Steevens's Advertisement to the Reader, first printed in 1773.

10) Mr. Malone's Preface to his edition, 1790.

speare's writings prevents that appeal to internal evidence, which in other cases has been found to throw light on character. The purity of his morals, for example, if sought in his plays, must be measured against the licentiousness of his language, and the question will then be, how much did he write from inclination, and how much to gratify the taste of his hearers? How much did he add to the age, and how much did he borrow from it? Pope says, "he was obliged to please the lowest of the people, "and to keep the worst of company:" this must have been Pope's conjecture. Managers are sometimes obliged to please the lowest of the people: and, in our days, they have not unfrequently yielded to or created a corrupt taste; but we know not that writers are under a similar obligation; and of Shakspeare's keeping the worst of company, we have no existing proof. With regard to the amusements of his leisure hours, we have many allusions in his works to the sports of the field, and falconry appears to have been a particular favourite. Generally speaking, there is every reason to think, that he soon acquired and maintained a respectable character. He came to London poor and unknown, and he left it with a high reputation, and took his seat with the men of rank and opulence in his native county.

The only life which has been prefixed to all the editions of Shakspeare of the eighteenth century, is that drawn up by Mr. Rowe, and which he modestly calls, "Some Account, &c." In this we have, what Rowe could collect when every legitimate source of information was closed, a few traditions that were floating nearly a century after the author's death. Some inaccuracies in his account have been detected in the valuable notes of Mr. Steevens, and in that part of a new but imperfect life of Shakspeare, published in Mr. Malone's last edition. In other parts also of their respective editions, they have scattered a few brief notices which we have incorporated in the present sketch. The whole, however, is unsatisfactory. Shakspeare, in his private character, in his friendships, in his amusements, in his closet, in his family, is no where before us: and such was the nature of the writings on which his fame depends, and of that employment in which he was engaged, that being in no important respect connected with the history of his age, it is in vain to look into the latter for any information concerning him.

Mr. Capell is of opinion that he wrote some prose works, because "it can hardly be supposed that he, "who had so considerable a share in the confidence "of the Earls of Essex and Southampton, could be "a mute spectator only of controversies in which "they were so much interested." This editor, however, appears to have taken for granted a degree of confidence with these two statesmen which he ought first to have proved. Shakspeare might have enjoyed the confidence of their social hour, but it is mere conjecture that they admitted him into the confidence of their state affairs. Mr. Malone, the most frequent conjecturer of all Shakspeare's admirers, but whose opinions are entitled to a higher degree of credit than those of Mr. Capell, thinks that our author's prose compositions, if they should be discovered, would exhibit the same perspicuity, the same cadence, the same elegance and vigour, which we find in his plays.

It is unfortunate, however, for all wishes and all conjectures, that not a line of Shakspeare's manuscripts is known to exist, and his prose writings are no where hinted at. We are in possession of printed copies only of his plays and poems, and those so depraved by carelessness or ignorance, that all the labour of all his commentators has not yet been able to restore them to more than a probable purity. Many of the difficulties which originally attended the perusal of them yet remain, and will require, what it is now scarcely possible to expect, greater sagacity and more happy conjecture than have hitherto been employed.

Of Shakspeare's Poems, it is perhaps necessary that some notice should be taken in an account of his life, although they have never been favourites with the public, and have seldom been reprinted with his plays. Shortly after his death, Mr. Malone informs us, a very incorrect impression of them was issued out, which in every subsequent reprint was implicitly followed, until he published a correct edition, or what he supposed to be such, in 1780, with illustrations. But the peremptory decision of his compeer, Mr. Steevens, on the merits of these poems, must be our apology for omitting them in the present abridgment of the labours of these critics. "We "have not reprinted the Sonnets, &c. of Shakspeare, "because the strongest act of parliament that could "be framed would fail to compel readers into their "service. Had Shakspeare 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 "sonnetteer."

The elegant preface of Dr. Johnson gives an account of the attempts made in the early part of the last century to revive the memory and reputation of our poet, by Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, and Warburton, whose respective merits he has characterised with candour, and with singular felicity of expression. Shakspeare's works may be overloaded with criticism, for what writer has excited so much curiosity, and so many opinions? but Johnson's preface is an accompaniment worthy of the genius it celebrates. — His own edition followed in 1765, and a second, in conjunction with Mr. Steevens, 1773. The third edition of the joint editors appeared in 1785, the fourth in 1793, in 15 vols., and the last and most complete, in 1803, in 21 volumes octavo. Mr. Malone's edition was published in 1790, in 10 vols. crown octavo, and soon became scarce. His original notes and improvements were, however, incorporated in the editions of 1793 and 1803, by Mr. Steevens. Mr. Malone's last edition, a posthumous work, which appeared in 1821, was edited by Mr. James Boswell, the second son of the biographer of Johnson, who appears to have been fully in the confidence of Mr. Malone. To this is prefixed a new life of Shakspeare, which, although extending to more than five hundred pages, conducts Shakspeare only to London, without giving us any more information of his subsequent progress than we had before in the notes which Steevens and Malone had formerly contributed to Rowe's life. Mr. Malone, after more than twenty years' labour, had not advanced farther, nor did he leave any materials from which his editor could attempt a continuation.

To follow Mr. Malone in enumerating the copies of Shakspeare dispersed through England, would now be impossible. In one form or other his plays have been, for the last twenty years, almost continually in the press. Nor among the honours paid to his genius, ought we to forget the very magnificent edition undertaken by Messrs. Boydell and Nicol. Still less ought it to be forgotten how much the reputation of Shakspeare was revived by the

unrivalled excellence of Garrick's performance. His share in directing the public taste towards the study of Shakspeare, was perhaps greater than that of any individual in his time, and such was his zeal, and such his success in this laudable attempt, that he may be forgiven for his injudicious alterations of some of the plays, as well as for the foolish mummery of the Stratford jubilee.

When public opinion had begun to assign to Shakspeare the very high rank he was destined to hold, he became the promising object of fraud and imposture. This we have already observed, he did not wholly escape in his own time, and he had the spirit or policy to despise it. [11]) It was reserved for modern impostors, however, to avail themselves of the obscurity in which his history is involved. In 1751 a book was published, entitled, "A Compen- "dious or briefe examination of certayne ordinary "Complaints of diuers of our Countrymen in those "our days: which although they are in some Parte "unjust and frivolous, yet are they all by way of "dialogue throughly debated and discussed by Wil- "liam Shakspeare, Gentleman." This had been originally published in 1581, but Dr. Farmer has clearly proved that *W. S. gent.* the only authority for attributing it to Shakspeare in the reprinted edition, meant *William Stafford, gent.* — Theobald, the same accurate critic informs us, was desirous of palming upon the world a play called "Double False- "hood," for a posthumous one of Shakspeare. In 1770 was reprinted at Feversham, an old play called "The Tragedy of Arden of Feversham, and Black "Will," with a preface attributing it to Shakspeare, without the smallest foundation. But these were trifles compared to the atrocious attempt made in 1795-6, when, besides a vast mass of prose and verse, letters, &c., pretendedly in the handwriting of Shakspeare and his correspondents, an entire play, entitled Vortigern, was not only brought forward to the astonishment of the public, but actually performed on Drury-lane stage. It would be unnecessary to expatiate on the merits of this play, which Mr. Steevens has very happily characterized as "the "performance of a madman, without a lucid interval," or to enter more at large into the history of a fraud so recent, and so soon acknowledged by the authors of it. It produced, however, an interesting controversy between Mr. Malone and Mr. George Chalmers, which, although mixed with some unpleasant asperities, was extended to inquiries into the history and antiquities of the stage, from which future historians and critics may derive considerable information.

11) Mr. Malone has given a list of 14 plays ascribed to Shakspeare, either by the editors of the two later folios, or by the compilers of ancient catalogues. Of these Pericles has found advocates for its admission into his works.

III.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

SHAKSPEARE'S WILL,

FROM THE ORIGINAL

IN THE OFFICE OF THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

Vicesimo quinto die Martii, [1]) *Anno Regni Domini nostri Jacobi nunc Regis Angliæ, &c. decimo quarto, et Scotiæ quadragesimo nono. Anno Domini* 1616.

In the name of God, Amen. I William Shakspeare, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent. in perfect health and memory (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following; that is to say:

First, I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping, and assuredly believing through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting; and my body to the earth whereof it is made.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Judith, one hundred and fifty pounds of lawful English money, to be paid unto her in manner and form following: that is to say, one hundred pounds in discharge of her marriage portion within one year after my decease, with consideration after the rate of two shillings in the pound for so long time as the same shall be unpaid unto her after my decease; and the fifty pounds residue thereof, upon her surrendering of, or giving of such sufficient security as the overseers of this my will shall like of, to surrender or grant, all her estate and right that shall descend or come unto her after my decease, or that she now hath, of, in, or to, one copyhold tenement, with the appurtenances, lying and being in Stratford-upon-Avon aforesaid, in the said county of Warwick, being parcel or holden of the manor of Rowington, unto my daughter Susanna Hall, and her heirs for ever. [2])

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said daughter Judith one hundred and fifty pounds more, if she, or any issue of her body, be living at the end of three years next ensuing the day of the date of this my will, during which time my executors to pay her consideration from my decease according to the rate aforesaid: and if she die within the said term without issue of her body, then my will is, and I do give and bequeath one hundred pounds thereof to my niece [3]) Elizabeth Hall, and the fifty pounds to be set forth by my executors during the life of my sister Joan Hart, and the use and profit thereof coming, shall be paid to my said sister Joan, and after her decease the said fifty pounds shall remain amongst the children of my said sister, equally to be divided amongst them; but if my said daughter Judith be living at the end of the said three years, or any issue of her body, then my will is, and so I devise and bequeath the said hundred and fifty pounds to be set out by my executors and overseers for the best benefit of her and her issue, and the stock not to be paid unto her so long as she shall be married and covert baron; but my will is, that she shall have the consideration yearly paid unto her during her life, and after her decease the said stock and consideration to be paid to her children, if she have any, and if not, to her executors or assigns, she living the said term after my decease: provided that if such husband as she shall at the end of the said three years be married unto, or at any [time] after, do sufficiently assure unto her, and the issue of her body, lands answerable to the portion by this my will given unto her, and to be adjudged so by my executors and overseers, then my will is, that the said hundred and fifty pounds shall be paid to such husband as shall make such assurance, to his own use.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said sister Joan twenty pounds, and all my wearing apparel, to be paid and delivered within one year after my decease; and I do will and devise unto her the house, with the appurtenances, in Stratford, wherein she dwelleth, for her natural life, under the yearly rent of twelvepence.

Item, I give and bequeath unto her three sons, William Hart, — Hart, [4]) and Michael Hart, five pounds a piece, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath unto the said Elizabeth Hall all my plate (except my broad silver and gilt bowl,) [5]) that I now have at the date of this my will.

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of Stratford aforesaid ten pounds; to Mr. Thomas Combe [6]) my sword; to Thomas Russel, esq. five pounds; and to Francis Collins [7]) of the borough of Warwick, in the county of Warwick, gent. thirteen pounds six shillings and eight-pence, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath to Hamlet [*Hamnet*] Sadler [8]) twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring; to William Reynolds, gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring; to my godson, William Walker, [9]) twenty shillings in gold; to Anthony Nash, [10]) gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence; and to Mr. John Nash, [11]) twenty-six shillings eight-pence; and to my fellows, John Hemynge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell, [12]) twenty-six shillings eight-pence apiece, to buy them rings.

Item, I give, will, bequeath, and devise, unto my daughter, Susannah Hall, for better enabling of her to perform this my will, and towards the performance thereof, all that capital messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, in Stratford aforesaid, called The New Place, wherein I now dwell, and two messuages or tenements, with the appurtenances, situate, lying, and being in Henley-street, within the borough of Stratford aforesaid; and all my barns, stables, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever, situate, lying, and being, or to be had, received, perceived, or taken, within the towns, hamlets, villages, fields, and grounds of Stratford-upon-Avon, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, [13]) or in any of them, in the said county of Warwick; and also all that messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, situate, lying, and being, in the Blackfriars in London near the Wardrobe: [14]) and all other my lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever: to have and to hold all and singular the said premises, with their appurtenances, unto the said Susanna Hall, for and during the term of her natural life; and after her decease to the first son of her body lawfully issuing, and to the heirs-males of the body of the said first son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the second son of her body lawfully issuing, and to the heirs-males of the body of the said second son lawfully issuing; and for default of such heirs, to the third son of the body of the said Susanna lawfully issuing, and to the heirs-males of the body of the said third son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, the same so to be and remain to the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons of her body, lawfully issuing one after another, and to the heirs-males of the bodies of the said fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons lawfully issuing, in such manner as it is before limited to be and remain to the first, second, and third sons of her body, and to their heirs-males; and for default of such issue, the said premises to be and remain to my said niece Hall, and the heirs-males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to my daughter Judith, and the heirs-males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the right heirs of me the said William Shakspeare for ever.

Item, I give unto my wife my second best bed, with the furniture. [15])

1) Our poet's will appears to have been drawn up in February, though not executed till the following month; for *February* was first written, and afterwards struck out, and *March* written over it. — Malone.

2) This was found to be unnecessary, as it was ascertained that the copyhold descended to the eldest daughter by the custom of the manor. — Malone, edit. 1821.

3) — *to my niece* —] Elizabeth Hall was our poet's grand-daughter. So, in *Othello,* Act I. sc. 1. Iago says to Brabantio: "You'll have your *nephews* neigh to you;" meaning his grand-children. — Malone.

4) — *Hart,*] It is singular that neither Shakspeare nor any of his family should have recollected the Christian name of his nephew, who was born at Stratford but eleven years before the making of his will. His Christian name was *Thomas;* and he was baptized in that town, July 24, 1605. — Malone.

5) — *except my broad silver and gilt bowl,*] This bowl, as we afterwards find, our poet bequeathed to his daughter Judith. — Harness.

6) — *Mr. Thomas Combe*] This gentleman was baptized at Stratford, Feb. 9, 1588-9, so that he was twenty-seven years old at the time of Shakspeare's death. He died at Stratford in July 1657, aged 68; and his elder brother William died at the same place, Jan. 30, 1666-7, aged 80. Mr. Thomas Combe by his will, made June 20, 1656, directed his executors to convert all his personal property into money, and to lay it out in the purchase of lands, to be settled on William Combe, the eldest son of John Combe of Allchurch in the county of Worcester, gent. and his heirs-male; remainder to his two brothers successively. Where, therefore, our poet's sword has wandered, I have not been able to discover. I have taken the trouble to ascertain the ages of Shakspeare's friends and relations, and the time of their deaths, because we are thus enabled to judge how far the traditions concerning him which were communicated to Mr. Rowe in the beginning of this century, are worthy of credit. — Malone.

7) — *to Francis Collins* —] This gentleman was, I believe, baptized at Warwick. He died the year after our poet, and was buried at Stratford, Sept. 27, 1617, on which day he died. — Malone, edit. 1821.

8) — *to Hamnet Sadler*] This gentleman was godfather to Shakspeare's only son, who was called after him. Mr. Sadler, I believe, was born about the year 1550, and died at Stratford-upon-Avon, in October 1624. His wife, Judith Sadler, who was godmother to Shakspeare's youngest daughter, was buried there, March 23, 1613-14. Our poet probably was godfather to their son *William,* who was baptized at Stratford, Feb. 5, 1597-8. — Malone.

9) — *to my godson, William Walker,*] William, the son of Henry Walker, was baptized at Stratford, Oct. 16, 1608. I mention this circumstance, because it ascertains that our author was at his native town in the autumn of that year. Mr. William Walker was buried at Stratford, March 1, 1679-80. — Malone.

10) — *to Anthony Nash,*] He was father of Mr. Thomas Nash, who married our poet's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Hall. He lived, I believe, at Welcombe, where his estate lay; and was buried at Stratford, Nov. 18, 1622. — Malone.

11) — *to Mr. John Nash,*] This gentleman died at Stratford, and was buried there, Nov. 10, 1623. — Malone.

12) — *to my fellows, John Hemynge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell,*] These our poet's *fellows* did not very long survive him. Burbage died in March, 1619; Cundell in December, 1627; and Heminge in October, 1630. — Malone.

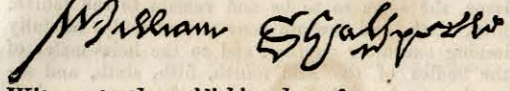
13) — *Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe,*] The lands of Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, here devised, were, in Shakspeare's time, a continuation of one large field, all in the parish of Stratford. Bishopton is two miles from Stratford, and Welcombe one. For *Bishopton,* Mr. Theobald erroneously printed *Bushaxton,* and the error has been continued in all the subsequent editions. The word in Shakspeare's original will is spelt *Bushopton,* the vulgar pronunciation of Bishopton. — I searched the Indexes in the Rolls Chapel from the year 1589 to 1616, with the hope of finding an enrolment of the purchase-deed of the estate here devised by our poet, and of ascertaining its extent and value; but it was not enrolled during that period, nor could I find any inquisition taken after his death, by which its value might have been ascertained. I suppose it was conveyed by the former owner to Shakspeare, not by bargain and sale, but by a deed of feoffment, which it was not necessary to enroll. — Malone.

14) — *that messuage or tenement — in the Blackfriars in London near* the Wardrobe:] This was the house which was mortgaged to Henry Walker. — By *the Wardrobe* is meant the King's Great Wardrobe, a royal house, near Puddle-Wharf, purchased by King Edward the Third from sir John Beauchamp, who built it. King Richard III. was lodged in this house, in the second year of his reign. See Stowe's *Survey,* p. 693, edit. 1618. After the fire of London this office was kept in the Savoy: but it is now abolished. — Malone.

15) — *my second best bed, with the furniture.*] Thus Shakspeare's original will. — It appears, in the original will of Shakspeare (now in the Prerogative-office, Doctors' Commons,) that he had forgot his wife; the legacy to her being expressed by an interlineation, as well as those to Heminge, Burbage, and Condell. — The will is written on three sheets of paper, the last two of which are undoubtedly subscribed with Shakspeare's own hand. The first indeed has his name

Item, I give and bequeath to my said daughter, Judith, my broad silver gilt bowl. All the rest of my goods, chattels, leases, plate, jewels, and household stuff whatsoever, after my debts and legacies paid, and my funeral expenses discharged, I give, devise, and bequeath to my son-in-law, John Hall, gent. and my daughter, Susanna, his wife, whom I ordain and make executors of this my last will and testament. And I do entreat and appoint the said Thomas Russell, esq. and Francis Collins, gent. to be overseers hereof. And do revoke all former wills, and publish this to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto put my hand, the day and year first above written.

By me



Witness to the publishing hereof.

Fra. Collyns, Hamnet Sadler,
Julius Shaw, Robert Whatcott.
John Robinson,

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London, coram Magistro William Byrde, Legum Doctore, &c. vicesimo secundo die mensis Junii, Anno Domini, 1616*; juramento Johannis Hall unius ex. cui, &c. de bene, &c. jurat. reservata potestate, &c. Susannæ Hall, alt. ex. &c. eam cum venerit, &c. petitur, &c.*

No. II.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

IN WHICH

THE PLAYS OF SHAKSPEARE

ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN, ACCORDING TO THE ARRANGEMENTS OF

CHALMERS, MALONE, AND DR. DRAKE.

Chalmers and Malone reject *Titus Andronicus,* and *Pericles,* as spurious. Dr. Drake does not notice the former play, but, on the authority of Dryden, admits the latter as genuine, and supposes it to have been produced in 1590. The dates which they severally ascribe to the remaining plays are as follows:

	Chalm.	Mal.	Drake.
1. The Comedy of Errors	1591	1592	1591
2. Love's Labour Lost	1592	1594	1591
3. Romeo and Juliet	1592	1596	1593
4. Henry VI. the First Part	1593	1589	1592
5. Henry VI. the Second Part	1595	1591	1592
6. Henry VI. the Third Part	1595	1591	
7. The Two Gentlemen of Verona	1595	1591	1595
8. Richard III.	1596	1593	1595
9. Richard II.	1596	1593	1596
10. The Merry Wives of Windsor	1596	1601	1601
11. Henry IV. the First Part	1596	1597	1596
12. Henry IV. the Second Part	1597	1599	1596
13. Henry V.	1597	1599	1599
14. The Merchant of Venice	1597	1594	1597
15. Hamlet	1597	1600	1597
16. King John	1598	1596	1598
17. A Midsummer-Night's Dream	1598	1594	1593
18. The Taming of the Shrew	1598	1596	1594
19. All's Well that Ends Well	1599	1606	1598
20. Much Ado About Nothing	1599	1600	1599
21. As You Like It	1599	1599	1600
22. Troilus and Cressida	1600	1602	1601
23. Timon of Athens	1601	1610	1602
24. The Winter's Tale	1601	1611	1610
25. Measure for Measure	1604	1603	1603
26. Lear	1605	1605	1604
27. Cymbeline	1606	1609	1605
28. Macbeth	1606	1606	1606
29. Julius Cæsar	1607	1607	1607
30. Antony and Cleopatra	1608	1608	1608
31. Coriolanus	1609	1610	1609
32. The Tempest	1613	1611	1611
33. The Twelfth Night	1613	1607	1613
34. Henry VIII.	1613	1603	1602
35. Othello	1614	1604	1612

in the margin, but it differs somewhat in spelling as well as manner, from the two signatures that follow. — MALONE *and* STEEVENS.

No. III.

EDITIONS OF SHAKSPEARE'S WORKS.

Of the following plays, editions were printed during the life-time of Shakspeare.

EARLY QUARTOS.

Titus Andronicus . . . . . 1600—1611
Pericles 1609
Henry VI. Parts 2 and 3. .
Richard II. . . . . 1597—1598—1608—1615
Richard III. . . . . 1597—1598—1602—1612
Romeo and Juliet . . . . . 1597—1599—1609
Love's Labour Lost 1598
Henry IV. the First Part . 1598—1599—1604—1608—1613
Henry IV. the Second Part . 1600
Henry V. . . . . 1600—1602—1608
Merchant of Venice 1600
Midsummer-Night's Dream 1600
Much Ado About Nothing . 1600
Merry Wives of Windsor . 1602
Hamlet . . . . . 1603—1604—1605—1607—1609
Lear 1608
Troilus and Cressida 1609
Othello . . . . . no date.

The above are the only dramatic productions of our Author which were published during his lifetime. All of them were sent into the world imperfectly; some printed from copies surreptitiously obtained by means of inferior performers, who, deriving no benefit from the theatre, except their salary, were uninterested in the retention of copies, which was one of the chief concerns of our ancient managers; and the rest, as *Hamlet* in its first edition, *The Merry Wives of Windsor, Romeo and Juliet, Henry the Fifth, and the two Parts of Henry the Fourth,* appear to have been published from copies inaccurately taken by the ear during representation, without any assistance from the originals belonging to the playhouses.

FOLIOS.

As Shakspeare had himself shewn such an entire disregard for posthumous reputation as to omit publishing a collected edition of his works, an attempt was made to atone for his neglect by his friends Heminge and Condell, about eight years after his death, who published, in 1623, the only authentic edition of his works.

The title page is as follows:

"Mr. William Shakspeare's Comedies, Histories, "and Tragedies. Published according to the true "original Copies, 1623, Fol. Printed at the Char-"ges of W. Jaggard, Ed. Blount, J. Smethweeke, "and W. Apsley."

The Dedication of the Players, prefixed to the first folio, 1623.

To the most Noble and Incomparable Paire of Brethren, William Earle of Pembroke, &c. Lord Chamberlaine to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, and Philip Earle of Montgomery, &c. Gentleman of his Majesties Bed-chamber. Both Knights of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, and our singular good Lords.

Right Honourable,

Whilst we studie to be thankful in our particular, for the many favors we have received from your L. L. we are falne upon the ill fortune, to mingle two the most diverse things that can bee, feare and rashnesse; rashnesse in the enterprize, and feare of the successe. For, when we valew the places your H. H. sustaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend to the reading of these trifles: and, while we name them trifles, we have depriv'd ourselves of the defence of our Dedication. But since your L. L. have been pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing, heeretofore; and have prosequuted both them, and their Authour living, with so much favour: we hope that (they out-living him, and he not having the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings) you will use the same indulgence toward them, you have done unto their parent. There is a great difference, whether any booke choose his Patrones, or finde them: This hath done both. For, so much were your L. L. likings of the severall parts, when they were acted, as before they were published, the Volume ask'd to be yours. We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, and Fellow alive, as was our SHAKESPEARE, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we have justly observed, no man to come neere your L. L. but with a kind of religious addresse, it hath bin 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 owne powers. Country hands reach foorth milke, creame, fruites, or what they have: and many Nations (we have heard) that had not gummes and incense, obtained their requests with a leavened Cake. It was no fault to approch their Gods by what meanes 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 remaines 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 payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the living, and the dead, as is

Your Lordshippes most bounden,

JOHN HEMINGE,
HENRIE CONDELL.

The Preface of the Players. Prefixed to the first folio edition, published in 1623.

To the great variety of Readers,

From the most able, to him that can but spell: there you are number'd. We had rather you were weigh'd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends upon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! it is now publique, and you wil stand for your priviledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soever your braines be, or your wisdomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Judge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, whatever you do, Buy. Censure will not drive a Trade, or make the Jacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock-pit, to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes have had their triall alreadie, and stood out all Appeales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, than any purchas'd Letters of commendation.

It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had lived to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you, doe not envie his Friends, the office of their care and paine, to have collected and publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with divers stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors, that expos'd them: even those are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived thē: Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade yourselves, and others. And such readers we wish him.

JOHN HEMINGE,
HENRIE CONDELL.

Steevens, with some degree of probability, supposes these prefaces to be the productions of Ben Jonson.

In 1632, the works of Shakspeare were reprinted in folio by Thomas Cotes, for Robert Allot. Of this edition Malone speaks most contemptuously, though many of the errors of the first are corrected in it, and he himself silently adopted 186 of its corrections without acknowledging the debt. The judgment passed by Steevens on this edition is, "Though "it be more incorrectly printed than the preceding "one, it has likewise the advantage of various read-"ings, which are not merely such as reiterature of "copies will naturally produce. The curious ex-

"aminer of Shakspeare's text, who possesses the "first of these, ought not to be unfurnished with "the second."

The third folio was printed in 1664, for P. C. [16]) And a fourth, for H. Herringham, E. Brewster, and R. Bentley, in 1682.

"As to these impressions," says Steevens, "they "are little better than waste paper, for they differ "only from the preceding ones by a larger accumu- "lation of errors."

These are all the ancient editions of Shakspeare.

MODERN EDITIONS.

Octavo, Rowe's, London, 1709, 7 vols.
Duodecimo, Rowe's, ditto, 1714, 9 ditto.
Quarto, Pope's, ditto, 1725, 6 ditto.
Duodecimo, Pope's, ditto, 1728, 10 ditto.
Octavo, Theobald's, ditto, 1733, 7 ditto.
Duodecimo, Theobald's, ditto, 1740, 8 ditto.
Quarto, Hanmer's, Oxford, 1744, 6 ditto.
Octavo, Warburton's, London, 1747, 8 ditto.
Ditto, Johnson's, ditto, 1765, 8 ditto.
Ditto, Steevens's, ditto, 1766, 4 ditto.
Crown 8vo. Capell's, 1768, 10 ditto.
Quarto, Hanmer's, Oxford, 1771, 6 ditto.
Octavo, Johnson and Steevens, London, 1773, 10 ditto.
Ditto, second edition, ditto, 1778, 10 ditto.
Ditto (published by Stockdale), 1784, 1 ditto.
Ditto, Johnson and Steevens, 1785, third edition, revised and augmented by the editor of Dodsley's Collection of old Plays (i. e. Mr. Reed), 10 ditto.
Duodecimo (published by Bell), London, 1788, 20 vols.
Octavo (published by Stockdale), ditto, 1790, 1 ditto.
Crown 8vo. Malone's, ditto, 1790, 10 ditto.
Octavo, fourth edition, Johnson and Steevens, &c. ditto, 1793, 15 ditto.
Octavo, fifth edition, Johnson and Steevens, by Reed, 1803, 21 ditto.
The dramatic Works of Shakspeare, in 6 vols., 8vo. with Notes, by Joseph Rann, A. M. Vicar of St. Trinity, in Coventry. — Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Vol. i. 1786
Vol. ii. 1787
Vol. iii. 1789
Vol. iv. 1791
Vol. v. . . . . } 1794
Vol. vi. . . . . }

The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare, with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators: comprehending a Life of the Poet, and an enlarged history of the stage, by the late Edward Malone, 1821. This edition was superintended by the late Mr. Boswell. — HARNESS.

No. IV.

PLAYS ASCRIBED TO SHAKSPEARE,

EITHER BY THE EDITORS OF THE TWO LATER FOLIOS, OR BY THE COMPILERS OF ANCIENT CATALOGUES.

Locrine.
Sir John Oldcastle.
Lord Cromwell.
The London Prodigal.
The Puritan.
The Yorkshire Tragedy.

These were all printed as Shakspeare's in the third folio, 1664, without having the slightest claim to such a distinction. Steevens thought that the *Yorkshire Tragedy* might probably be a hasty sketch of our great Poet; but he afterwards silently abandoned this opinion. We find from the papers of Henslowe [17]) that *Sir John Oldcastle* was the work of four writers — Munday, Drayton, Wilson, and Hathway. It is impossible to discover to whom the rest are to be attributed.

Some other plays, with about equal pretensions, have likewise been given to our Author.

The Arraignment of Paris, which is known to have been written by George Peele.

The Birth of Merlin, the work of Rowley, although in the title-page, 1662, probably by a fraud of the bookseller, it is stated to be the joint production of Rowley and Shakspeare.

Edward the Third. This play Capell ascribed to Shakspeare, for no other reason but that he thought it too good to be the work of any of his contemporaries.

Fair Emma. There is no other ground for supposing this play to be among our author's productions, than its having been met with in a volume, which formerly belonged to Charles II. which is lettered on the back, SHAKSPEARE, Vol. I.

The Merry Devil of Edmonton, entered on the Stationers' books as Shakspeare's about the time of the restoration; but there is a former entry, in 1608, in which it is said to be written by T. B. whom Malone supposes to have been Tony or Antony Brewer.

Mucedorus. The real author unknown. Malone conceives that he might be R. Greene.

Shakspeare is supposed to have had a share in two other plays, and to have assisted Ben Jonson in *Sejanus,* and Fletcher in the *Two Noble Kinsmen.* If he was the person who united with Jonson in the composition of *Sejanus,* which Mr. Gifford very reasonably doubts, no portion of his work is now remaining. The piece, as originally written, was not successful; and the passages supplied by the nameless friend of Jonson were omitted in publication. The fact of his having co-operated with Fletcher in the *Two Noble Kinsmen* has been much discussed: Pope favours the supposition that Shakspeare's hand may be discovered in the tragedy: Dr. Warburton expresses a belief that our great Poet wrote "the first act, but in his worst manner." All the rest of the commentators, without exception, agree in rejecting this opinion; and attribute the origin of the tale to the puff of a bookseller, who found his profit in uniting the name of Shakspeare with that of Fletcher on publishing the play. The judgment of the majority appears in this case to be the most correct. — HARNESS.

No. V.

PORTRAITS OF SHAKSPEARE.

It has been doubted whether any original Portrait of our Author really exists; the two which

16) This edition is more scarce than even that of 1623; most of the copies having been destroyed in the fire of London, 1666. — HARNESS.

17) He appears to have been proprietor of the Rose Theatre, near the bank side in Southwark. The MSS. alluded to were found at Dulwich College. — HARNESS.

have been engraved for this edition of his works are those, which we have the best grounds for admitting as resemblances of Shakspeare.

1. The engraving from the monument of Stratford, is deserving of the greatest regard. One of the first artists in this country, has given an opinion, coinciding with the common tradition of Stratford, that the original bust was taken from a cast after death: if this were the case it must afford an exact representation of the features, though it would no longer retain the living expression, of Shakspeare. This monument was raised very soon after his decease, and is alluded to in Digges' verses, prefixed to the first folio of 1623.

The bust was originally coloured; and tradition conveys to us the knowledge that the eyes were of a light hazel colour, the hair and beard auburn. The doublet in which he was dressed was of scarlet, over which was thrown a loose black gown without sleeves, such as the students of law wear at dinner in the Middle Temple Hall.

This monument was repaired, and the colours faithfully restored, in 1748, by Mr. John Hale, an artist of Stratford. This was done at the suggestion, and by the liberality, of Mr. Ward, the maternal grandfather of Mrs. Siddons, who, to create a fund for the occasion, gave a benefit-play at the Town-Hall of Stratford, on the 9th of September, 1746. The play was Othello, and the Rev. Joseph Greene wrote an address, grounded on the famous prologue of Pope to the tragedy of Cato, which Mr. Ward delivered to an audience properly glorying in their townsman.

In 1793, Malone, with an affectation of refined taste, which we cannot but lament and condemn, had the whole figure painted white as it now appears.

2. The second picture of Shakspeare which we have given, is a *fac simile* of the engraving by Martin Droeshout, which was prefixed to the first edition of our Author's works in 1623. Ben Jonson testifies to the resemblance; and the following verses, from his pen, were printed in the Volume on the page fronting the Portrait:

TO THE READER.

This figure, that those here see put,
It was for gentle Shakspeare cut;
Wherein the graver had a strife
With nature, to out-doo the life:
O, could he but have drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he has hit
His face; the print would then surpasse
All that was ever writ in brasse.
But, since he cannot, reader, looke
Not on his picture, but his book.

3. Another generally received portrait is the Chandos portrait, now at Stowe, in the possession of the Duke of Buckingham. This was once the property of Sir William Davenant, and was copied for Dryden by Kneller. [18]) After the death of Davenant, 1663, it was bought by Betterton the actor: when he died, Mr. Robert Keck, of the Inner Temple, gave Mrs. Barry the actress forty guineas for it. From Mr. Keck it passed to Mr. Nicoll of Southgate, whose only daughter married the Marquis of Carnarvon. Shakspeare was probably about the age of forty-three when this portrait was painted. Steevens questions its authenticity: but without any sufficient grounds; it resembles both the heads that accompany the present work, in the extreme length of the upper lip, and the high forehead.

4. The *Felton head,* from which the print prefixed to *Reed's* Shakspeare is taken, was purchased of Mr. Wilson, a picture dealer in St. James's Square, by Mr. S. Felton, of Drayton, in Shropshire. It is on wood, and Steevens wished to persuade the world that it was the architype of Droeshout's engraving. But there was a very strong suspicion entertained that Steevens knew it to be a modern fabrication; that he was well acquainted with the history of its manufacture; and "that there was a "deeper meaning in his words, when he tells us, *he* "*was instrumental in procuring it,* than he would "wish to have generally understood." [19])

5. A miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, in the possession of Sir James Bland Burgess. This is said to have been painted for Mr. Somerville of Edstone, who lived in habits of intimacy with Shakspeare. It descended from father to son, as a relic in the Somerville family, till Lord Somerville gave it to his daughter, the mother of Sir James Bland Burgess. It was missing for several years, and recovered in 1813. It is engraved as the frontispiece to the third volume of Boswell's Shakspeare.

6. A head by Cornelius Jansen, in the collection of the Duke of Somerset. This is a beautiful head; it is dated 1610, æt. forty-six; and in a scroll over the head are the two words UT MAGUS, which very personally apply to Shakspeare. The two words are extracted from the famous Epistle of Horace to Augustus, the first of the second book: the particular passage is this:

Ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur
Ire poeta; meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet,
Ut Magus; et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis.

All this is certainly applicable to Shakspeare. Jansen, it appears, was in England about the time the picture is supposed to have been painted; and was employed by Lord Southampton, the friend and patron of Shakspeare. For him also, this picture might have been executed. It originally belonged to Mr. Jennens, of Gopsal, in Leicestershire. By his direction a mezzotinto was taken from it by Earlom. There is no more known of the picture. It represents such a man as we might well imagine Shakspeare to have been; but is not sufficiently like the bust of the Stratford monument, or the head prefixed to the first folio, for us to admit it, without considerable doubt, as a genuine portrait of our Author.

It is remarkable that a copy of this picture, which is in the possession of Mr. Croker, was lately discovered behind the pannel of a wainscot, in one of the houses lately pulled down near the site of Old Suffolk-street.

In drawing out the above account of the portraits of Shakspeare, I have been much indebted to the work of Mr. Boaden, entitled, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of the Various Pictures and Prints of Shakspeare.* — HARNESS.

18) The copy is at Wentworth Castle, in the possession of Lord Fitzwilliam. — HARNESS.

19) BOSWELL'S *Shakspeare,* Advertisement, vol i. — HARNESS.

IV.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

TO

THE PLAYS AND POEMS.

I. TEMPEST.

The Tempest and *The Midsummer Night's Dream* are the noblest efforts of that sublime and amazing imagination peculiar to Shakspeare, which soars above the bounds of nature, without forsaking sense; or, more properly, carries nature along with him beyond her established limits. Fletcher seems particularly to have admired these two plays, and hath wrote two in imitation of them, *The Sea Voyage*, and *The Faithful Shepherdess*. But when he presumes to break a lance with Shakspeare, and write in emulation of him, as he does in *The False One*, which is the rival of *Antony and Cleopatra*, he is not so successful. After him, Sir John Suckling and Milton catched the brightest fire of their imagination from these two plays; which shines fantastically indeed in *The Goblins*, but much more nobly and serenely in *The Mask at Ludlow Castle*. WARBURTON. = No one has hitherto been lucky enough to discover the romance on which Shakspeare may be supposed to have founded this play, the beauties of which could not secure it from the criticism of Ben Jonson, whose malignity appears to have been more than equal to his wit. In the induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, he says: "If there be never a *servant monster* in the fair, who can help it, he says, nor a nest of *antiques?* He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget *Tales, Tempests*, and such like drolleries." STEEVENS. = I was informed by the late Mr. Collins of Chichester, that Shakspeare's *Tempest*, for which no origin is yet assigned, was formed on a romance called *Aurelio and Isabella*, printed in Italian, Spanish, French, and English, in 1588. But though this information has not proved true on examination, an useful conclusion may be drawn from it, that Shakspeare's story is somewhere to be found in an Italian novel, at least that the story preceded Shakspeare. Mr. Collins had searched this subject with no less fidelity than judgment and industry; but his memory failing in his last calamitous indisposition, he probably gave me the name of one novel for another. I remember he added a circumstance which may lead to a discovery, — that the principal character of the romance, answering to Shakspeare's Prospero, was a chemical necromancer, who had bound a spirit like Ariel to obey his call, and perform his services. Taken at large, the magical part of *The Tempest* is founded on that sort of philosophy which was practised by John Dee and his associates, and has been called the Rosicrucian. The name Ariel came from the Talmudistic mysteries with which the learned Jews had infected this science. T. WARTON. = It was one of our author's last works. In 1598, he played a part in the original *Every Man in his Humour*. Two of the characters are *Prospero* and *Stephano*. Here Ben Jonson taught him the pronunciation of the latter word, which is always *right* in *The Tempest:*

"Is not this *Stephăno*, my drunken butler?"

And always *wrong* in his earlier play, *The Merchant of Venice*, which had been on the stage at least two or three years before its publication in 1600:

"My friend *Stephāno*, signify I pray you," &c.

— So little did Mr. Capell know of his author, when he idly supposed his *school literature* might perhaps have been lost by the *dissipation of youth*, or the *busy scene* of public life! FARMER. = This play must have been written before 1614, when Jonson sneers at it in his *Bartholomew Fair*. In the latter plays of Shakspeare, he has less of pun and quibble than in his early ones. In *The Merchant of Venice*, he expressly declares against them. This perhaps might be one criterion to discover the dates of his plays. BLACKSTONE. = It was not printed till 1623, when it was published with the rest of our author's plays in folio. Mr. Malone is of opinion it was written about the year 1611, and considers the circumstances attending the storm by which Sir George Somers was shipwrecked on the island of Bermuda, in the year 1609, as having given rise to the play, and suggested the title as well as some of the incidents. Mr. Douce appears to be of the same opinion. See Malone's Shakspeare, edit. 1821, and Douce's "Illustrations of Shakspeare." CHALMERS. = It is observed of *The Tempest*, that its plan is regular; this the author of *The Revisal* thinks, what I think too, an accidental effect of the story, not intended or regarded by our author. But, whatever might be Shakspeare's intention in forming or adopting the plot, he has made it instrumental to the production of many characters, diversified with boundless invention, and preserved with profound skill in nature, extensive knowledge of opinions, and accurate observation of life. In a single drama are here exhibited princes, courtiers, and sailors, all speaking in their real characters. There is the agency of airy spirits, and of an earthly goblin. The operations of magic, the tumults of a storm, the adventures of a desert island, the native effusion of untaught affection, the punishment of guilt, and the final happiness of the pair for whom our passions and reason are equally interested. JOHNSON. =

II. TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

SOME of the incidents in this play may be supposed to have been taken from *The Arcadia*, book i. chap. vi., where Pyrocles consents to head the Helots. (The *Arcadia* was entered on the books of the Stationers' Company, Aug. 23, 1588.) The love-adventure of Julia resembles that of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, and is, indeed, common to many of the ancient novels. STEEVENS. = Mrs. Lenox observes, and I think not improbably, that the story of *Proteus* and *Julia* might be taken from a similar one in the *Diana* of George of *Montemayor*. — "This pastoral romance," says she, "was translated from the Spanish in Shakspeare's time." I have seen no earlier translation than that of Bartholomew Yong, who dates his dedication in November, 1598; and Meres, in his *Wit's Treasury*, printed the same year, expressly mentions the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Indeed, *Montemayor* was translated two or three years before, by one Thomas Wilson; but this work, I am persuaded, was never published *entirely*; perhaps some parts of it were, or the tale might have been translated by others. However, Mr. Steevens says, very truly, that this kind of love-adventure is frequent in the old *novelists*. FARMER. = There is no earlier translation of the *Diana* entered on the books of the Stationers' Company, than that of B. Younge, Sept. 1598. Many translations, however, after they were licensed, were capriciously suppressed. Among others, "The Decameron of Mr. John Boccace, Florentine," was "recalled by my lord of Canterbury's commands." STEEVENS. = It is observable (I know not for what cause) that the style of this comedy is less figurative, and more natural and unaffected, than the greater part of this author's, though supposed to be one of the first he wrote. POPE. = It may very well be doubted whether Shakspeare had any other hand in this play than the enlivening it with some speeches and lines thrown in here and there, which are easily distinguished, as being of a different stamp from the rest. HANMER. = To this observation of Mr. Pope, which is very just, Mr. Theobald has added, that this is one of Shakspeare's *worst plays, and is less corrupted than any other*. Mr. Upton peremptorily determines, *that if any proof can be drawn from manner and style, this play must be sent packing, and seek for its parent elsewhere. How otherwise*, says he, *do painters distinguish copies from originals? and have not authors their peculiar style and manner, from which a true critic can form as unerring judgment as a painter?* I am afraid this illustration of a critic's science will not prove what is desired. A painter knows a copy from an original by rules somewhat resembling those by which critics know a translation, which, if it be literal, and literal it must be to resemble the copy of a picture, will be easily distinguished. Copies are known from originals, even when the painter copies his own picture; so, if an author should literally translate his work, he would lose the manner of an original. — Mr. Upton confounds the copy of a picture with the imitation of a painter's manner. Copies are easily known, but good imitations are not detected with equal certainty, and are, by the best judges, often mistaken. Nor is it true that the writer has always peculiarities equally distinguishable with those of the painter. The peculiar manner of each arises from the desire, natural to every performer, of facilitating his subsequent work by recurrence to his former ideas; this recurrence produces that repetition which is called habit. The painter, whose work is partly intellectual and partly manual, has habits of the mind, the eye, and the hand; the writer has only habits of the mind. Yet, some painters have differed as much from themselves as from any other; and I have been told that there is little resemblance between the first works of Raphael and the last. The same variation may be expected in writers; and if it be true, as it seems, that they are less subject to habit, the difference between their works may be yet greater. — But by the internal marks of a composition we may discover the author with probability, though seldom with certainty. When I read this play, I cannot but think that I find, both in the serious and ludicrous scenes, the language and sentiments of Shakspeare. It is not, indeed, one of his most powerful effusions; it has neither many diversities of character, nor striking delineations of life; but it abounds in γνωμαι beyond most of his plays, and few have more lines or passages, which, singly considered, are eminently beautiful. I am yet inclined to believe that it was not very successful, and suspect that it has escaped corruption, only because, being seldom played, it was less exposed to the hazards of transcription. JOHNSON. = This comedy was written in 1591, according to Mr. Malone, who supposes it to have been our author's first play; and, viewed as a first production, he thinks it may be pronounced a very elegant and extraordinary performance. CHALMERS. = In this play there is a strange mixture of knowledge and ignorance, of care and negligence. The versification is often excellent, the allusions are learned and just; but the author conveys his heroes by sea from one inland town to another in the same country; he places the emperor at Milan, and sends his young men to attend him, but never mentions him more; he makes Proteus, after an interview with Silvia, say he has only seen her picture; and, if we may credit the old copies, he has, by mistaking places, left his scenery inextricable. The reason of all this confusion seems to be, that he took his story from a novel, which he sometimes followed, and sometimes forsook, sometimes remembered, and sometimes forgot. — That this play is rightly attributed to Shakspeare, I have little doubt. If it be taken from him, to whom shall it be given? This question may be asked of all the disputed plays, except *Titus Andronicus;* and it will be found more credible, that Shakspeare might sometimes sink below his highest flights, than that any other should rise up to his lowest. JOHNSON. = Johnson's general remarks on this play are just, except that part in which he arraigns the conduct of the poet, for making Proteus say, that he had only seen the picture of Silvia, when it appears that he had had a personal interview with her. This, however, is not a blunder of Shakspeare's, but a mistake of Johnson's, who considers the passage alluded to in a more literal sense than the author intended it. Sir Proteus, it is true, had seen Silvia for a few moments; but though he could form from thence some idea of her person, he was still unacquainted with her temper, manners, and the qualities of her mind. He therefore considers himself as having seen her picture only. — The thought is just and elegantly expressed. M. MASON. =

III. MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

A FEW of the incidents in this comedy might have been taken from an old translation of *Il Pecorone* by Giovanni Fiorentino. I have lately met with the same story in a very contemptible performance, intitled, *The fortunate, the deceived, and the unfortunate Lovers*. Of this book, as I am told, there are several impressions; but that in which I read it was published in 1632, quarto. A somewhat similar story occurs in *Piacevoli Notti di Straparola*, Nott. 4ª. Fav. 4ª. — This comedy was first entered at Stationers' Hall, Jan. 18, 1601, by John Busby. STEEVENS. = This play should be read between *K. Henry IV.* and *K. Henry V.* in Johnson's opinion. But Mr. Malone says, it ought rather to be read between *The First* and *The Second Part of King Henry IV.* in the latter of which young Henry becomes king. In the last act, Falstaff says:

"Herne the hunter, quoth you? am I a ghost?
"'Sblood the fairies hath made a ghost of me.
"What, hunting at this time of night!
"I'le lay my life the mad *prince of Wales*
"Is stealing his father's deare."

and in this play, as it now appears, Mr. Page discountenances the addresses of Fenton to his daughter, because "he keeps company with the wild *prince*, and with Poins." — *The Fishwife's Tale of Brainford* in Westward for Smelts, a book which Shakspeare seems to have read, (having borrowed from it a part of the fable of *Cymbeline*,) probably led him to lay the scene of Falstaff's love-adventures at *Windsor*. It begins thus: "In *Windsor* not long agoe dwelt a sumpterman, who had to wife a very faire but wanton creature, over whom, not without cause, he was something *jealous*; yet had he never any proof of her incoustancy." Malone. == The adventures of *Falstaff* in this play seem to have been taken from the story of *The Lovers of Pisa*, in an old piece, called *Tarleton's Newes out of Purgatorie*. Mr. *Warton* observes, in a note to the last *Oxford* edition, that the play was probably not written as we now have it, before 1607, at the earliest. I agree with my very ingenious friend in this supposition, but yet the argument here produced for it may not be conclusive. *Slender* observes to master *Page*, that his *greyhound was out-run at Cotsale* [*Cotswold-Hills* in *Gloucestershire*;] and Mr. *Warton* thinks, that the *games* established there by captain *Dover* in the beginning of *K. James's* reign, are alluded to. But, perhaps, though the captain be celebrated in the *Annalia Dubrensia* as the *founder* of them, he might be the *reviver* only, or some way contribute to make them more famous; for in *The Second Part of Henry IV*. 1600, Justice *Shallow* reckons among the *Swinge-bucklers*, "*Will Squeele*, a *Cotsole man*." — In the first edition of the imperfect play, *Sir Hugh Evans* is called on the title-page, the *Welsh Knight*; and yet there are some persons who still affect to believe, that all our author's plays were originally published by *himself*. Farmer. == Queen Elizabeth was so well pleased with the admirable character of Falstaff in *The Two Parts of Henry IV*. that, as Mr. Rowe informs us, she commanded Shakspeare to continue it for one play more, and show him in love. To this command we owe *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; which, Mr. Gildon says, [*Remarks* on Shakspeare's Plays, 8vo. 1710,] he was very well assured our author finished in a fortnight. He quotes no authority. The circumstance was first mentioned by Mr. Dennis. "This comedy," says he, in his Epistle Dedicatory to *The Comical Gallant* (an alteration of the present play,) 1702, "was written at her [Queen Elizabeth's] command, and by her direction, and she was so eager to see it acted, that she commanded it to be finished in *fourteen days*; and was afterwards, as tradition tells us, very well pleased at the representation." The information, it is probable, came originally from Dryden, who, from his intimacy with Sir William Davenant, had an opportunity of learning many particulars concerning our author. — At what period Shakspeare new-modelled *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is unknown. I believe it was enlarged in 1603. Malone. == It is not generally known, that the first edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in its present state, is in the valuable folio printed 1623, from whence the quarto of the same play, dated 1630, was evidently copied. The two earlier quartos, 1602, and 1619, only exhibit this comedy as it was originally written, and are so far curious as they contain Shakspeare's first conceptions in forming a drama, which is the most complete specimen of his comic powers. T. Warton. == Of this play there is a tradition preserved by Mr. Rowe, that it was written at the command of queen Elizabeth, who was so delighted with the character of Falstaff, that she wished it to be diffused through more plays; but suspecting that it might pall by continued uniformity, directed the poet to diversify his manner, by showing him in love. No task is harder than that of writing to the ideas of another. Shakspeare knew what the queen, if the story be true, seems not to have known — that by any real passion of tenderness, the selfish craft, the careless jollity, and the lazy luxury of Falstaff must have suffered so much abatement, that little of his former cast would have remained. Falstaff could not love, but by ceasing to be Falstaff. He could only counterfeit love, and his professions could be prompted, not by the hope of pleasure, but of money. Thus the poet approached as near as he could to the work enjoined him; yet, having, perhaps, in the former plays, completed his own idea, seems not to have been able to give Falstaff all his former power of entertainment. — This comedy is remarkable for the variety and number of the personages, who exhibit more characters appropriated and discriminated, than perhaps can be found in any other play. — Whether Shakspeare was the first that produced upon the English stage the effect of language distorted and depraved by provincial or foreign pronunciation, I cannot certainly decide. [1]) This mode of forming ridiculous characters can confer praise only on him who originally discovered it, for it requires not much of either wit or judgment: its success must be derived almost wholly from the player, but its power in a skilful mouth, even he that despises it, is unable to resist. — The conduct of this drama is deficient; the action begins and ends often, before the conclusion, and the different parts might change places without inconvenience; but its general power, that power by which all works of genius shall finally be tried, is such, that perhaps it never yet had reader or spectator who did not think it too soon at the end. Johnson. ==

IV. TWELFTH NIGHT: OR, WHAT YOU WILL.

There is great reason to believe, that the serious part of this Comedy is founded on some old translation of the seventh history in the fourth volume of Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*. Belleforest took the story, as usual, from Bandello. The comic scenes appear to have been entirely the production of Shakspeare. It is not impossible, however, that the circumstances of the Duke sending his Page to plead his cause with the Lady, and of the Lady's falling in love with the Page, &c. might be borrowed from the Fifth Eglog of Barnaby Googe, published with his other original poems, in 1563.

"A worthy *Knyght* dyd love her longe,
"And for her sake dyd feale
"The panges of love, that happen styl
"By frowning fortune's wheale.
"He had a *Page*, Valerius named,
"Whom so muche he dyd truste,
"That all the secrets of his hart
"To hym declare he muste.
"And made hym all the onely meanes
"To sue for his redresse,
"And to entreate for grace to her
"That caused his distresse.
"*She whan as first she saw his page*
"*Was straight with hym in love*,
"*That nothynge coulde Valerius' face*
"*From Claudia's mynde remove*.
"By him was Faustus often harde,
"By hym his sutes toke place,
"By hym he often dyd aspyre
"To se his Ladyes face.
"This passed well, tyll at the length
"Valerius sore did sewe,
"With many teares besechynge her
"His mayster's gryefe to rewe.
"And tolde her that yf she wolde not
"Release his mayster's payne,
"*He never wolde attempte her more*
"*Nor se her ones agayne*," &c.

1) In *The Three Ladies of London*, 1584, is the character of an *Italian* merchant, very strongly marked by foreign pronunciation. Dr. *Dodypoll*, in the comedy which bears his name, is, like *Caius*, a French physician. This piece appeared at least a year before *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The hero of it speaks such another jargon as the antagonist of sir Hugh, and like him is cheated of his mistress. In several other pieces, more ancient than the earliest of Shakspeare's, provincial characters are introduced. *Steevens*.

Thus also concludes the first scene of the third act of the play before us:

"And so adieu, good madam; never more
"Will I my master's tears to you deplore."

I offer no apology for the length of the foregoing extract, the book from which it is taken being so uncommon, that only one copy, except that in my own possession, has hitherto occurred. Even Dr. Farmer, the late Rev. T. Warton, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Malone, were unacquainted with this Collection of Googe's Poetry. — August 6, 1607, a Comedy called *What you will*, (which is the second title of this play,) was entered at Stationers' Hall by Tho. Thorpe. I believe, however, it was Marston's play with that name. Ben Jonson, who takes every opportunity to find fault with Shakspeare, seems to ridicule the conduct of *Twelfth-Night* in his *Every Man out of his Humour*, at the end of Act III. sc. vi. where he makes *Mitis* say, "That the argument of his comedy might have been of some other nature, as of a duke to be in love with a countess, and that countess to be in love with the duke's son, and the son in love with the lady's waiting maid: *some such cross wooing, with a clown to their serving man*, better than be thus near and familiarly allied to the time." Steevens. == I suppose this comedy to have been written in 1607. Ben Jonson unquestionably could not have ridiculed this play in *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was written many years before it. Malone. == This play is in the graver part elegant and easy, and in some of the lighter scenes exquisitely humorous. Ague-cheek is drawn with great propriety, but his character is, in a great measure, that of natural fatuity, and is therefore not the proper prey of a satirist. The soliloquy of Malvolio is truly comic; he is betrayed to ridicule merely by his pride. The marriage of Olivia, and the succeeding perplexity, though well enough contrived to divert on the stage, wants credibility, and fails to produce the proper instruction required in the drama, as it exhibits no just picture of life. Johnson. ==

V. MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

The story is taken from Cinthio's *Novels*, Decad. 8. Novel 5. Pope. == We are sent to Cinthio for the plot of *Measure for Measure*, and Shakspeare's judgment hath been attacked for some deviations from him in the conduct of it, when probably all he knew of the matter was from Madam *Isabella*, in *The Heptameron of Whetstone*, Lond. 4to. 1582. — She *reports*, in the fourth dayes Exercise, the rare *Historie of Promos and Cassandra*. A marginal note informs us, that *Whetstone* was the author of the *Comedie* on that subject; which likewise had probably fallen into the hands of Shakspeare. Farmer. == There is perhaps not one of Shakspeare's plays more darkened than this by the peculiarities of its author, and the unskilfulness of its editors, by distortions of phrase, or negligence of transcription. Johnson. == Dr. Johnson's remark is so just respecting the corruptions of this play, that I shall not attempt much reformation in its metre, which is too often rough, redundant, and irregular. Additions and omissions (however trifling) cannot be made without constant notice of them; and such notices, in the present instance, would so frequently occur, as to become equally tiresome to the commentator and the reader. — Shakspeare took the fable of this play from the *Promos and Cassandra* of George Whetstone, published in 1578. — A hint, like a seed, is more or less prolific, according to the qualities of the soil on which it is thrown. This story, which in the hands of Whetstone, produced little more than barren insipidity, under the culture of Shakspeare became fertile of entertainment. The curious reader will find that the old play of *Promos and Cassandra*, exhibits an almost complete embryo of *Measure for Measure*; yet the hints on which it is formed are so slight, that it is nearly as impossible to detect them, as it is to point out in the acorn the future ramifications of the oak. — *Measure for Measure* was, I believe, written in 1603. Malone. == Of this play, the light or comic part is very natural and pleasing, but the grave scenes, if a few passages be excepted, have more labour than elegance. The plot is rather intricate than artful. The time of the action is indefinite; some time, we know not how much, must have elapsed between the recess of the Duke and the imprisonment of Claudio; for he must have learned the story of Mariana in his disguise, or he delegated his power to a man already known to be corrupted. The unities of action and place are sufficiently preserved. Johnson. ==

VI. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

The story is taken from Ariosto, *Orl. Fur.* B. V. Pope. == It is true, as Mr. Pope has observed, that somewhat resembling the story of this play is to be found in the fifth Book of the *Orlando Furioso*. In Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, B. II. c. iv. as remote an original may be traced. A novel, however, of Belleforest, copied from another of Bandello, seems to have furnished Shakspeare with his fable, as it approaches nearer in all its particulars to the play before us, than any other performance known to be extant. I have seen so many versions from this once popular collection, that I entertain no doubt but that a great majority of the tales it comprehends have made their appearance in an English dress. Of that particular story which I have just mentioned, viz. the 18th history in the third volume, no translation has hitherto been met with. — This play was entered at Stationers' Hall, Aug. 23, 1600. Steevens. == Ariosto is continually quoted for the fable of *Much Ado About Nothing*; but I suspect our poet to have been satisfied with the *Geneura* of Turberville. "The tale (says Harrington) is a pretie comical matter, and hath bin written in *English* verse some few years past, learnedly and with good grace, by M. George Turbervil," *Ariosto*, fol. 1591, p. 39. Farmer. == I suppose this comedy to have been written in 1600, in which year it was printed. Malone. == This play may be justly said to contain two of the most sprightly characters that Shakspeare ever drew. The wit, the humourist, the gentleman, and the soldier, are combined in Benedick. It is to be lamented, indeed, that the first and most splendid of these distinctions, is disgraced by unnecessary profaneness; for the goodness of his heart is hardly sufficient to atone for the licence of his tongue. The too sarcastic levity, which flashes out in the conversation of Beatrice, may be excused on account of the steadiness and friendship so apparent in her behaviour, when she urges her lover to risk his life by a challenge to Claudio. In the conduct of the fable, however, there is an imperfection similar to that which Dr. Johnson has pointed out in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: — the second contrivance is less ingenious than the first: — or, to speak more plainly, the same incident is become stale by repetition. I wish some other method had been found to entrap Beatrice, than that very one which before had been successfully practised on Benedick. Steevens. ==

VII. MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

This play was entered at Stationers' Hall, Oct. 8, 1600, by Thomas Fisher. It is probable that the hint for it was received from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. — There is an old black letter pamphlet by W. Bettie, called *Titana and Theseus*, entered at Stationers' Hall, in 1608; but

Shakspeare has taken no hints from it. *Titania* is also the name of the Queen of the Fairies in Decker's *Whore of Babylon*, 1607. Steevens. == *The Midsummer-Night's Dream* I suppose to have been written in 1594. Malone. == Wild and fantastical as this play is, all the parts in their various modes are well written, and give the kind of pleasure which the author designed. Fairies in his time were much in fashion; common tradition had made them familiar, and Spenser's poem had made them great. Johnson. == Johnson's concluding observation on this play, is not conceived with his usual judgment. There is no analogy or resemblance whatever between the Fairies of Spenser and those of Shakspeare. The Fairies of Spenser, as appears from his description of them in the second book of the Fairy Queen, canto x., were a race of mortals created by Prometheus, of the human size, shape, and affections, and subject to death. But those of Shakspeare, and of common tradition, as Johnson calls them, were a diminutive race of sportful beings, endowed with immortality and supernatural power, totally different from those of Spenser. M. Mason. ==

VIII. LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

I have not hitherto discovered any novel on which this comedy appears to have been founded; and yet the story of it has most of the features of an ancient romance. Steevens. == I suspect that there is an error in the title of this play, which I believe should be — "*Love's Labours Lost.*" M. Mason. == *Love's Labour's Lost*, I conjecture to have been written in 1594. Malone. == In this play, which all the editors have concurred to censure, and some have rejected as unworthy of our poet, it must be confessed that there are many passages mean, childish, and vulgar; and some which ought not to have been exhibited, as we are told they were, to a maiden queen. But there are scattered through the whole many sparks of genius; nor is there any play that has more evident marks of the hand of Shakspeare. Johnson. ==

IX. MERCHANT OF VENICE.

In Steevens's and Malone's editions of Shakspeare, the reader will find a distinct epitome of the novels from which the story of this play is supposed to be taken. It should, however, be remembered, that if our poet was at all indebted to the Italian novelists, it must have been through the medium of some old translation, which has hitherto escaped the researches of his most industrious editors. — It appears from a passage in Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse*, &c. 1579, that a play, comprehending the distinct plots of Shakspeare's *Merchant of Venice*, had been exhibited long before he commenced a writer, viz. "The Jews shown at the Bull, representing the greediness of worldly choosers, and the bloody minds of usurers." — "These plays," says Gosson, (for he mentions others with it,) "are goode and sweete plays," &c. It is therefore not improbable that Shakspeare new-wrote his piece, on the model already mentioned, and that the elder performance, being inferior, was permitted to drop silently into oblivion. — This play of Shakspeare had been exhibited before the year 1598, as appears from Meres's *Wits Treasury*, where it is mentioned with eleven more of our author's pieces. It was entered on the books of the Stationers' Company, July 22. in the same year. It could not have been printed earlier, because it was not yet licensed. The old song of *Gernutus the Jew of Venice*, is published by Dr. Percy in the first volume of his *Reliques of ancient English Poetry:* and the ballad intituled, *The murtherous Life and terrible Death of the rich Jewe of Malta;* and the tragedy on the same subject, were both entered on the Stationers' books, May, 1594. Steevens. == The story was taken from an old translation of *The Gesta Romanorum*, first printed by Wynkyn de Worde. The book was very popular, and Shakspeare has closely copied some of the language: an additional argument, if we wanted it, of his track of reading. *Three vessels* are exhibited to a lady for her *choice.* — The first was made of pure *gold*, well beset with precious stones *without*, and *within* full of dead men's bones; and thereupon was engraven this posie: *Whoso chuseth me, shall find that he deserveth.* The second vessel was made of fine *silver*, filled with earth and worms: the superscription was thus: *Whoso chuseth me, shall find that his nature desireth.* The third vessel was made of *lead*, full within of precious stones, and thereupon was insculpt this posie: *Whoso chuseth me, shall find that God hath disposed for him.* — The lady, after a comment upon each, chuses the *leaden vessel.* — In a MS. of Lidgate, belonging to my very learned friend, Dr. Askew, I find a *Tale of Two Merchants of Egipt* and of *Baldad ex Gestis Romanorum.* Leland, therefore, could not be the original author, as Bishop Tanner suspected. He lived a century after Lidgate. Farmer. == The two principal incidents of this play are to be found separately in a collection of odd stories, which were very popular, at least five hundred years ago, under the title of *Gesta Romanorum.* The first, *Of the Bond*, is in ch. xlviii. of the copy which I chuse to refer to, as the completest of any which I have yet seen. MS. Harl. n. 2270. A knight there borrows money of a merchant; upon condition of forfeiting *all his flesh* for non-payment. When the penalty is exacted before the judge, the *knight's mistress*, disguised, *in forma viri & vestimentis pretiosis induta*, comes into court, and, by permission of the judge, endeavours to mollify the merchant. She first offers him his money, and then the double of it, &c. to all which his answer is — "*Conventionem meam volo habere.* — Puella, cum hoc audisset, ait coram omnibus, Domine mi judex, da rectum judicium super his, quæ vobis dixero. — Vos scitis quod miles nunquam se obligabat ad aliud per literam nisi quod mercator habeat potestatem carnes ab ossibus scindere, *sine sanguinis effusione*, de quo nihil erat prolocutum. Statim mittat manum in eum; si vero sanguinem effuderit, *Rex contra eum actionem habet.* Mercator, cum hoc audisset, ait; date mihi pecuniam & omnem actionem ei remitto. Ait puella, Amen, dico tibi, nullum denarium habebis — pone ergo manum in eum, ita ut sanguinem non effundas. Mercator vero videns se confusum abscessit; & sic vita militis salvata est, & nullum denarium dedit." — The other incident, *of the casket*, is in ch. xcix. of the same collection. A king of Apulia sends his daughter to be married to the son of an emperor of Rome. After some adventures, (which are nothing to the present purpose,) she is brought before the emperor, who says to her, "Puella, propter amorem filii mei multa adversa sustinuisti. Tamen si digna fueris ut uxor ejus sis cito probabo. Et fecit fieri tria vasa. Primum fuit *de auro purissimo* & lapidibus pretiosis interius ex omni parte, & plenum *ossibus mortuorum:* & exterius erat subscriptio; *Qui me elegerit, in me inveniet quod meruit.* Secundum vas erat *de argento* puro & gemmis pretiosis, plenum *terra;* & exterius erat subscriptio: *Qui me elegerit, in me inveniet quod natura appetit.* Tertium vas *de plumbo* plenum *lapidibus pretiosis interius & gemmis nobilissimis;* & exterius erat subscriptio talis: *Qui me elegerit, in me inveniet quod Deus disposuit.* Ista tria ostendit puellæ, & dixit: si unum ex istis elegeris, in quo commodum & proficuum est, filium meum habebis. Si vero elegeris quod nec tibi nec aliis est commodum, ipsum non habebis." The young lady, after mature consideration of the vessels and their inscriptions, chuses the *leaden*, which being opened, and found to be full of gold and precious stones, the emperor says: "Bona puella, bene elegisti — ideo filium meum habebis." — From this abstract of these two stories, I think it appears sufficiently plain that they are the *remote* originals of the two incidents in this play. That *of the caskets*, Shakspeare might take from the English *Gesta Romanorum*, as Dr. Farmer has observed; and that *of the bond* might come to him from the *Pecorone;* but upon the whole I am rather inclined to suspect, that he has followed some hitherto unknown novelist, who had saved him the trouble of working up the two stories into one. Tyrwhitt. == This comedy, I believe, was written in the beginning of the year 1594. Meres's book was not published till the end of that year. Malone. == Of The Merchant of Venice the style is even and easy, with few peculiarities of diction, or anomalies of construction. The comic part raises laughter, and the serious fixes expectation. The probability of either one or the other story cannot be maintained. The union of two actions in one event is in this drama eminently happy. Dryden was much pleased with his own address in connecting the two plots of his *Spanish Friar*, which yet, I believe, the critic will find excelled by this play. Johnson. ==

X. AS YOU LIKE IT.

Was *certainly borrowed*, if we believe Dr. Grey and Mr. Upton, from the *Coke's Tale of Gamelyn:* which by the way was not *printed* till a century afterward: when in truth the old bard, who was no hunter of MSS., contented himself solely with *Lodge's Rosalynd*, or *Euphue's Golden Legacye*, 4to. 1590. Farmer. == Shakspeare has followed Lodge's novel more exactly than is his general custom when he is indebted to such worthless originals: and has sketched some of his principal characters, and borrowed a few expressions from it. His imitations, &c. however, are in general too insignificant to merit transcription. — It should be observed, that the characters of *Jaques*, the *Clown*, and *Audrey*, are entirely of the poet's own formation. — Although I have never met with any edition of this comedy before the year 1623, it is evident that such a publication was at least designed. At the beginning of the second volume of the entries at Stationers' Hall, are placed two leaves of irregular prohibitions, notes, &c. Among these are the following: —

Aug. 4.
"*As you like it*, a book.....
"*Henry the Fift*, a book..... } to be staid."
"The Comedy of *Much Ado*, a book...

The dates scattered over these plays are from 1596 to 1615. Steevens. == This comedy, I believe, was written in 1599. Malone. == Of this play the fable is wild and pleasing. I know not how the ladies will approve the facility with which both Rosalind and Celia give away their hearts. To Celia much may be forgiven for the heroism of her friendship. The character of Jaques is natural and well preserved. The comic dialogue is very sprightly, with less mixture of low buffoonery than in some other plays; and the graver part is elegant and harmonious. By hastening to the end of this work, Shakspeare suppressed the dialogue between the usurper and the hermit, and lost an opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson in which he might have found matter worthy of his highest powers. Johnson. ==

XI. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

The story of *All's well that ends well*, or, as I suppose it to have been sometimes called, *Love's Labour Wonne*, is originally indeed the property of Boccace, but it came immediately to Shakspeare from Painter's *Giletta of Narbon*, in the First Vol. of the *Palace of Pleasure*, 4to. 1566, p. 88. Farmer. == Shakspeare is indebted to the novel only for a few leading circumstances in the graver part of the piece. The comic business appears to be entirely of his own formation. Steevens. == This comedy, I imagine, was written in 1606. Malone. == This play has many delightful scenes, though not sufficiently probable, and some happy characters, though not new, nor produced by any deep knowledge of human nature. Parolles is a boaster and a coward, such as has always been the sport of the stage, but perhaps never raised more laughter or contempt than in the hands of Shakspeare. — I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram; a man noble without generosity, and young without truth; who marries Helen as a coward, and leaves her as a profligate: when she is dead by his unkindness, sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman whom he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness. — The story of Bertram and Diana had been told before of Mariana and Angelo, and, to confess the truth, scarcely merited to be heard a second time. Johnson. ==

XII. TAMING OF THE SHREW.

We have hitherto supposed Shakspeare the author of *The Taming of the Shrew*, but his property in it is extremely disputable. I will give my opinion, and the reasons on which it is founded. I suppose then the present play not *originally* the work of Shakspeare, but restored by him to the stage, with the whole Induction of the Tinker; and some other occasional improvements; especially in the character of Petruchio. It is very obvious that the Induction and the Play were either the works of different hands, or written at a great interval of time. The former is in our author's *best* manner, and a great part of the *latter* in his *worst*, or even below it. Dr. Warburton declares it to be certainly spurious; and without doubt, *supposing* it to have been written by Shakspeare, it must have been one of his earliest productions. Yet it is not mentioned in the list of his works by Meres in 1598. — I have met with a facetious piece of Sir John Harrington, printed in 1596, (and possibly there may be an earlier edition,) called *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, where I suspect an allusion to the old play: "Read the *Booke* of *Taming a Shrew*, which hath made a number of us so perfect, that *now* every one can rule a shrew in our countrey, save he that hath hir." — I am aware a *modern* linguist may object that the word *book* does not at present seem *dramatic*, but it was once *technically* so: Gosson, in his *Schoole of Abuse, containing a pleasant Invective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters, and such like Caterpillars of a Commonwealth*, 1579, mentions "twoo prose *bookes* played at the Bell-Sauage;" and Hearne tells us, in a note at the end of *William of Worcester*, that he had seen a MS. in the nature of a *Play* or *Interlude*, intitled *The Booke of Sir Thomas More.* — And in fact there is such an old *anonymous* play in Mr. Pope's list: "A pleasant conceited history, called, *The Taming of a Shrew* — sundry times acted by the Earl of Pembroke his servants." Which seems to have been republished by the remains of that company in 1607, when Shakspeare's copy appeared at the Black-Friars or the Globe. — Nor let this seem derogatory from the character of our poet. There is no reason to believe that he wanted to claim the play as his own; for it was not even printed till some years after his death; but he merely revived it on his stage as a *manager.* — In support of what I have said relative to this play, let me only observe further at present, that the author of *Hamlet* speaks of Gonzago, and his wife Baptista; but the author of *The Taming of the Shrew* knew Baptista to be the name of

a man. Mr. Capell indeed made me doubt, by declaring the authenticity of it to be confirmed by the testimony of Sir Aston Cockayn. I knew Sir Aston was much acquainted with the writers immediately subsequent to Shakspeare; and I was not inclined to dispute his authority: but how was I surprised, when I found that Cockayn ascribes nothing more to Shakspeare, than the *Induction-Wincot-Ale and the Beggar!* I hope this was only a slip of Mr. Capell's memory. Farmer. == In spite of the great deference which is due from every commentator to Dr. Farmer's judgment, I own I cannot concur with him on the present occasion. I know not to whom I could impute this comedy, if Shakspeare was not its author. I think his hand is visible in almost every scene, though perhaps not so evidently as in those which pass between Katharine and Petruchio. — I once thought that the name of this play might have been taken from an old story, entitled, *The Wyf lapped in Morell's Skin*, or *The Taming of a Shrew*; but I have since discovered among the entries in the books of the Stationers' Company the following: "Peter Shorte] May 2, 1594, a pleasaunt conceited historie, called, *The Taming of a Shrowe.*" It is likewise entered to Nich. Ling, Jan. 22, 1606; and to John Smythwicke, Nov. 19, 1607. — It was no uncommon practice among the authors of the age of Shakspeare, to avail themselves of the titles of ancient performances. Thus, as Mr. Warton has observed, Spenser sent out his *Pastorals* under the title of *The Shepherd's Kalendar*, a work which had been printed by Wynken de Worde, and reprinted about twenty years before these poems of Spenser appeared, viz. 1559. — Dr. Percy, in the first volume of his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, is of opinion, that *The Frolicksome Duke, or the Tinker's good Fortune*, an ancient ballad in the Pepys' Collection, might have suggested to Shakspeare the Induction for this comedy. — The following story, however, which might have been the parent of all the rest, is related by Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, edit. 1632, p. 649: "A *Tartar* Prince, saith *Marcus Polus*, Lib. II. cap. 28, called *Senex de Montibus*, the better to establish his government amongst his subjects, and to keepe them in awe, found a convenient place in a pleasant valley environed with hills, *in which he made a delitious parke full of odorifferous flowers and fruits, and a palace full of all worldly contents* that could possibly be devised, *musicke, pictures, variety of meats*, &c. and chose out a certaine young man whom with *a soporiferous potion* he so benummed, that he perceived nothing: *and so, fast asleepe as he was, caused him to be conveied into this faire garden.* Where, after he had lived a while in all such pleasures as sensuall man could desire, *he cast him into a sleepe againe, and brought him forth, that when he waked he might tell others he had been in Paradise.*" — *Marco Paolo*, quoted by Burton, was a traveller of the 13th century. — Beaumont and Fletcher wrote what may be called a sequel to this comedy, viz. *The Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tam'd*; in which Petruchio is subdued by a second wife. Steevens. == Our author's *Taming of the Shrew* was written, I imagine, in 1596. Malone. == Of this play the two plots are so well united, that they can hardly be called two without injury to the art with which they are interwoven. The attention is entertained with all the variety of a double plot, yet is not distracted by unconnected incidents. — The part between Katharine and Petruchio is eminently spritely and diverting. At the marriage of Bianca the arrival of the real father, perhaps, produces more perplexity than pleasure. The whole play is very popular and diverting. Johnson. == Steevens and Malone have mentioned several authors by whom stories like that of Sly in the Induction, have been told, but it is rather singular they should make no mention of the "Sleeper Awakened," in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, vol. iii. Chalmers. ==

XIII. WINTER'S TALE.

This play, throughout, is written in the very spirit of its author. And in telling this homely and simple, though agreeable, country tale,

Our sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,
Warbles his native wood-notes wild.

This was necessary to observe in mere justice to the play; as the meanness of the fable, and the extravagant conduct of it, had misled some of great name into a wrong jugdment of its merit; which, as far as it regards sentiment and character, is scarce inferior to any in the whole collection. Warburton. == At Stationers' Hall, May 22, 1594, Edward White entered "A book entitled *A Wynter Nyght's Pastime.*" Steevens. == The story of this play is taken from the *Pleasant History of Dorastus and Fawnia*, written by Robert Greene. Johnson. == In this novel, the King of Sicilia, whom Shakspeare names

Leontes, is called	Egistus.
Polixenes K. of Bohemia	Pandosto.
Mamillius P. of Sicilia	Garinter.
Florizel P. of Bohemia	Dorastus.
Camillo	Franion.
Old Shepherd	Porrus.
Hermione	Bellaria.
Perdita	Faunia.
Mopsa	Mopsa.

The parts of Antigonus, Paulina, and Autolycus, are of the poet's own invention; but many circumstances of the novel are omitted in the play. Steevens. == Dr. Warburton, by "some of great name," means Dryden and Pope. See the Essay at the end of the Second Part of *The Conquest of Grenada:* "Witness the lameness of their plots; [the plots of Shakspeare and Fletcher;] many of which, especially those which they wrote first, (for even that age refined itself in some measure,) were made up of some ridiculous incoherent story, which in one play many times took up the business of an age. I suppose I need not name, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, [and here, by-the-by, Dryden expressly names *Pericles* as our author's production,] nor the historical plays of Shakspeare; besides many of the rest, as the *Winter's Tale, Love's Labour's Lost, Measure for Measure*, which were either grounded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment." Mr. Pope, in the Preface to his edition of our author's plays, pronounced the same ill-considered judgment on the play before us: "I should conjecture (says he) of some of the others, particularly *Love's Labour's Lost*, The Winter's Tale, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Titus Andronicus*, that only some characters, single scenes, or perhaps a few particular passages, were of his hand." — None of our author's plays has been more censured for the breach of dramatic rules than *The Winter's Tale*. In confirmation of what Mr. Steevens has remarked in another place — "that Shakspeare was not ignorant of these rules, but disregarded them," — it may be observed, that the laws of the drama are clearly laid down by a writer once universally read and admired, Sir Philip Sidney, who, in his *Defence of Poesie*, 1595, has pointed out the very improprieties into which our author has fallen in this play. After mentioning the defects of the tragedy of *Gorboduc*, he adds: "But if it be so in *Gorboducke*, how much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Affricke of the other, and so manie under kingdomes, that the player when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. — Now of time they are much more liberal. For ordinarie it is, that two young princes fall in love, after many traverses she is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy: he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another childe, and all this in two houres space: which how absurd it is in sence, even sence may imagine." — *The Winter's Tale* is sneered at by B. Jonson, in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614: "If there be never a servant-monster in the fair, who can help it, *nor a nest of antiques?* He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget Tales, *Tempests*, and such like drolleries." By the *nest of antiques*, the twelve satyrs who are introduced at the sheep-shearing festival, are alluded to. — In his conversation with Mr. Drummond, of Hawthornden, in 1619, he has another stroke at his *beloved* friend: „He [Jonson] said, that Shakspeare wanted art, and sometimes sense; for in one of his plays he brought in a number of men, saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by 100 miles." Drummond's Works, fol. 225, edit. 1711. — When this remark was made by Ben Jonson, *The Winter's Tale* was not printed. These words, therefore, are a sufficient answer to Sir T. Hanmer's idle supposition that *Bohemia* was an error of the press for *Bythinia*. — This play, I imagine, was written in the year 1611. Malone. == Sir Thomas Hanmer gave himself much needless concern that Shakspeare should consider Bohemia as a maritime country. He would have us read *Bythinia:* but our author implicitly copied the novel before him. Dr. Grey, indeed, was *apt to believe* that *Dorastus and Faunia* might rather be borrowed from the play; but I have met with a copy of it which was printed in 1588. — Cervantes ridicules these geographical mistakes, when he makes the princess Micomicona land at Ossuna. — Corporal Trim's king of Bohemia "delighted in navigation, and had never a seaport in his dominions;" and my Lord Herbert tells us, that De Luines, the prime minister of France, when he was ambassador there, demanded, whether Bohemia was an inland country, or lay *"upon the sea?"* — There is a similar mistake in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, relative to that city and Milan. Farmer. == *The Winter's Tale* may be ranked among the historic plays of Shakspeare, though not one of his numerous critics and commentators have discovered the drift of it. It was certainly intended (in compliment to Queen Elizabeth,) as an indirect apology for her mother, Anne Boleyn. The address of the poet appears no where to more advantage. The subject was too delicate to be exhibited on the stage without a veil; and it was too recent, and touched the Queen too nearly, for the bard to have ventured so home an allusion on any other ground than compliment. The unreasonable jealousy of Leontes, and his violent conduct in consequence, form a true portrait of Henry the Eighth, who generally made the law the engine of his boisterous passions. Not only the general plan of the story is most applicable, but several passages are so marked, that they touch the real history nearer than the fable. Hermione on her trial says:

"—— for honour,
"'Tis a derivative from me to mine,
"And only that I stand for."

This seems to be taken from the very letter of Anne Boleyn to the king before her execution, where she pleads for the infant princess his daughter. Mamillius, the young prince, an unnecessary character, dies in his infancy; but it confirms the allusion, as Queen Anne, before Elizabeth, bore a still-born son. But the most striking passage, and which had nothing to do in the tragedy, but as it pictured Elizabeth, is, where Paulina, describing the new-born princess, and her likeness to her father, says: *"She has the very trick of his frown."* There is one sentence indeed so applicable, both to Elizabeth and her father, that I should suspect the poet inserted it after her death. Paulina, speaking of the child, tells the king:

"—— 'Tis yours;
"And might we lay the old proverb to your charge,
"So like you, 'tis the worse."

The Winter's Tale was, therefore, in reality a second part of *Henry the Eighth.* Walpole. == This play, as Dr. Warburton justly observes, is, with all its absurdities, very entertaining. The character of Autolycus is naturally conceived, and strongly represented. Johnson. ==

XIV. COMEDY OF ERRORS.

Shakspeare might have taken the general plan of this comedy from a translation of the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, by W. W. i. e. (according to Wood) William Warner, in 1595, whose version of the acrostical argument hereafter quoted is as follows: —

"Two twinne borne sonnes a Sicill marchant had,
"Menechmus one, and Sosicles the other;
"The first his father lost, a little lad;
"The grandsire namde the latter like his brother:
"This (growne a man) long travell took to seeke
"His brother, and to Epidamnum came,
"Where th' other dwelt inricht, and him so like,
"That citizens there take him for the same,
"Father, wife, neighbours, each mistaking either,
"Much pleasant error, ere they meet togither."

Perhaps the last of these lines suggested to Shakspeare the title for his piece. — See this translation of the *Menæchmi*, among *six old Plays on which Shakspeare founded*, &c. published by S. Leacroft, Charing-cross. — At the beginning of an address *Ad Lectorem*, prefixed to the errata of Decker's *Satiromastix*, &c. 1602, is the following passage, which apparently alludes to the title of the comedy before us: — "In steed of the Trumpets sounding thrice before the play begin, it shall not be amisse (for him that will read) first to beholde this short *Comedy of Errors*, and where the greatest enter, to give them instead of a hisse, a gentle correction." Steevens. == I suspect this and all other plays where much rhyme is used, and especially long hobbling verses, to have been among Shakspeare's more early productions. Blackstone. == I am possibly singular in thinking that Shakspeare was not under the slightest obligation, in forming this comedy, to Warner's translation of the *Menæchmi*. The additions of *Erotes* and *Sereptus*, which do not occur in that translation, and he could never invent, are, alone, a sufficient inducement to believe that he was no way indebted to it. But a further and more convincing proof is, that he has not a name, line, or word, from the old play, nor any one incident but what must, of course be common to every translation. Sir William Blackstone, I observe, suspects "this and all other plays where much rhyme is used, and especially long hobbling verses, to have been among Shakspeare's more early productions." But I much doubt whether any of these "long hobbling verses" have the honour of proceeding from his pen: and, in fact, the superior elegance and harmony of his language is no less distinguishable in his earliest than his latest production. The truth is, if any inference can be drawn from the most striking dissimilarity of style, a tissue as different as silk and worsted, that this comedy, though boasting the embellishments of our author's genius, in additional words, lines, speeches, and scenes, was not originally his, but proceeded from some inferior playwright, who was capable of reading the *Menæchmi* without the help of a translation, or, at least, did not make use of Warner's. And this I take to have been the case, not only with the three Parts of *King Henry VI.* as I think a late editor (*O si sic omnia!*) has satisfactorily proved, but with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Love's Labour's Lost*, and *King Richard II.*, in all which pieces Shakspeare's new work is as apparent as the brightest touches of Titian would be on the poorest performance of the veriest canvas-spoiler that ever handled a brush. The originals of these plays, (except *The Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI.*) were never printed, and may be

thought to have been put into his hands by the manager, for the purpose of alteration and improvement, which we find to have been an ordinary practice of the theatre in his time. We are therefore no longer to look upon the above "pleasant and fine conceited comedie," as entitled to a situation among the "*six plays on which Shakspeare founded his Measure for Measure*," &c. of which I should hope to see a new and improved edition. Ritson. == This comedy, I believe, was written in 1592. Malone. == On a careful revision of the foregoing scenes, I do not hesitate to pronounce them the composition of two very unequal writers. Shakspeare had undoubtedly a share in them; but that the entire play was no work of his, is an opinion which (as Benedick says) "fire cannot melt out of me; I will die in it at the stake." Thus, as we are informed by Aulus Gellius, Lib. III. cap. 3. some plays were absolutely ascribed to Plautus, which in truth had only been (*retractatæ* et *expolitæ*) retouched and polished by him. — In this comedy we find more intricacy of plot than distinction of character; and our attention is less forcibly engaged, because we can guess in great measure how the denouement will be brought about. Yet the subject appears to have been reluctantly dismissed, even in this last and unnecessary scene, where the same mistakes are continued, till their power of affording entertainment is entirely lost. Steevens. == The long doggrel verses that Shakspeare has attributed in this play to the two Dromios, are written in that kind of metre which was usually attributed, by the dramatic poets before his time, in their comic pieces, to some of their inferior characters; and this circumstance is one of many that authorizes us to place the preceding comedy, as well as *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, (where the same kind of versification is likewise found,) among our author's earliest productions; composed probably at a time when he was imperceptibly infected with the prevailing mode, and before he had completely learned "to deviate boldly from the common track." Malone. == Mr. Malone also, in opposition to Mr. Steevens, asserts his firm opinion, that the whole of the present comedy was written by Shakspeare. Chalmers. ==

XV. MACBETH.

In order to make a true estimate of the abilities and merit of a writer, it is always necessary to examine the genius of his age, and the opinions of his contemporaries. A poet who should now make the whole action of his tragedy depend upon enchantment, and produce the chief events by the assistance of supernatural agents, would be censured as transgressing the bounds of probability, be banished from the theatre to the nursery, and condemned to write fairy tales instead of tragedies; but a survey of the notions that prevailed at the time when this play was written, will prove that Shakspeare was in no danger of such censures, since he only turned the system that was then universally admitted, to his advantage, and was far from overburdening the credulity of his audience. — The reality of witchcraft or enchantment, which, though not strictly the same, are confounded in this play, has in all ages and countries been credited by the common people, and in most, by the learned themselves. The phantoms have indeed appeared more frequently, in proportion as the darkness of ignorance has been more gross; but it cannot be shown, that the brightest gleams of knowledge have at any time been sufficient to drive them out of the world. The time in which this kind of credulity was at its height, seems to have been that of the holy war, in which the Christians imputed all their defeats to enchantments or diabolical opposition, as they ascribed their success to the assistance of the military saints; and the learned Dr. Warburton appears to believe (*Supplement to the Introduction to Don Quixote*) that the first accounts of enchantments were brought into this part of the world by those who returned from their eastern expeditions. But there is always some distance between the birth and maturity of folly as of wickedness: this opinion had long existed, though perhaps the application of it had in no foregoing age been so frequent, nor the reception so general. Olympiodorus, in Photius's *Extracts*, tells us of one Libanius who practised this kind of military magic, and having promised *χώρις ὁπλιτῶν κατὰ βαρβάρων ἐνεργεῖν*, *to perform great things against the Barbarians without soldiers*, was, at the instance of the empress Placidia, put to death, when he was about to have given proofs of his abilities. The empress showed some kindness in her anger, by cutting him off at a time so convenient for his reputation. — But a more remarkable proof of the antiquity of this notion may be found in St. Chrysostom's book *de Sacerdotio*, which exhibits a scene of enchantments not exceeded by any romance of the middle age: he supposes a spectator overlooking a field of battle, attended by one that points out all the various objects of horror, the engines of destruction and the arts of slaughter. *Δεικνύτο δὲ ἔτι παρὰ τοῖς ἐναντίοις καὶ πετομένους ἵππους διά τινος μαγγανείας, καὶ ὁπλίτας δι' ἀέρος φερομένους, καὶ πάσην γοητείας δύναμιν καὶ ἰδέαν. Let him then proceed to show him in the opposite armies flying horses by enchantment, armed men transported through the air, and every power and form of magic.* Whether St. Chrysostom believed that such performances were really to be seen in a day of battle, or only endeavoured to enliven his description, by adopting the notions of the vulgar, it is equally certain, that such notions were in his time received, and that therefore they were not imported from the Saracens in a later age; the wars with the Saracens however gave occasion to their propagation, not only as bigotry naturally discovers prodigies, but as the scene of action was removed to a great distance. — The Reformation did not immediately arrive at its meridian, and though day was gradually increasing upon us, the goblins of witchcraft still continued to hover in the twilight. In the time of Queen Elizabeth was the remarkable trial of the witches of Warbois, whose conviction is still commemorated in an annual sermon at Huntingdon. But in the reign of King James, in which this tragedy was written, many circumstances concurred to propagate and confirm this opinion. The king, who was much celebrated for his knowledge, had, before his arrival in England, not only examined in person a woman accused of witchcraft, but had given a very formal account of the practices and illusions of evil spirits, the compacts of witches, the ceremonies used by them, the manner of detecting them, and the justice of punishing them, in his dialogues of *Dæmonologie*, written in the Scottish dialect, and published at Edinburgh. This book was, soon after his succession, reprinted at London; and as the ready way to gain King James's favour was to flatter his speculations, the system of *Dæmonologie* was immediately adopted by all who desired either to gain preferment or not to lose it. Thus the doctrine of witchcraft was very powerfully inculcated; and as the greatest part of mankind have no other reason for their opinions than that they are in fashion, it cannot be doubted but this persuasion made a rapid progress, since vanity and credulity co-operated in its favour. The infection soon reached the parliament, who, in the first year of King James, made a law, by which it was enacted, (chap. xii.) That "if any person shall use any invocation or conjuration of any evil or wicked spirit; 2. or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed or reward any evil or cursed spirit to or for any intent or purpose; 3. or take up any dead man, woman, or child, out of the grave, — or the skin, bone, or any part of the dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; 4. or shall use, practise, or exercise any sort of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; 5. whereby any person shall be destroyed, killed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in any part of the body; 6. That every such person being convicted shall suffer death." This law was repealed in our own time. — Thus, in the time of Shakspeare, was the doctrine of witchcraft at once established by law and by the fashion, and it became not only unpolite, but criminal, to doubt it; and as prodigies are always seen in proportion as they are expected, witches were every day discovered, and multiplied so fast in some places, that Bishop Hall mentions a village in Lancashire, where their number was greater than that of the houses. The jesuits and sectaries took advantage of this universal error, and endeavoured to promote the interest of their parties by pretended cures of persons afflicted by evil spirits; but they were detected and exposed by the clergy of the established church. — Upon this general infatuation Shakspeare might be easily allowed to found a play, especially since he has followed with great exactness such histories as were then thought true; nor can it be doubted that the scenes of enchantment, however they may now be ridiculed, were both by himself and his audience thought awful and affecting. Johnson. == In the concluding paragraph of Dr. Johnson's admirable introduction to this play, he seems apprehensive that the fame of Shakspeare's magic may be endangered by modern ridicule. I shall not hesitate, however, to predict its security, till our national taste is wholly corrupted, and we no longer deserve the first of all dramatic enjoyments; for such, in my opinion at least, is the tragedy of *Macbeth*. Steevens. == This tragedy was written, I believe, in the year 1606. Malone. == This play is deservedly celebrated for the propriety of its fictions, and solemnity, grandeur, and variety of its action; but it has no nice discriminations of character: the events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions, and the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents. — The danger of ambition is well described; and I know not whether it may not be said, in defence of some parts which now seem improbable, that, in Shakspeare's time, it was necessary to warn credulity against vain and illusive predictions. — The passions are directed to their true end. Lady Macbeth is merely detested; and though the courage of Macbeth preserves some esteem, yet every reader rejoices at his fall. Johnson. ==

XVI. KING JOHN.

The troublesome reign of King John was written in two parts, by W. Shakspeare and W. Rowley, and printed 1611. But the present play is entirely different, and infinitely superior to it. Pope. == The edition of 1611 has no mention of Rowley, nor in the account of Rowley's works is any mention made of his conjunction with Shakspeare in any play. *King John* was reprinted in two parts, in 1622. The first edition that I have found of this play, in its present form, is that of 1623, in folio. The edition of 1591 I have not seen. Johnson. == Dr. Johnson mistakes, when he says there is no mention, in Rowley's works, of any conjunction with Shakspeare. *The Birth of Merlin* is ascribed to them jointly, though I cannot believe Shakspeare had any thing to do with it. Mr. Capell is equally mistaken, when he says (Pref. p. 15.) that Rowley is called his partner in the title-page of *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*. — There must have been some tradition, however erroneous, upon which Mr. Pope's account was founded. I make no doubt that Rowley wrote the first *King John;* and when Shakspeare's play was called for, and could not be procured from the players, a piratical bookseller reprinted the old one, with *W. Sh.* in the title-page. Farmer. == The elder play of *King John* was first published in 1591. Shakspeare has preserved the greatest part of the conduct of it, as well as some of the lines. The number of quotations from Horace, and similar scraps of learning scattered over this motley piece, ascertain it to have been the work of a scholar. It contains likewise a quantity of rhyming Latin, and ballad-metre; and in a scene where the Bastard is represented as plundering a monastery, there are strokes of humour, which seem, from their particular turn, to have been most evidently produced by another hand than that of our author. — Of this historical drama there is a subsequent edition in 1611, printed for John Helme, whose name appears before none of the genuine pieces of Shakspeare. I admitted this play some years ago as our author's own, among the twenty which I published from the old editions; but a more careful perusal of it, and a further conviction of his custom of borrowing plots, sentiments, &c. disposes me to recede from that opinion. Steevens. == A play entitled *The troublesome Raigne of John King of England*, in two parts, was printed in 1591, without the writer's name. It was written, I believe, either by Robert Greene, or George Peele; and certainly preceded this of our author. Mr. Pope, who is very inaccurate in matters of this kind, says that the former was printed in 1611, as written by W. Shakspeare and W. Rowley. But this is not true. In the *second* edition of this old play, in 1611, the letters *W. Sh.* were put into the title-page, to deceive the purchaser, and to lead him to suppose the piece was Shakspeare's play, which, at that time, was not published. Our author's *King John* was written, I imagine, in 1596. Malone. == Though this play have the title of *The Life and Death of King John*, yet the action of it begins at the thirty-fourth year of his life, and takes in only some transactions of his reign to the time of his demise, being an interval of about seventeen years. Theobald. == Hall, Holinshed, Stowe, &c. are closely followed, not only in the conduct, but sometimes in the very expressions, throughout the following historical dramas, viz. *Macbeth*, this play, *Richard II. Henry IV.* two parts, *Henry V. Henry VI.* three parts, *Richard III.* and *Henry VIII.* — "A booke called *The Historie of Lord Faulconbridge, bastard son to Richard Cordelion*," was entered at Stationers' Hall, Nov. 29, 1614; but I have never met with it, and therefore know not whether it was the old black letter history, or a play upon the same subject. For the original *King John*, see *Six old Plays on which Shakspeare founded*, &c. published by S. Leacroft, Charing-cross. Steevens. == *The Historie of Lord Faulconbridge*, &c. is a prose narrative, in bl. l. The earliest edition that I have seen of it was printed in 1616. But by an entry on the Stationers' Registers, 29th Nov. 1614, it appears that there had been an old edition of the tract, entitled, *The History of George W. Faulconbridge, the son of Richard Cordelion*, and that the copy had been assigned by (William) Barley to Thomas Beale. — A book entitled *Richard* Cur *de Lion*, was entered on the Stationers' Books in 1558. — A play called *The Funeral of Richard Cordelion*, was written by Robert Wilson, Henry Chettle, Anthony Mundy, and Michael Drayton, and first exhibited in the year 1598. Malone. == The tragedy of *King John*, though not written with the utmost power of Shakspeare, is varied with a very pleasing interchange of incidents and characters. The lady's grief is very affecting; and the character of the Bastard contains that mixture of greatness and levity which this author delighted to exhibit. Johnson. ==

XVII. KING RICHARD II.

This history comprises little more than the two last years of this prince. The action of the drama begins with Bolingbroke's appealing the duke of Norfolk, on an accusation of high treason, which fell out in the year 1398; and it closes with the murder of king Richard at Pomfret Castle, towards the end of the year 1400, or the beginning of the ensuing year. Theobald. = It is evident from a passage in Camden's *Annals*, that there was an old play on the subject of Richard the Second; but I know not in what language. Sir Gillie Merick, who was concerned in the hare-brained business of the earl of Essex, who was hanged for it, with the ingenious Cuffe, in 1601, is accused, amongst other things "quod exoletam tragœdiam de tragicâ abdicatione regis Ricardi Secundi in publico theatro coram conjuratis datâ pecuniâ agi curasset." — I have since met with a passage in my lord Bacon, which proves this play to have been in English. It is in the arraignments of *Cuffe and Merick*, Vol. IV. p. 412., of Mallet's edition: "The afternoon before the rebellion, Merick, with a great company of others, that afterwards were all in the action, had procured to be played before them the play of deposing *King Richard the Second;* — when it was told him by one of the players, that the play was *old*, and they should have loss in playing it, because few would come to it, there was forty shillings extraordinary given to play, and so thereupon played it was." — It may be worth enquiring, whether some of the *rhyming* parts of the present play, which Mr. Pope thought of a different hand, might not be borrowed from the old one. Certainly, however, the general tendency of it must have been very different; since, as Dr. Johnson observes, there are some expressions in this of Shakspeare, which strongly inculcate the doctrine of *indefeasible right*. Farmer. = Bacon elsewhere glances at the same transaction; "And for your comparison with Richard II. I see you follow the example of them that *brought him upon the stage, and into print in queen Elizabeth's time*." *Works*, Vol. IV. p. 278. The partizans of Essex had, therefore, procured the publication as well as the acting of this play. Holt White. = It is probable, I think, that the play which Sir Gilly Merick procured to be represented, bore the title of Henry IV. and not of Richard II. — Camden calls it — "exoletam tragœdiam de tragicâ abdicatione regis Ricardi Secundi;" and Lord Bacon (in his account of *The effect of that which passed* at the arraignment of *Merick* and others,) says: "that the afternoon before the rebellion, *Merick* had procured to be played before them, the play *of deposing* King *Richard the Second*." But in a more particular account of the proceeding against *Merick*, which is printed in the *State Trials*, Vol. VII. p. 60. the matter is stated thus: "The story of *Henry IV.* being set forth in a play, and in that play, there being set forth the killing of the king upon the stage; the Friday before, sir *Gilly Merick* and some others of the earl's train having an humour to see a play, they must needs have *The Play of* Henry IV. The players told them that was stale; they should get nothing by playing that; but no play else would serve: and sir *Gilly Merick* gives forty shillings to *Philips* the player to play this, besides whatsoever he could get." — *Augustine Philippes* was one of the patentees of the Globe play-house with *Shakspeare*, in 1603: but the play here described was certainly not *Shakspeare's* Henry IV. as that commences above a year after the death of Richard. Tyrrwhitt. = This play of Shakspeare was first entered at Stationers' Hall by Andrew Wise, Aug. 29, 1597. Steevens. = Mr. Malone thinks that this play was written in 1593, that it was Shakspeare's first tragic performance, and is as manifestly his production as his more highly wrought and finished pieces. Mr. M. wonders that Dr. Farmer should give any countenance to the idle notion entertained by Mr. Pope, that "some of the rhyming parts in this tragedy were of a different hand." Chalmers. = This play is extracted from the *Chronicle* of Holinshead, in which many passages may be found which Shakspeare has, with very little alteration, transplanted into his scenes; particularly a speech of the bishop of Carlisle, in defence of King Richard's unalienable right, and immunity from human jurisdiction. — Jonson, who, in his *Catiline* and *Sejanus*, has inserted many speeches from the Roman historians, was perhaps induced to that practice by the example of Shakspeare, who had condescended sometimes to copy more ignoble writers. But Shakspeare had more of his own than Jonson; and, if he sometimes was willing to spare his labour, showed by what he performed at other times, that his extracts were made by choice or idleness rather than necessity. — This play is one of those which Shakspeare has apparently revised; but as success in works of invention is not always proportionate to labour, it is not finished at last with the happy force of some other of his tragedies, nor can be said much to affect the passions, or enlarge the understanding. Johnson. = The notion that Shakspeare revised this play, though it has long prevailed, appears to me extremely doubtful; or, to speak more plainly, I do not believe it. Malone. =

XVIII. KING HENRY IV.

PART I.

The transactions contained in this historical drama are comprised within the period of about ten months; for the action commences with the news brought of Hotspur having defeated the Scots under Archibald earl of Douglas at Holmedon, (or Halidown-hill,) which battle was fought on Holy-rood day, (the 14th of September,) 1402; and it closes with the defeat and death of Hotspur at Shrewsbury; which engagement happened on Saturday the 21st of July, (the eve of Saint Mary Magdalen,) in the year 1403. Theobald. = This play was first entered at Stationers' Hall, Feb. 25, 1597, by Andrew Wise. Again, by M. Woolff, Jan. 9, 1598. For the piece supposed to have been its original, see *Six old Plays on which Shakspeare founded*, &c. published for S. Leacroft, Charing-cross. Steevens. = Shakspeare has apparently designed a regular connexion of these dramatic histories from Richard the Second to Henry the Fifth. King Henry, at the end of Richard the Second, declares his purpose to visit the Holy Land, which he resumes in the first speech of this play. The complaint made by King Henry in the last Act of Richard the Second, of the wildness of his son, prepares the reader for the frolics which are here to be recounted, and the characters which are now to be exhibited. Johnson. = This comedy was written, I believe, in the year 1597. Malone. =

XIX. KING HENRY IV.

PART II.

The transactions comprized in this history take up about nine years. The action commences with the account of Hotspur's being defeated and killed [1403]; and closes with the death of King Henry IV. and the coronation of King Henry V. (1412-13.] Theobald. = This play was entered at Stationers' Hall, August 23, 1600. Steevens. = *The Second Part of King Henry IV.* I suppose to have been written in 1598. Malone. = Mr. Upton thinks these two plays improperly called *The First* and *Second Parts of Henry the Fourth*. The first play ends, he says, with the peaceful settlement of Henry in the kingdom by

the defeat of the rebels. This is hardly true: for the rebels are not yet finally suppressed. The second, he tells us, shows Henry the Fifth in the various lights of a good-natured rake, till, on his father's death, he assumes a more manly character. This is true; but this representation gives us no idea of a dramatic action. These two plays will appear to every reader, who shall peruse them without ambition of critical discoveries, to be so connected, that the second is merely a sequel to the first; to be two only because they are too long to be one. Johnson. = I fancy every reader, when he ends this play, cries out with Desdemona, "O most lame and impotent conclusion!" As this play was not, to our knowledge, divided into acts by the author, I could be content to conclude it with the death of Henry the Fourth:

"In that Jerusalem shall Harry die."

These scenes, which now make the fifth Act of *Henry the Fourth*, might then be the first of *Henry the Fifth*; but the truth is, that they do not unite very commodiously to either play. When these plays were represented, I believe they ended as they are now ended in the books; but Shakspeare seems to have designed that the whole series of action, from the beginning of *Richard the Second*, to the end of *Henry the Fifth*, should be considered by the reader as one work, upon one plan, only broken into parts by the necessity of exhibition. — None of Shakspeare's plays are more read than the *First and Second Parts of Henry the Fourth*. Perhaps no author has ever, in two plays, afforded so much delight. The great events are interesting, for the fate of kingdoms depends upon them; the slighter occurrences are diverting, and, except one or two, sufficiently probable: the incidents are multiplied with wonderful fertility of invention, and the characters diversified with the utmost nicety of discernment, and the profoundest skill in the nature of man. — The prince, who is the hero both of the comic and tragic part, is a young man of great abilities and violent passions, whose sentiments are right, though his actions are wrong; whose virtues are obscured by negligence, and whose understanding is dissipated by levity. In his idle hours he is rather loose than wicked; and when the occasion forces out his latent qualities, he is great without effort, and brave without tumult. The trifler is roused into a hero, and the hero again reposes in the trifler. The character is great, original, and just. — Percy is a rugged soldier, choleric and quarrelsome, and has only the soldier's virtues, generosity and courage. — But Falstaff unimitated, unimitable Falstaff, how shall I describe thee? thou compound of sense and vice; of sense which may be admired, but not esteemed; of vice which may be despised, but hardly detested. Falstaff is a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt. He is a thief and a glutton, a coward and a boaster, always ready to cheat the weak, and prey upon the poor; to terrify the timorous, and insult the defenceless. At once obsequious and malignant, he satirizes in their absence those whom he lives by flattering. He is familiar with the prince only as an agent of vice, but of this familiarity he is so proud, as not only to be supercilious and haughty with common men, but to think his interest of importance to the duke of Lancaster. Yet the man thus corrupt, thus despicable, makes himself necessary to the prince that despises him, by the most pleasing of all qualities, perpetual gaiety, by an unfailing power of exciting laughter, which is the more freely indulged, as his wit is not of the splendid or ambitious kind, but consists in easy scapes and sallies of levity, which make sport, but raise no envy. It must be observed, that he is stained with no enormous or sanguinary crimes, so that his licentiousness is not so offensive but that it may be borne for his mirth. — The moral to be drawn from this representation is, that no man is more dangerous than he that, with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please; and that neither wit nor honesty ought to think themselves safe with such a companion, when they see Henry seduced by Falstaff. Johnson. =

XX. KING HENRY V.

This play was writ (as appears from a passage in the chorus to the fifth Act) at the time of the earl of Essex's commanding the forces in Ireland in the reign of queen Elizabeth, and not till after *Henry the Sixth* had been played, as may be seen by the conclusion of this play. Pope. = The transactions comprized in this historical play commence about the latter end of the first and terminate in the eighth year of this king's reign: when he married Katharine princess of France, and closed up the differences betwixt England and that crown. Theobald. = This play, in the quarto edition, 1608, is styled *The Chronicle History of Henry*, &c. which seems to have been the title anciently appropriated to all Shakspeare's historical dramas. So, in *The Antipodes*, a comedy, by R. Brome, 1638:

"These lads can act the emperors' lives all over,
"And Shakspeare's *Chronicled Histories* to boot."

The players likewise, in the folio edition, 1623, rank these pieces under the title of *Histories*. — It is evident that a play on this subject had been performed before the year 1592. Nash, in *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil*, dated 1592, says, "what a glorious thing it is to have *Henry the Fifth* represented on the stage, leading the French king prisoner, and forcing both him and the Dolphin to sweare fealtie." — Perhaps this is the same play as was thus entered in the books of the Stationers' Company: "Tho. Strode] May 2, 1594. A booke intituled *The famous Victories of Henry the Fift, containing the honorable Battle of Agincourt*." There are two more entries of a play of *Henry V.* viz. between 1596 und 1615, and one August 14th, 1600. I have two copies of it in my possession; one without date, (which seems much the elder of the two,) and another, (apparently printed from it,) dated 1617, though printed by Bernard Alsop, (who was printer of the other edition,) and sold by the same person, and at the same place. Alsop appears to have been a printer before the year 1600, and was afterwards one of the twenty appointed by decree of the Star-chamber to print for this kingdom. I believe, however, this piece to have been prior to that of Shakspeare for several reasons. First, because it is highly probable that it is the very "displeasing play" alluded to in the epilogue to *The Second Part of King Henry IV.* — *for Oldcastle died a martyr*. Oldcastle is the Falstaff of the piece, which is despicable, and full of ribaldry and impiety from the first scene to the last. — Secondly, because Shakspeare seems to have taken not a few hints from it; for it comprehends, in some measure, the story of the two Parts of *Henry IV.* as well as of *Henry V.*: and no ignorance, I think, could debase the gold of Shakspeare into such dross; though no chemistry but that of Shakspeare could exalt such base metal into gold. — When the Prince of Wales, in *Henry IV.*, calls Falstaff *my old lad of the Castle*, it is probably but a sneering allusion to the deserved fate which this performance met with; for there is no proof that our poet was ever obliged to change the name of Oldcastle into that of Falstaff, though there is an absolute certainty that this piece must have been condemned by any audience before whom it was ever represented. — Lastly, because it appears (as Dr. Farmer has observed) from the *Jests* of the famous comedian, Tarlton, 4to. 1611, that he had been particularly

celebrated in the part of the Clown, [2]) in *Henry V.* and though this character does not exist in our play, we find it in the other, which, for the reasons already enumerated, I suppose to have been prior to this. — This anonymous play of *Henry V.* is neither divided into Acts or Scenes, is uncommonly short, and has all the appearance of having been imperfectly taken down during the representation. As much of it appears to have been omitted, we may suppose that the author did not think it convenient for his reputation to publish a more ample copy. — There is, indeed, a play, called *Sir John Oldcastle,* published in 1600, with the name of *William Shakspeare* prefixed to it. The prologue being very short, I shall quote it, as it serves to prove that a former piece, in which the character of *Oldcastle* was introduced, had given great offence:

"The doubtful title (gentlemen) prefixt
"Upon the argument we have in hand,
"May breed suspense, and wrongfully disturbe
"The peaceful quiet of your settled thoughts.
"To stop which scruple, let this breefe suffice:
"It is no *pamper'd glutton* we present,
"Nor *aged councellour to youthful sinne;*
"But one, whose vertue shone above the rest,
"A valiant martyr, and a vertuous peere;
"In whose true faith and loyalty exprest
"Unto his soveraigne, and his countries weale,
"We strive to pay that tribute of our love
"Your favours merit: let faire truth be grac'd,
"Since forg'd invention former time defac'd."

STEEVENS.

The piece to which Nash alludes is the old anonymous play of *King Henry V.*, which had been exhibited before the year 1589, Tarlton, the comedian, who performed in it both the parts of the chief justice and the clown, having died in that year. It was entered on the Stationers' books in 1594, and, I believe, printed in that year, though I have not met with a copy of that date. An edition of it, printed in 1598, was in the valuable collection of Dr. Wright. — The play before us appears to have been written in the middle of the year 1599. — The old *King Henry V.* may be found among *Six old Plays on which Shakspeare founded,* &c. printed by S. Leacroft, 1778. MALONE. == This play has many scenes of high dignity, and many of easy merriment. The character of the king is well supported, except in his courtship, where he has neither the vivacity of Hal, nor the grandeur of Henry. The humour of Pistol is very happily continued: his character has perhaps been the model of all the bullies that have yet appeared on the English stage. — The lines given to the Chorus have many admirers; but the truth is, that in them a little may be praised, and much must be forgiven; nor can it be easily discovered why the intelligence given by the Chorus is more necessary in this play than in many others where it is omitted. The great defect of this play is the emptiness and narrowness of the last act, which a very little diligence might have easily avoided. JOHNSON. ==

XXI. KING HENRY VI.

PART I.

THE historical transactions contained in this play, take in the compass of above thirty years. I must observe, however, that our author, in the three parts of *Henry VI.* has not been very precise to the date and disposition of his facts; but shuffled them, backwards and forwards, out of time. For instance, the lord Talbot is killed at the end of the Fourth Act of this play, who in reality did not fall till the 13th of July, 1453: and *The Second Part of Henry VI.* opens with the marriage of the king, which was solemnized eight years before Talbot's death, in the year 1445. Again, in the Second Part, dame Eleanor Cobham is introduced to insult Queen Margaret! though her penance and banishment for sorcery happened three years before that princess came over to England. I could point out many other transgressions against history, as far as the order of time is concerned. Indeed, though there are several master-strokes in these three plays, which incontestibly betray the workmanship of Shakspeare; yet I am almost doubtful, whether they were entirely of his writing. And unless they were wrote by him very early, I should rather imagine them to have been brought to him as a director of the stage; and so have received some finishing beauties at his hand. An accurate observer will easily see, the diction of them is more obsolete, and the numbers more mean and prosaical, than in the generality of his genuine compositions. THEOBALD. == Like many others, I was long struck with the many evident *Shakspearianisms* in these plays, which appeared to me to carry such decisive weight, that I could scarcely bring myself to examine with attention any of the arguments that have been urged against his being the author of them. But I should have adverted to a very striking circumstance which distinguishes this *first* part from the other parts of *King Henry VI.* This circumstance is, that none of these Shakspearian passages are to be found here, though several are scattered through the two other parts. I am therefore decisively of opinion that *this* play was not written by Shakspeare. I would here request the reader to attend particularly to the versification of this piece, (of which almost every line has a pause at the end,) which is so different from that of Shakspeare's undoubted plays, and of the greater part of the two succeeding pieces, as *altered* by him, and so exactly corresponds with that of the tragedies written by others before and about the time of his first commencing author, that this alone might decide the question, without taking into the account the numerous classical allusions which are found in this first part. — With respect to the *second* and *third* parts of *King Henry VI.* or, as they were originally called, *The Contention of the Two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster,* they stand, in my apprehension, on a very different ground from that of this first part, or, as I believe it was anciently called, *The Play of King Henry VI. — The Contention,* &c. printed in two parts, in quarto, 1600, was, I conceive, the production of some playwright who preceded, or was contemporary with Shakspeare; and out of that piece he formed the two plays which are now denominated the *Second* and *Third* Parts of *King Henry VI.*; as, out of the old plays of *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew,* he formed two other plays with the same titles. — This old play of *King Henry VI.* now before us, or as our author's editors have called it, the *first* part of *King Henry VI.* I suppose, to have been written in 1589, or before. The disposition of facts in these three plays, not always corresponding with the dates, which Mr. Theobald mentions, and the want of uniformity and consistency in the series of events exhibited, may perhaps be in some measure accounted for by the hypothesis now stated. As to our author's having accepted these pieces as a *director* of the stage, he had, I fear, no pretension to such a situation at so early a period. MALONE. == The chief argument on which the first paragraph of the foregoing note depends, is not, in my opinion, conclusive. This historical play might have been one of our author's earliest dramatic efforts; and almost every young poet begins his career by imitation. Shakspeare, therefore, till he felt his own strength, perhaps servilely conformed to the style and manner of his predecessors. STEEVENS. == Of this play there is no copy earlier than that of the folio in 1623, though the two succeeding parts are extant in two editions in quarto. That the second and third parts were published without the first, may be admitted as no weak proof that the copies were surreptitiously obtained, and that the printers of that time gave the public those plays, not such as the author designed, but such as they could get them. That this play was written before the two others is indubitably collected from the series of events; that it was written and played before *Henry the Fifth* is apparent, because in the epilogue there is mention made of this play, and not of the other parts:

"Henry the sixth in swaddling bands crown'd king,
"Whose state so many had the managing,
"That they lost France, and made his England bleed:
"Which oft our stage hath shown."

France is lost in this play. The two following contain, as the old title imports, the contention of the houses of York and Lancaster. — The second and third parts of *Henry VI.* were printed in 1600. When *Henry V.* was written, we know not, but it was printed likewise in 1600, and therefore before the publication of the first and second parts. The first part of *Henry VI.* had been often *shown on the stage,* and would certainly have appeared in its place, had the author been the publisher. JOHNSON. == That the second and third parts (as they are now called) were printed without the first, is a proof, in my apprehension, that they were not written by the author of the first; and the title of *The Contention of the Houses of York and Lancaster,* being affixed to the two pieces which were printed in quarto, 1600, is a proof that they were a distinct work, commencing where the other ended, but not written at the same time; and that this play was never known by the name of *The First Part of King Henry VI.* till Heminge and Condell gave it this title in their volume, to distinguish it from the two subsequent plays; which being *altered* by Shakspeare, assumed the new titles of *The Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI.* that they might not be confounded with the original pieces on which they were formed. This first part was, I conceive, originally called *The Historical Play of King Henry VI.* MALONE. ==

XXII. KING HENRY VI.

PART II.

THIS and *The Third Part of King Henry VI.* contain that troublesome period of this prince's reign which took in the whole contention betwixt the houses of York and Lancaster: and under that title were these two plays first acted and published. The present scene opens with King Henry's marriage, which was in the twenty-third year of his reign [A. D. 1445]; and closes with the first battle fought at St. Alban's and won by the York faction, in the thirty-third year of his reign [A. D. 1455]: so that it comprizes the history and transactions of ten years. THEOBALD. == This play was altered by *Crowne,* and acted in the year 1681. STEEVENS. == *The Contention of the Two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* in two parts, was published in quarto, in 1600; and the first part was entered on the Stationers' books, (as Mr. Steevens has observed,) March 12, 1593-94. On these two plays, which I believe to have been written by some preceding author, before the year 1590, Shakspeare formed, as I conceive, this and the following drama; altering, retrenching, or amplifying, as he thought proper. In the printing of these plays, all the lines printed in the usual manner, are found in the original quarto plays (or at least with such minute variations as are not worth noticing): and those, I conceive, Shakspeare adopted as he found them. The lines to which inverted commas are prefixed, were, if my hypothesis be well founded, retouched, and greatly improved by him; and those with asterisks were his own original production; the embroidery with which he ornamented the coarse stuff that had been awkwardly made up for the stage by some of his contemporaries. The speeches which he new-modelled, he improved, sometimes by amplification, and sometimes by retrenchment. — These two pieces, I imagine, were produced in their present form in 1591. Dr. Johnson observes very justly, that these two parts were not written without a *dependance* on the first. Undoubtedly not; the old play of *King Henry VI.* (or, as it is now called, *The First Part,*) certainly had been exhibited before these were written in *any form.* But it does not follow from this concession, either that *The Contention of the Two Houses,* &c. in two parts, was written by the author of the former play, or that Shakspeare was the author of these two pieces as they *originally appeared.* MALONE. == In Mr. Malone's new edition, we find some alterations and additions to his asterisks and inverted commas. The whole is conjectural, and shows how little is known with certainty respecting Shakspeare's works. CHALMERS. ==

XXIII. KING HENRY VI.

PART III.

THE action of this play (which was at first printed under this title, *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York, and the good King Henry the Sixth; or, The Second Part of the Contention of York and Lancaster,*) opens just after the first battle of Saint Alban's, [May 23, 1455,] wherein the York faction carried the day; and closes with the murder of King Henry VI. and the birth of Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward V. [November 4, 1471.] So that this history takes in the space of full sixteen years. THEOBALD. == I have never seen the quarto copy of the *Second* part of THE WHOLE CONTENTION, &c. printed by *Valentine Simmes* for Thomas Millington, 1600; but the copy printed by W. W. for Thomas Millington, 1600, is now before me; and it is not precisely the same with that described by Mr. Pope and Mr. Theobald, nor does the undated edition (printed, in fact, in 1619,) correspond with their description. The title of the piece printed in 1600, by W. W., is as follows: *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke, and the Death of good King Henrie the Sixt: With the Whole Contention between the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke: as it was sundry Times acted by the Right Honourable* the Earle of Pembrooke his Servants. *Printed at London by W. W. for Thomas Millington, and are to be sold at his Shoppe under St. Peter's Church in Cornewall,* [3]) 1600. On this piece Shakspeare, as I conceive, in 1591, formed the drama before us. MALONE. == The present historical drama was altered by Crowne, and brought on the stage in the year 1680, under the title of *The Miseries of Civil War.* Surely the works of Shakspeare could have been little read at that period; for Crowne, in his Prologue, declares the play to be entirely his own composition:

"For by his feeble skill 'tis built alone,
"The divine Shakspeare *did not lay one stone.*"

Whereas the very first scene is that of Jack Cade copied almost verbatim from *The Second Part of King Henry VI.*, and several others from this third part, with as little variation. STEEVENS. == The three parts of *KingHenry VI.* are suspected, by Mr. Theobald, of being supposititious, and are declared, by Dr. Warburton, to be certainly not Shakspeare's. Mr. Theobald's suspicion arises from some obsolete words; but the phraseology is like the rest of

2) Mr. Oldys, in a manuscript note in his copy of Langbaine, says, that Tarleton appeared in the character of the Judge who receives the box on the ear. This judge is likewise a character in the old play. I may add, on the authority of the books at Stationers' Hall, that Tarleton published what he called his *Farewell,* a ballad, in Sept. 1588. In Oct. 1589, was entered, "Tarleton's *Repentance, and his Farewell to his Friends in his Sickness a little before his Death;*" in 1590, "Tarleton's *Newes out of Purgatorie;*" and in the same year, "*A pleasaunt Ditty Dialogue-wise betweene Tarleton's Ghost and Robyn Goodfellowe.*" *Steevens.*

3) i. e. Cornhill.

our author's style, and single words, of which however I do not observe more than two, can conclude little. — Dr. Warburton gives no reason, but I suppose him to judge upon deeper principles and more comprehensive views, and to draw his opinion from the general effect and spirit of the composition, which he thinks inferior to the other historical plays. — From mere inferiority, nothing can be inferred; in the production of wit there will be inequality. Sometimes judgment will err, and sometimes the matter itself will defeat the artist. Of every author's works, one will be the best, and one will be the worst. The colours are not equally pleasing, nor the attitudes equally graceful, in all the pictures of Titian or Reynolds. — Dissimilitude of style and heterogeneousness of sentiment, may sufficiently show that a work does not really belong to the reputed author. But in these plays no such marks of spuriousness are found. The diction, the versification, and the figures, are Shakspeare's. These plays, considered, without regard to characters and incidents, merely as narratives in verse, are more happily conceived, and more accurately finished than those of *K. John, Richard II.*, or the tragic scenes of *King Henry IV.* and *V.* If we take these plays from Shakspeare, to whom shall they be given? What author of that age had the same easiness of expression and fluency of numbers? — Having considered the evidence given by the plays themselves, and found it in their favour, let us now inquire what corroboration can be gained from other testimony. They are ascribed to Shakspeare by the first editors, whose attestation may be received in questions of fact, however unskilfully they superintended their edition. They seem to be declared genuine by the voice of Shakspeare himself, who refers to the second play in his epilogue to *King Henry V.*, and apparently connects the first act of *King Richard III.* with the last of *The Third Part of King Henry VI.* If it be objected that the plays were popular, and that therefore he alluded to them as well known; it may be answered, with equal probability, that the natural passions of a poet would have disposed him to separate his own works from those of an inferior hand. And, indeed, if an author's own testimony is to be overthrown by speculative criticism, no man can be any longer secure of literary reputation. — Of these three plays I think the second the best. The truth is, that they have not sufficient variety of action, for the incidents are too often of the same kind; yet many of the characters are well discriminated. King Henry, and his queen, king Edward, the duke of Gloster, and the earl of Warwick, are very strongly and distinctly painted. — The old copies of the two latter parts of *King Henry VI.* and of *King Henry V.* are so apparently imperfect and mutilated, that there is no reason for supposing them the first draughts of Shakspeare. I am inclined to believe them copies taken by some auditor, who wrote down, during the representation, what the time would permit, then perhaps filled up some of his omissions at a second or third hearing, and, when he had by this method formed something like a play, sent it to the printer. Johnson. ==

XXIV. KING RICHARD III.

This tragedy, though it is called the life and death of this prince, comprizes, at most, but the last eight years of his time; for it opens with George duke of Clarence being clapped up in the Tower, which happened in the beginning of the year 1477; and closes with the death of Richard at Bosworth field, which battle was fought on the 22d of August, in the year 1485. Theobald. == It appears that several dramas on the present subject had been written before Shakspeare attempted it. This play was first entered at Stationers' Hall by Andrew Wise, Oct. 20, 1597, under the title of *The Tragedie of King Richard the Third, with the Death of the Duke of Clarence.* Before this, viz. Aug. 15, 1586, was entered, *A tragical Report of King Richard the Third, a Ballad.* It may be necessary to remark that the words, *song, ballad, enterlude* and *play,* were often synonymously used. Steevens. == This play was written, I imagine, in the year 1593. *The Legend of King Richard III.* by Francis Seagars, was printed in the first edition of *The Mirrour for Magistrates,* 1559, and in that of 1575, and 1587, but Shakspeare does not appear to be indebted to it. In a subsequent edition of that book printed in 1610, the old legend was omitted, and a new one inserted, by Richard Niccols, who has very freely copied the play before us. In 1597, when this tragedy was published, Niccols, as Mr. Warton has observed, was but thirteen years old. *Hist. of Poetry,* Vol. III. p. 267. — The real length of time in this piece is fourteen years; not eight years, (as Mr. Theobald supposed:) for the second scene commences with the funeral of king Henry VI. who, according to the received account, was murdered on the 21st of May, 1471. The imprisonment of Clarence, which is represented previously in the first scene, did not in fact take place till 1477-78. — It has been since observed to me by Mr. Elderton, (who is of opinion that Richard was charged with this murder by the Lancastrian historians without any foundation,) that "it appears on the face of the public accounts allowed in the exchequer for the maintenance of king Henry and his numerous attendants in the Tower, that he lived to the 12th of June, which was twenty-two days after the time assigned for his pretended assassination; was exposed to the public view in St. Paul's for some days, and interred at Chertsey with much solemnity, and at no inconsiderable expence." Malone. == This is one of the most celebrated of our author's performances; yet I know not whether it has not happened to him as to others, to be praised most, when praise is not most deserved. That this play has scenes noble in themselves, and very well contrived to strike in the exhibition, cannot be denied. But some parts are trifling, others shocking, and some improbable. Johnson. == I agree entirely with Dr. Johnson in thinking that this play from its first exhibition to the present hour has been estimated greatly beyond its merit. From the many allusions to it in books of that age, and the great number of editions it passed through, I suspect it was more often represented and more admired than any of our author's tragedies. Its popularity perhaps in some measure arose from the detestation in which Richard's character was justly held, which must have operated more strongly on those whose grandfathers might have lived near his time; and from its being patronized by the queen on the throne, who probably was not a little pleased at seeing king Henry VII. placed in the only favourable light, in which he could have been exhibited on the scene. Malone. == I most cordially join with Dr. Johnson and Mr. Malone in their opinions; and yet perhaps they have overlooked one cause of the success of this tragedy. The part of Richard is, perhaps, beyond all others variegated, and consequently favourable to a judicious performer. It comprehends, indeed, a trait of almost every species of character on the stage. The hero, the lover, the statesman, the buffoon, the hypocrite, the hardened and repenting sinner, &c. are to be found within its compass. No wonder, therefore, that the discriminating powers of a Burbage, a Garrick, and a Henderson, should at different periods have given it a popularity beyond other dramas of the same author. — Yet the favour with which this tragedy is now received, must also in some measure be imputed to Mr. Cibber's reformation of it, which, generally considered, is judicious: for what modern audience would patiently listen to the narrative of Clarence's dream, his subsequent expostulation with the murderers, the prattle of his children, the soliloquy of the scrivener, the tedious dialogue of the citizens, the ravings of Margaret, the gross terms thrown out by the duchess of York on Richard, the repeated progress to execution, the superfluous train of spectres, and other undramatic incumbrances, which must have prevented the more valuable parts of the play from rising into their present effect and consequence? — The expulsion of languor, therefore, must atone for such remaining want of probability as is inseparable from an historical drama into which the events of fourteen years are irregularly compressed. Steevens. ==

XXV. KING HENRY VIII.

We are unacquainted with any dramatic piece on the subject of Henry VIII. that preceded this of Shakspeare; and yet on the books of the Stationers' Company appears the following entry: "Nathaniel Butter] (who was one of our author's printers) Feb. 12, 1604. That he get good allowance for the enterlude of *King Henry VIII.* before he begin to print it; and with the warden's hand to yt, he is to have the same for his copy." Dr. Farmer, in a note on the epilogue to this play, observes, from Stowe, that Robert Greene had written somewhat on the same story. Steevens. == This historical drama comprizes a period of twelve years, commencing in the twelfth year of king Henry's reign (1521,) and ending with the christening of Elizabeth in 1533. Shakspeare has deviated from history in placing the death of queen Katharine before the birth of Elizabeth, for, in fact, Katharine did not die till 1536. — *King Henry VIII.* was written, I believe, in 1603. — Dr. Farmer, in a note on the epilogue, observes from Stowe, that "Robert Greene had written something on this story;" but this, I apprehend, was not a play, but some historical account of Henry's reign, written not by Robert Greene, the dramatic poet, but by some other person. In the list of "authors out of whom Stowe's *Annals* were compiled," prefixed to the last edition printed in his life-time, quarto, 1605, Robert Greene is enumerated with Robert de Brun, Robert Fabian, &c. and he is often quoted as an authority for facts in the margin of the history of that reign. Malone. == The play of *Henry the Eighth* is one of those which still keeps possession of the stage by the splendour of its pageantry. The coronation, about forty years ago, drew the people together in multitudes for a great part of the winter. [4]) Yet pomp is not the only merit of this play. The meek sorrows and virtuous distress of Katharine have furnished some scenes, which may be justly numbered among the greatest efforts of tragedy. But the genius of Shakspeare comes in and goes out with Katharine. Every other part may be easily conceived and easily written. Johnson. == The historical dramas are now concluded, of which the two parts of *Henry the Fourth,* and *Henry the Fifth,* are among the happiest of our author's compositions; and *King John, Richard the Third,* and *Henry the Eighth,* deservedly stand in the second class. Those whose curiosity would refer the historical scenes to their original, may consult Holinshed, and sometimes Hall: from Holinshed Shakspeare has often inserted whole speeches, with no more alteration than was necessary to the numbers of his verse. To transcribe them into the margin was unnecessary, because the original is easily examined, and they are seldom less perspicuous in the poet than in the historian. — To play histories, or to exhibit a succession of events by action or dialogue, was a common entertainment among our rude ancestors upon great festivities. The parish clerks once performed at Clerkenwell a play which lasted three days, containing *The History of the World.* Johnson. ==

4) Chetwood says that, during one season, it was exhibited seventy five times.

XXVI. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

The story was originally written by Lollius, an old Lombard author, and since by Chaucer. Pope. == Mr. Pope (after Dryden) informs us, that the story of *Troilus and Cressida* was originally the work of one Lollius, a Lombard; (of whom Gascoigne speaks in *Dan Bartholmewe his first Triumph:* "Since *Lollius* and Chaucer both, make doubt upon that glose,") but Dryden goes yet further. He declares it to have been written in Latin verse, and that Chaucer translated it. Lollius was a historiographer of Urbino in Italy. Shakspeare received the greatest part of his materials for the structure of this play from the *Troye Boke* of Lydgate. Lydgate was not much more than a translator of Guido of Columpna, who was of Messina in Sicily, and wrote his *History of Troy* in Latin, after Dictys Cretensis, and Dares Phrygius, in 1287. On these, as Mr. Warton observes, he engrafted many new romantic inventions, which the taste of his age dictated, and which the connection between Grecian and Gothic fiction easily admitted; at the same time comprehending in his plan the Theban and Argonautic stories from Ovid, Statius, and Valerius Flaccus. Guido's work was published at Cologne in 1477, again 1480: at Strasburgh, 1486, and *ibidem,* 1489. It appears to have been translated by Raoul le Feure, at Cologne, into French, from whom Caxton rendered it into English in 1471, under the title of his *Recuyel,* &c.; so that there must have been yet some earlier edition of Guido's performance than I have hitherto seen or heard of, unless his first translator had recourse to a manuscript. — Guido of Columpna is referred to as an authority by our own chronicler Grafton. Chaucer had made the loves of Troilus and Cressida famous, which very probably might have been Shakspeare's inducement to try their fortune on the stage. — Lydgate's *Troye Boke* was printed by Pynson, in 1513. In the books of the Stationers' Company, anno 1581, is entered "A proper ballad, dialogue-wise, between *Troilus and Cressida.*" Again, Feb. 7, 1602: "The booke of *Troilus and Cressida,* as it is acted by my Lo. Chamberlain's men." The first of these entries is in the name of Edward White, the second in that of Mr. Roberts. Again, Jan. 28, 1608, entered by Rich. Bonian and Hen. Whalley, "A booke called the history of *Troilus and Cressida.*" Steevens. == The entry in 1608-9 was made by the booksellers for whom this play was published in 1609. It was written, I conceive, in 1602. Malone. == Before this play of *Troilus and Cressida,* printed in 1609, is a bookseller's preface, showing that first impression to have been before the play had been acted, and that it was published without Shakspeare's knowledge, from a copy that had fallen into the bookseller's hands. Mr. Dryden thinks this one of the first of our author's plays: but, on the contrary, it may be judged, from the fore-mentioned preface, that it was one of his last; and the great number of observations, both moral and politic, with which this piece is crowded more than any other of his, seems to confirm my opinion. Pope. == We may learn, from this preface, that the original proprietors of Shakspeare's plays thought it their interest to keep them unprinted. The author of it adds, at the conclusion, these words: "Thank fortune for the 'scape it hath made among you, since, by the grand possessors' wills, I believe you should rather have prayed for them, than have been prayed," &c. By the *grand possessors,* I suppose, were meant *Heming* and *Condell.* It appears that the rival play-houses at that time made frequent depredations on one another's copies. In the Induction to *The Malcontent,* written by Webster, and augmented by Marston, 1606, is the following passage: — "I wonder you would play it, another company having interest in it." — "Why not *Malevole* in folio with us, as *Jeronimo* in decimo sexto with them? They taught

us a name for our play; we call it *One for another.*" — Again, T. Heywood, in his preface to *The English Traveller*, 1633: "Others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors, who think it against their peculiar profit to have them come in print." Steevens. = Notwithstanding what has been said by a *late editor*, [Mr. Capell,] I have a copy of the *first folio*, including *Troilus and Cressida*. Indeed, it was at first either *unknown* or *forgotten*. It does not, however, appear in the *list* of the plays, and is thrust in between the *histories* and the *tragedies*, without any enumeration of the pages, except, I think, on one leaf only. It differs entirely from the copy in the *second folio*. Farmer. = I have consulted at least *twenty copies* of the *first folio*, and *Troilus and Cressida* is not wanting in any of them. Steevens. = This play is more correctly written than most of Shakspeare's compositions, but it is not one of those in which either the extent of his views or elevation of his fancy is fully displayed. As the story abounded with materials, he has exerted little invention; but he has diversified his characters with great variety, and preserved them with great exactness. His vicious characters disgust but cannot corrupt, for both Cressida and Pandarus are detested and contemned. The comic characters seem to have been the favourites of the writer: they are of the superficial kind, and exhibit more of manners than nature; but they are copiously filled and powerfully impressed. Shakspeare has in his story followed, for the greater part, the old book of Caxton, which was then very popular; but the character of Thersites, of which it makes no mention, is a proof that this play was written after Chapman had published his version of Homer. Johnson. =

XXVII. TIMON OF ATHENS.

The story of the Misanthrope is told in almost every collection of the time, and particularly in two books, with which Shakspeare was intimately acquainted; the *Palace of Pleasure*, and the *English Plutarch*. Indeed from a passage in an old play, called *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, I conjecture that he had before made his appearance on the stage. Farmer. = The passage in *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, or *Pasquil and Katherine*, 1601, is this:

"Come, I'll be as sociable as *Timon of Athens*."

But the allusion is so slight, that it might as well have been borrowed from Plutarch or the novel. — Mr. Strutt the late engraver, to whom our antiquaries are under no inconsiderable obligations, had in his possession a MS. play on this subject. It appears to have been written, or transcribed, about the year 1600. There is a scene in it resembling Shakspeare's banquet given by Timon to his flatterers. Instead of *warm water* he sets before them *stones painted like artichokes*, and afterwards beats them out of the room. He then retires to the woods, attended by his faithful steward, who (like Kent in *King Lear*) has disguised himself to continue his services to his master. Timon in the last act is followed by his fickle mistress, &c. after he was reported to have discovered a hidden treasure by digging. The piece itself (though it appears to be the work of an academic) is a wretched one. The *personæ dramatis* are as follows: — "The actors' names. "Timon." "Laches, his faithful servant." "Eutrapelus, a dissolute young man." "Gelasimus, a cittie heyre." "Pseudocheus, a lying travailer." "Demeas, an orator." "Philargurus, a covetous churlish ould man." "Hermogenes, a fidler." "Abyssus, a usurer." "Lollio, a cuntrey clowne, Philargurus sonne." "Stilpo, Speusippus, Two lying philosophers." "Grunnio, a lean servant of Philargurus." "Obba, Tymon's butler." "Pœdio, Gelasimus page." "Two serjeants." "A sailor." "Callimela, Philargurus daughter." "Katte, her prattling nurse." "Scene, Athens." Steevens. = Shakspeare undoubtedly formed this play on the passage in Plutarch's *Life of Antony* relative to Timon, and not on the twenty-eighth novel of the first volume of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*; because he is there merely described as "a man-hater, of a strange and beastly nature," without any cause assigned; whereas Plutarch furnished our author with the following hint to work upon; "Antonius forsook the citie, and companie of his friendes, — saying, that he would lead Timon's life, because he had the like wrong offered him, that was offered unto Timon; and *for the unthankfulness of those he had done good unto, and whom he tooke to be his friendes, he was angry with all men, and would trust no man.*" — To the manuscript play mentioned by Mr. Steevens, our author, I have no doubt, was also indebted for some other circumstances. Here he found the faithful steward, the banquet-scene, and the story of Timon's being possessed of great sums of gold which he had dug up in the woods: a circumstance which he could not have had from Lucian, there being then no translation of the dialogue that relates to this subject. — Spon says, there is a building near Athens, yet remaining, called *Timon's Tower*. — *Timon of Athens* was written, I imagine, in the year 1610. Malone. = The play of *Timon* is a domestic tragedy, and therefore strongly fastens on the attention of the reader. In the plan there is not much art, but the incidents are natural, and the characters various and exact. The catastrophe affords a very powerful warning against that ostentatious liberality, which scatters bounty, but confers no benefits, and buys flattery, but not friendship. Johnson. =

XXVIII. CORIOLANUS.

This play I conjecture to have been written in the year 1610. — It comprehends a period of about four years, commencing with the secession to the *Mons Sacer* in the year of Rome 262, and ending with the death of Coriolanus, A. U. C. 266. Malone. = The whole history is exactly followed, and many of the principal speeches exactly copied, from the Life of Coriolanus in *Plutarch*. Pope. = The tragedy of *Coriolanus* is one of the most amusing of our author's performances. The old man's merriment in Menenius; the lofty lady's dignity in Volumnia; the bridal modesty in Virgilia; the patrician and military haughtiness in Coriolanus; the plebeian malignity and tribunitian insolence in Brutus and Sicinius, make a very pleasing and interesting variety: and the various revolutions of the hero's fortune fill the mind with anxious curiosity. There is, perhaps, too much bustle in the first Act, and too little in the last. Johnson. =

XXIX. JULIUS CÆSAR.

It appears from Peck's *Collection of divers curious historical Pieces*, &c. (appended to his *Memoirs*, &c. *of Oliver Cromwell*,) p. 14, that a Latin play on this subject had been written: "Epilogus Cæsaris interfecti, quomodo in scenam prodiit ea res, acta, in Ecclesia Christi, Oxon. Qui Epilogus a Magistro Ricardo Eedes, et scriptus et in proscenio ibidem dictus fuit, A. D. 1582." Meres, whose *Wit's Commonwealth* was published in 1598, enumerates Dr. Eedes among the best tragic writers of that time. Steevens. = From some words spoken by Polonius in *Hamlet*, I think it probable that there was an English play on this subject, before Shakspeare commenced a writer for the stage. — Stephen Gosson, in his *School of Abuse*, 1579, mentions a play entitled *The History of Cæsar and Pompey*. — William Alexander, afterwards earl of Sterline, wrote a tragedy on the story, and with the title of *Julius Cæsar*. It may be presumed that Shakspeare's play was posterior to his; for lord Sterline, when he composed his *Julius Cæsar*, was a very young author, and would hardly have ventured into that circle, within which the most eminent dramatic writer of England had already walked. The death of Cæsar, which is not exhibited but related to the audience, forms the catastrophe of his piece. In the two plays many parallel passages are found, which might, perhaps, have proceeded only from the two authors drawing from the same source. However, there are some reasons for thinking the coincidence more than accidental. — A passage in *The Tempest*, (p. 81,) seems to have been copied from one in *Darius*, another play of lord Sterline's, printed at Edinburgh, in 1603. His *Julius Cæsar* appeared in 1607, at a time when he was little acquainted with English writers; for both these pieces abound with scotticisms, which, in the subsequent folio edition, 1637, he corrected. But neither *The Tempest* nor the *Julius Cæsar* of our author was printed till 1623. — It should also be remembered, that our author has several plays, founded on subjects which had been previously treated by others. Of this kind are *King John*, *King Richard II.*, the two parts of *King Henry IV.*, *King Henry V.*, *King Richard III.*, *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and, I believe, *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens*, *and the Second and Third Part of King Henry VI.*, whereas no proof has hitherto been produced, that any contemporary writer ever presumed to new model a story that had already employed the pen of Shakspeare. On all these grounds it appears more probable, that Shakspeare was indebted to lord Sterline, than that lord Sterline borrowed from Shakspeare. If this reasoning be just, this play could not have appeared before the year 1607. I believe it was produced in that year. Malone. = The real length of time in *Julius Cæsar* is as follows: About the middle of February A. U. C. 709, a frantic festival, sacred to Pan, and called *Lupercalia*, was held in honour of *Cæsar*, when the regal crown was offered to him by Antony. On the 15th of March in the same year, he was slain. November 27, A. U. C. 710, the triumvirs met at a small island, formed by the river Rhenus, near Bononia, and there adjusted their cruel proscription. — A. U. C. 711, Brutus and Cassius were defeated near Philippi. Upton. = Of this tragedy many particular passages deserve regard, and the contention and reconcilement of Brutus and Cassius is universally celebrated; but I have never been strongly agitated in perusing it, and think it somewhat cold and unaffecting, compared with some other of Shakspeare's plays: his adherence to the real story, and to Roman manners, seems to have impeded the natural vigour of his genius. Johnson. =

XXX. ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

Among the entries in the books of the Stationers' Company, October 19, 1593, I find "A Booke entitled the Tragedie of *Cleopatra*." It is entered by Symon Waterson, for whom some of Daniel's works were printed; and therefore it is probably by that author, of whose *Cleopatra* there are several editions; and, among others, one in 1594. — In the same volumes, May 20, 1608, Edward Blount entered "A Booke called *Anthony and Cleopatra*." This is the first notice I have met with concerning any edition of this play more ancient than the folio, 1623. Steevens. = *Antony and Cleopatra* was written, I imagine, in the year 1608. Malone. = This play keeps curiosity always busy, and the passions always interested. The continual hurry of the action, the variety of incidents, and the quick succession of one personage to another, call the mind forward without intermission from the first Act to the last. But the power of delighting is derived principally from the frequent changes of the scene; for, except the feminine arts, some of which are too low, which distinguish Cleopatra, no character is very strongly discriminated. Upton, who did not easily miss what he desired to find, has discovered that the language of Antony is, with great skill and learning, made pompous and superb, according to his real practice. But I think his diction not distinguishable from that of others: the most tumid speech in the play is that which Cæsar makes to Octavia. — The events, of which the principal are described according to history, are produced without any art of connection or care of disposition. Johnson. =

XXXI. CYMBELINE.

Mr. Pope supposed the story of this play to have been borrowed from a novel of Boccace; but he was mistaken, as an imitation of it is found in an old story-book entitled *Westward for Smelts*. This imitation differs in as many particulars from the Italian novelist, as from Shakspeare, though they concur in some material parts of the fable. It was published in a quarto pamphlet 1603. This is the only copy of it which I have hitherto seen. — There is a late entry of it in the books of the Stationers' Company, Jan. 1619, where it is said to have been written by *Kitt of Kingston*. Steevens. = The only part of the fable which can be pronounced with certainty to be drawn from the above, is, Imogen's wandering about after Pisanio has left her in the forest: her being almost famished: and being taken at a subsequent period, into the service of the Roman General as a *page*. The general scheme of *Cymbeline* is, in my opinion, formed on Boccace's novel (Day 2, Nov. 9.) and Shakspeare has taken a circumstance from it, that is not mentioned in the other tale. See Act II. sc. ii. It appears from the preface to the old translation of the *Decamerone*, printed in 1620, that many of the novels had before received an English dress, and had been printed separately: "I know, most worthy lord, (says the printer in his Epistle Dedicatory,) that many of them [the novels of Boccace] *have long since been published before*, as stolen from the original author, and yet not beautified with his sweet style and elocution of phrase, neither savouring of his singular moral applications." — *Cymbeline*, I imagine, was written in the year 1609. The king, from whom the play takes its title, began his reign, according to Holinshed, in the 19th year of the reign of Augustus Cæsar; and the play commences in or about the twenty-fourth year of Cymbeline's reign, which was the forty-second year of the reign of Augustus, and the 16th of the Christian æra; notwithstanding which, Shakspeare has peopled Rome with modern Italians; *Philario*, *Iachimo*, &c. Cymbeline is said to have reigned thirty-five years, leaving at his death two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus. Malone. = An ancient translation, or rather, a deformed and interpolated imitation, of the ninth novel of the second day of the *Decameron* of Boccacio, has recently occurred. The title and Colophon of this rare piece, are as follows: — "This mater treateth of a merchaūtes wyfe that afterwarde went lyke a mā and becam a great lorde and was called Frederyke of Jennen afterwarde." — "Thus endeth this lytell story of lorde Frederyke. Imprỹted ī Anwarpe by me John Dusborowhge, dwellynge besyde ye Camer porte in the yere of our lorde god a. M. CCCCC. and xviij. — This novel exhibits the material features of its original; though the names of the characters are changed, their sentiments debased, and their conduct rendered still more improbable than in the scenes before us. John of Florence is the

Ambrogiulo, Ambrosius of Jennens the Bernabo of the story. Of the translator's elegance of imagination, and felicity of expression, the two following instances may be sufficient. He has converted the picturesque mole under the left breast of the lady, into a black wart on her left arm; and when at last, in a male habit, she discovers her sex, instead of displaying her bosom only, he obliges her to appear before the king and his whole court completely "naked, save that she had a karcher of sylke before hyr members." — The whole work is illustrated with wooden cuts representing every scene throughout the narrative. — I know not that any advantage is gained by the discovery of this antiquated piece, unless it serves to strengthen our belief that some more faithful translation had furnished Shakspeare with incidents which, in their original Italian, to him at least were inaccessible. Steevens. = This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expence of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation. Johnson. =

XXXII. TITUS ANDRONICUS.

It is observable, that this play is printed in the quarto of 1611, with exactness equal to that of the other books of those times. The first edition was probably corrected by the author, so that here is very little room for conjecture or emendation; and accordingly none of the editors have much molested this piece with officious criticism. Johnson. = There is an authority for ascribing this play to Shakspeare, which I think a very strong one, though not made use of, as I remember, by any of his commentators. It is given to him, among other plays, which are undoubtedly his, in a little book, called *Palladis Tamia, or the Second Part of Wit's Commonwealth*, written by Francis Meres, Maister of Arts, and printed at London in 1598 The other tragedies, enumerated as his in that book, are *King John, Richard the Second, Henry the Fourth, Richard the Third*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The comedies are, the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, the *Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Comedy of Errors*, the *Love's Labour's Lost*, the *Love's Labour Won*, and the *Merchant of Venice*. I have give this list, as it serves so far to ascertain the date of these plays; and also, as it contains a notice of a comedy of Shakspeare, the *Love's Labour Won*, not included in any collection of his works; nor, as far as I know, attributed to him by any other authority. If there should be a play in being with that title, though without Shakspeare's name, I should be glad to see it; and I think the editor would be sure of the public thanks, even if it should prove no better than the *Love's Labour's Lost*. Tyrwhitt. = The work of criticism on the plays of our author, is, I believe, generally found to extend or contract itself in proportion to the value of the piece under consideration; and we shall always do little where we desire but little should be done. I know not that this piece stands in need of much emendation; though it might be treated as condemned criminals are in some countries, — any experiments might be justifiably made on it. — The author, whoever he was, might have borrowed the story, the names, the characters, &c. from an old ballad, which is entered in the books of the Stationers' Company immediately after the play on the same subject. "John Danter] Feb. 6, 1593. A book entitled *A Noble Roman Historie of Titus Andronicus*." — "Enter'd unto him also the ballad thereof." — Entered again April 19, 1602, by Tho. Pavyer. — The reader will find it in Dr. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, Vol. I. Dr. Percy adds, that "there is reason to conclude that this play was rather improved by Shakspeare with a few fine touches of his pen, than originally writ by him; for not to mention that the style is less figurative than his others generally are, this tragedy is mentioned with discredit in the induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* in 1614, as one that had then been exhibited 'five-and-twenty or thirty years:' which, if we take the lowest number, throws it back to the year 1589, at which time Shakspeare was but 25: an earlier date than can be found for any other of his pieces, and if it does not clear him entirely of it, shews at least it was a first attempt." — Though we are obliged to Dr. Percy for his attempt to clear our great dramatic writer from the imputation of having produced this sanguinary performance, yet I cannot admit that the circumstance of its being discreditably mentioned by Ben Jonson, ought to have any weight; for Ben has not very sparingly censured *The Tempest*, and other pieces which are undoubtedly among the most finished works of Shakspeare. The whole of Ben's Prologue to *Every Man in his Humour*, is a malicious sneer on him. — Painter, in his *Palace of Pleasure*, Tom. II. speaks of the story of *Titus* as well known, and particularly mentions the cruelty of *Tamora:* And, in *A Knack to know a Knave*, 1594, is the following allusion to it:

"— — as welcome shall you be
"To me, my daughters, and my son-in-law,
"As *Titus* was unto the Roman senators,
"When he had made a conquest on the *Goths*."

Whatever were the motives of Heming and Condell for admitting this tragedy among those of Shakspeare, all it has gained by their favour is, to be delivered down to posterity with repeated remarks of contempt, — a Thersites babbling among heroes, and introduced only to be derided. Steevens. = On what principle the editors of the first complete edition of our poet's plays admitted this into their volume, cannot now be ascertained. The most probable reason that can be assigned, is, that he wrote a few lines in it, or gave some assistance to the author, in revising it, or in some other way aided him in bringing it forward on the stage. The tradition mentioned by Ravenscroft in the time of King James II. warrants us in making one or other of these suppositions. "I have been told" (says he in his preface to an alteration of this play published in 1687,) "by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally his, but brought by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master-touches to one or two of the principal parts or characters." — "A booke entitled *A noble Roman Historie of Titus Andronicus*" was entered at Stationers'-Hall, Feb. 6, 1593-4. This was undoubtedly the play as it was printed in that year (according to Langbaine, who alone appears to have seen the first edition,) and acted by the servants of the earls of Pembroke, Derby, and Sussex. It is observable that in the entry no author's name is mentioned, and that the play was originally performed by the same company of comedians who exhibited the old drama, entitled *The Contention of the Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, The* old *Taming of the Shrew*, and Marlowe's *King Edward II.* by whom not one of Shakspeare's plays is said to have been performed. — From Ben Jonson's Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614, we learn that *Andronicus* had been exhibited twenty-five or thirty years before; that is, according to the lowest computation, in 1589; or taking a middle period, which is perhaps more just, in 1587. — To enter into a long disquisition to prove this piece not to have been written by Shakspeare, would be an idle waste of time. To those who are not conversant with his writings, if particular passages were examined, more words would be necessary than the subject is worth: those who are well acquainted

with his works, cannot entertain a doubt on the question. — I will however mention one mode by which it may be easily ascertained. Let the reader only peruse a few lines of *Appius and Virginia, Tancred and Gismund, The Battle of Alcazar, Jeronimo, Selimus Emperor of the Turks, the Wounds of Civil War, The Wars of Cyrus, Locrine, Arden of Feversham, King Edward I., The Spanish Tragedy, Soliman and Perseda, King Leir*, the old *King John*, or any other of the pieces that were exhibited before the time of Shakspeare, and he will at once perceive that *Titus Andronicus* was coined in the same mint. — The testimony of Meres, mentioned in a preceding note, alone remains to be considered. His *enumerating* this among Shakspeare's plays may be accounted for in the same way in which we may account for its being *printed* by his fellow-comedians in the first folio edition of his works. Meres was in 1598, when his book appeared, intimately connected with Drayton, and *probably* acquainted with some of the dramatic poets of the time, from some or other of whom he might have heard that Shakspeare interested himself about this tragedy, or had written a few lines for the author. The internal evidence furnished by the piece itself, and proving it not to have been the production of Shakspeare, greatly outweighs any single testimony on the other side. Meres might have been misinformed, or inconsiderately have given credit to the rumour of the day. For six of the plays which he has mentioned, (exclusive of the evidence which the representation of the pieces themselves might have furnished,) he had perhaps no better authority than the whisper of the theatre; for they were not then printed. He could not have been deceived by a title-page, as Dr. Johnson supposes; for Shakspeare's name is *not* in the title-page of the edition printed in quarto in 1611, and therefore we may conclude, was not in the title-page of that in 1594, of which the other was undoubtedly a re-impression. Had this mean performance been the work of Shakspeare, can it be supposed that the booksellers would not have endeavoured to procure a sale for it by stamping his name upon it? — In short, the high antiquity of the piece, its entry on the Stationers' books, and being afterwards printed without the name of our author, its being performed by the servants of Lord Pembroke, &c. the stately march of the versification, the whole colour of the composition, its resemblance to several of our most ancient dramas, the dissimilitude of the style from our author's undoubted compositions, and the tradition mentioned by Ravenscroft, when some of his contemporaries had not been long dead, (for Lowin and Taylor, two of his fellow-comedians, were alive a few years before the Restoration, and Sir William D'Avenant, who had himself written for the stage in 1629, did not die till April 1668;) all these circumstances combined, prove with irresistible force that the play of *Titus Andronicus* has been erroneously ascribed to Shakspeare. Malone. = In the library of the duke of Bridgewater, at Ashridge, is a volume of old quarto plays, numbered R. 1. 7, in which the first is *Titus Andronicus*. This Mr. Todd has collated with the edition of 1793, and most of his collations may be seen in the edition of Shakspeare in 21 volumes, 1803, or in that of 1811. They appear of very little value. Mr. Malone, in his edition, marks a few lines here and there, which he supposes may have been written by Shakspeare; but these are of still less value, and might, in truth, have been written by many of Shakspeare's contemporaries. We have therefore passed them over without notice. Chalmers. = All the editors and critics agree with Mr. Theobald in supposing this play spurious. I see no reason for differing from them; for the colour of the style is wholly different from that of the other plays, and there is an attempt at regular versification, and artificial closes, not always inelegant, yet seldom pleasing. The barbarity of the spectacles, and the general massacre, which are here exhibited, can scarcely be conceived tolerable to any audience; yet we are told by Jonson, that they were not only borne but praised. That Shakspeare wrote any part, though Theobald declares it *incontestible*, I see no reason for believing. — The testimony produced at the beginning of this play, by which it is ascribed to Shakspeare, is by no means equal to the argument against its authenticity, arising from the total difference of conduct, language, and sentiments by which it stands apart from all the rest. Meres had probably no other evidence than that of a title-page, which, though in our time it he sufficient, was then of no great authority; for all the plays which were rejected by the first collectors of Shakspeare's works, and admitted in later editions, and again rejected by the critical editors, had Shakspeare's name on the title, as we must suppose, by the fraudulence of the printers, who, while there were yet no gazettes, nor advertisements, nor any means of circulating literary intelligence, could usurp at pleasure any celebrated name. Nor had Shakspeare any interest in detecting the imposture, as none of his fame or profit was produced by the press. — The chronology of this play does not prove it not to be Shakspeare's. If it had been written twenty-five years, in 1614, it might have been written when Shakspeare was twenty-five years old. When he left Warwickshire I know not, but at the age of twenty-five it was rather too late to fly for deer-stealing. — Ravenscroft, who in the reign of James II. revised this play, and restored it to the stage, tells us, in his preface, from a theatrical tradition, I suppose, which in his time might be of sufficient authority, that this play was touched in different parts by Shakspeare, but written by some other poet. I do not find Shakspeare's touches very discernible. Johnson. =

XXXIII. PERICLES.

The story on which this play is formed is of great antiquity. It is found in a book, once very popular, entitled *Gesta Romanorum*, which is supposed by Mr. Tyrwhitt, the learned editor of *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, 1775, to have been written five hundred years ago. The earliest impression of that work (which I have seen) was printed in 1488; [5]) in that edition the history of *Appolonius King of Tyre* makes the 153d chapter. It is likewise related by Gower in his *Confessio Amantis*, lib. viii. p. 175—85. edit. 1554. The Rev. Dr. Farmer has in his possession a fragment of a MS. poem on the same subject, which appears, from the handwriting and the metre, to be more ancient than Gower. There is also an ancient romance on this subject, called *Kyng Appolyn of Thyre*, translated from the French by Robert Copland, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1510. In 1576 William Howe had a licence for printing *The most excellent, pleasant, and variable Historie of the strange Adventures of Prince* Appolonius, Lucine *his wyfe, and* Tharsa *his daughter*. The author of *Pericles* having introduced Gower in his piece, it is reasonable to suppose that he chiefly followed the work of that poet. It is observable, that the hero of this tale is, in Gower's poem, as in the present play, called *Prince* of Tyre; in the *Gesta Romanorum*, and Copland's prose Romance, he is entitled *King*. Most of the incidents of the play are found in the *Conf. Amant.* and a few of Gower's expressions are occasionally borrowed. However, I think it is not unlikely, that there may have been (though I have not met with it) an early prose translation of this popular story, from the *Gest. Roman.* in which the name of Appolonius was changed to Pericles; to which, likewise, the author of this drama

5) There are several editions of the *Gesta Romanorum* before 1488. *Boucc.*

may have been indebted. In 1607 was published at London, by Valentine Sims, "The patterne of painful adventures, containing the most excellent, pleasant, and variable Historie of the strange Accidents that befell unto Prince Appolonius, the lady Lucina his wife, and Tharsia his daughter, wherein the uncertaintie of this world and the fickle state of man's life are lively described. Translated into English by T. Twine, Gent." I have never seen the book, but it was without doubt a republication of that published by W. Howe in 1576. — *Pericles* was entered on the Stationers' books, May 2, 1608, by Edward Blount, one of the printers of the first folio edition of Shakspeare's plays; but it did not appear in print till the following year, and then it was published not by Blount, but by Henry Gosson; who had probably anticipated the other, by getting a hasty transcript from a playhouse copy. There is, I believe, no play of our author's, perhaps I might say, in the English language, so incorrect as this. The most corrupt of Shakspeare's other dramas, compared with *Pericles*, is purity itself. The metre is seldom attended to; verse is frequently printed as prose, and the grossest errors abound in almost every page. I mention these circumstances, only as an apology to the reader for having taken somewhat more licence with this drama than would have been justifiable, if the copies of it now extant had been less disfigured by the negligence and ignorance of the printer or transcriber. The numerous corruptions that are found in the original edition in 1609, which have been carefully preserved and augmented in all the subsequent impressions, probably arose from its having been frequently exhibited on the stage. In the four quarto editions it is called *the much-admired play* of Pericles, Prince of Tyre; and it is mentioned by many ancient writers as a very popular performance. — For the division of this piece into scenes I am responsible, there being none found in the old copies. Malone. == Chaucer refers to the story of Apollonius, King of Tyre, in *The Man of Lawe's Prologue:*

"Or elles of Tyrius Appolonius,
"How that the cursed king Antiochus
"Beraft his doughter of hire maidenhede,
"That is so horrible a tale for to rede," &c.

There are three French translations of this tale, viz. — "La Chronique d'Appollin, Roy de Thyr;" 4to. Geneva, bl. l. no date; — and "Plaisante et agreable Histoire d'Appollonius Prince de Thyr en Affrique, et Roi d'Antioche; traduit par Gilles Corozet," 8vo. Paris, 1530; — and (in the seventh volume of the *Histoires Tragiques*, &c. 12mo. 1604, par François Belle-Forest, &c.) "Accidens diuers aduenus à Appollonie Roy des Tyriens: ses malheurs sur mer, ses pertes de femme & fille, & la fin heureuse de tous ensemble." — The popularity of this tale of Apollonius, may be inferred from the very numerous MS. in which it appears. — Both editions of Twine's translation are now before me. Thomas Twine was the continuator of Phaer's Virgil, which was left imperfect in the year 1558. — In Twine's book our hero is repeatedly called — "Prince of Tyrus." It is singular enough that this fable should have been republished in 1607, the play entered on the books of the Stationers' Company in 1608, and printed in 1609. — It is almost needless to observe that our dramatic *Pericles* has not the least resemblance to his historical namesake; though the adventures of the former are sometimes coincident with those of *Pyrocles*, the hero of Sidney's *Arcadia:* for the amorous, fugitive, shipwrecked, musical, tilting, despairing Prince of Tyre is an accomplished knight of Romance, disguised under the name of a statesman.

"Whose resistless eloquence
"Wielded at will a fierce democratie,
"Shook th' arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece."

As to Sidney's *Pyrocles, — Tros, Tyriusve, —*

"The world was all before him, where to choose
"His place of rest."

But *Pericles* was tied down to Athens, and could not be removed to a throne in Phœnicia. No poetic licence will permit a unique, classical, and conspicuous name to be thus unwarrantably transferred. A Prince of Madagascar must not be called Æneas, nor a Duke of Florence Mithridates: for such peculiar appellations would unseasonably remind us of their great original possessors. The playwright who indulges himself in these wanton and injudicious vagaries will always counteract his own purpose. Thus, as often as the appropriated name of *Pericles* occurs, it serves but to expose our author's gross departure from established manners and historic truth; for laborious fiction could not designedly produce two personages more opposite than the settled demagogue of Athens, and the vagabond Prince of Tyre. — It is remarkable, that many of our ancient writers were ambitious to exhibit Sidney's worthies on the stage; and when his subordinate agents were advanced to such honour, how happened it that *Pyrocles*, their leader, should be overlooked? Musidorus, (his companion,) Argalus and Parthenia, Phalantus and Eudora, Andromana, &c. furnished titles for different tragedies; and perhaps *Pyrocles*, in the present instance, was defrauded of a like distinction. The names invented or employed by Sidney had once such popularity, that they were sometimes borrowed by poets who did not profess to follow the direct current of his fables, or attend to the strict preservation of his characters. Nay, so high was the credit of this romance, that many a fashionable word and glowing phrase selected from it was applied, like a Promethean torch, to contemporary sonnets, and gave a transient life even to those dwarfish and enervate bantlings of the reluctant Muse. — I must add, that the *Appolyn* of the Story-book and Gower could have been rejected only to make room for a more favourite name; yet, however conciliating the name of *Pyrocles* might have been, that of *Pericles* could challenge no advantage with regard to general predilection. — I am aware, that a conclusive argument cannot be drawn from the false quantity in the second syllable of Pericles; and yet if the Athenian was in our author's mind, he might have been taught by repeated translations from fragments of satiric poets in Sir Thomas North's Plutarch, to call his hero Pericles; as, for instance, in the following couplet:

"O Chiron, tell me, first, art thou indeede the man
"Which did instruct *Pericles* thus? make aunswer if thou can," &c. &c.

Again, in George's Gascoigne's *Steele Glass:*

"*Pericles* stands in rancke amongst the rest."

Again, *ibidem:*

"*Pericles* was a famous man of warre."

Such therefore was the poetical pronunciation of this proper name, in the age of Shakspeare. The address of Persius to a youthful orator — *Magni pupille Pericli,* is familiar to the ear of every classical reader. — By some of the observations scattered over the following pages, it will be proved that the illegitimate *Pericles* occasionally adopts not merely the ideas of Sir Philip's heroes, but their very words and phraseology. All circumstances therefore considered, it is not improbable that our author designed his chief character to be called *Pyrocles*, not *Pericles*, however ignorance or accident might have shuffled the latter (a name of almost similar sound) into the place of the former. The true name, when once corrupted or changed in the theatre, was effectually withheld from the public; and every commentator on this play agrees in a belief, that it must have been printed by means of a copy "far as Deucalion off" from the manuscript which had received Shakspeare's revisal and improvement. Steevens.

== In this play we have exhibited more variations of text than in any other. This arises not only from the greater licence avowedly taken by Messrs. Steevens and Malone with the erroneous old copies, but from the pleasure these gentlemen always had in differing from each other; of what importance their *various readings* are, it would be unnecessary to state. Chalmers. == To a former edition of this play were subjoined two Dissertations: one written by Mr. Steevens, the other by me. In the latter I urged such arguments as then appeared to me to have weight, to prove that it was the entire work of Shakspeare, and one of his earliest compositions. Mr. Steevens on the other hand maintained, that it was originally the production of some elder playwright, and afterwards improved by our poet, whose hand was acknowledged to be visible in many scenes throughout the play. On a review of the various arguments which each of us produced in favour of his own hypothesis, I am now convinced that the theory of Mr. Steevens was right, and have no difficulty in acknowledging my own to be erroneous. — This play was entered on the Stationers' books, together with *Antony and Cleopatra,* in the year 1608, by Edward Blount, a bookseller of eminence, and one of the publishers of the first folio edition of Shakspeare's works. It was printed with his name in the title-page, in his lifetime; but this circumstance proves nothing; because by the knavery of booksellers other pieces were also ascribed to him in his lifetime, of which he indubitably wrote not a line. Nor is it necessary to urge in support of its genuineness, that at a subsequent period it was ascribed to him by several dramatic writers. I wish not to rely on any circumstance of that kind; because in all questions of this nature, internal evidence is the best that can be produced, and to every person intimately acquainted with our poet's writings, must in the present case be decisive. The congenial sentiments, the numerous expressions bearing a striking similitude to passages in his undisputed plays, some of the incidents, the situation of many of the persons, and in various places the colour of the style, all these combine to set the seal of Shakspeare on the play before us, and furnish us with internal and irresistible proofs, that a considerable portion of this piece, as it now appears, was written by him. The greater part of the last three acts, may, I think, on this ground be safely ascribed to him; and his hand may be traced occasionally in the other two divisions. — To alter, new-model, and improve the unsuccessful dramas of preceding writers, was, I believe, much more common in the time of Shakspeare than is generally supposed. This piece having been thus new-modelled by our poet, and enriched with many happy strokes from his pen, is unquestionably entitled to that place among his works, which it has now obtained. Malone. ==

XXXIV. KING LEAR.

The story of this tragedy had found its way into many ballads and other metrical pieces; yet Shakspeare seems to have been more indebted to *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his Three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella,* 1605, than to all the other performances together. It appears from the books at Stationers' Hall, that some play on this subject was entered by Edward White, May 14, 1594. "A booke entituled, *The moste famous Chronicle Hystorie of Leire King of England, and his three Daughters.*" A piece with the same title is entered again, May 8, 1605; and again, Nov. 26, 1607. From *The Mirror of Magistrates,* 1587, Shakspeare has, however, taken the hint for the behaviour of the steward, and the reply of Cordelia to her father concerning her future marriage. The episode of Gloster and his sons must have been borrowed from Sidney's *Arcadia,* as I have not found the least trace of it in any other work. For the first *King Lear,* see likewise *Six old Plays on which Shakspeare founded,* &c. published for S. Leacroft, Charing-Cross. — The reader will also find the story of *K. Lear,* in the second book and 10th canto of Spenser's *Fairy Queen,* and in the 15th chapter of the third book of Warner's *Albion's England,* 1602. — The whole of this play, however, could not have been written till after 1603. Harsnet's pamphlet, to which it contains so many references, was not published till that year. Steevens. == Camden, in his *Remains,* (p. 306. edit. 1674,) tells a similar story to this of *Leir* or *Lear,* of Ina king of the West Saxons; which, if the thing ever happened, probably was the real origin of the fable. See under the head of *Wise Speeches.* Percy. == The story told by Camden in his *Remaines,* 4to. 1605, is this: — "Ina, king of West Saxons, had three daughters, of whom upon a time he demanded whether they did love him, and so would do during their lives, above all others: the two elder sware deeply they would; the youngest, but the wisest, told her father flatly, without flattery, that albeit she did love, honour, and reverence him, and so would whilst she lived, as much as nature and daughterly dutie at the uttermost could expect, *yet she did think that one day it would come to passe that she should affect another more fervently, meaning her husband, when she were married;* who being made one flesh with her, as God by commandment had told, and nature had taught her, she was to cleave fast to, forsaking father and mother, kiffe and kinne. [Anonymous.] One referreth this to the daughters of King Leir." — It is, I think, more probable that Shakspeare had this passage in his thoughts, when he wrote Cordelia's reply concerning her future marriage, than *The Mirror for Magistrates,* as Camden's book was published recently before he appears to have composed this play, and that portion of it which is entitled *Wise Speeches,* where the foregoing passage is found, furnished him with a hint in *Coriolanus.* — The story of King Leir and his three daughters was originally told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, from whom Holinshed transcribed it; and in his Chronicle Shakspeare had certainly read it, as it occurs not far from that of *Cymbeline;* though the old play on the same subject probably *first* suggested to him the idea of making it the ground-work of a tragedy. — Geoffrey of Monmouth says, that Leir, who was the eldest son of Bladud, "nobly governed his country for sixty years." According to that historian, he died about 800 years before the birth of Christ. — The name of Leir's youngest daughter, which in Geoffrey's history, in Holinshed, *The Mirror for Magistrates,* and the old anonymous play, is *Cordeilla, Cordila,* or *Cordella,* Shakspeare found softened into *Cordelia,* by Spenser, in his Second Book, Canto X. The names of Edgar and Edmund were probably suggested by Holinshed. See his *Chronicle,* Vol. I. p. 122. "*Edgar,* the son of *Edmund,* brother of Athelstane," &c. — This tragedy, I believe, was written in 1605. Malone. == The tragedy of Lear is deservedly celebrated among the dramas of Shakspeare. There is perhaps no play which keeps the attention so strongly fixed; which so much agitates our passions, and interests our curiosity. The artful involutions of distinct interests, the striking oppositions of contrary characters, the sudden changes of fortune, and the quick succession of events, fill the mind with a perpetual tumult of indignation, pity, and hope. There is no scene which does not contribute to the aggravation of the distress or conduct of the action, and scarce a line which does not conduce to the progress of the scene. So powerful is the current of the poet's imagination, that the mind which once ventures within it, is hurried irresistibly along. — On the seeming improbability of Lear's conduct, it may be observed, that he is represented according to histories at that time vulgarly received as true.

And, perhaps, if we turn our thoughts upon the barbarity and ignorance of the age to which this story is referred, it will appear not so unlikely as while we estimate Lear's manners by our own. Such preference of one daughter to another, or resignation of dominion on such conditions, would be yet credible, if told of a petty prince of Guinea or Madagascar. Shakspeare, indeed, by the mention of his earls and dukes, has given us the idea of times more civilized, and of life regulated by softer manners; and the truth is, that though he so nicely discriminates, and so minutely describes the characters of men, he commonly neglects and confounds the characters of ages, by mingling customs ancient and modern, English and foreign. — My learned friend, Mr. Warton, [afterwards Dr. Joseph Warton,] who has in *The Adventurer* very minutely criticised this play, remarks, that the instances of cruelty are too savage and shocking, and that the intervention of Edmund destroys the simplicity of the story. These objections may, I think, be answered, by repeating, that the cruelty of the daughters is an historical fact, to which the poet has added little, having only drawn it into a series of dialogue and action. But I am not able to apologize with equal plausibility for the extrusion of Gloster's eyes, which seems an act too horrid to be endured in dramatic exhibition, and such as must always compel the mind to relieve its distresses by incredulity. Yet let it be remembered that our author well knew what would please the audience for which he wrote. — The injury done by Edmund to the simplicity of the action is abundantly recompensed by the addition of variety, by the art with which he is made to co-operate with the chief design, and the opportunity which he gives the poet of combining perfidy with perfidy, and connecting the wicked son with the wicked daughters, to impress this important moral, that villainy is never at a stop, that crimes lead to crimes, and at last terminate in ruin. — But though this moral be incidentally enforced, Shakspeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles. Yet this conduct is justified by *The Spectator*, who blames Tate for giving Cordelia success and happiness in his alteration, and declares, that in his opinion, *the tragedy has lost half its beauty*. Dennis has remarked, whether justly or not, that, to secure the favourable reception of *Cato, the town was poisoned with much false and abominable criticism*, and that endeavours had been used to discredit and decry poetical justice. A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life; but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded, that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or, that if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue. — In the present case the public has decided. [6]) Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add any thing to the general suffrage, I might relate, I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor. — There is another controversy among the critics concerning this play. It is disputed whether the predominant image in Lear's disordered mind be the loss of his kingdom or the cruelty of his daughters. Mr. Murphy, a very judicious critic, has evinced by induction of particular passages, that the cruelty of his daughters is the primary source of distress, and that the loss of royalty affects him only as a secondary and subordinate evil. He observes, with great justness, that Lear would move our compassion but little, did we not rather consider the injured father than the degraded king. — The story of this play, except the episode of Edmund, which is derived, I think, from Sidney, is taken originally from Geoffry of Monmouth, whom Holinshed generally copied; but perhaps immediately from an old historical ballad. My reason for believing that the play was posterior to the ballad, rather than the ballad to the play, is, that the ballad has nothing of Shakspeare's nocturnal tempest, which is too striking to have been omitted, and that it follows the chronicle; it has the rudiments of the play, but none of its amplifications: it first hinted Lear's madness, but did not array it in circumstances. The writer of the ballad added something to the history, which is a proof that he would have added more, if more had occurred to his mind, and more must have occurred if he had seen Shakspeare. Johnson. ═

6) Dr. Johnson should rather have said that the managers of the theatres royal have decided, and the public has been obliged to acquiesce in their decision. The altered play has the upper gallery on its side; the original drama was patronized by Addison. — "Victrix causa *Diis* placuit, sed victa *Catoni*." *Steevens.*

XXXV. ROMEO AND JULIET.

The original relater of the story on which this play is formed, was Luigi da Porto, a gentleman of Vicenza, who died in 1529. His novel did not appear till some years after his death; being first printed at Venice in 1535, under the title of *La Giulietta*. A second edition was published in 1539, and it was again reprinted at the same place in 1553, (without the author's name,) with the following title: *Historia nuovamente ritrovata di due nobili Amanti, con la loro pietosa morte; intervenuta gia nella cita di Verona, nell tempo del Signor Bartolomeo della Scala. Nuovamente stampata.* — In 1554 Bandello published, at Lucca, a novel on the same subject [Tom. II. Nov. ix.]; and shortly afterwards Boisteau exhibited one in French, founded on the Italian narratives, but varying from them in many particulars. From Boisteau's novel the same story was, in 1562, formed into an English poem, with considerable alterations and large additions, by Mr. Arthur Brooke. This piece was printed by Richard Tottle with the following title, written probably, according to the fashion of that time, by the bookseller: *The Tragicall Hystory of Romeus and Juliet, containing a rare Example of true Constancie: with the subtill Counsels, and Practices of an old Fryer, and their ill event.* It was again published by the same bookseller in 1582. Painter, in the second volume of his *Palace of Pleasure*, 1567, published a prose translation from the French of Boisteau, which he entitled *Rhomeo and Julietta*. Shakspeare had probably read Painter's novel, having taken one circumstance from it or some other prose translation of Boisteau; but his play was undoubtedly formed on the poem of Arthur Brooke. This is proved decisively by the following circumstance. 1. In the poem the prince of Verona is called *Escalus;* so also in the play. — In Painter's translation from Boisteau he is named *Signor Escala;* and sometimes *Lord Bartholomew of* Escala. 2. In Painter's novel the family of Romeo are called the *Montesches;* in the poem and in the play, the Montagues. 3. The messenger employed by friar Lawrence to carry a letter to Romeo to inform him when Juliet would awake from her trance, is in Painter's translation called *Anselme:* in the poem, and in the play, friar *John* is employed in this business. 4. The circumstance of Capulet's writing down the names of the guests whom he invites to supper, is found in the poem and in the play, but is not mentioned by Painter, nor is it found in the original Italian novel. 5. The residence of the Capulets, in the original, and in Painter, is called *Villa Franca;* in the poem and in the play, *Freetown*. 6. Several passages of *Romeo and Juliet* appear to have been formed on hints

furnished by the poem, of which no traces are found either in Painter's novel, or in Boisteau, or the original; and several expressions are borrowed from thence, which will be found in their proper places. — As what has been now stated has been controverted, (for what may not be controverted?) I should enter more largely into the subject, but various passages of the poem furnish such a decisive proof of the play's having been constructed upon it, as not to leave, in my apprehension, a shadow of doubt upon the subject. The question is not, whether Shakspeare had read other novels, or other poetical pieces, founded on this story, but whether the poem written by Arthur Brooke was the *basis* on which this play was built. — With respect to the name of Romeo, this also Shakspeare might have found in the poem; for in one place that name is given to him: or he might have had it from Painter's novel, from which or from some other prose translation of the same story he has, as I have already said, taken one circumstance not mentioned in the poem. In 1570 was entered on the Stationers' books by Henry Bynneman, *The Pitifull Hystory of ij lovying Italians*, which I suspect was a prose narrative of the story on which our author's play is constructed. — Breval says in his travels, that on a strict inquiry into the histories of Verona, he found that Shakspeare had varied very little from the truth, either in the names, characters, or other circumstances of his play. Malone. ═ It is plain, from more than one circumstance, that Shakspeare had read this novel, both in its prosaic and metrical form. He might likewise have met with other poetical pieces on the same subject. We are not yet at the end of our discoveries relative to the originals of our author's dramatic pieces. Steevens. ═ This play, Mr. Malone conjectures, was written in 1596. Chalmers. ═ This play is one of the most pleasing of our author's performances. The scenes are busy and various, the incidents numerous and important, the catastrophe irresistibly affecting, and the process of the action carried on with such probability, at least with such congruity to popular opinions, as tragedy requires. — Here is one of the few attempts of Shakspeare to exhibit the conversation of gentlemen, to represent the airy sprightliness of juvenile elegance. Mr. Dryden mentions a tradition, which might easily reach his time, of a declaration made by Shakspeare, that *he was obliged to kill Mercutio in the third Act, lest he should have been killed by him.* Yet he thinks him *no such formidable person, but that he might have lived through the play, and died in his bed*, without danger to the poet. Dryden well knew, had he been in quest of truth, in a pointed sentence, that more regard is commonly had to the words than the thought, and that it is very seldom to be rigorously understood. Mercutio's wit, gaiety, and courage, will always procure him friends that wish him a longer life; but his death is not precipitated, he has lived out the time allotted him in the construction of the play; nor do I doubt the ability of Shakspeare to have continued his existence, though some of his sallies are perhaps out of the reach of Dryden; whose genius was not very fertile of merriment, nor ductile to humour, but acute, argumentative, comprehensive, and sublime. — The Nurse is one of the characters in which the author delighted: he has, with great subtlety of distinction, drawn her at once loquacious and secret, obsequious and insolent, trusty and dishonest. — His comic scenes are happily wrought, but his pathetic strains are always polluted with some unexpected depravations. His persons, however distressed, *have a conceit left them in their misery, a miserable conceit.* [7]) Johnson. ═

7) This quotation is also found in the Preface to Dryden's Fables: "Just *John Littlewit* in *Bartholomew Fair*, who had a conceit (as he tells you) left him in his misery; a miserable conceit." *Steevens.*

XXXVI. HAMLET.

The original story on which this play is built, may be found in Saxo Grammaticus, the Danish historian. From thence Belleforest adopted it in his collection of novels, in seven volumes, which he began in 1564, and continued to publish through succeeding years. From this work, *The Hystorie of Hamblett*, quarto, bl. l. was translated. I have hitherto met with no earlier edition of the play than one in the year 1604, though it must have been performed before that time, as I have seen a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, which formerly belonged to Dr. Gabriel Harvey, (the antagonist of Nash,) who, in his own hand-writing, has set down *Hamlet*, as a performance with which he was well acquainted, in the year 1598. His words are these: "The younger sort take much delight in Shakspeare's Venus and Adonis; but his Lucrece, and his tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke, have it in them to please the wiser sort, 1598." — In the books of the Stationers' Company, this play was entered by James Roberts, July 26, 1602, under the title of "A booke called *The Revenge of Hamlett, Prince of Denmarke*, as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servantes." — In *Eastward Hoe*, by George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, 1605, is a fling at the hero of this tragedy. A footman named *Hamlet* enters, and a tankard-bearer asks him — "'Sfoote, *Hamlet*, are you *mad?*" — The frequent allusions of contemporary authors to this play sufficiently show its popularity. Thus, in Decker's *Bel-man's Nightwalkes*, 4to. 1612, we have — "But if any *mad Hamlet*, hearing this, smell villainie, and rush in by violence to see what the tawny diuels [gypsies] are dooing, then they excuse the fact," &c. Again, in an old collection of satirical poems, called *The Night-Raven*, is this couplet:

"I will not cry *Hamlet Revenge* my greeves,
"But I will call Hangman, Revenge on thieves."
Steevens.

Surely no satire was intended in *Eastward Hoe*, which was acted at Shakspeare's own playhouse, (Blackfriars,) by the children of the revels, in 1605. Malone. ═ The following particulars relative to the date of this piece, are borrowed from Dr. Farmer's *Essay on the Learning of Shakspeare*, pp. 85, 86. second edition: — "Greene, in the Epistle prefixed to his *Arcadia*, hath a lash at some 'vaine glorious tragedians,' and very plainly at Shakspeare in particular. — 'I leave all these to the mercy of their *mother-tongue*, that feed on nought but the crums that fall from the *translators* trencher. — That could scarcely *latinize* their neck verse if they should have neede, yet *English Seneca*, read by candlelight, yields many good sentences — hee will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say, *handfuls* of tragicall speeches.' — I cannot determine exactly when this *Epistle* was first published; but, I fancy, it will carry the original *Hamlet* somewhat further back than we have hitherto done: and it may be observed, that the oldest copy now extant is said to be 'enlarged to almost as much againe as it was.' *Gabriel Harvey* printed at the end of the year 1592, 'Foure Letters and certaine Sonnetts, especially touching *Robert Greene:*' in one of which his *Arcadia* is mentioned. Now *Nash*'s Epistle must have been previous to these, as *Gabriel* is quoted in it with applause; and the *Foure Letters* were the beginning of a quarrel. *Nash* replied in 'Strange News of the intercepting certaine Letters, and a Convoy of Verses, as they were going *privilie* to victual the *Low Countries*, 1593.' *Harvey* rejoined the same year in '*Pierce's* Supererogation, or a new Praise of the old Asse.' And *Nash* again, in 'Have with you to *Saffron Walden*, or *Gabriell Harvey's* Hunt is up;' containing a full answer to the eldest sonne of the haltermaker, 1596." — *Nash* died before 1606, as appears from an old comedy

called *The Return from Parnassus*. Steevens. == A play on the subject of *Hamlet* had been exhibited on the stage before the year 1589, of which Thomas Kyd was, I believe, the author. On that play, and on the bl. l. *Historie of Hamblet*, our poet, I conjecture, constructed the tragedy before us. The earliest edition of the prose-narrative which I have seen was printed in 1608, but it undoubtedly was a republication. — Shakspeare's *Hamlet* was written, if my conjecture be well founded, in 1600. Malone. == If the dramas of Shakspeare were to be characterised, each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the tragedy of Hamlet the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous, that the argument of the play would make a long tale. The scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity: with merriment that includes judicious and instructive observations; and solemnity not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. New characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness, and every personage produces the effect intended, from the apparition that in the first Act chills the blood with horror, to the fop in the last, that exposes affectation to just contempt. — The conduct is perhaps not wholly secure against objections. The action is indeed for the most part in continual progression, but there are some scenes which neither forward nor retard it. Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity. He plays the madman most, when he treats Ophelia with so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty. — Hamlet is, through the whole piece, rather an instrument than an agent. After he has, by the stratagem of the play, convicted the King, he makes no attempt to punish him; and his death is at last effected by an incident which Hamlet had no part in producing. — The catastrophe is not very happily produced; the exchange of weapons is rather an expedient of necessity, than a stroke of art. A scheme might easily be formed to kill Hamlet with the dagger, and Laertes with the bowl. — The poet is accused of having shown little regard to poetical justice, and may be charged with equal neglect of poetical probability. The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose; the revenge which he demands is not obtained, but by the death of him that was required to take it; and the gratification, which would arise from the destruction of an usurper and a murderer, is abated by the untimely death of Ophelia, the young, the beautiful, the harmless, and the pious. Johnson. ==

XXXVII. OTHELLO.

The story of Othello is taken from *Cynthio's Novels*. Pope. == I have not hitherto met with any translation of this novel (the seventh in the third decad) of so early a date as the age of Shakspeare; but undoubtedly many of those little pamphlets have perished between his time and ours. — It is highly probable that our author met with the name of *Othello* in some tale that has escaped our researches; as I likewise find it in Reynolds's *God's Revenge against Adultery*, standing in one of his Arguments as follows: "She marries *Othello*, an old German soldier." This History (the eighth) is professed to be an *Italian* one. Here also occurs the name of *Iago*. — It is likewise found, as Dr. Farmer observes, in "The History of the famous Euordanus Prince of Denmark, with the strange Adventures of Iago Prince of Saxonie; bl. l. 4to. London, 1605." — It may indeed be urged that these names were adopted from the tragedy before us: but I trust that every reader who is conversant with the peculiar style and method in which the work of honest John Reynolds is composed, will acquit him of the slightest familiarity with the scenes of Shakspeare. — This play was first entered at Stationers' Hall, Oct. 6, 1621, by Thomas Walkely. Steevens. == I have seen a French translation of *Cynthio*, by Gabriel Chappuys, Par. 1584. This is not a faithful one; and I suspect, through this medium the work came into English. Farmer. == This tragedy I have ascribed to the year 1604. Malone. == The time of this play may be ascertained from the following circumstances; Selymus the Second formed his design against Cyprus in 1569, and took it in 1571. This was the only attempt the Turks ever made upon that island after it came into the hands of the Venetians, (which was in the year 1473,) wherefore the time must fall in with some part of that interval. We learn from the play that there was a junction of the Turkish fleet at Rhodes, in order for the invasion of Cyprus, that it first came sailing towards Cyprus, then went to Rhodes, there met another squadron, and then resumed its way to Cyprus. These are real historical facts which happened when Mustapha, Selymus's general, attacked Cyprus in May, 1570, which therefore is the true period of this performance. See Knolles's *History of the Turks*, pp. 838, 846, 867. Reed. == The beauties of this play impress themselves so strongly upon the attention of the reader, that they can draw no aid from critical illustration. The fiery openness of Othello, magnanimous, artless, and credulous, boundless in his confidence, ardent in his affection, inflexible in his resolution, and obdurate in his revenge; the cool maliguity of Iago, silent in his resentment, subtle in his designs, and studious at once of his interest and his vengeance; the soft simplicity of Desdemona, confident of merit, and conscious of innocence, her artless perseverance in her suit, and her slowness to suspect that she can be suspected, are such proofs of Shakspeare's skill in human nature, as, I suppose, it is vain to seek in any modern writer. The gradual progress which Iago makes in the Moor's conviction, and the circumstances which he employs to inflame him, are so artfully natural, that, though it will perhaps not be said of him as he says of himself, that he is *a man not easily jealous*, yet we cannot but pity him, when at last we find him *perplexed in the extreme*. — There is always danger, lest wickedness, conjoined with abilities, should steal upon esteem, though it misses of approbation; but the character of Iago is so conducted, that he is from the first scene to the last hated and despised. — Even the inferior characters of this play would be very conspicuous in any other piece, not only for their justness, but their strength. Cassio is brave, benevolent, and honest; ruined only by his want of stubbornness to resist an insidious invitation. Roderigo's suspicious credulity, and impatient submission to the cheats which he sees practised upon him, and which by persuasion he suffers to be repeated, exhibit a strong picture of a weak mind betrayed by unlawful desires to a false friend; and the virtue of Emilia is such as we often find, worn loosely, but not cast off, easy to commit small crimes, but quickened and alarmed at atrocious villainies. — The scenes from the beginning to the end are busy, varied by happy interchanges, and regularly promoting the progression of the story; and the narrative in the end, though it tells but what is known already, yet is necessary to produce the death of Othello. — Had the scene opened in Cyprus, and the preceding incidents been occasionally related, there had been little wanting to a drama of the most exact and scrupulous regularity. Johnson. ==

PLAYS.