

**SIDELIGHTS *on***  
**SHAKESPEARE**

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**EDWIN GORDON LAWRENCE**

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SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE

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# SIDELIGHTS

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ON

# SHAKESPEARE

BY

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To

*The Immortal Spirit of William Shakespeare*

A POOR PLAYER WHO STRUTTED AND FRETTE<sup>D</sup> HIS HOUR  
UPON THE STAGE OF LIFE, AND THEN WAS SEEN  
NO MORE, BUT WHO LIVES TODAY AS THE  
DRAMATIST IN A MORE REAL SENSE  
THAN WHEN, IN THE GUISE OF  
MAN, HE WALKED THE EARTH

*This Book is Dedicated*

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## CHAPTER I

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# Shakespeare's Knowledge and Portrayal of Human Nature

AS WITH a wave of a wand, Shakespeare mysteriously called into being men and women of all lands, all climes, all temperaments, and all ages. He could not have known the originals of all the types that he produced. How then did he accomplish his task? Through an understanding of the nature of man. He knew that the emotions of men are similar the world over and that only in the expression of these emotions do men differ. It is this difference in the mode of expressing the feelings that move the heart and mind of humanity that produces the different types of men and women.

Different persons see the same things in different lights and express their emotions concerning them in different ways. It is this difference in perception and action that indicates the difference in characters. Perceiving this in human nature, Shakespeare drew the characters of Macbeth and Richard III. He represents both men as actuated by ambition, and yet so dissimilar are these characters in speech, action, and mode of procedure while in pursuit of their object as to appear to be impelled by different motives. They are both murderers, both usurpers, both actuated by the same motives, and both work

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according to the same principles but along lines peculiar to the characteristics of each individual.

The peculiar characteristic possessed by Macbeth that colored his ambition was the philosophical trend of his mind, therefore was he continually debating with himself on the wisdom and the consequences of his acts. On the other hand, the ambition of Richard III. was directed by his belief in the superiority of the intellect over all other powers, but his intellect was so saturated with cruelty that it prompted him to perform deeds that brought about his ruin. It was the misdirection of Richard's mental powers, and not his possession of them, that made him a murderer and a villain. These sidelights are necessary to a clear perception of character.

Thus Shakespeare depicts two beings of different temperaments who are representative types of characters governed by the same emotions but differing in the expression of them. This reveals what constitutes the difference in Shakespeare's characters, and partly accounts for his marvelous portrayal of them.

The grasping of this great truth that there is an underlying principle in human nature that governs the emotions and their expressions, enabled Shakespeare to produce two types of the wicked woman—Lady Macbeth and Goneril. One, intellectually immoral; the other, physically depraved.

Lady Macbeth's wickedness was tinged with determination. She would go on in any course, no matter what the penalty, provided she had made

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up her mind to do so. Determination was the main characteristic that colored the trait in the type of wicked woman represented by Lady Macbeth. Selfishness entered so largely into the making of Goneril that it produced in her a kind of wickedness different from that typified by Lady Macbeth. In order to gain a share in the kingdom, she lied to her father; to satisfy her passion, she was false to her husband; to possess the man of her choice, she murdered her sister; and when she found that her plans had miscarried, she took her own life. Both of these characters are women, both wicked, but because of the peculiar characteristics possessed by each they are different types of women who show their wickedness in different ways.

So also with two pure women of his creation—Desdemona and Cordelia. He lays hold of the basic trait that is the foundation to the characters of both these women and then develops those characters along different lines. Desdemona was of that type of women who will gladly lie in order to shield a loved one—lie, as it were, in the performance of a duty. Shakespeare understood that such women exist, therefore he made Desdemona a character true to nature when he caused her to lie in an endeavor to prevent the discovery of Othello's crime. On the other hand, there are women who will not tell a lie even though the heavens fall. Shakespeare knew there were such women in the world, consequently when he gave that trait to Cordelia he produced a different woman to Desdemona, but one

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just as natural. Thus Shakespeare depicts the difference between the conception of right and wrong of these two noble women. The same principle actuates both—the desire to do right, and the moral courage to do that right as they understand it, irrespective of the consequences. This same principle is apparent in both and is the governing force in both, the trait in each character showing the standpoint from which each viewed her duty. The main trait in Desdemona's character is obedience to her husband; that of Cordelia's obedience to truth.

The knowledge that it was a difference in viewpoint that produced the different types in human nature enabled Shakespeare to depict murders without being a murderer, to characterize madness without being mad, to draw women to perfection without being a woman, to create representative kings, peasants, philosophers and fools without being, in turn, a king, a peasant, a philosopher, or a fool. Instead of possessing all the traits that go to the making of these diverse types of humanity (the murderer, the madman, the woman), instead of being a complex character such as Nature never created, Shakespeare was merely the dramatist who saw the principles that govern human nature and applied them when creating the children of his brain. Through his ability to see and apply Nature's laws he was able to produce counterfeits that resemble closely the men and women of reality, and it is because he so saw and applied these laws that his productions have



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lived for over three hundred years and bid fair to exist until the end of time.

In life there is a predominating trait in all human beings, the exercise of which forms their characters and directs the current of their lives. Selfishness is the governing power in some; lust of power in others; desire for worldly wealth, love, fear, courage, virtue, sensuality, religion, in still others; but in every human being there is some one predominating and peculiar trait that singles out one person from another and gives each his individuality.

A strong proof that Shakespeare was aware of this principle in human nature, and knowingly applied it to his creatures of the stage, is discernible in his emphasizing the fact that the failure of King Henry VI. as a monarch was due to the fact that he was over conscientious regarding his behavior toward others but very lax in demanding and exacting conscientious treatment from them. He believed himself bound by his oath, but lost sight of the fact that his enemies were morally equally bound by their oaths. He held himself to a strict account, but he made excuses for others. This is why he was a weak king, and this is why he lost his crown to Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. Shakespeare realized that any trait or characteristic carried to an extreme is the means of unbalancing a character, consequently he used the goodness of Henry VI. for his undoing, and the wickedness of Richard III. for his. This was merely carrying out the principle that pervades all nature both material and human.

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If there is a superabundance of any mineral in a given piece of earth, that portion of the earth will be incapable of bringing forth certain fruits; if any trait is unduly developed in man, it unbalances him and makes him unable to control himself properly or to do his best work. It matters not whether the trait is good or bad, it will be productive of evil if it is composed of unequal proportions. Shakespeare himself says:

O! mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities:  
For naught so vile that on the earth doth live  
But to the earth some special good doth give;  
Nor aught so good, but, strain'd from that fair use,  
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse:  
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;  
And vice sometimes by action dignified.<sup>1</sup>

Thus virtue, in the person of Henry VI., being misapplied, turns vice; whereas vice, represented by the lie told by Desdemona to shield her husband, becomes, because of the virtuous intent, dignified. In like manner, the goodness of Henry VI., carried to unreasonable ends, was productive of evil; the intellectual strength of Richard III. and Iago, applied to evil purposes, turned these strong men into villains. Shakespeare was as immutable as Nature, causing all his characters to bear the consequences of their acts, and moving them on the stage of the theatre in accordance with the same principles that move men and women upon earth.

This natural principle was seized upon by Shake-

<sup>1</sup> "Romeo and Juliet," Act II. Scene III.

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speare and applied by him in the delineation of all his characters. Love of truth is the dominating trait in the character of Cordelia; determination or fixedness of purpose that of Lady Macbeth; cruelty that of Queen Margaret; belief in intellectual superiority over all other powers is the main trait in the character of Iago; ambition controls Macbeth; lust of power governs Cassius; religion predominates in Henry VI., while patriotism animates Brutus. Thus we see that Shakespeare placed in his characters traits that govern them in accordance with the laws of human nature, and as the causes that control them are similar to the causes that animate mankind they speak and act like human beings.

Nothing has been said in this chapter regarding Ariel, Caliban, and the Weird Sisters, because they are not natural characters, and Shakespeare could not have intended them to be. They are imaginary creations that typify the emotions, passions, and spirits of man. These embodiments of the fates, furies, and mysteries that are supposed to hover over mankind are purely the creations of Shakespeare's mind for which he is in no way indebted to Nature. They are wonderful creations of fancy, thoroughly Shakespearean in every way, but a consideration of them is not germane to the subject of this chapter.

While the author has stated that in his opinion Shakespeare was governed by no fixed rule, he is convinced that he was always controlled by a principle, exactly in the same manner that Nature is gov-

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erned. By principle is meant a power that acts inflexibly, continuously, and uniformly; a cause that is fundamental and necessarily produces results along certain lines; a power that brushes aside all rules. Whereas the word rule signifies a method of procedure through customary channels that is subject to change. Rules must give way to principles; they are qualified, principles are not. The laws of Nature are immutable, but when man works in harmony with them they never thwart or hinder him. So with the laws of Shakespeare. He looked into Nature and learned the secret of her power. He applied the selfsame principles she uses, and the result was that he produced creatures of his brain so lifelike, and apparently so little circumscribed, as to make them seem the work of Nature herself.

True, Shakespeare follows the arch-like development in the construction of his plays—that is, there is a gradual rise to the middle of the play and then as gradual a fall to the end in most of his works. This, however, cannot be called a rule in the sense that that word is commonly used. It is, on the other hand, distinctly a principle, as it underlies all his creations. As Nature, in all her works, is governed by the principle of growth and decay, so Shakespeare, in his dramas, is governed by the principle of the rise and fall of development. He seized on the law of Nature and worked it out in his plays. He was not fettered by rules, but was governed by a principle as fixed as that of gravitation. No rule of dramatic construction can be cited that Shake-

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speare has not broken, but no principle of Nature has ever been violated by him. He had no rules for fashioning his villains—Richard III. is not like Iago, nor is Lady Macbeth like Goneril. He had no rules for creating his kings—Richard II. is not like Claudius. He had no rules for drawing his lovers—Romeo is not like Benedick. But he did have principles, by means of which he drew all his characters and constructed all his plays. And it is because he was governed by principles and not by rules that his characters are dissimilar and yet all equally true, his plays unlike one another and yet each one the most perfect of its kind. No other dramatist has ever produced a comedy to equal *The Tempest*, a historical play to equal *Henry V.*, or a tragedy to equal *Macbeth*. In all these fields of dramatic literature Shakespeare reigns supreme, because he created by principle while others manufactured by rule.

When it is stated that Shakespeare was controlled by a governing principle in all his work, it is intended to mean that he worked in accordance with the laws of Nature and not from any preconceived plan such as the Aristotelian rules of unity. There is in Nature a great principle known as undulation which manifests itself in the ebb and flow of the tide, in hunger and satisfaction, in inhalation and exhalation. This is the principle that Shakespeare seized upon and used in the building of his plays. He did not deliberately set forth to employ the arch-like mode of plot construction, he did not measure each play to find the exact spot that was to indi-

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cate the center of the arch, but he understood the laws of Nature, and when he decided to write a play dealing with a particular subject, he gathered his material, and then proceeded to accomplish his object. Just as the ocean rises and falls in obedience to the principle of undulation, so do the plays of Shakespeare develop. Call this what you will—skill, chance, genius—it matters not by what name it is known, it is a force that worked as unerringly as the force of Nature. Nowhere throughout the Plays is any restraint apparent such as would surely arise from the use of rules. Precisely as when the inequality of the English language stood in the way of the expression of his thought and he supplied the deficiency by creating new words or altering old ones, when a strict compliance with the rules of iambic poetry would harden and mechanize his lines and the rule went by the board and not the purpose of the Poet, so also all rules had to give way to the building and unfolding of the plot. This is one of the great secrets of Shakespeare's power as shown in the construction of his plays, and it accounts for his ability to accomplish so much with the little material in the way of schooling that he possessed. Our own Lincoln had this same insight into Nature and her works, therefore was he able to construct the immortal Gettysburg address even though he had received less than one year's schooling. It is not schooling that develops the mind of man, it is education; and the best way to gain this education is by a study of Nature and of man. This

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Shakespeare did, and because he did it, he is Shakespeare. Very few persons received an education equal to that of the great Dramatist, but thousands upon thousands spent more time in artificial school-rooms than he. His place of study was the world—his ear close to the mouth of Nature, his finger upon the pulse of man. He loved Nature and she spoke to him in her manifold voices and told him her secrets. He was a child of the immortal spirit of Nature, and this same spirit passing into the children of his brain impregnated them with a similar immortality. In no other way can the author account for the being who was known upon earth as William Shakespeare.

## CHAPTER II

### Types of Shakespeare's Characters

IT is a mighty task to attempt to analyze and describe the characters of Shakespeare. They are all so human, all so moved and controlled by the manifold emotions of mankind, that it is a difficult matter to fathom their mysteries and peer into their souls unless one understands the workings of Nature. In his earlier plays Shakespeare shows the influence that external nature had upon him, but in his later plays he devotes his genius to creating types of human nature. He turns from the trees, the flowers, the clouds, the streams, and the heavenly planets to a contemplation of the love, hate, remorse, jealousy, ambition, joy, and sorrow of the human mind and human heart. The marvelous power of Shakespeare is nowhere more apparent than in his lifelike portrayal of character. His men and women, his kings and queens, his philosophers and his fools all wear such a human garb that it requires little stretch of the imagination to make one feel, while poring over the pages of the great magician, that the characters really live and breathe and that one is actually communing with them and not with the pages of a book. It would not be surprising if Shakespeare created merely great men characters, he was himself a man and experienced the many emotions common to men, but it is almost incomprehensible that he should also



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have had the power of bringing into being the marvelously lifelike characters of his women.

He accomplished this through his knowledge of Nature's laws and his almost godlike power of imagination—the power of taking a speck of knowledge and turning it, by the magnifying quality of the poet's eye, into a world of reality. No matter what means he employed for creating these beings of fancy, that are as real as actual material creatures, the characters are here for our enjoyment, and our gratitude for the gift need not be less deep because of our inability to fathom fully the source of their being. As God breathed the breath of life into the inanimate clay and man became thereby a living soul, so also Shakespeare placed the life of his genius into dead words and they sprang into living characters. He, of all men, was, in reality, a creator, as he brought into existence dramatic personages endowed with his own living force. We will turn from surmises regarding the causes that led to the birth of these characters to gaze upon them as actualities. Let us enter the charmed circle of comradeship through becoming personally acquainted with the characters by studying their attributes, their motives, and their actions.

### THE CHARACTER OF HAMLET

In all English literature no dramatic character has been so much written about as has that of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Of no other have the opinions of scholars, editors, doctors and actors so differed.

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By some it has been claimed that he was insane, some that the imaginative powers were overbalanced, some that he was a coward, lacked energy, and was devoid of action. But the contrary of all this is indicated by the text if it is read with an unbiased and intelligent mind.

First, consider the question of his sanity. There is but one place to go for evidence on this point—the play. Doctors may argue on the acts and sayings of Hamlet and conclude from their study of them that a human being responsible for them would unquestionably be insane, but doctors should not take all these acts and sayings at their face value unless they are corroborated by other facts, especially when it is distinctly stated in the play that the character is acting a part. Many will claim that the statement of the character in question that he is merely pretending insanity is a sure indication of his being so in reality, pointing to the fact that the insane rarely, if ever, realize their mental state. But this is only the case when attending circumstances disprove the contention of the insane one by showing his opinion to be a delusion.

The first we see of Hamlet is in Act I. Scene II. where he is represented as coming upon the stage in attendance on the King and Queen. Surely in this scene no indication of insanity appears. He replies sanely to the request of his mother to remain at Elsinore and not go to Wittenberg. On the exit of the other characters he remains and gives expression to his thoughts regarding the second marriage of his

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mother in the words of that pathetic soliloquy, "O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt!" No indication whatever of insanity here. At its close, Horatio, Bernardo and Marcellus enter and impart to him the information of the ghostly visit paid to them by the spirit of Hamlet's father. This naturally amazes the Prince, but throughout the dialogue that follows between him and his friends there is not the least sign of mental derangement. Hamlet now realizes that something is radically wrong regarding the death of his father, and he looks anxiously for the coming of the hour when he is to go forth to meet the ghostly visitor.

We next see Hamlet upon the platform of the castle awaiting the coming of his father's spirit. He converses normally with Horatio and Marcellus, no symptoms of insanity being visible. On the appearance of the Ghost he is naturally excited, but no more so than were Horatio and his companions when they first beheld it. Horatio pictures the scene thus:

A figure like your father,  
Arm'd at all points, exactly, cap-a-pe,  
Appears before them, and with solemn march  
Goes slow and stately by them; thrice he walk'd  
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,  
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd  
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,  
Stand dumb, and speak not to him.<sup>1</sup>

If these soldiers were so strangely affected by what they saw, why should one marvel if Hamlet's nerves had been shaken on beholding his father's ghost? And

<sup>1</sup>Act I. Scene II.

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yet, up to the close of Scene IV. Act I., during which Hamlet addresses the Ghost but it does not reply to him in words, he has borne himself with remarkable fortitude. So far, then, no reason has been discovered in the play for considering Hamlet at all irrational.

The scene now changes to a more removed part of the platform of the castle, and the interview here takes place between Hamlet and the Ghost that acquaints the Prince with the circumstances of his father's death. Hamlet suspected that his father did not die a natural death, this is attested by the following :

GHOST.

—but know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET.

O, my prophetic soul! my uncle!<sup>2</sup>

This clearly denotes that suspicion regarding the manner of his father's taking off had dwelt in the mind of Hamlet previous to the opening of the play, and accounts for his extreme expression of his grief in Scene II. Act I. Had his father surrendered up his life at the call of Nature, Hamlet would have mourned his death as became the son of a noble parent; but when suspicion entered his mind that the death was brought about by foul means instigated by the brother of this righteous king his soul was sorely distressed and he mourned, not only the death of his father, but the baseness of his uncle and the perfidy

<sup>2</sup>Act I. Scene V.

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of his mother. Thus, then, there are substantial reasons for Hamlet donning a cloak of inky blackness.

It is not to be wondered at that Hamlet was momentarily overcome by emotion at the recital of the Ghost's harrowing tale, and that he should exclaim:

Hold, hold, my heart!  
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,  
But bear me stiffly up.<sup>3</sup>

What son would not be so affected by like circumstances? Were he not, he would indeed be either a strange specimen of humanity or else a fit candidate for an asylum.

It should be remembered that Hamlet lived in a barbarous age, was a resident of a state whose king had committed murder in order to gain the crown and who would not hesitate to do other murders to retain it. He knew his life was in danger, and therefore he decided "to put an antic disposition on" the better to hide his purpose from the King and to safeguard his life. Note the oath to which Horatio and Marcellus subscribe:

Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,  
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself;—  
As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on;—  
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,  
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,  
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,  
As, "Well, well, we know;"—or, "We could,  
an if we would;"—  
Or, "If we list to speak;"—or, "There be,  
an if they might;"—

<sup>3</sup>Act I. Scene V.

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Or such ambiguous giving-out, to note  
That you know aught of me:—this not to do,  
So grace and mercy at your most need help you.<sup>4</sup>

Thus does Hamlet tell his two friends that he intends to assume the mask of madness, and binds them not to divulge his secret. The language and all the attendant circumstances are so plain as to shut out the necessity for further comment as to the assumption of madness. Up to this point he has acted in a quiet, calm and controlled manner, but henceforth he puts “an antic disposition on” when it suits his purpose to do so.

Such an occasion is described by Ophelia when she says:

My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,  
Lord Hamlet,—with his doublet all unbrae'd;  
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,  
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle;  
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;  
And with a look so piteous in purport,  
As if he had been loosed out of hell,  
To speak of horrors,—he comes before me.<sup>5</sup>

Hamlet appeared thus before Ophelia with the purpose of testing her loyalty to him. He knew the King to be the murderer of his father, that his mother was false to her marriage vows and had linked her fortunes with those of her paramour by wedding him, that Polonius was a man who could serve two masters and would stoop to any act that would further his own cause. Thus was he surrounded by his enemies and compelled to move with great caution. It was his desire to find out whether the woman of his heart

<sup>4</sup>Act I. Scene V.

<sup>5</sup>Act II. Scene I.

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would stand with him in the battle he was about to wage to avenge his father's wrongs or would ally herself with his enemies that caused him to go thus habited into the chamber of Ophelia. That she could not be relied upon is attested by the fact that she immediately carried the story in all its detail to her father and thence to the King and Queen, finally allowing herself to be used as a decoy to lure Hamlet into the hands of his enemies.

The scene between Hamlet and Polonius, and later the one that introduces Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are on their face so clearly ones of strategy on the part of Hamlet, indicating unmistakably that he is fencing with his adversaries, that little comment is necessary. It may be well, however, to call attention to the situation that is developed by Hamlet conjuring his two associates by the rights of fellowship to be honest with him. By putting the "antic disposition on" he has thrown both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern off their guard and they confess that they were sent by the King and Queen to fathom Hamlet. Then follows that poetically beautiful passage commencing, "I will tell you why."<sup>6</sup>

We have now come to the crucial test of Ophelia's character, and to the point that demonstrates clearly the sanity of Hamlet.

The scene is set for the trapping of Hamlet. The King and Polonius are behind the arras, Ophelia is given a book and told to walk in the Prince's path in order that a meeting may be brought about within sight and hearing of the two hidden watchers. Hamlet

<sup>6</sup>Act II. Scene II.

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enters, debating with himself the problems of life as they then confront him. He turns and beholds Ophelia, meditating, as he supposes, over a book of prayers, and salutes her gravely:

Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins remember'd.<sup>7</sup>

When, however, she offers to return to him the gifts of love he had bestowed upon her, he immediately suspects her loyalty to him and resumes his rôle of madness. When he asks her the whereabouts of her father and she guiltily replies that he is at home, he sees through her falsehood and assumes more closely the mask of insanity. The King, however, has pierced the mask, and toward the close of the scene sagely remarks to Polonius:

Love! his affections do not that way tend;  
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,  
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood.<sup>8</sup>

In the scene that follows, we have Hamlet's wonderful address to the players. No insane man could ever possess such illuminating thoughts, let alone express them, as are uttered in this instructive speech.

During the enacting of the play arranged to discover the guilt of King Claudius, the behavior of Hamlet is watchful and penetrating, showing the keenness of the alert, healthy mind, and not the cunning of the diseased one. The same may be said of the interview that follows with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern where, after playing with these spies

<sup>7</sup> Act III. Scene I.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



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of the King, he asks them to play the recorders, and, on their confession of inability to do so, strips the mask of deceit from them and lets them understand that he knows they have been lying to him. No trace of insanity in all this. Rather the masterful control of the well-balanced intellect.

We now come to the interview between Hamlet and his mother, Scene IV. Act III. Here he throws aside all pretense and is simply the indignant son upbraiding the mother for her shameful conduct and urging her to repent and reform, save at the moment when Polonius, in answer to the call of the Queen, cries out for help. Hamlet, believing that it is the King who is eavesdropping, dons his "antic disposition" and kills the listener. On learning that Polonius is the victim, he discards his disguise and returns once more to his own character of the outraged son. There is no indication of madness in this highly dramatic scene, one of the strongest and most active in the play, unless Hamlet's seeing of the Ghost be construed into one. This, however, would be a false construction. Shakespeare, for the purposes of his drama and because at the time its action is supposed to take place the people believed in ghosts and spirits, makes the unearthly visitor visible to Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo, and unless we agree that because of this these three are insane, we cannot justly assign it as evidence of the insanity of Hamlet.

In Scene II. Act IV. Hamlet puts on his "antic disposition" the better to puzzle and confound Rosen-

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crantz and Guildenstern, this being indicated by his talking in riddles to them, thus:

ROS. What have you done, my lord, with the  
dead body?

HAM. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROS. Tell me where 'tis; that we may take it  
thence,

And bear it to the chapel.

HAM. Do not believe it.

ROS. Believe what?

HAM. That I can keep your counsel, and not mine  
own. Besides, to be demanded of a  
sponge, what replication should be made  
by the son of a king?

ROS. Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAM. Ay, sir; that soaks up the king's coun-  
tenance, his rewards, his authorities.  
But such officers do the king best serv-  
ice in the end: he keeps them, as an  
ape doth nuts, in the corner of his jaw;  
first mouth'd, to be last swallowed:  
When he needs what you glean'd, it is  
but squeezing you, and, sponge, you  
shall be dry again.

ROS. I understand you not, my lord.

HAM. I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps  
in a foolish ear.

In the interview between Hamlet and the King which takes place in the scene that follows (Scene III. Act. IV.), the same reasons exist for the assumption of madness as were pointed out in Scene II., and Hamlet adopts a like way of showing it.

When Hamlet meets with the army of Norway under command of young Fortinbras, he enters into conversation with one of the captains and questions him sanely regarding the purpose of the expedition,

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and at the close of the interview soliloquizes sagely on his own conduct. Here there is no need to dissemble, and Hamlet talks and acts as a perfectly normal being. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

From this point there is nothing in the play that can be forced into even an appearance of madness in Hamlet, so the question will be pursued no further. Those who do not at first reading agree with the conclusions here set down are requested to study the tragedy itself with an unprejudiced mind, thus preventing the entrance of a third estate between themselves and the matter. The truth is within the text, so "seek and ye shall find."

Hamlet was no coward, he did not lack will power, and he was not deficient in action.

He bravely went forth to meet the Ghost, and persisted in following it to a more removed part of the platform, even though Horatio and Marcellus implored him not to do so, and warned him that the Ghost perhaps purposed to do him harm. He hesitated not to face Laertes in the bout, and he bore himself like a soldier and a gentleman throughout it.

It was not lack of courage that caused Hamlet to put off the satisfaction of his revenge, but a noble and lofty spirit of morality that would not permit him to become a common assassin. He believed in a future existence, and "that dread of something after death" held him in check until he was convinced of his uncle's guilt. His conscience was acute and warned him the instant that his passion was about to carry him into error. The injunction of the Ghost was that he

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should avenge the foul murder of his father, but there was another injunction laid upon him by command of God, "Thou shalt do no murder," which held him in restraint until he satisfied himself that he was the avenging minister of Heaven. He could be an avenger, but he would not be a murderer.

There was no lack of will power in Hamlet as he is drawn by Shakespeare. Those who claim that the character evinces such a weakness err in their conception of the meaning of the word "will." What does the word signify? It means the power of converting thought into action. The essentials of will are (1) Choice: the power by which, after consideration, one selects an end of action; (2) Purpose: an act of the will deciding on the accomplishing of a choice; and (3) Volition: the faculty of the will, whereby the powers are centered on the attainment of the chosen and determined end. In few words, Will is the power of the mind to control action.

To will does not signify merely the doing of an act. It means also refraining from the doing. Just as much will-power is required to keep one from action as is necessary to force one to it; therefore when Hamlet determined to satisfy himself that the Ghost was an honest one before he would take its word, and to refrain from killing the King while on his knees in prayer beseeching forgiveness, he was exercising the power of will to a greater extent than if he rushed blindly forward to positive action.

This is the man that the author conceives Shakespeare to have drawn in his character of Hamlet: A

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man of deep sensibilities, great intellect and noble qualities. A man shouldered with responsibilities that he dared not escape and yet dreaded to perform. A man to whom all, save one,<sup>9</sup> were disloyal. A man of whom it might be truly said:

Now cracks a noble heart! Good night, sweet prince;  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.<sup>10</sup>

### THE CHARACTER OF MACBETH

One of the principal traits in the character of Macbeth was his imagination. While he was a soldier and a man of action, still he was a thinker and a poet, and possessed those finer and higher qualities of the mind which, had they not been crushed or set aside by material ambition, would have made him a refined and noble being. Had he been left to himself he never would have killed his king, nor in any manner departed from the path of honor; but his nature was receptive, he was easily influenced by a will stronger than his own, and he finally became a puppet in the hands of the masterful woman who dominated his life. It is not the intention of the author to shield Macbeth from the consequences of his acts, nor to place, without reason, the blame for his fall upon the woman, repeating the words of Adam, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree,"<sup>11</sup> but to analyze and weigh the character as it is depicted to his mind by the Dramatist, and to find the causes that governed it. In

<sup>9</sup> Horatio.

<sup>10</sup> "Hamlet," Act V. Scene II.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis II. 12.

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thus looking beyond the effects and tracing them back to their source we can plainly see that the pencil of fate that wrote the life of Macbeth was held within the fingers of his wife.

That Macbeth entertained the hope of being king of Scotland before the play actually opens is no doubt true, it is reflected in his attitude in the first interview with the Witches when he starts on being hailed as "king hereafter,"<sup>12</sup> but that he purposed to murder Duncan is nowhere apparent until after his wife has suggested "the nearest way."<sup>13</sup> Thus is the parable of the fall of man further followed in that Lady Macbeth devilishly injects the virus of evil into the mind of her husband as did the serpent whisper the temptation into the ear of Eve.

In the early scenes of the play there is a tremendous struggle in the mind of Macbeth which shows the workings of his conscience, and this conscience would have won the victory had not the powers of evil been reinforced by the o'er mastering influence of the wife. In these early scenes Macbeth is depicted as more conscientious than his wife, she stronger intellectually than he; but in the later scenes, after he has taken the plunge into sin, she appears the weaker mentally and he the stronger, although both are now dead to the voice of conscience—save Lady Macbeth when lost in sleep. After Macbeth once embarks in crime, after he has befouled his hands in the innocent blood of his fellowman, once he is

<sup>12</sup>Act I. Scene III.

<sup>13</sup>Act I. Scene V.

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launched on the sea of infamy, he knows no bounds but rushes from crime to crime, fairly swimming in blood, and is finally overwhelmed by the forces which he himself created by his wickedness and cruelty. Being recreant to his own duties, false to his own king and to his own conception of right, he thinks everyone else is base and false. He thus suspects those around him, loses control over himself, permits his mind to deal with confused metaphors, and becomes a wretched creature blown hither and thither by the winds of doubt. Macbeth was a brave man physically, but he was an arrant coward mentally. He could fight to the death with Macduff, but he fled from his better self.

Deftly and accurately Lady Macbeth draws the character of her husband:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be  
What thou art promis'd.—Yet do I fear thy nature:  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way: Thou wouldst be great;  
Art not without ambition; but without  
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win.<sup>14</sup>

There is no getting around this passage by claiming, as some editors do, that Lady Macbeth in thus describing Macbeth is revealing her own character. She has her husband in mind when speaking the lines, has been poring over the letter containing the prophesy of the Witches, and has been devising means for bringing about the end she so fervently desires.

<sup>14</sup>Act I. Scene V.

## SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE

In her cogitations she has analyzed her husband's nature, sees all his traits and then gives voice to them. It is because she finds him full of "human kindness," understands that he is ambitious, but sees also that he is not basely ambitious, and knows his conscientious scruples, that she longs for his early home coming in order that she may saturate him with her views and control him by means of her strong mentality. Therefore she exclaims :

Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
And chastise with the valor of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crown'd withal.<sup>15</sup>

This is all so plain that further comment as to Lady Macbeth's conception of her husband's character would be superfluous.

Macbeth was much of a philosopher, resembling in this respect, strange though it may appear, the character of Hamlet. He traces the processes of the mind, studies the consequences of evil, weighs the effects of actions, and is decidedly of a meditative nature. He thinks before he acts, and, even though the thinking does not prevent the action, it shows the motion of the aroused conscience and the application of the mental faculty. The fact that he fails to control his mentality at the behest of conscience, but listens, instead, to the voice of the temptress, giving way before her scourging tongue and surrendering his convictions at her command, is but evidence of his

<sup>15</sup>Act I. Scene V.



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mental cowardice. We can feel no admiration for such a creature, but we can, and do, experience pity at the failure of such a character to fulfill its fair promise. Macbeth possessed all the attributes that go to the making of a man, save one—mental courage. Lacking this, all the others availed him nothing. Proof of this assertion might be produced from the pages of the play until piled “mountain high,” but to cite such evidence would be a waste of space and time when the student in search of it has only to turn to Macbeth’s soliloquies and speeches to find it for himself.

Macbeth is a masterful creation, evincing, with Hamlet and Lear, the marvelous knowledge of metaphysics, so far as that science applies to the mind, that Shakespeare possessed. The Dramatist shows us the mind in all its phases and actions; lays bare its workings when debating a thought, weighing its effects, or discounting its influence; planning a deed, mapping out the mode of procedure, or anticipating its accomplishment—in fact, he reveals to us the mind and heart, yea, the very soul of man and woman as though he were a creator of them in reality and not merely of their “counterfeit presentments.”

Macbeth does not shirk responsibility for his acts, he does not throw the fault upon fate, he blames not the Witches for his entrance upon crime. No, he does none of those things, but considers himself a free agent and acts accordingly. He is not aware of the great influence wielded over him by his wife, but he loves her, has implicit faith in her, respects her

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mental powers, her great will and her keenness of vision, and gladly lends himself to her guidance. Their married state was happy, their domestic life free from strife, and their two dissimilar natures seemed to weld together into a congenial whole, making the one harmonious being. Sad, indeed, that crime should have entered such a tranquil abode to mar its peace. Had it been absent, we should have heard the song of the lark and not the screeching of the owl. But the evil-disposed will of the woman and the moral weakness of the man brought about the awful story as told in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.

### THE CHARACTER OF OTHELLO

Othello, thou perplexed soul, what judgment shall be rendered against thee? Let the words of thy mouth pronounce it:

Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice; then, must you speak  
Of one that lov'd, not wisely, but too well;  
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,  
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,  
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,  
Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum.<sup>16</sup>

Seldom is it given a person to read his own character as Othello here reads his. He was of a loving nature, possessed great faith in the purity of woman, never speaking of her in the sneering, sensual

<sup>16</sup> "Othello," Act V. Scene II.

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language of Iago, nor even of Cassio; prized his honor more than his life, and loved his wife better than himself. How comes it, then, that such a noble creature became the tool of a scheming, unscrupulous villain? Through his faith in the honesty of others. It might then be asked, Why did he not show his faith by trusting in the purity and loyalty of Desdemona? This he did until his jealousy had been aroused by Iago and every circumstance of time, place and person confirmed suspicion. The very innocence of Desdemona, her concern for Othello, her pleading in behalf of Cassio, the stolen handkerchief, all seemingly confirmed the tale of baseness that Iago poured into Othello's unlistening ears and convinced him of his wife's wantonness even against his own love, faith, and judgment. When the scheming villain first intimates the disloyalty of Othello's wife, the noble-hearted Moor spurns belief in its possibility from him as a thing incredible; when Iago continues to thrust it before his unwilling mind, he takes the scoundrel by the throat and well-nigh strangles him. But the intellectual villainy of Iago is too much for the pure-heartedness of Othello and he soon after succumbs to the baleful influence of the plotting scoundrel. When this occurs we come to the turning point of the play—the center of the arch.

Othello was not jealous by nature, but he became rich ground for the sowing of the seeds of jealousy at the cunning hand of the crafty Iago because of his great love for Desdemona. His speech, his mind, his heart, were all open, and they were all pure until

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the doubt of the honesty of the woman who was dearer to him than life itself changed his entire being and made him as putty in the hands of the intelligent liar who posed as his faithful officer and loving friend. Iago undoubtedly exercised great influence over Othello, and because of this influence we are compelled to study the character of Iago in order that we may understand that of Othello. The Moor's every act that succeeded his marriage was the effect of some cause that had its origin in the fertile brain of the Ancient, and in order that we may understand the effect we must study the cause. It therefore appears as though Iago was the greater person. He was, so far as intelligent cunning is concerned; but in integrity of purpose, love of truth, and kindness of heart, Othello made him kick the beam. When we compare the intellect of the two men, Iago does not suffer in comparison with Othello; but when we come to weigh their characters, it is as though a feather were placed in the balance against a nugget of gold. The character of Othello is well expressed by Iago in the following lines:

The Moor is of a free and open nature,  
That thinks men honest that but seem to be.<sup>17</sup>

He certainly was generous, frank, open and confiding, thinking men honest until they proved themselves otherwise, and because he possessed a nature such as this he became the ready tool of one who looked upon all men as false and all women as fickle.

The great battle that Othello had to fight was not

<sup>17</sup>Act I. Scene III.

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against jealousy, but, as he himself states it, against the foes who would tarnish his honor. Therefore, when he believes Desdemona has become his worst enemy by besmirching his sacred honor which he had placed in her keeping, he turns upon her as he would upon one who dared advise him to be a traitor to his country. She was his all in all so long as she was worthy of his love; but when he became persuaded that she had tarnished his honor, then his love died and the stern avenger sprang into life. Thus does he voice his thought:

I'll see, before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;  
And, on the proof, there is no more but this,—  
Away at once with love or jealousy.<sup>18</sup>

There are some natures that when once they love they continue to do so even after the attributes that caused them to love have passed from the beloved object, but with Othello it was different. He could love only those worthy to be loved; and as soon as the worthiness departed, the love ceased to exist. Here is his view:

She's gone; I am abus'd; and my relief  
Must be to loathe her.<sup>19</sup>

She in whom he had placed his greatest trust had, to his mind, proved recreant to it, therefore his sense of honor compelled him to spurn her from him. His way of looking upon this question is revealed to us in his expressive words to Cassio, spoken to that officer

<sup>18</sup> Act III. Scene III.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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when he learned he had been false to the trust imposed in him :

Cassio, I love thee;  
But never more be officer of mine.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the captain, jealous of his honor as a soldier, dismisses the lieutenant whom he loves because of his failure in the line of duty. So also the husband, jealous of his honor as a man, banishes the wife when he is convinced of her disloyalty.

That Othello was not naturally of a jealous disposition is attested by many circumstances, viz.: his failure to heed Brabantio's warning, "She has deceived her father, and may thee,"<sup>21</sup> his faith in Desdemona, his confidence in Cassio, and his belief in the honesty of Iago. It is not until Iago recalls to his mind the fact that Desdemona's father has bid him beware of the deceit of the woman he had just taken to wife that Othello pays any attention to the warning, showing that he was not jealous of Desdemona until Iago spoke those fateful words,

IAGO. She did deceive her father, marrying you;  
And, when she seem'd to shake, and fear  
your looks,  
She lov'd them most.

OTHELLO. And so she did.<sup>22</sup>

Here is where suspicion regarding the actions of Desdemona enters Othello's mind, the poison of jealousy passes like a drug through his system, his mental balance is lost, and he falls a prey to the knavery of Iago.

<sup>20</sup>Act II. Scene III.

<sup>21</sup>Act I. Scene III.

<sup>22</sup>Act III. Scene III.

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The character of Othello is wonderfully well drawn, and it stands in its majestic grandeur towering above those that cluster around it. The whole interest of the play centers in Othello, all the other characters contribute to the [telling of this story](https://www.tellinglifthisstory.com), and each in its turn throws its light upon him, revealing some trait in his nature or something characteristic of his personality. His is a sad story: He loved deeply, was sorely tried, sinned grievously (although unknowingly), and paid an awful penalty. His life was tempestuous from his first appearance on the stage until his death, and as the final curtain falls upon him we cannot help feeling that "he was more sinned against than sinning."

### THE CHARACTER OF DESDEMONA

True it is that "what we are, that only can we see." Desdemona was pure in heart and in mind, pure in body and in soul, and because she was herself pure she saw purity in others. Not only did she make of Othello a god of purity, but she even raised the devil Iago into the same sublime atmosphere. Her innocence, sad though it may be, was founded on ignorance, for she did not know that there was villainess in man as well as purity, and because of this ignorance she was blind to the snares of Iago and allowed her purity of thought to be the cause of her undoing.

Desdemona was of an impressionable nature and easily affected by outside influences. Reared in the seclusion of her father's palace, shielded from the

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evils and the temptations of the world, she grew to womanhood believing that all creatures were pure like herself, so when Othello appeared as her father's guest and repeated his tales of adventures, she saw in him a reflex of her own being and allowed her heart to be enfolded in his. She never questioned the truth of his story, she did not heed the dark complexion of his skin; she saw only the whiteness of herself, felt her being respond to the romantic call of his manhood, and immediately acknowledged him as her lord and master. It is here the one blot upon her character appears: she was an undutiful child. When she felt her heart drawn toward Othello she gave no thought to her father—the father who had devoted his life to loving and protecting her. She allowed herself to be governed by this new love—this mysterious feeling that unconsciously changed the current of her life—and gave no heed to any call but that of the one within her that cried for a realization of that new life which Othello's magic voice and strong personality had awakened. Had she been true to her father, had she opened her heart by confiding to him a knowledge of the influence Othello was exerting over her (not drugs, nor charms, but a mighty magic greater than these), she would have been saved from the terrible catastrophe that her silence and deceit imposed upon her. True, had she done this, we should have lost one of the great tragedies, her deceit being necessary to its growth, but because of this deceit we have an imperfect woman in the character of Desdemona. She was true to her husband,



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but she was false to her father, and this falsehood brought upon her all the suffering of her young married life, her untimely death, the misery of her people, and the ruin and suicide of her husband. Sad, indeed, that one so pure should be the cause of so much evil, but ignorance always carries a train of misery in its wake. Thus is our Dramatist true to nature in depicting the character of Desdemona and showing the effect of her actions. Had she not hidden her heart from her father, had he not uttered those words of warning,

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:  
She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee,<sup>23</sup>

the mind of Othello would never have been open to the poison of Iago's lying tongue, and the married happiness of Desdemona's life would not have been marred.

### THE CHARACTER OF IAGO

Iago has been pronounced unnatural and impossible by many Shakespearean writers. On the contrary, he appears to the author to be as natural and as possible as Othello himself; than which, no character in ancient or modern drama is more natural and more possible. He is the antithesis of Othello, the opposite to him in everything,—in stature, complexion, mode of life, conception of honor, and all that goes to the making of character. It is because of this polarity of their natures that we must study both characters before we can know either.

<sup>23</sup>Act I. Scene III.

## SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE

The one great trait in the character of Iago is his intellectuality. Had it been used in the proper direction he would have been a great man, but as it was employed in the wrong direction he became a great scoundrel. The influences that acted on his intellect and made him a cunning, diabolical villain, are: His love of money; his utter lack of confidence in the honesty of man and woman; his determination to use others for his own advancement, irrespective of the consequence to them. Acting on these lines he became a selfish, cruel, and wicked man, devoid of honesty, unworthy of the sacred trust reposed in him by Othello and of the innocent confidence of Desdemona.

He loved money, and he also loved to acquire it by means of his clever manipulation of the weaknesses of those he imposed upon. He gloried in making his fool his purse, praising his own dexterity in wheedling money from the poor creature and treating his tool with scorn for being thus imposed upon. He does not scruple to use underhand methods for gaining his purpose, but he would respect the prowess of one who could beat him at his own game. He looks upon virtue as belonging to fools, honesty as non-existent, and the accomplishing of one's purpose legitimate under any and all circumstances. "Put money in thy purse" is his cry. No matter what means you employ, "put money in thy purse." Gain your aim no matter what injustice you do others or what misfortunes you bring down upon them. This is the policy he both preached and practiced.

Why did he seek the ruin of Othello? For two

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reasons: (1) To get money out of Roderigo; (2) to have revenge on Othello. Why did he desire revenge on Othello? For two reasons: (1) Because Othello had not advanced him in the military service as he considered he deserved; (2) for the reason that he suspected Othello had been unlawfully intimate with his wife Emilia. No matter that his reasons were merely suspicions. He took his suspicions as actualities and determined to get even with the Moor wife for wife.

Iago is absolutely dishonest in character; vain by nature, his vanity is aggravated by disappointment; envious of the success of Othello, his envy turns bitter as gall. His mind was depraved, ever dwelling on lascivious pictures which he delighted to create. He looked for the worst in everyone, and if he did not succeed in finding it, convinced himself by his evil reasoning of its existence. These attributes made him a dangerous man, a cunning schemer, and an infamous villain, but he is true to nature and a wonderful product of the great Dramatist.

It is true that Iago despised all power but that of the intellect, but it is not because of this that he was of a base nature. Will power is capable of great good or great evil—the result depending entirely on the direction given the will—and it is because Iago chose to devote his mental powers to the cause of depravity that he brought about the misery of himself and others. Had he devoted his efforts to a righteous cause, he would have been as successful in creating happiness

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as he was in producing misery. Mighty, indeed, is the power of the will. It is godlike when properly directed, but devilish when working in behalf of evil.

### THE CHARACTER OF LADY MACBETH

The character of Lady Macbeth has been studied and analyzed by all students of Shakespeare. Teachers and writers have dissected her character, and many editors of the plays of Shakespeare have given their views concerning it. The Tragedy of Macbeth is a part of the English course in most preparatory schools, and it is one of the most widely read of all Shakespeare's plays. Despite these facts there is a tendency on the part of writers to soften the inflexible hardness of character of this remarkable woman in a manner not warranted by the facts as stated by the Dramatist. Attributes of femininity are claimed for her that are nowhere revealed in the text of the play, and editors read into the character traits that they assign to her through sympathy, seeing not those that are given to her by her creator. Some even go so far as to reject absolutely all evidence she gives against herself. True, we should not always take the words as spoken by a character at their face value, but when a description of the nature of a person is given by a character itself, and this description is corroborated by other characters and circumstances, it should be accepted with as much faith as is the evidence of a witness that is confirmed by the testimony of other witnesses.

Following the evidence of the play, we find

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that there is little that is womanly—that is, sweetly feminine—in the nature of Lady Macbeth. She shows little real heart-love for her husband, no love for her children, no conception of the duties of a hostess, no consideration of the rights of others. But, on the other hand, ambition is her governing motive—not for her husband, but for herself. She would sacrifice parent, husband, child, all and everything for position and power, and in this she is true to nature, only forecasting the attitude of many women of modern times who sacrifice all that the true woman holds dear in order that they may gain social recognition and advancement. Hers was a vaulting ambition that o'erleaped itself and led to her spiritual extinction, her madness, and her physical death. This is a severe arraignment, and a wicked one if not borne out by the facts. Here is the evidence.

That she had little love for her husband is shown in the greeting she bestows upon him after his return from a successful war:

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!  
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!  
Thy letters have transported me beyond  
This ignorant present, and I feel now  
The future in the instant.<sup>24</sup>

No wifely greeting here. No joy at her husband's safe return. Nothing but a bold reception to the successful captain who, by his prowess, has won fresh laurels for himself—and her. Macbeth's salutation for his wife possesses more affection than does

<sup>24</sup>Act I. Scene V.

## SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE

hers for him. He addresses her as “my dearest love” and in many ways shows a loving concern for her, but nowhere in the play does she show any such feeling toward him.

[www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

She lacks the mother-heart — the one great indication of womanliness—the heart that prizes the child above all other earthly possessions. She would kill her infant, dash its brains against a wall, merely because she had vowed to do so:

I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from its boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.<sup>25</sup>

Is this the language of a woman, a mother? Nay, a fiend rather. A womanly woman could not have even imagined doing such a thing, could not have voiced such a thought, would not have possessed a brain capable of giving birth to such a horrible idea. No, Lady Macbeth was devoid of love of husband and love of child. This being the case, how can she be considered as possessing the qualities of a woman?

She even goes so far as to threaten her husband with a withdrawal of what she terms her love if he refuses to carry out the proposed plan to remove Duncan and unlawfully secure the crown of Scotland to themselves:

From this time,  
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valor,  
As thou art in desire?<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Act I. Scene VII.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

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Could anything be more base than for a wife to threaten to divorce her husband from her person unless he does what she desires, even though his conscience tells him that to comply with her request would be a sin or a crime? Would a womanly woman so debase her womanhood as to hold her love over her husband as a club to enforce requests? Well Lady Macbeth knows that no weapon is sharper than a woman's envenomed tongue, therefore she sneers at Macbeth and goads him to a compliance with her demands. Here is one of the strongest bits of evidence in the whole play as to the true character of Lady Macbeth, a piece of evidence passed over by those who proclaim the womanliness of her character but of such a nature that, like Banquo's ghost, it will not down. Surely, Lady Macbeth cannot be termed a woman who was a wife for love's sake.

She gave no consideration to the performance of the main duty of a hostess—the welfare of the guest. As soon as she learns of the intended visit of Duncan to her castle she decrees that he shall die there, and even plans on committing the deed of murder herself. She prays to the powers of darkness to take from her that which she does not possess—womanly qualities. She implores them to unsex her, little thinking that by giving utterance to such a prayer, harboring such thoughts, she had unsexed herself. Let her tell the story in her own words:

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,

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Stop up the access and passage to remorse;  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell!  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry, "Hold, Hold!"<sup>27</sup>

Is not this a horrible, a fiendish passage? Could a human being express such thoughts without possessing attributes that would cause them to take voice? Assuredly no. The trait must be in the character before the thought, the wish, can enter the brain. After such evidence, can it be said that Lady Macbeth is anything else than absolutely bad? Perhaps it may be thought that she is merely playing a part, merely trying to make herself believe that she is this stern-visaged, unsexed creature. Very well, let us seek further evidence regarding the truth of the picture she draws of herself. She convinces her husband of its truth, and he was well informed by close association as to her character. After she has outlined to Macbeth her plan for disposing of Duncan and turning suspicion from themselves, he says:

Bring forth men-children only;  
For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males.<sup>28</sup>

Thus does Macbeth clearly express his conviction that there is nothing feminine in her nature and that there-

<sup>27</sup>Act I. Scene V.

<sup>28</sup>Act I. Scene VII.



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fore she should bring forth nothing but males because the attributes she displays are unsuited to the feminine nature. After this can it be said that Lady Macbeth is aught womanly?

She has no consideration for the rights of others—anything that stands between her and her will must be ruthlessly cast aside, no matter what may be the suffering of the innocent impediment. When she determines that Duncan shall die she looks about for some one to bear the blame for the crime so that no suspicion may rest upon herself and her husband. Thus she plans it:

. . . . . his two chamberlains  
Will I with wine and wassel so convince,  
That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbeck only: When in swinish sleep  
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon  
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great quell?<sup>29</sup>

Only once in the entire play does Lady Macbeth's conscience make itself known during her waking hours. The solitary instance occurring in Act II. Scene II. where, on hearing a noise in Duncan's chamber, she fears that Macbeth has failed in his intent to kill the king, she thinks aloud:

Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't.

This was the voice of conscience speaking to her soul, but she heeded it no further than to pass the doing

<sup>29</sup>Act I. Scene VII.

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of the deed of murder on to her husband. Thus she feared what she later called "a painted devil" when Macbeth refused to look again upon the face of the dead king:

[www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)  
The sleeping, and the dead,  
Are but as pictures: 'Tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil.<sup>30</sup>

She would have stabbed the old king to the heart had he not resembled her father. Conscience thus held back the raised knife, just as it forbade Macbeth to return to the chamber of horror.

It is claimed by some that the mental dissolution of Lady Macbeth showed her to be of such a sensitive, moral nature that her mind broke under the unnatural strain that was placed upon it through her entrance upon the course of evil. Here, according to the text of the play, they are also wrong. When Macbeth is about the murder of Duncan, and a noise is heard within, she cries:

Alack! I am afraid they have awak'd,  
And 'tis not done:—the attempt, and not the deed,  
Confounds us.<sup>31</sup>

It was the fear of failure, not sorrow for the murder, that troubled her. So also, it was the failure to successfully seize and hold the crown, and not remorse for sin, that caused her mind to give way. It was because the guilty pair failed to get upon the firm ground of security, but wallowed in the mire of suspicion and danger, that Lady Macbeth was troubled unto death. It will be observed, though, that

<sup>30</sup> Act II. Scene II.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

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it was only when she was not herself, when she was in the foreign land of sleep, that her thoughts troubled her. When awake, she had that power of will that made her master of herself; but when asleep, when that will no longer existed, she felt all the pangs of a sleeping conscience awakened by the bodily sleep, and then she suffered the tortures of the damned soul, staggering under its load of unrepented sin, and madness was the logical result. Had she not stifled the cry of her conscience during the day, had she given it voice by repenting her crimes, it would not have haunted her at night and enforced disclosure even against her knowledge of disclosing it.

Lady Macbeth is one of the most immoral characters in Shakespeare—not immoral physically, but devoid of morality spiritually. Her body was pure, but her mind was as black as the impenetrable night. Hers was not of the same class of immorality to which Regan's and Goneril's belonged, but it was as baneful to herself and far more dangerous to others. Hers was a spiritual illness, not springing, as did Regan's and Goneril's, from the lusts of the body, but from an inherent baseness of the mind. She had the power to live a pure and noble life, to make others happy and to be happy herself; but she chose the baser part; she allowed selfishness to be her guide, and she became a malign influence, poisoning all that she touched. In many respects she resembled Iago. Both were intellectually great, both despised all power but that of the intellect, both misdirected their tremendous mental forces, and both came to a wretched end. Pity

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we can feel for one who goes astray through love, but nothing else than contempt and detestation should be felt for those who go astray through selfishness. This was the besetting sin of both Iago and Lady Macbeth, and both justly suffered because of it.

Lady Macbeth is one of the greatest of Shakespeare's marvelous creations, and ranks with those master characters of the other sex, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and Lear. In the estimation of the author, it is the greatest of all his female characters. Not great, like some, in goodness; not great merely in its badness; but great because of the insight it gives to the workings of the human heart and brain, and its absolute truth to nature.

### CHAPTER III

## Classes of Shakespeare's Plays

WHAT a mine of literary wealth we possess in the plays of Shakespeare! Blot out these dramatic poems and a greater gap would be made in literature than by the destruction of all else purely dramatic in character that has been written in the English language. Any one of his four great tragedies, Othello, Hamlet, Lear and Macbeth, represents more to English literature than the entire production of any other dramatic author. His works have entered into the very being of most subsequent writers and made an impression on Literature second to that of only one other work—the Bible. The reason that the influence of these plays has been so far reaching is that they are true to Nature. Shakespeare's descriptions of scenery, his pictures of plant and animal life, analyses of the mind and heart of man are so vivid, so true, and so masterful as to give them the force of reality. This is why his plays appeal to men of all lands and of all ages, and stand as the monumental intellectual production of the English race. He had no fixed mode of procedure, he was governed by no set rules. He took the dust of other writers, breathed into it the breath of his genius and it became a living thing. He was indebted to French, Italian and English

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authors for his plots and most of his characters. When the matter came to his hands it was nothing more than material; but when it passed out of them, it was a magnificent edifice. He was the greatest literary borrower of all times but he paid his debts with usurious interest. Whatever he took he returned a hundred fold, and whatever he touched he awakened to greater life. Whenever the English language failed to contain words expressive of his thoughts he created them, and thus he became possessed of a vocabulary of over fifteen thousand words, larger by far than that used by any other writer. In the handling of this immense number of words he was a magician, juggling with them in a most charming and marvelous manner, arranging them in so masterful a way as to make his phrases and sentences pregnant with the life of his thought. This wonderful arrangement of words is one of the main beauties of Shakespeare. In him it is the perfection of art, because nowhere in his work is the art apparent, nowhere does it intrude between the reader and the thought. This ability to preserve the thought in spite of the multiplicity of words that encase them, is one of the marvels of Shakespeare. He used words as a means and not as an end. He employed them to convey his ideas and not to display the extent of his vocabulary. Here is a striking example:

Therefore, to be possess'd with double pomp,  
To guard a title that was rich before,  
To guild refined gold, to paint the lily,

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To throw a perfume on the violet,  
To smooth the ice, or add another hue  
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light  
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,  
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.<sup>1</sup>

One who could so plainly perceive the futility of the excessive use of any means as to pen the above sentiment, would never have used words for the mere sake of using them.

There were no "periods" in Shakespeare's art such as the "immature," "maturing," and "matured." His was a steady climb from the first to the last, showing a broadening and a strengthening of his mental powers that were gradual and sure, and his progress cannot be confined within periods.

Commencing his education at the Parish school at Stratford, he continued it by a communion with Nature along the banks of the Avon and through the fields of Warwickshire, and completed it by a study of mankind in the city of London. In addition to this, he was an omnivorous reader, devouring all the important printed matter of the day, whether it pertained to his own land or those foreign climes that the navigators of England were then bringing to the light of civilization. His connection with the theatre placed in his hands the productions of other dramatists, and he did not hesitate to take suggestions from these works any more than he did from the stories of Holinshed's Chronicles. And if Greene and others are correct in their statements, he took more than suggestions. Thus it was, from Nature,

<sup>1</sup>"King John," Act IV. Scene II.

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from man, from books, from his fellow dramatists, that Shakespeare gained his education, and it is because his training was so diversified and the sources of his knowledge so many, that he was able to produce his wonderful plays. A mere bookworm could not have done the work of Shakespeare, nor could a mere child of Nature, but it was a blending of the two that produced the master playwright.

We do not possess a single manuscript of Shakespeare's, nor any printed form of any play that is known to have received his sanction, consequently it is not to be wondered at that his plays have come down to us in a very incomplete and defective form. Much credit is due the able and patient scholars who compared and arranged the material that has reached us, and who have given us Shakespeare as we know him today.

The original printed copies are, as a rule, full of typographical errors, and where there are several different printings of a play they often disagree in many important particulars. In some, the text differs materially; while in others, speeches, and even entire scenes, are omitted. In only a few are the acts and scenes clearly marked.

Some of the plays were printed in quarto pamphlet form either from incomplete copies obtained by the actors or from manuscripts made by persons who attended the performances and took down the matter as best they could. The First Folio gives what purports to be "all his comedies, histories, and tragedies, truly set forth according to their first original."



## CLASSES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

This collection of Shakespeare's plays was edited by his fellow actors Heminge and Condell, and was issued in 1623.

The First Folio contains fourteen plays that are set down as comedies, ~~ten that are listed~~ as histories, and twelve that are grouped as tragedies, making a total of thirty-six plays ascribed to Shakespeare by Heminge and Condell, being one less than the number allotted him by most modern editors. Pericles, Prince of Tyre, is the tragedy omitted in The First Folio.

Shakespeare's plays are divided into three distinct classes: tragedies, comedies and histories. This is the classification as used in The First Folio, and as there is no good reason for departing from it, it will be followed here. Of the tragedies, Othello, Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth will be discussed; of the comedies, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and Much Ado About Nothing; of the histories, Henry V., thus presenting to the consideration of students characteristic types of all Shakespeare's plays.

The Tragedy of Othello first appeared in quarto form in 1622; was among the collection of plays as issued by Heminge and Condell in 1623; was again printed in quarto form in 1630; and is included among the plays in The Second Folio of 1632, which is practically a reprint of The First Folio. These several versions of the same play differ from each other, some slightly, others to a considerable extent. That of The First Folio is the most complete, containing over a hundred and fifty lines that are want-

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ing in the first quarto, but some few lines absent in the folio are supplied by this quarto. The play was not printed during its author's lifetime, and there is nothing to prove that any of the printed copies is strictly authentic. ~~Further~~ ~~than~~ the fact that Heminge and Condell are supposed by some editors to have had access to the author's manuscripts of such plays as they included in The First Folio. This again is merely conjecture, there being no legal evidence to sustain it, and the fact that this folio is full of errors and blemishes would tend to disprove the supposition.

The Tragedy of Hamlet first appeared in quarto form in 1603. This no doubt was printed from notes taken down during the performance of the play and from memory, as it is imperfect in many ways. In 1604 a second quarto was issued, a great improvement over the first, which is today our main authority for the text of this wonderful play. In The First Folio it appears without arrangement into scenes and acts, many of the best portions are omitted, and the whole play is in a garbled state, indicating clearly that in this particular instance Heminge and Condell could not have had access to Shakespeare's manuscripts.

The Tragedy of Lear is supposed to have been written in 1606. It was first printed in 1608 and again issued the same year. Both issues were in quarto form, and both were full of errors and poorly printed. It appeared in The First Folio in 1623 and again in quarto form in 1655.

## CLASSES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

The text of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* as it appeared originally in *The First Folio* is wonderfully free from errors. The acts and scenes are uniformly arranged, the play being in every way complete. In so perfect a form does this play come down to us as to appear to have been revised and arranged for publication by the hand of the Dramatist himself.

The comedy of *As You Like It* was first printed, so far as is known, in *The First Folio*, although it is supposed to have been written in 1599. The structural work is faulty, indicating either haste or carelessness on the Dramatist's part.

*Twelfth Night* was written about the year 1600, and originally appeared in *The First Folio*. The play is made up of two distinct parts, comic and serious. There are, besides the main story of Viola's love for the Duke, three stories: (1) Olivia and the Duke; (2) Viola and Sebastian; (3) Malvolio, and the fun of which he is the center.

*Much Ado About Nothing* is supposed to have been written in 1599. It was first printed in quarto form in 1600. The text is remarkably accurate, but neither the scenes nor acts are marked. It appears in *The First Folio* much as it is in the quarto, except that the acts are marked and there are a few unimportant variations in the text.

*The Life of Henry the Fifth*, as it is styled in *The First Folio*, is supposed to have been written in 1598. The earliest known edition of the play appeared in 1600. This edition was reprinted in 1602 and 1608. All these editions were in quarto form.

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In the folio of 1623 it differs materially from the quartos, being fully twice as long.

Shakespeare's genius is displayed best by his tragedies. As plays, the comedies are not in the same class with the tragedies. Three of the comedies, by general agreement of critics, stand out pre-eminently from the others: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*. While *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale* are both generally classed as comedies, they are considered by some editors as not distinctly so, being classed by them as romantic dramas, but as the principal characters in both plays succeed and the plays have a happy ending, they are properly considered comedies. With the exception of *The Tempest*, all the comedies are deficient in plot and construction, not being comparable in these respects with the principal tragedies, but they all contain wonderful examples of the Dramatist's art in the delineation of the comic characters.

Shakespeare was at his best when he depicted great things and events in man and nature. His was an exceptional talent and it required unusual events for its display in its grandest and highest form. This requirement was met in depicting the philosophy of the human mind in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Lear*, not only in the development of the main character in each play but in all those minor ones that the play included, and in the construction of the play itself. But when it came to telling the stories depicting the sprightliness of *Rosalind*, the timidity

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of Viola, and the wit of Beatrice, he appears to have been guilty of a carelessness not to be found in his serious dramas. Not that the characters are not well drawn—for they are, in their way, as perfect as any of the tragic characters—but the plays themselves are founded on weaker foundations, the plots being developed with less care and the structural work not so masterfully put together. Action is less apparent in the comedies than in the tragedies. In the comedies, more depends on the wit and sprightliness of the dialogue than on the movement of the story, the merriment of many of the scenes depending on the quaintness of individual characters such as Dogberry, whose comedy element is depicted by words and not by action. On the other hand, the tragedies stand upon massive foundations, the plots are deep and the development moves along in an impressive, strong and sure manner. It is only as plays that the comedies are weaker than the tragedies, for as far as the limning of the characters is concerned there is not much choice between Rosalind and Desdemona, Viola and Ophelia, Beatrice and Cordelia. But as plays, there is all the difference in the world between *As You Like It* and *Othello*, *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Lear*. This difference, so far as their value as plays is concerned, consists in the superiority of the structural work of the tragedies over that of the comedies.

The stories of all the comedies were borrowed by Shakespeare but the characters are his own. In

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every instance the plots are weak but the characters wondrous in their lifelike portraiture. In the tragedies, also, the Dramatist drew from outside sources, but the characters that give them their form and life were the children of his own brain. Therefore we see that what is truly great in the plays of Shakespeare was original with him. His characters pass through the plays as do men and women in life, and it is the lifelike portrayal of the traits of human beings in the characters of the stage that gives his plays their everlasting life. It is Hamlet, Othello, Lear and Macbeth who move us; it is Beatrice, Rosalind and Viola whom we love; it is Harry of Monmouth who thrills us, while the tragedies and comedians are only the bodies that contain the souls of these immortal characters.

### THE TRAGEDY OF OTHELLO

What suggested the idea of Othello to the mind of Shakespeare appears to have been a work by the Italian novelist, Giraldi Cinthio, entitled *Il Moro Di Venezia*. It is not known whether Shakespeare possessed sufficient knowledge of Italian to enable him to read the novel in the original tongue or whether there was an English translation of it previous to the writing of his Tragedy. It is possible that a play on the same subject by another author preceded that of Shakespeare's Othello, but as this is mere surmise there is no use in following it further.

The plot is complex, being made up of several

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separate actions which, however, finally blend into the main one—that of the love and death of Othello and Desdemona. The other sections, or, as they might better be termed, threads, consist of (1) the story of Bianca and Cassio; (2) Roderigo's attachment for Desdemona; (3) Iago's compact with Roderigo; (4) Iago's scheming to get Cassio's place; (5) Iago's plan to bring about the death of Cassio; (6) Iago's intrigue to separate Othello and Desdemona. These secondary stories, however, all pertain to the main one, flowing into it as do many small streams into a larger one.

The Tragedy of Othello ranks as one of Shakespeare's masterpieces, being placed by all editors and scholars alongside Lear, Hamlet and Macbeth. All agree that it is one of the greatest, and some<sup>2</sup> claim that it is the greatest, of all Shakespeare's plays. It certainly shows that it is the work of a master hand: the style is even and elegant, all its parts are logical and admirably joined, and there is unity of action throughout. Its theme is purely domestic, the play dealing with the love, marriage, estrangement, and death of Othello and Desdemona. It holds closely to the unity of place, remarkably so for a play by Shakespeare, the action taking place in Cyprus, except the first act which is laid in Venice. This slight transgression from the law of unity of place is wise, because it shows the events leading up to the tragedy instead of having them told by the actors. Thus by breaking one law of the play-

<sup>2</sup> "Othello" is perhaps the greatest work in the world.

—T. B. Macaulay.

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wright's art the Dramatist emphasizes another—showing by action instead of telling by words. The first act gives us an insight into the characters of the principal personages of the drama that could never have been gained unless we had been admitted into this close relationship. It was necessary to allow Iago and Desdemona to show their traits of character in order that the nature of Othello might be understood and his actions made to appear logical. The reasons for Desdemona's love for the Moor could not have been made convincingly apparent in any manner except by unfolding them to the gaze of the audience as the Dramatist has done in the first act. Shakespeare was severely censured by some critics for doing the very thing that made his tragedy so appealing, even Doctor Johnson suggested that had the scene opened in Cyprus, the events of the first act being told by the characters from time to time, the action of the play would have been greatly improved. Here the learned Doctor certainly erred, because it would have been necessary on several occasions to halt the action of the play while some of the facts were being narrated by the characters, thus turning the actors into orators and making them directly address the audience—a procedure which is against all the laws of dramatic art.

The pivotal point of the play, or the center of the arch, is at the close of the third act when Othello, convinced of the guilt of his wife, takes Iago to his heart and exclaims, "Now art thou my lieutenant."



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The play is marvelously well constructed, the plot being one of the best that has ever been developed. Many incidents are introduced that pertain primarily to other actions than that of the pivotal one, but they all work into the main structure as do individual threads into a piece of cloth. All the several incidents are important elements that lend to the unfolding of the story. The construction of the Tragedy of Othello required the experienced actor's trained hand as well as that of the able writer and thinker.

The characters are all strikingly dissimilar, wonderful effects being produced by setting one type against another; as, Desdemona and Emelia, and Othello and Iago. It delineates marvelously the workings of the mental faculties and analyzes keenly the feelings of the heart. Othello is in every respect a remarkable production of the dramatist's art, and had Shakespeare written nothing else, this one play would have given him literary immortality.

### THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET

The story that is the foundation of this wonderful creation of Shakespeare's genius is ancient, having been known to the people of Iceland for many centuries before the magic pen of Shakespeare made it known to the civilized world. It is presumed that the Dramatist obtained his information regarding it after it had passed through many forms and finally appeared in the works of the French author,

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Francis de Belleforest. Whether he took it directly from the French or from an English translation is not known. The play, however, indicates that its source was that of the story as related by Belleforest in his *Histoires Tragiques*, who, in his turn, had taken it from the Danish author Saxo Grammaticus, who lived in the early period of the thirteenth century, and drew many of his stories from the sagas of Iceland.

The story as narrated by these men is one of rapine, murder and lust. It is horrible and barbarous in the extreme, without a suggestion of romance. As it passed through the many languages it improved little in narrative or diction until Shakespeare incorporated it into his splendid dramatic poem. He is indebted to the early authors for nothing more than the plain facts, and these he softened and subdued to his purpose.

The plot is a simple one, dealing, as it does, solely with the story of Hamlet. Every action revolves around him and all incidents point particularly to him. There is nothing in the plot to detract in the slightest from the one story.

Two parts are plainly discernable to this play: contemplation and action. The author cannot agree with those who claim that in it "philosophy overflows all bounds, and sweeps onward unchecked."<sup>3</sup> True, it is a tragedy of thought, but it is also a tragedy of action. Were this not the case it could not have proceeded from the brain of Shakespeare,

<sup>3</sup> Hudson's Introduction to "The Tragedy of Hamlet."

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for all his plays possess this great requisite that constitutes a literary composition a play. There is action all through the tragedy, from the appearance of the Ghost to the men on watch until the soul of Hamlet takes its flight and rejoins that of his revered father. This phase of the subject is dealt with at length in the analysis of the character of Hamlet, so we will not linger on it here.

There are more than twenty characters in the play, all drawn in a masterful manner. Laertes and Horatio are well contrasted — one being a social favorite with many vices, the other an all-round manly man. King Claudius in endeavoring to bring about the death of Hamlet insures his own ruin, and the successive steps leading to this are strongly built. Polonius, a man trained in diplomacy, one on whom two kings depended, is a sneak and a babbler who is finally caught in his trickery and brought to an account. Queen Gertrude, a mixture of goodness and baseness, of loyalty and deceit, who is bad because she is weak and not from any liking she has for evil itself, finally awakens to the villainy of Claudius and repents her sins. Ophelia is a character of sweetness, one who loved fondly but without strength, one controlled by the minds of others and not by the consciousness of duty to herself and her lover, one naturally constituted to rely on a protector and not on herself. Therefore, when left alone, she sinks under the burden of her sorrows and comes to an untimely but logical end. All these characters are deftly painted, and by their truth to

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Nature and appropriateness to the purpose of the story they give the tragedy an atmosphere of reality, despite the fact that the story itself, with its Ghost and the brooding melancholy of its principal character, is, in the main, imaginative.

Hamlet is the soul of the tragedy, not merely because of the many lines he has to speak and the length of time that he occupies the stage, but for the reason that he is continuously the subject of the conversation of the other characters and thus kept ever before the minds of the auditors. He is almost as much the object of attention when off the stage as he is when on, the creation of interest in this character being one of the marked traits of genius as shown to us by the Dramatist.

The versification is excellent throughout, some of the passages, such as Hamlet's remarks to Horatio, "Nay, do not think I flatter," (Act III. Scene II.), and the famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be" (Act III. Scene I.) being splendid specimens of verse, while the prose matter in the speech commencing "I will tell you why" (Act II. Scene II.), is animated with the very spirit of poetry. Nothing more poetical than this passage is anywhere to be found.

The play reaches its climax, the center of its development, in Act III., at the moment when King Claudius betrays his guilt, being brought to this betrayal by witnessing the play as arranged by Hamlet for the special purpose of unmasking the King. From the opening of the tragedy Hamlet has suspected that all is not well. This suspicion is

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strengthened by the Ghost, and it is confirmed by the behavior of Claudius. Here we have the upward tendency of the plot: the first half of the arch. Now commences the bringing about of the circumstances that shall lead to the fulfilment of Hamlet's vow to the Ghost, the punishment of Claudius. Here begins the unravelling of the plot: the other half of the arch. Thus in the development of the tragedy is plainly discerned the arch-like form of construction that is common to the works of Shakespeare.

### THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

The first act of this play is a masterful one, as are the great majority of Shakespeare's first acts. It opens with a conversation between Kent and Gloster which immediately suggests to the reader the story upon which the play is founded, and introduces three of the important characters. This first act is like a premise upon which an argument is founded, conveying, as it does, an insight into the many characters who have the weaving of the plot in their hands. Soon after the rise of the curtain the all-important character is presented, surrounded by the group which is to fashion the tale. The first scene of this awful tragedy makes known the characteristics of all the persons represented, no mask being thick enough to keep their true characters from being known. The foolish, stubborn strength of Lear, the bluntness of Kent, the deceitfulness of Goneril and Regan, the truthful firmness of Cordelia

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are all made clear, and thus are sufficient reasons furnished for what transpires in the play. It is this early insight into the characters permitted the reader that makes the outcome of the tragedy so logical. Such a vain, stubborn (not strong) character as Lear could not help foolishly parting with his sovereign powers. He must ruthlessly and remorselessly turn his hatred and anger upon his child because she showed a trait in her character so like one possessed by her father, trusting to the breathy protestations of his two other daughters; and after they had cast him out (as previously he had without cause banished his youngest child from his heart and home), turning on them in such awful anger and cursing them so horribly that the reader or spectator cannot help but feel that the curses must fall upon his own head. This wonderful portrayal of character is, in the author's opinion, the greatest of the many great reasons for the stupendous grandeur of this dramatic composition.

In this chapter, stress is laid upon Shakespeare's delineation of the characters in *The Tragedy of King Lear* because the author believes that the high state of their development was one of the principal means employed by the Dramatist in creating a play that must rank among the greatest of the great. Another reason for so doing is that the author departs so fundamentally from the general conception of these characters that he feels called upon to make his purpose as clear as possible.

Regan and Goneril are dreadful creatures, devilish

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in their wickedness, and yet the insight that the Dramatist gives us into all the characters of this play show these women to be so influenced by heredity and environment as to be the logical production of plainly discernable natural causes and not monstrosities. Take away from the reader the knowledge that Lear was a peevish, vain, stubborn old man who loved profession more than performance, and both these women would be so horrible in their lust, their cruelty, and their general wickedness as to make them monsters of unreality. But with this character of Lear clearly depicted, we see it was necessary for his daughters to lie to him in order to receive at his hands any consideration, to deceive him at every turn in order that their lives might be made bearable. They could plainly see that their father was unjust to them, that he had them in his power and could enforce his will upon them, consequently the repetition of their deceits and lies formed their habits, these habits fashioned their characters, and when they got their father into their power they treated him with injustice because they themselves had been brought up under it. Shakespeare understood that likes begets like, consequently he gave Regan and Goneril such a father as Lear.

Much the same reasoning accounts for Cordelia's character, but she was so disgusted with the falsehood of the life her sisters lived that she refused to share it with them. She was, however, her father's true daughter in that she possessed that

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stubborn (or determined) trait of character that enabled her to hold to her purpose, even though she lost the third of a kingdom. The same spirit that caused Lear to disinherit Cordelia, animated her in her refusal to flatter him. Her disposition, however, had been softened by the influence of her mother who, according to the few hints given by Lear, must have been a sweet and noble woman.

In an interesting and instructive *Life of Shakespeare* by Oliphent Smeaton, M. A., it is stated that Regan and Goneril "in a fury of jealousy killed each other."<sup>4</sup> In another portion of the work it is stated, "they perish miserably, each by the hand of the other."<sup>5</sup> This is wrong, as a reference to Scene III. Act V. of the play will show. Goneril poisons her sister Regan and stabs herself to the heart. The text reads thus:

Yet Edmund was belov'd:  
The one the other poison'd for my sake,  
And after slew herself.<sup>6</sup>

Reference is made to this error because of the bearing it has on the characters themselves.

The center of development in *The Tragedy of King Lear* is toward the close of the second act, at the point where Lear realizes that he is on the verge of madness, at the time he utters the pathetic, heart-breaking words, "O fool! I shall go mad." While this occurs in the second act, whereas in most of Shakespeare's plays the climax, or turning

<sup>4</sup> "Shakespeare, His Life and Work," page 416.

<sup>5</sup> "Shakespeare, His Life and Work," page 422.

<sup>6</sup> "King Lear," Act V. Scene III.



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point, is reached in the third, it is almost in the middle of the tragedy.

The plot is complex, being composed of the stories of (1) Lear, (2) Kent, (3) Gloster, with other secondary threads running into them, all of which are bound together by the character of Cordelia, despite the fact that the story is dominated by the towering character of King Lear.

The versification is strong, solid, and right to the point. It bears the impress of having been boiled down almost to an essence.

King Lear is supposed to have reigned in Britain some eight hundred years before the coming of Christ, and the story as employed by Shakespeare was handed down through the ages as history.

In the awfulness of its theme Lear is surpassed by no other drama; as a tragedy it is second only to Macbeth; in the perfection of its characterization it stands supreme.

### THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH

Macbeth, from beginning to end, is bustle, turmoil, and strife. It opens with the peal of thunder and the crash of lightning; passes to the armed camp, the blast of the trumpet, and the roll of the drum; and finally depicts the great struggle between conscience and wicked ambition. This air of strife permeates the entire drama, and is its keynote.

From a historical standpoint the play covers a period of about fifteen years—from the murder of

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Duncan in 1039 to the killing of Macbeth in 1054. The historical facts used in this tragedy are gathered from the chronicles of Raphael Holinshed to whom Shakespeare was indebted for most of the historical information he used in the plays that deal with events that transpired in Great Britain.

The action of the play takes place in Scotland, except Scene III. Act IV., which transpires in England.

The characters are vividly and accurately drawn, even the unimportant ones, such as the Porter, the Wounded Soldier, and the Doctor, are clearly depicted. This trait of drawing vividly all characters, great and small, is one of the striking characteristics of Shakespeare's handiwork.

The plot is simple, consisting of the story of the murder of King Duncan. All that takes place in the play flows into that tragic story or ebbs from it.

Some editors class the play of Macbeth with the histories, but it is so intensely dramatic throughout, so purely tragic in character, its very air being pregnant with awful events, as to stamp this classification as erroneous. The historical facts, in some instances incorrect, are secondary in importance, Shakespeare bending everything to the successful creation of his tragedy. The main feature of the play is the tragic story of the murder of King Duncan and the attendant circumstances. Why it should be classed as a history cannot be seen by the author any more than can a reason be assigned for the like classification of Lear. Both deal with his-

## CLASSES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

torical incidents but in both cases the incidents are subordinate to the stories, which are highly and purely tragic.

In this tragedy Shakespeare gives free rein to his imagination and permits it to run wild. The metaphors are so far drawn as to almost amount to hyperboles, but always does the Dramatist keep within poetic bounds. When Macbeth is contemplating the murder of Duncan, and is inclined to retire from the awful compact with his wife, he soliloquizes thus:

Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against  
The deep damnation of his taking off;  
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind.<sup>7</sup>

This language shows the excited state of Macbeth's mind brought about by the terrific combat between his conscience and his ambition. The passage is not far-fetched. Macbeth was in an extraordinary frame of mind and it required extraordinary terms to describe it. Thus is it with many other passages in this great tragedy of action—action that rushes on so tumultuously as to almost bring about confusion—passages that have been called in question by some critics, but they are all as reasonable as the passage just quoted and all as easily explained.

<sup>7</sup> "Macbeth," Act I. Scene VII.

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The versification throughout the play is magnificent, fully up to Shakespeare's highest standard, and absolutely in keeping with the awfulness of the story.

The dialogue is wonderfully sustained, some scenes, notably those between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, being without peer. The high point of development in this tragedy is reached in Act III. Scene IV. Up to the appearance of the Ghost of Banquo all has gone with Macbeth as he desired: the crown is on his brow and he is King of Scotland. From the appearance of the Ghost, however, the decline in his fortunes begins and continues without change to his death at the hands of Macduff.

The domestic aspect of the tragedy equals that of Othello; its philosophical phase is comparable with that of Hamlet; while in the awfulness of its catastrophe it is not exceeded even by Lear.

Macbeth stands pre-eminently at the head of Shakespeare's tragedies; and as he was the greatest dramatist of all known times, Macbeth is the master tragedy of the ages.

### AS YOU LIKE IT

The tone of this sweet woodland play is as fragrant as the odor of a breeze blowing through a garden of unseen roses and bearing the fragrance of the lovely flowers throughout the land. Whence comes this fragrance it is hard to tell, but that it is there, is perceptible to all who read this charming play. It

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possesses the odor of the glade, the joy of the dancing brook, the song of the bird, and a general air of perfect naturalness. Of all Shakespeare's comedies it is the one that is most restful and exhilarating—restful in the charm of the idealistic atmosphere of the play, and exhilarating in the portrayal by the characters of some of the noblest traits of humanity. It is purely a pastoral drama; and, as with many others of Shakespeare's plays, we are indebted for our interest and entertainment more to the characters and their expressions of sentiments than to the development of the plot.

As You Like It is supposed to have been written in 1599, but was not printed until it appeared in *The First Folio*. It is presumed that Shakespeare is indebted to a novel by Thomas Lodge, published in 1590, entitled *Rosalynd; Euphues' Golden Legacies*, for the story out of which he constructed this comedy.

The plot is complex. The main thread of the plot is the story of Rosalind and Orlando. The secondary ones are, (1) Oliver and Orlando; (2) The usurping Duke; (3) The banished Duke and his companions; (4) Rosalind and Phoebe; (5) Touchstone and Audrey.

The play contains some of the gems of Shakespeare. (1) "Now, my co-mates, and brothers in exile," "Indeed, my lord, etc.," and "O! yes, into a thousand similes" (Act II. Scene I.); (2) "A fool! a fool!— I met a fool in the forest" and "All the

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world's a stage (Act II. Scene VII.); (3) "Think not I love him" (Act III. Scene V.).

The characters fit into the story beautifully, they are drawn with the best skill of the Dramatist, and show distinctive traits that mark and individualize every one.

As You Like It, taken for all in all, is the best of Shakespeare's plays that can be distinctly termed comedies. The plot is sustained throughout, the versification in places excellent, and the characterization superb. It is a favorite on the stage and is equally enjoyable in the closet.

### TWELFTH NIGHT

This delightful comedy was written about the year 1600. It is not known to have been printed until its appearance in The First Folio in 1623.

It is impossible to say where Shakespeare got the story for this play. He may have taken it from a tale by Barnaby Rich who, in his turn, most likely, took it from the Italian of Bandello, but there is such scant evidence at hand as to the source of the plot that no one can do more than hazard a guess.

The play sparkles with wit and has an atmosphere of poetry. The style of composition is almost flawless, being simple and chaste; harmless intrigue, whimsicalities and accidents being interwoven in an amusing and interesting manner. There are two distinct parts to the play, one serious the other comic, but Viola enters into both and thus binds them together.

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Three threads form the plot, (1) Love of Orsino for the Countess Olivia; (2) The story of Sebastian and Viola; (3) Malvolio and the group of characters surrounding him.

Twelfth Night is particularly strong in the bold comedy portion, the characters that are there introduced being wonderfully well drawn. Malvolio, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew comparing favorably with Falstaff, Bardolph, and Pistol.

The romantic element of the play, introduced by Viola, is soothingly sweet, being best expressed by the Dramatist's own lines which he puts in the mouth of Orsino:

O! it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odor.<sup>8</sup>

There are many poetical passages in this play, one of the tenderest and sweetest being Viola's description of the love "her father's daughter" entertained for a man (Act II. Scene IV.). The refined, womanly character of Viola, one of the best of Shakespeare's creations, permeates the entire play and gives it most of its beauty. The comedy has always been considered one of Shakespeare's happiest productions.

### MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The play aptly carries out its title, for it is truly founded upon nothing and it makes much ado. It is pregnant with life, bright in dialogue, but defi-

<sup>8</sup>Act I. Scene I.

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cient in reason for all the commotion that it portrays.

It was probably written in 1599, printed in quarto form in 1560, and reprinted, with few modifications, in The First Folio. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn) In the quarto it appears with neither the acts nor scenes marked, while in the folio the matter is arranged into acts but not scenes. The text, in both printings, is very accurate. It is written mainly in prose, only 643 out of the 2823 lines that compose it being in blank verse.

The sources of its plot are Italian, being mainly taken from a novel by Bandello entitled *Timbreo di Cardona*. The work of the Italian writer was translated into French and appears in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*. It was used by Aristo in his *Orlando Furioso*, and this was transferred into English by Peter Beverly in 1565 and by Sir John Harrington in 1591. Whether Shakespeare took the material directly from the Italian, or from the French or English translation, is not known.

The entire action of the play takes place at Messina.

The plot is exceedingly thin, the play depending entirely on the characters for its action and interest. The characters are drawn with Shakespeare's accustomed skill, all of them, even the unimportant ones, standing out in lifelike proportions, and no two are similar.

There are two distinct threads to the story which are bound together by the main agent of the plot, John, the bastard brother of Don Pedro, Prince of



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Arragon. These threads are (1) the love of Benedick and Beatrice, and (2) the story of Hero.

The interest of the play consists of (1) the witty passages between Benedick and Beatrice; (2) the almost tragic experience of Hero; and (3) the drollery of Dogberry and Verges. There is no depth to the plot nor the characters, all the beauties of this excellent play being on the surface.

The plot development is in the main, catastrophic, moving steadily along to the happy ending. Shakespeare had only to make Hero die in reality, instead of appearance, in order to turn his comedy into a tragedy.

### KING HENRY V

This play is purely historical, depicting events in the life of a monarch who typifies all that is noble and heroic in the nation he was intended by its author to represent.

The scene of this patriotic drama is England in the vicinity of London, and then on the battlefields of France and the palace of the French King.

As to plot proper, there is very little to this play. The story consists of episodes in the life of King Henry V. that are strung together in an inspiring manner, but the plot lacks the strength and grandeur that goes with unity. Its episodes are interesting, stirring and brilliant, and in this lies the principal charm of the patriotic fervor of the English nation typified in the person of its king. This fervor runs through the entire play, and is about

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all there is in the way of a plot. At the close of the battle of Agincourt, when victory has perched on the banners of England, the play practically ends, but the Dramatist, as though with the express purpose of showing the soldier-king in love, adds the scene depicting his wooing of Katherine.

While there is not a great amount of action in the play, save what pertains to the individual scenes, Henry himself is action personified and injects this quality, by reflection, into the play itself.

The play is supposed to have been written in 1598, was printed in quarto form in 1600, and reprinted in 1602 and 1608. Shakespeare's name, however, does not appear to have been attached to the play until it appeared in *The First Folio*, where it is about double the length of the quartos.

The materials that enter into the making of this play are taken from two sources: (1) The second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which was printed in 1587, and (2) an old play entitled *The Famous Victories of Henry V.*

#### CHAPTER IV

## Shakespeare's Revelation of Himself in His Characters

THE greater the mystery that attaches to a person the more interesting that person is to others, and while it is mainly because of Shakespeare's genius that interest is drawn to him, this interest is often promoted, and is generally enhanced, by the mystery that surrounds his life.

Of Shakespeare the man very little is known. Some of his fellow actors speak of him as a charming companion, a lovable friend, and a marvelous writer, and Ben Jonson tells us that he was "honest and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions," but nowhere can we find positive and comprehensive information concerning his habits, his motives, his appearance, and his character. As far as his physical parts are concerned we know nothing, no two pictures of him agreeing in any important particular, nor do the different descriptions given his height, the cut of his beard, the color of his hair and eyes, correspond. These, of course, are unimportant particulars, and do not affect his standing as an author, yet the absence of all accuracy concerning them shows how little is known regarding the physical parts of the man.

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In regard to his spiritual parts we know no more than we do concerning his material parts, and we have no source of information concerning his ideas of life, his temperament and his actions, unless it is furnished by himself in his plays and in the sonnets. It is claimed that he did reveal himself in his works, that he identified himself with his characters, spoke through them, and thus portrayed his nature. Is this the fact? Let us call upon the different characters for their testimony, and see how they will agree.

What were Shakespeare's religious convictions? Was Shakespeare a Catholic? Many claim that he was, and they give as their reasons for this belief his knowledge of the forms and observances of that religion as shown in his plays, and the utterances of the characters therein depicted. Now let us cite evidence to prove that he gives ample reasons for supposing that he was a non-Catholic.

Laertes, after his sister's body has been denied the full offices of the church, on account of the circumstances attending her death, has this to say:

I tell thee churlish priest,  
A ministering angel shall my sister be,  
When thou liest howling.

—*Hamlet, Act V. Scene I.*

Does this sound as though it came from the mouth of a true Catholic? Would such a one tell a priest of his church that a suicide would be an angel in heaven while the priest was howling in hell? Hardly.

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In The First Part of King Henry VI. the Duke of Gloucester thus addresses Cardinal Beaufort:

What! am I dared and bearded to my face?  
Draw, men, for all this privileged place;  
Blue coats to tawny coats. Priest, beware your beard;  
I mean to tug it and to cuff you soundly:  
Under my feet I stamp thy cardinal's hat:  
In spite of pope or dignities of church,  
Here by the cheeks I'll drag thee up and down.

—*First Part of King Henry VI., Act I. Scene III.*

It may be that Shakespeare was a Catholic, but if he spoke through his characters, these two incidents would go to prove that he was not. But no, he did not hide behind "the children of his brain," he merely put into their mouths the words that expressed the emotions they were pictured as laboring under at the time. Thus he causes the hot-headed youth, Laertes, smarting under what he imagined an indignity and a wrong done to his sister, to cry out against those responsible for his grievance without considering their office or station. In like manner, he permitted him to speak his mind to the King freely when he thought him responsible for his sister's death, or, at least, conniving at it. He allowed the ambitious Richard, who had respect neither for God nor man, to give vent to his hatred for the Cardinal. The passages quoted express the sentiments of Laertes and Gloucester, but in no way do they reflect the opinions of William Shakespeare.

Was Shakespeare a believer in the liberties of the people, or did he think them only creatures to be

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governed and used by their betters? In Coriolanus he says:

This double worship  
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other  
Insult without all reason; where gentry, title, wisdom,  
Cannot conclude but by the yea and no  
Of general ignorance,—it must omit  
Real necessities, and give way the while  
To unstable slightness: purpose so bar'd, it follows,  
Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you,—  
You that will be less feared than discreet;  
That love the fundamental part of state  
More than you doubt the change on't; that prefer  
A noble life before a long, and wish  
To jump a body with a dangerous physic  
That's sure of death without it,—at once pluck out  
The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick  
The sweet that is their poison.

—*Coriolanus, Act III. Scene I.*

Or did he believe in Jack Cade's conception of liberty?

And you that love the commons, follow me.  
Now show yourselves men; 'tis for liberty.  
We will not leave one lord, one gentleman:  
Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon;  
For they are thrifty honest men, and such  
As would, but that they dare not, take our parts.

—*Second Part of King Henry VI., Act IV. Scene II.*

Was Shakespeare pure in heart or base? He places in the mouth of Hamlet these words descriptive of those who are of a well-balanced and noble nature:

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,  
And could of men distinguish, her election  
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been  
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;

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A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee.

—*Hamlet, Act III. Scene II.*

Does the above description fit the character of Shakespeare, or is his portrait depicted in the following passage from the Tragedy of Richard III.?

And therefore since I cannot prove a lover,  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,  
I am determined to prove a villain,  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.  
Plots have I lain, inductions dangerous,  
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,  
To set my brother Clarence and the king  
In deadly hate the one against the other:  
And if King Edward be as true and just  
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,  
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up.

—*Richard III., Act I. Scene I.*

How are we to judge whether Shakespeare revealed himself as

“A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks,”

or as the hunchback tyrant railing against the world and picturing himself as “subtle, false and treacherous?” Here are two portraits drawn by the same hand, depicting two distinct individuals, but where is the warrant for the belief that a third person is revealed in either one or both?

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Did Shakespeare believe in the purity of woman?  
Let us call on Isabella for her testimony.

As much for my poor brother as myself:  
That is, were I under the terms of death,  
The impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,  
And strip myself to death, as to a bed  
That longing I've been sick for, ere I'd yield  
My body up to shame.

—*Measure for Measure, Act II. Scene IV.*

Thus speaks the noble maiden when her brother's  
life is offered to her in exchange for her own chasity.  
Now we will ask Cressida for her voice regarding  
the virtue of her sex. This is her reply:

Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee,  
But with my heart the other eye doth see.  
Oh, poor our sex! this fault in us I find,  
The error of our eye directs our mind:  
What error leads, must err: O! then conlude,  
Minds, sway'd by eyes, are full of turpitude.

—*Troilus and Cressida, Act V. Scene II.*

Is this evidence to show that Shakespeare had anything further in mind than depicting the pure, steadfast character of one type of woman in Isabella, and the impure, changeful character of another type in Cressida? In order to make it appear as though he had, we must attribute to him intentions that he does not tell us nor show us that he possessed.

Did Shakespeare believe in the honesty of man, or did he consider him absolutely mercenary? If we hold that he revealed himself in his characters, and cite Brutus to bear witness for him, we must decide that he not only believed in the integrity of



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man, but that he himself was most loyal and honorable. Listen to the testimony of Brutus:

If it be aught toward the general good,  
Set honor in one eye and death i' the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently:  
For let the Gods so speed me as I love  
The name of honor more than I fear death.

—*Julius Caesar, Act I. Scene II.*

This would be all very well if Brutus were the only witness examined, but here is another come into court and anxious to be heard. Note the testimony of Cassius:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,  
Thy honorable metal may be wrought  
From that it is dispos'd: therefore, 'tis meet  
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;  
For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?

—*Julius Caesar, Act I. Scene II.*

How are we to reconcile the opposing testimony of these two capable witnesses? Is there any way to do so and still hold the belief that Shakespeare revealed himself in his characters?

Here we have produced eight witnesses to testify regarding the characteristics of the man Shakespeare as revealed in his work. We find that four state that he honored the people, was pure in heart, and believed in the purity of woman and the honesty of man; while the other four picture him as being an aristocrat who despised the common people, was impure in heart, and a believer in the frailty of woman and the perfidy of man. Which are we to accept? It seems the wiser plan to believe neither

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set of witnesses but to throw the whole case out of court and look upon Shakespeare as a special advocate pleading in behalf of the individual character and keeping himself entirely out of the scene except as the advocate urging the cause of his client. Thus does he represent Shylock demanding the forfeit according to the bond; English Harry inspiring his nobles and yeomen once more to attempt to carry the walled town of Harfleur; the guilty Scotch queen vainly striving to wash the blood from her little hand; the scheming Iago; the melancholy Jacques; the lovesick Romeo; the ambitious Macbeth; the eloquent Antony, and the many other characters of different times, complexions and degrees, which, in a marvelously natural manner, "strut their hour upon the stage."

A Shakespearean scholar,<sup>1</sup> contending that the Dramatist revealed himself in his characters, has this to say: "If anybody could have doubt about the liveliness of Shakespeare, let them consider the liveliness of Falstaff. When a man has created *that* without a capacity for laughter, then a blind man may succeed in describing colors." Would it not be just as reasonable to say, If anybody could have doubt about the melancholy of Shakespeare, let him consider the melancholy of Hamlet? Might we not, with as much right, claim that he was a murderer at heart because he so vividly portrays the blood-thirsty villain when he depicts Macbeth treating with the two ruffians for the untimely cutting off of

<sup>1</sup> Walter Bagehot in "Shakespeare — the Man."

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Banquo and his son Fleance, and when Richard III. fiendishly arranges for the murder of the young princes? Might one not, with equal reason, argue that Shakespeare was a woman because he so marvelously portrays her sweet characteristics in Juliet, Desdemona and Cordelia, while with equal skill he pictures her baser nature in Goneril, Regan, and Lady Macbeth? It was not necessary that Shakespeare should be of a lively disposition in order to draw the character of Falstaff, nor that he should be melancholy that he might depict Hamlet, nor that he should be a woman that he might delineate the traits common to that sex. But it was necessary that he should know human nature, should possess a knowledge of the many emotions and characters before he could reproduce them, and this knowledge he certainly possessed to a greater extent than any other human being the world has ever known.

### Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes  
Or Cythera's breath.

—*The Winter's Tale, Act IV. Scene III.*

Are these charming lines descriptive of Shakespeare's love of nature, or are they but expressive of the love of Perdita for her prince of Bohemia, couched in terms that were made familiar to her through intercourse with nature? If the latter is not the case, how are we to account for the following?

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For brave Macbeth — well he deserves that name —  
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel  
Which smoked with bloody execution,  
Like valor's minion carved out his passage  
Till he faced the slave;  
Which never shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

—*Macbeth, Act I. Scene II.*

Could a bloody encounter be more vividly portrayed? This passage is certainly as truly pictured as is the one of the daffodils and the violets, and it would be just as correct for us to say that the passage from *Macbeth* denotes Shakespeare's blood-thirsty disposition as it is to claim that the extract from *The Winter's Tale* demonstrates his love of nature.

Does a playwright indicate his own character in the puppets he creates? One writer<sup>2</sup> on this subject says: "A dramatist lets us know, and cannot help letting us know, what is his general view of his fellow creatures and of the world in which they live. It is his very function to do so, and though the indication may be indirect, it is not the less significant of the observer's own peculiarities." Wherever a playwright obtrudes his personal opinions, or endeavors to project himself into his characters, we have a poor play. A playwright should develop characters along fixed lines, and reason out that because they are of certain natures they should express certain ideas and portray certain emotions, but never should he parade himself upon the stage.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Stephen in "Self-Revelation of Shakespeare."

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The playwright differs from the poet in the same manner that the actor differs from the orator. The playwright studies man and aims to reproduce him and not to create him; he does not endeavor to fashion images of himself and trot them out upon the stage to sermonize, but he looks out into the world and produces distinct and individual characters which he allows to tell their stories. The poet gazes into his own heart and reveals its contents, showing how Nature acts upon him and influences him. He calls upon his imagination, and by means of it he sees things as he thinks they should be and not as they are. In fact, the poet is the antithesis of the playwright, because the former is fanciful and the latter is realistic, and as soon as the playwright ceases to be realistic he ceases to be a playwright. He must hold, "as 'twere, the mirror up to nature," being a reflector, or copyist, and not an originator, but always a realist.

In the same manner we distinguish the actor from the orator. The actor should never be himself, he should lose his identity in his character, and unless he does this, he is real, and consequently cannot be acting, for to act is to be other than oneself. The orator, however, is an orator only so long as he is himself, so long as he is giving expression to his own views and is absolutely sincere in all he says and does.

Shakespeare was an actor and a playwright who thoroughly understood the principles underlying those arts, consequently it is only fair to assume that

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he had no desire to reveal himself in his plays, that he did not attempt to do so, and that nowhere in his writings does he speak except as the character he is representing should speak in order that it may be developed along effective and natural lines.

Shakespeare does not reveal his sympathies through his characters, but he causes them to speak and move as will best suit his purpose from the standpoint of the stage, and he does not reward or punish them according to their deserts. Otherwise the fair Ophelia would not have perished a suicide, Desdemona would not have been murdered, Romeo and Juliet would not have been parted, nor would such terrible affliction have been visited upon the head of poor old Lear. The hand of fate apparently controlled the creations of Shakespeare just as the hand of Providence regulates the lives of mortals and "directs our ends rough hew them as we will." He moved his characters in the mimic world in order that he might produce a powerful play that would attract audiences to the theatre, and not to indicate his own character.

Shakespeare depicted all the emotions the human being is capable of feeling, and he drew true to life the men and women of all climes and stations. The Italian Romeo, the French Katherine, Othello the Moor, English Harry, Shylock the Jew, Hamlet the Dane, and all his other characters he makes stand out on the printed page as though brought back from the grave to revisit, at the call of the reader, "the glimpses of the moon." The crafty, cynical

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villain speaks in Iago; the open, buoyant spirit in Mercutio; the physically courageous but mentally cowardly in Macbeth; the vain, sorely punished in Lear; and the far-seeing politician in Marc Antony. In Juliet he depicts the warm-hearted, trusting girl; in Rosalind one whose deep affectionate nature is masked by her mirth and wit; in Lady Macbeth the ambitious, unscrupulous woman; and in Cordelia the faithful child who would rather sacrifice her share in her father's kingdom than flatter his ears with meaningless and exaggerated protestations of affection which her true heart told her should not be uttered. Shakespeare puts into the mouth of prince and peasant words appropriate to each, and depicts accurately the scenes of camp, palace, and hovel. In fact, his genius swept the gamut of passion from foundation to apex, and created all kinds, classes and conditions of beings so true to nature as to make one almost believe that in his person lived the magician Prospero armed with his fabled wand.

## The Bible in Shakespeare

THAT Shakespeare was familiar with the Bible is attested by the fact that in most of his plays some mention is made of persons or events that are spoken of or described in it. What particular version of the Bible he used is not known, but it was most likely either the first complete English Bible of Myles Coverdale issued in 1535, the Geneva Bible published in 1560, or what is known as the Bishop's Bible which appeared in 1568. It certainly was not the version known as the King James, because this was not published until 1611, five years before the death of Shakespeare, or about the time he ceased his labors as a playwright. But what evidence we possess points to its having been the Geneva Bible. The evidence consists of the similarity of words and phrases used by Shakespeare and those found in the Geneva Bible.

Let us first examine *The Merchant of Venice* to see what influence the Bible had on the writings of Shakespeare.

Gratiano, in Act I. Scene I., expresses himself thus :

O my Antonio, I do know of these  
That therefore only are reputed wise  
For saying nothing; when, I am sure,  
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears  
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.



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“Would call their brothers fools” was inspired by Matthew V., 22, which is as follows:

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother ~~without cause shall be~~ in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

In Act I. Scene III. Shylock says:

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet, the Nazarite, conjured the devil into.

The parable of the casting out of the devils from the man possessed of an unclean spirit into the swine is to be found in Matthew VIII., 28-34; Mark V., 2-20; Luke VIII., 26-39.

In the same scene of *The Merchant of Venice* appears this extract:

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep —  
This Jacob from our holy Abram was,  
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,  
The third possessor; ay, he was the third —

Herein does Shakespeare show how deep was his knowledge of the Bible. Many persons fairly familiar with the Bible, might not, on reading this passage, immediately place the reference, but on examination it is clearly seen that the Dramatist was fully conversant with the story of Jacob and his brother Esau as told in the 27th chapter of Genesis. Abraham was the first possessor under the covenant with God, Isaac the second, and Esau would have been the third had

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it not been for the deceit Rebekah practiced upon Isaac in behalf of Jacob, thereby causing the blessing to go to the second son, Jacob, and making him the head of the family, before whom all the other members were to bow down. Thus was Esau, by the scheming of Rebekah, deprived of his inheritance and made subserviant to his younger brother; and thus did Jacob, because "his wise mother wrought in his behalf," become "the third possessor." The story which Shylock tells in this same scene of Jacob's bargain with his uncle Laban in reference to a division of the sheep, and how he craftily got the better of him, is narrated in the 30th chapter of Genesis.

In the same scene Antonio says:

Mark you this, Bassanio,  
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.

This is a reference to the temptation of Christ by Satan as narrated in Matthew IV., 6:

If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down:  
for it is written, He shall give his angels charge  
concerning thee: and in their hands they shall  
bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot  
against a stone.

The passage cited by Satan is in the XCI. Psalm, 11-12:

For he shall give his angels charge over thee,  
to keep thee in all thy ways.  
They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou  
dash thy foot against a stone.

In Act IV. Scene I. of this same play is that sweet

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appeal of Portia's known as the Quality of Mercy Speech wherein she says:

Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,—  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation; we do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.

Shakespeare here has reference to the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and also to the 14th and 15th verses of the 6th chapter of Matthew which immediately follow this prayer:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

In Act II. Scene V. Shylock says:

What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?

The word Hagar means stranger. She was an Egyptian bondmaid in the household of Sarah, Abraham's wife, and her story is told in Genesis XVI.—XXI.

In Act IV. Scene I. the following reference is made to Barabbas by Shylock:

These be the Christian husbands. I have a daughter;  
Would any of the stock of Barrabas<sup>1</sup>  
Had been her husband rather than a Christian!

Barabbas was a noted robber in the time of Christ, who was in prison under sentence of death for sedition and murder. It was a custom of the Roman government to conciliate the Jews by releasing one

<sup>1</sup>The robber's name is thus spelt in Shakespeare.

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Jewish prisoner at the yearly Passover, the Jews being permitted to select the prisoner who was to be released. Pilate was anxious to release Jesus, but the Jews demanded that Barabbas should be released and that Jesus should be executed upon the cross. The narrative is found in Matthew XXVII., 16-26.

Thus, in one play, we find eight important references to passages in the Bible, and they are all of such a nature as to prove that it was not a superficial knowledge that Shakespeare possessed of this book of great sorrows and of great joys.

In *The Tempest*, Act III. Scene II., these lines are spoken by Caliban:

Yea, yea, my lord: I'll yield him thee asleep,  
Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head.

The story of Jael driving the nail into the temples of Sisera, the general of the army of Jabin, king of Hazor, who, after being defeated by Barak, escaped on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber, the Kenite, is to be found in Judges IV., 17-23. In the 23rd verse we are told:

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly into him [Sisera], and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

This is the only reference to the Bible that is to be found in *The Tempest*.

There are five references in *Hamlet* to Biblical passages.

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Act I. Scene II. contains the first line in the tragedy of Hamlet that owes its origin to the Bible. Hamlet, dwelling on the circumstances of the death of his father and the nasty second marriage of his mother, thus cries out:

O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! . . .

This canon is to be found in Exodus XX., 13:

Thou shalt not kill.

In Act II. Scene II. the following dialogue takes place:

HAMLET. O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POLONIUS. What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET. Why

One fair daughter and no more,  
The which he loved passing well.

POLONIUS (*Aside*). Still on my daughter.

HAMLET. Am I not in the right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

In Judges, Chapters XI. and XII., is given the history of Jephthah, the son of Gilead, who was a Judge of Israel for six years. The touching story of his offering up his only child, a daughter, as a burnt offering to the Lord is told in Judge XI., 30-40.

Hamlet, in his advice to the players, Act III. Scene II., says:

I could have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

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There were four princes of the name of Herod, Idumaeans by descent, who, under the Romans, governed either the whole or a part of Judea. It was Herod the Great who ruled at the time of the birth of Jesus, and it was by his order that all children of two years old and under, living in Bethlehem, should be destroyed. He was a cruel king, an unnatural father, and an utterly odious man; and Shakespeare possibly had this particular Herod in mind when he penned the words "out-herod Herod." The narrative is to be found in Matthew II., 1-17.

In Act V. Scene I. the two clowns, or grave-diggers, thus converse :

1ST CLOWN. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers, they hold up Adam's profession.

2ND CLOWN. Was he a gentleman?

1ST CLOWN. He was the first that ever bore arms.

2ND CLOWN. Why, he had none.

1ST CLOWN. What, art thou a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says "Adam digged;" could he dig without arms?

In Genesis III. is described the temptation of Eve by the serpent and the subsequent fall of herself and Adam, and in the 23rd verse is found the passage referred to by the clown :

Therefore the Lord God sent him [Adam] forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

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In the same scene Hamlet, in discussing the skull cast up by the clown, makes this remark:

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once; how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder.

The story of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain is told in Genesis IV., 3-17. It is stated that the brothers brought offerings unto the Lord, that He accepted of Abel's but that Cain's did not find favor in His sight. Cain then rose against Abel and slew him; thereby committing the first murder.

Richard II. is rich in references to persons and incidents of the Bible. In Act I. Scene I. we find:

Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,  
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,  
To me for justice, and rough chastisement.

This refers to the murder of Abel directly after having sacrificed unto the Lord, as told in Genesis IV., and particularly to the 10th verse:

And he said, what hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

In the same scene occurs this dialogue:

RICHARD. Rage must be withstood.  
Give him his gage:—Lions make leopards tame.  
NORFOLK. Yea, but not change his spots.

This expression is found in Jeremiah XIII., 23:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

In Act III. Scene II. of this play Richard thus

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rails against the supposed traitorous conduct of three of his lords :

O, villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption!  
Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!  
Snakes in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart!  
Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas!  
Would they make peace? terrible hell make war  
Upon their spotted souls for this offence.

The Judas referred to here is Judas I., Iscariot. The story, in its entirety, is found in Matthew XXVI., XXVII.

Queen Isabella, in Act III. Scene IV., thus replies to the gardener whom she has overheard :

Thou, old Adam's likeness, set to dress this garden,  
How dares thy harsh rude tongue sound this  
unpleasing news?  
What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee  
To make a second fall of cursed man?

The story of Eve, the serpent, the curse placed upon Adam by the Lord God, and the fall of man is told in Genesis III.

In Act IV. Scene I., Bolingbroke, speaking of the death of the Duke of Norfolk, says :

Sweet peace conduct his sweet soul to the bosom  
Of good Old Abraham!

In Luke XVI., 22 it is stated that Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom, or to a state of heavenly felicity in that paradise to which the soul of the father of the faithful had departed :

And it came to pass, that the begger died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried.



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A little further the Bishop of Carlisle, speaking in behalf of Richard and prophesying what the result will be in case the lords persist in their determination to depose their lawful King and crown Bolingbroke in his place, thus refers to the spot where Christ was crucified :

Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny,  
Shall here inhabit, and this land be call'd  
The field of Golgotha, and dead men's skulls.

Golgotha, which is the Hebrew word for Calvary, means the place of a skull or a place shaped like a skull, and was the scene of the crucifying of Christ. Matthew XXVII., 33-51.

In the same scene Richard, on being sent for to surrender his crown to Bolingbroke, thus bewails the treachery of his nobles :

Yet I well remember  
The favors of these men: Were they not mine?  
Did they not sometime cry, All hail! to me?  
So Judas did to Christ: but He, in twelve,  
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.

The story of Judas and his betrayal of his Lord is in Matthew XXVI., XXVII.

A little further in the scene is found this reference :

Nay, all of you, that stand and look upon me,  
Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,—  
Though some of you, with Pilate, wash your hands,  
Showing an outward pity; yet you Pilates  
Have here delivered me to my sour cross,  
And water cannot wash away your sin.


In the 27th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, 24th verse, it is said :

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When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

In Act V. Scene V., is this passage:

The better sort,  
As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd  
With scruples, and do set the word itself  
Against the word:  
As thus,—“Come, little ones;” and then again,—  
“It is as hard to come, as for a camel  
To thread the postern of a needle’s eye.”

Richard is here contrasting one passage of Holy Writ against another. It is stated in Matthew XIX. that when little children were brought unto Christ that he might lay his hands on them, they were rebuked by the disciples, and that Jesus said: 

Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for such is the kingdom of heaven.—*Matthew XIX., 14.*

In the 24th verse of the same chapter we find:

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

This is what Richard terms “set the word against the word.” The invitation to come is given, and then, he says, we are told that it is an impossibility for us to do so. He, of course, loses sight of the fact that the Scriptures state that the impossibility attaches to the rich man, and the invitation to come is extended to the children.

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Bolingbroke, Act V. Scene VI., after he has been informed of the murder of Richard, thus addresses Sir Pierce of Exton, the murderer :

- The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labor,  
But neither my good word nor princely favor:  
With Cain go wander through the shades of night,  
And never show thy head by day nor light.

Cain's banishment from the garden of Eden is told in Genesis IV., 11-12 :

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

Here we have ten references in one play to passages and persons mentioned in the Bible, and collectively they show a deep insight into its contents.

In Love's Labor's Lost there are brief references to Adam (Act IV. Scene II.), Eve (Act I. Scene I.), Cain (Act IV. Scene II.), Solomon (Act I. Scene II.), Judas (Act V. Scene II.); and in Act I. Scene II. is the following mention of an event in the life of Samson :

Samson, master: he was a man of good carriage, great carriage! for he carried the town-gates on his back, like a porter; and he was in love.

In Judges XIV., 3-4 we find :

And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and car-

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ried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron.

And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of the Sorek, whose name was Delilah. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

As You Like It (Act I. Scene I.) contains this reference to the parable of The Prodigal Son :

Shall I keep your hogs, and eat husks with them?  
What prodigal portion have I spent, that I should  
come to such penury?

The Parable is in Luke XV., 11-32.

In Act II. Scene III. Adam, on offering his savings to Orlando, says :

Take that; and He that doth the ravens feed,  
Yea providently caters for the sparrow,  
Be comfort to my age!

This was no doubt suggested by Psalm CXLVII., 9 :

He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young  
ravens which cry.

In the same play are mentioned Adam (Act II. Scene I.), the Ark (Act V. Scene IV.), and Judas (Act III. Scene IV.).

The Comedy of Errors contains allusions to the Flood (Act III. Scene II.), Adam (Act IV. Scene III.), The Prodigal Son (Act IV. Scene III.).

In Anthony and Cleopatra Herod is spoken of four times: Act I. Scene II., Act III. Scene III., Act III. Scene VI. In Act III. Scene XI. Antony says :

O, that I were  
Upon the hill of Basan,<sup>2</sup> — to outroar

<sup>2</sup> Bashan (fat, fruitful), a rich hilly district lying east of the Jordan.

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The horned herd! for I have savage cause;  
And to proclaim it civilly, were like  
A halter'd neck, which does the hangman thank  
For being yare<sup>3</sup> about him.

Antony here is railing against being made a sacrifice by Cleopatra unto Octavius Caesar, and has in mind the offering up of the cattle as a sacrifice at Bashan, the horned herd roaring against the slaughter, which is thus stated in Ezekiel XXXIX., 18:

Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink  
the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of  
lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fat-  
lings of Bashan.

In Macbeth there is but one direct Biblical reference, and that is to Golgotha, in Act I. Scene II., where the soldier, speaking of the contest between the loyal and the rebel armies, says:

If I say sooth, I must report they were  
As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks:  
So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:  
Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,  
Or memorize another Golgotha,  
I cannot tell.

This reference to Golgotha was to emphasize the terrors of the battle, and to make clear the determination of Banquo and Macbeth to pile up the skulls of their enemies until they formed a mount.

While in Othello there are several expressions that might owe their origin to the Bible, there is but one that is direct. This is the remark of Othello to Emilia, Act IV. Scene II., wherein he accuses her of holding the keys to the gate of hell.

<sup>3</sup> That is, ready, nimble, active.

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You, mistress,  
That have the office opposite Saint Peter,  
And keep the gate of hell; you, you, ay, you!

Saint Peter is supposed to hold the keys to the gate of heaven, consequently the one who occupies "the office opposite" to him—that is, the office opposed to the office of the Saint as the keeper of the keys of heaven—must be the keeper of the keys of hell. The Bible account of the bestowal of the keys of heaven upon Peter is as follows:

And I give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This reference is to be found in Matthew XVI., 19.

In *Measure for Measure*, Act I. Scene II., Claudio thus speaks:

The words of Heaven;—on whom it will, it will;  
On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just.

Allusion is here made to Paul's Epistle to the Romans IX., 15:

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Also in the same chapter, verse 18:

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

In Act II. Scene II. of the same play we find this dialogue:

ISABEL. Hark, how I'll bribe you: Good my lord,  
turn back.

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ANGELO. How! Bribe me?

ISABEL. Ay, with such gifts that Heaven shall  
share with you.

. . . . .  
Not with fond shekels of the tested gold,  
Or stones, whose rates are either rich or poor  
As fancy values them: but with true prayers,  
That shall be up at heaven, and enter there,  
Ere sunrise; prayers from preserved souls,  
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate  
To nothing temporal.

ANGELO. Well: come to me  
Tomorrow.

ISABEL. Heaven keep your honor safe!

ANGELO. (*Aside*) Amen;  
For I am that way going to temptation,  
Where prayers cross.

When Isabella says "Heaven keep your honor safe," she is addressing Angelo according to his title; but his guilty mind sees in it reference to the danger his honor is in, and he says amen to her pious salutation. In the Lord's Prayer is the petition, "Lead us not into temptation," and Angelo knows that in making an appointment to meet Isabella on the morrow he is going directly in the path of temptation, and in doing this, he is travelling in a direction that is crossed or intercepted by the prayer. This causes him to say:

For I am that way going to temptation,  
Where prayers cross.

The Lord's Prayer is to be found in Matthew VI., 9-13, and Luke XI., 2-4.

A little further in the same scene Angelo soliloquizes thus regarding his base passion for the pure Isabella:

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Can it be

That modesty may more betray our sense  
Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,  
Shall we desire to raise the sanctuary,  
And pitch our evils there?

In Eastern countries it was the custom to treat with abomination the houses of worship of those who differed with the parties in power, thus desecrating them and mortifying the worshippers. In II. Kings X., it is stated that when Jehu wished to destroy the worshippers of Baal he caused them to gather in the temple dedicated to his worship and there commanded them to be slain. Not content with the destruction of the worshippers he caused the temple to be desecrated as told in the 27th verse:

And they brake down the image of Baal, and  
brake the house of Baal, and made it a draught  
house unto this day.

The word draught, meaning a cess-pool or receptacle for filth, signifies how Jehu showed his contempt for Baal.

In Act II. Scene III. the Duke, speaking to the Provost, refers to the "spirits in prison" thus:

Bound by my charity, and my bless'd order,  
I come to visit the afflicted spirits  
Here in the prison.

The reference here is to I. Peter III., 19, where, after speaking of the suffering of Christ for the sins of the unjust, it is written:

By which also he went and preached unto the  
spirits in prison.



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In *Much Ado About Nothing* there are three unimportant references to Biblical characters: St. Peter and Adam in Act II. Scene I., and Pharaoh in Act III. Scene III. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

The First Part of *Henry IV.* contains a few important references that may be traced to the Bible. In Act I. Scene II. we find Prince Henry saying to Falstaff:

Thou didst well; for wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it.

In *Proverbs* I., 20 is the following:

Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets.

The 24th verse of the same chapter is:

Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.

In Act II. Scene IV. Falstaff uses this expression:

If to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved.

The story of Pharaoh's kine is told in *Genesis* XLI., 1-4:

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fat fleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and lean fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.

And the ill favoured and lean fleshed kine did

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eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

In the same act and scene, and also in Act III. Scene III., Adam is casually mentioned.

In Act III. Scene III. Falstaff, addressing Bar-dolph, uses this expression:

I never see thy face, but I think upon hell-fire,  
and Dives that lived in purle.

And in Act IV. Scene II. Falstaff uses these words:

. . . and now my whole charge consists of  
ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of com-  
panies, slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted  
cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked the sores.

The parable of Dives and Lazarus is told in Luke XVI., 19-31; the passage referred to by Falstaff being verses 20 and 21:

And there was a certain begger named Lazarus,  
which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which  
fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs  
came and licked his sores.

In the same speech is found the following:

. . . and such have I, to fill up the rooms  
of them that have bought out their services, that  
you would think, that I had a hundred and fifty  
tatter'd prodigals, lately come from swine-keeping,  
from eating draff<sup>4</sup> and husks. . . .

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is in Luke XV., 11-32; the portion referred to by Falstaff being verses 15 and 16:

<sup>4</sup> Refuse grain from breweries and distilleries.

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And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

The Second Part of Henry IV. is rich in Biblical references. In Act I. Scene I. Northumberland says:

Let heaven kiss earth: now let not nature's hand  
Keep the wild flood confin'd: let order die:  
And let this world no longer be a stage,  
To feed contention in a lingering act;  
But let one spirit of the first-born Cain  
Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set  
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,  
And darkness be the burier of the dead!

How murder entered the heart of Cain and caused him to kill his brother Abel is told in Genesis IV., verse 8, stating:

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

In Scene II. of the same act we find:

Let him be damn'd like the glutton! may his tongue be hotter!

This alludes to the rich man who feasted and drank daily; who finally died, thirsted for a drop of water, and prayed that Lazarus might be permitted to bring it to him. The account is found in Luke XVI., 20-31. The particular passage being verse 24:

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

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A little further in the same scene is found this reference :

I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not so patient. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

The story of Job, his wealth and happiness, his trials and tribulations, his losses and his pains, his poverty and his patience, is told in the Book of Job.

In the same speech, Falstaff applies the term Achitophel to the tailor Dumbleton on being informed by his page that he has refused him credit. The Biblical character whom Falstaff had in mind was Ahithophel, a native of Giloh, a near friend to David, who, however, became his bitter enemy and joined Absalom when that young prince rose in rebellion against his father. The narrative is to be found in II. Samuel XV., XVI., XVII.

Lord Scroop, Archbishop of York, in Act I. Scene III., uses this language :

So, so, thou common dog, didst thou disgorge  
Thy glutton bosom of the royal Richard;  
And now thou wouldst eat thy dead vomit up,  
And howl'st to find it.

In the Second Epistle of Peter II., 22, those who turned from righteousness are thus likened unto the dog :

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again.

A reference to the story of the Prodigal Son is found in Act II. Scene I. The parable is in Luke XV., 11-32.

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In Act II. Scene II. Prince Henry says:

Nay, they will be kin to us, or they will fetch it from Japhet.

Japhet is no doubt used for Japheth, and Henry must have had in mind the meaning of the word, which is enlargement, when he referred to those who claimed kindred with the king. The passage in the Bible to which the reference of Prince Henry applies is in Genesis IX., 27:

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

A reference is made to David in Act III. Scene II. in the following words spoken by Shallow:

Certain, 'tis certain; very sure; very sure; death, as the Psalmist saith, is certain to all; all shall die.

David sings of the shortness and vanity of life in Psalm XXXIX., of death and the vanity of worldly possessions in Psalm XLIX., and in Psalm LXXXIX., 47-48, he cries out:

Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

Henry V. contains six Biblical references, three neither novel nor extensive in application: a reference to Adam, Act I. Scene I.; The fall of man, Act II. Scene II.; Return to vomit, Act III. Scene VII.; and three of considerable importance: The Book of

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Numbers quoted, Act I. Scene II.; reference to the Devil, Act II. Scene II.; and to Herod, Act III. Scene III.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Act I. Scene II., advising King Henry as to his rights in France, quotes the Bible as an authority to uphold the stand he advises the king to take:

For in the Book of Numbers it is writ,—  
When the son dies, let the inheritance  
Descend unto the daughter.

The passage referred to is in the Book of Numbers XXVII., 8:

And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.

King Henry, in reproving Lord Scroop for his treachery, Act II. Scene II., speaks thus:

If that same demon, that hath gull'd thee thus,  
Should with his lion gait walk the whole world,  
He might return to vast Tartar back,  
And tell the legions — I can never win  
A soul so easy as that Englishman's.

The passage that suggested the idea of "demon with his lion gait" is in I. Peter V., 8:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

In addressing the Governor of Harfleur, and advising him to surrender to the English, among other dire consequences that will befall the inhabi-

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tants unless his counsel is followed, King Henry, in Act III. Scene III., mentions this:

Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,  
While the mad mothers with their howls confus'd  
Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry  
At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen.

The story of the massacre of children by order of King Herod is told in Matthew II., the particular passage to which King Henry refers being in verses 16-18:

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

The Historical plays abound in Biblical references, the seven Henries containing no less than thirty-six. In The First Part of Henry VI., Act I. Scene II., mention is made of Samsons and Goliases (Goliaths) for expressing the prowess of the English:

For none but Samsons and Goliases  
It sendeth forth to skirmish. One to ten!  
Lean raw-boned rascals! who would e'er suppose  
They had such courage and audacity?

The story of Samson displaying his great strength in battle is told in Judges XV., the 15th verse, stating:

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And he [Samson] found a new jawbone of an ass and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

The fighting qualities of Goliath, a giant of Gath, supposed to have been nine feet and a half in height, are depicted in I. Samuel XVII., the 24th verse telling how the men of Israel feared him :

And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man [Goliath], fled from him, and were sore afraid.

In the same scene are these lines :

Stay, stay thy hands! thou art an Amazon,  
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.

Deborah was a prophetess, and she judged the people of Israel. The narrative is in Judges IV., 4-24. It was she who prevailed upon Barak to arm and go against Sisera; urging him by her counsel and strengthening him with her courage. In verses 8-9 it is stated :

And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then will I go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

A little further we find the following :

Was Mahomet inspired with a dove?  
Thou with an eagle art inspired then.  
Helen, the mother of great Constantine,  
Nor yet St. Philip's daughters, were like thee.



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This mention of St. Philip's daughters was no doubt prompted by Acts XXI., 9:

And the same man [Philip the evangelist] had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

In Scene III. of the same act Cardinal Beaufort, addressing the Duke of Gloucester, speaks thus:

This be Damascus, be thou cursed Cain,  
To slay thy brother Abel, if thou wilt.

Shakespeare apparently had in mind the old Chronicles which stated that Damascus was in the Garden of Eden, and upon the very spot where Cain slew Abel. In The Travels of Sir John Mandeville it is stated:

In that place where Damascus was founded,  
Kayn sloughe Abel his brother.

The story of the first murder is told in Genesis IV., the 8th verse reading:

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

A few speeches further Gloucester thus addresses himself to Cardinal Beaufort:

Thee I'll chase hence thou wolf in sheep's array.

In Matthew VII., 15, Jesus says:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

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The Second Part of Henry VI. possesses four thoughts the sources of which may be traced to the Bible. In Act II. Scene I. King Henry thus reproves his queen for encouraging the quarrels of the nobles:

I pr'y thee, peace  
Good queen! and whet not on these furious peers,  
For blessed are the peacemakers on earth.

The seventh Beatitude, Matthew V., 9, is thus:

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be  
called the children of God.

Cardinal Beaufort, replying to the threat of the Duke of Gloucester, Act II. Scene I., advises him in these words:

*Medice, teipsum:*  
Protector, see to't well, protect yourself.

*Medice, teipsum* (Physician, thyself.) comes from Luke IV., 23:

Physician, heal thyself.

In Scene III. of this act King Henry, addressing those found guilty of practicing witchcraft against his person, speaks thus:

Receive the sentence of the law, for sins  
Such as by God's Book are adjudg'd to death.

The Bible, Exodus XXII., 18, contains this command:

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

The final Biblical reference in this play is in Act IV. Scene II. where Cade, replying to the taunts of Sir Humphrey Stafford, answers him thus:

And Adam was a gardener.

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We are told in Genesis III., 22-23, that after Adam had eaten of the tree of knowledge, God rebuked him, saying :

Behold, the man is become one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever:

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

The Third Part of Henry VI. contains only three Biblical references, but all of them are important. In Act V. Scene I. Clarence, on deciding to be false to the oath he made to Warwick, thus expresses himself :

Why, trow'st thou, Warwick,  
That Clarence is so harsh, so blunt, unnatural,  
To bend the fatal instruments of war  
Against his brother, and his lawful king?  
Perhaps thou wilt object my holy oath:  
To keep that oath were more impiety  
Than Jephtha's when he sacrific'd his daughter.

The pathetic story is told in Judges XI., 30-31 :

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

In the second scene of the same act Warwick, wounded unto death, speaks these lines :

Thus yields the cedar to the axe's edge,  
Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle,

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Under whose shade the ramping lion slept;  
Whose top-branch overpeer'd Jove's spreading tree,  
And kept low shrubs from winter's powerful wind.

A passage like unto this is found in Ezekiel XXXI., 6:

All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

The entire speech of Warwick's indicates that Shakespeare drew upon the whole 31st chapter of Ezekiel for his inspiration, for as Warwick likens himself unto the cedar yielded to the axe's edge, so also is the Assyrian likened unto the cedar of Lebanon, with its fair branches and towering form, by the Lord when instructing His prophet Ezekiel.

In the last scene of this play Gloucester, after kissing his nephew, the young Prince of Wales, turns aside and mutters:

To say the truth, so Judas kissed his master,  
And cried all hail whereas he meant, all harm.

The betrayal of Christ by Judas is told in Matthew XXVI., 45-54; verse 49 being the particular one referred to by Gloucester:

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail,  
Master; and kissed him.

Richard III. contains many important Biblical references, indicative of the Poet's vast knowledge

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of Holy Writ. In Act I. Scene III. Lord Rivers thus replies to the Duke of Gloucester :

A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion,  
To pray for them that have done seath<sup>5</sup> to us.

The passage in Scripture that suggested this remark is in Matthew V., 44 :

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

When arguing with the murderers as to the justice of the sentence of death which they propose to carry out upon him, the Duke of Clarence, in Act I. Scene IV., thus addresses them :

Erroneous vassels! the great King of kings  
Hath in the table of His Law commanded,  
That thou shalt do no murder.

The table of the Law, the ten commandments given by God through Moses to the children of Israel, is in Exodus XX., 3-17; verse 13, the sixth commandment, reading :

Thou shalt not kill.

In Act I. Scene IV. of this tragedy the 1st Murderer makes use of the expression :

Right; as snow in harvest.—Come, you deceive yourself;  
'Tis he that sends us to destroy you here.

A like passage is found in Proverbs XXV., 13 :

As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is  
a faithful messenger to them that send him.

<sup>5</sup> Injury.

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A short distance further in the same scene the 2nd Murderer exclaims:

A bloody deed and desperately despatch'd!  
How, fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands  
Of this most grievous guilty murder done!

In Matthew XXVII., 24, Pilate thus absolves himself:

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing,  
but that rather a tumult was made, he took water,  
and washed his hands before the multitude, saying,  
I am innocent of the blood of this just person:  
see ye to it.

Act II. Scene III. contains this reference, spoken by one of the citizens when discussing his country's prospects under the young king:

Woe to that land that's govern'd by a child!

This is clearly traced to Ecclesiastes X., 16:

Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child!

The final Biblical reference in Richard III. is in Act IV. Scene III.:

The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's Bosom,  
And Anne my wife hath bid the world good night.

The reference to sleeping in Abraham's bosom is from Luke XVI., 22:

And it came to pass, that the begger died, and  
was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

King John possesses but two expressions that are traceable to the Bible. In Act II. Scene I. Constance, upbraiding Eleanor for her treatment of Arthur, thus addresses her:

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This is thy eldest son's son,  
Infortunate in nothing but in thee:  
Thy sins are visited in this poor child;  
The canon of the law is laid on him,  
Being but the second generation  
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

The particular portion of the Law of God referred to by Constance is that part of the second commandment contained in Exodus XX., 5:

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

The second reference is in Act III. Scene IV. and is nothing more than the mention of Cain as being the first male child:

For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,  
To him that did but yesterday suspire,<sup>o</sup>  
There was not such a gracious creature born.

In Genesis IV., I. it is stated:

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

Henry VIII. adds three Biblical references to the list. In Act I. Scene II. Queen Katherine, speaking in behalf of the Duke of Buckingham, requests that his words and actions be not misinterpreted, and thus chides Cardinal Wolsey for his apparent enmity:

My learn'd lord cardinal,  
Deliver all with charity.

That is,

Speaking the truth in love.  
—*Ephesians IV.*, 15.

<sup>o</sup> Breathe.

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Act V. Scene I. has this matter which points clearly to the Bible as its source :

    Ween<sup>7</sup> you of better luck,  
I mean in perjur'd witness, than your Master,  
Whose minister you are, whiles here He liv'd  
Upon this naughty earth?

The story of the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas, the high priest, is told in Matthew XXVI., 57-68. The passage bearing on the false witnesses is in verses 59-61 :

    Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

    But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

    And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Cranmer, Act V. Scene IV., prophesies great things for the infant Princess Elizabeth, among them being a desire for wisdom and a love for virtue :

    Saba was never  
More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue,  
Than this pure soul shall be.

The Queen of Sheba is supposed to have been the Saba of Strabo, situated toward the southern part of Arabia, close to the coast of the Red Sea. Her visit to King Solomon is narrated in I. Kings X., 1-13; her desire for wisdom causing her to take the expensive trip to the land of the Israelites in order

<sup>7</sup> Imagine.



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to commune with Solomon at Jerusalem. In Matthew XII., 42, it is stated :

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona contains but one mention of a Biblical character, that of Eve, which is in Act III. Scene I :

Out with that too: it was Eve's legacy, and cannot be ta'en from her.

All's Well That Ends Well contains a speech in Act II. Scene I. that breathes the very air of the Bible, and could only have been penned by one thoroughly familiar with its wondrous pages. The speech is that of Helena's addressed to the king, a portion of which is as follows :

He that of greatest works is finisher,  
Oft does them by the weakest minister:  
So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown,  
When judges have been babes. Great floods have flown  
From simple sources; and great seas have dried,  
When miracles have by the greatest been denied.

The passage,

So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown,  
When judges have been babes,

refers to Matthew XI., 25 :

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

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The thought contained in the words,

Great floods have flown  
From simple sources,

appears to refer to Moses smiting the rock in Horeb and causing the water to flow. This miraculous supplying of water is told in Exodus XVII., 1-7; verse 6 reading :

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

The words,

and great seas have dried,  
When miracles have by the greatest been denied,

no doubt alludes to the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, which divided at the word of God to permit of their passage and then came together and destroyed the hosts of Pharaoh. The miracle is recorded in Exodus XIV.; verse 22 reads :

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

In Act IV. Scene V. the Clown makes this remark :

I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir; I have not much skill in grass.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and Daniel's interpretation of it, is told in Daniel IV.; verse 33 states :

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon

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Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men,  
and did eat grass as oxen. . . .

The Biblical references in *All's Well That Ends Well* are of such a nature as to show that the user of them was familiar with their spirit and was not merely employing the form as would a quoter. They appear to spring spontaneously from the writer's brain, as though the thoughts were first engendered there, showing that they had passed into him by being thoroughly learned and not merely skimmed over. Some of the Biblical references in the plays are superficial, but there are a vast number that show clearly that the Bible was an open book to Shakespeare. This phase of the subject will be dwelt upon at the close of this chapter.

The *Merry Wives of Windsor* contains five references traceable to the Bible, but all of them appear in other plays and have been commented upon before. In Act IV. Scene II. there is mention of Eve; in Scene V. of the same act a painting of the story of the Prodigal Son is mentioned; in Act V. Scene I. Goliath [Goliath] is spoken of; and in Scene V. of this act Job is referred to. In Act V. Scene I. is the only significant Biblical reference that this play contains:

. . . because I know also, life is a shuttle.

In the Book of Job VII., 6, is to be found:

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and  
are spent without hope.

*Twelfth Night* is poor in Biblical topics, containing but four scanty references: Eve, Act I. Scene V.;

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Jezebel, Act II. Scene V.; Noah, Act III. Scene II., and "possessed of Devils," Act III. Scene IV.

Here is offered the sum and substance of Shakespeare's indebtedness to the Bible for many of his references and some of his noblest thoughts. Take the Bible out of Shakespeare and a great gap will appear. Not considering the mere references in the plays to persons and events that are recorded in the Great Book, the sentiments expressed therein in a vast number of instances show that the author's mind was influenced and his thoughts directed by knowledge that was gained from its pages. Note, for instance, the use of the idea contained in the words,

. . . would almost damn those ears  
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.

—*The Merchant of Venice, Act I. Scene I.*

Herein is clearly shown the subconscious use of a statement that had been thoroughly digested until it entered into the very being of the user and became his own. Had Shakespeare been asked where he found the expression, the chances are that he could not have answered that it was to be found in Matthew V., 22, because he had not memorized it as a verse in the Gospel, but he had grasped it as a living truth and transplanted it into the garden of his own mind. So with the lines in Act I. Scene III. of this comedy,

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which  
your prophet, the Nazarite, conjured the devil into.

He had no doubt often read the story of the miraculous driving forth of the devils from the man into

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the swine; so when he had occasion to draw the character of the Jew, what more natural than that the story of the act of the Nazarite should come to his mind and he should make use of it? It is employed not as one paraphrasing with the narrative before him, but as one making use of an incident that had been experienced. In like manner, though to a greater extent, this point is demonstrated in the passage where it is stated that Jacob was the third possessor—the passage which reads:

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep,—  
This Jacob from our holy Abram was,  
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,  
The third possessor; ay, he was the third —

What a world of thought is contained in the parenthetical phrase “as his wise mother wrought in his behalf.” In order to have uttered it, it was necessary for the Dramatist to have known the whole story of the covenant into which God entered with Abraham, and all the circumstances that followed it. He must have known that Abraham was the first possessor, Isaac the second, and Esau, by right of inheritance, the third; but by the wisdom (or scheming) of Rebekah, the mother both of Esau and Jacob, the inheritance was diverted from Esau, the first born, and bestowed upon Jacob, his younger brother. It is by such passages as these three from *The Merchant of Venice* that Shakespeare's deep knowledge of the Bible is shown, and his great indebtedness to it demonstrated.

The single instance of the use of a Biblical narra-

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tive contained in *The Tempest* goes far to still further show this knowledge and indebtedness. How many readers of the Bible can recall the story of the death of Sisera? The question was put to several of the author's acquaintances and few remembered the details, and yet a remembrance of the details was absolutely essential to the making of the lines.

Yea, yea, my lord: I'll yield him thee asleep,  
Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head.

It was necessary for the Dramatist to know that Sisera died from having a nail driven into his head, and that execution was done unto him while he was asleep. This is one of the passages in the plays that best displays Shakespeare's Biblical knowledge.

The ten references to subjects that are Biblical in their nature contained in *Richard II.* are all significant, the play being particularly rich in Biblical references, but the speech of Richard at the opening of Act V. contains a passage that shows intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. It is this:

My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,  
My soul, the father; and these two beget  
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,  
And these same thoughts people this little world  
In humours like the people of this world,  
For no thought is contented. The better sort,  
As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd  
With scruples, and do set the word itself  
Against the word:  
As thus,—“Come, little ones;” and then again,—  
“It is as hard to come, as for a camel  
To thread the postern of a needle's eye.”

The “Word,” of course, means the Bible; and the setting of the word against the word is illustrated

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by the two quotations—the invitation to come, and the impossibility of coming—which are used to show the conflict that is taking place in Richard's mind. And though the reasoning is erroneous—there being, in reality, no setting of the word against the word—the error is Richard's and not Shakespeare's. The idea of the Dramatist being to show the troubled nature of the King's thoughts and not to correctly interpret the Scriptures.

The use Shakespeare made of the Bible, culling from it thoughts that he might use in working out his characters, but illustrates one of the greatest traits of his genius—the capacity of using material produced by others in such a way as to give it added beauty and strength in its new setting. This is not saying that Shakespeare improved on the Bible, but merely that the incidents he used lost nothing by being transplanted into other soil. The subject might be followed to far greater length than has been here attempted, but the author trusts that enough has been accomplished to enable the earnest student in search of further enlightenment to uncover it for himself.

## Oratory in Shakespeare

WHILE there is no direct reference to oratory, and only three references to orator,<sup>1</sup> in the plays of Shakespeare, yet they abound with specimens of the many classes into which oratory may be divided. The passages in the plays where the characters soliloquize, or where the speech is merely a part of the dialogue, will not be discussed in this chapter, only such being considered as answer the requirements of a speech by possessing the necessary form of construction and are addressed to collective audiences. For the purpose of convenience the speeches will be placed in their appropriate classes, and one specimen of each class considered. The five classes of oratory are: Philosophic, Demonstrative, Argumentative, Deliberative, and Social.

Space is not given in this chapter to the different examples cited. The reader who wishes to study them further can turn to his copy of Shakespeare.

Let us first consider what oratory is. In its proper sense it is the art of public speaking; the ability to instruct, arouse, move, please, convince and persuade by means of the spoken word. By extension the word oratory is used to describe a com-

<sup>1</sup> I am no orator. "Julius Caesar," Act III. Scene II.  
I can better play the orator. "III. Henry VI.," Act I. Scene II.  
I'll play the orator. "Richard III.," Act III. Scene V.



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position which is read, or one that is printed in order to be circulated and thus influence other minds. It is in its proper, or restricted, sense that it is discussed here. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

In the second place let us consider what an oration is. Strictly speaking it is an elaborate utterance, delivered by word of mouth, in a public place, and in accordance with the rules of oratory. In its strict sense it is here considered.

In the third place let us settle in our minds what an orator is. He is one who speaks effectively in public; one who has the power of conveying thought by means of word of mouth; one who is able to entertain, move, convince, and persuade. Only those who successfully stand this test will be included among the characters selected to illustrate the work of this chapter.

### PHILOSOPHIC ORATORY

The first class of oratory is known as philosophic. Its province is to teach, and it must therefore be, above all other things, instructive. Its effort should be directed to the intellect, its sole aim being to influence the mind, and while it need not be devoid of feeling it must not be vehement in character, nor must its aim be to move through the feelings.

One of the best specimens of philosophic oratory to be found in the English language is the address of Hamlet to the Players.<sup>2</sup> The construction, the delivery, the address, and the speaker all conform

<sup>2</sup> "Hamlet," Act III. Scene II.

## SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE

to the requirements before set forth. Its aim is to instruct the players in the delivery of the lines set down for them; the instructions are delivered to a group of persons; and the delivery is that of the instructor.

### DEMONSTRATIVE ORATORY

The second class of oratory is known as demonstrative. It is passionate in nature, and its province is to move the listener through the emotions without consideration as to whether the motive that inspires the speech or controls the speaker is right or wrong, true or false.

An excellent example of this form of oratory is the speech of Henry V.<sup>3</sup> to his soldiers before the town of Harfleur. Its sole purpose was to cause the English army once more to attempt to carry the walled town, so King Henry appealed to the valor, pride, and passions of his soldiers, but said nothing as to the justice of their king's cause in behalf of which they were called upon to fight.

### ARGUMENTATIVE ORATORY

The third class of oratory is known as argumentative. It is presumed to found its cause on right and justice, it appeals only to the reason, and its province is to convince and persuade.

Of this class of oratory the speech of Othello,<sup>4</sup> made in his own defense before the Duke and Senators of Venice, furnishes an excellent example. It

<sup>3</sup> "King Henry V.," Act III. Scene I.

<sup>4</sup> "Othello," Act I. Scene III.

## ORATORY IN SHAKESPEARE

is clearly argumentative in nature, its object being to free Othello from the charge of having used unlawful means in winning Desdemona for his wife. The facts are clearly stated, the argument is logical, and the conclusion reasonable. The speech thus complies with the rules of argumentation, and denotes clearly the class of oratory to which it belongs.

### DELIBERATIVE ORATORY

The fourth class of oratory is known as deliberative. It pertains principally to legislative assemblies, and embraces the principles of both argumentative and demonstrative oratory. Its governing ideas are expediency and usefulness.

Marc Antony's Oration<sup>5</sup> over the body of Caesar is selected to illustrate this class. In making this selection the author is departing from the opinion of many writers who present it as a piece of argumentation. On close examination he believes that his judgment will be sustained, because the address is as much demonstrative as it is argumentative, the speaker is interrupted by members of the assembly who express their views and ask questions of the speaker, and the speech, in many ways, partakes of the nature of a debate. For these reasons it is placed in the deliberative class.

### SOCIAL ORATORY

The fifth class of oratory is known as social. Its one aim is to entertain, its functions being wholly of a social nature.

<sup>5</sup> "Julius Caesar," Act III. Scene II.

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This form of oratory is well illustrated by the speech of the Banished Duke<sup>o</sup> to his companions in the Forest of Arden. All that pertains to social oratory is apparent in this speech: the Duke's friends forming the assembly, the subject is pleasing and of a social nature, and the speaker's bearing toward his audience is that of a comrade.

Here is a goodly array of orations, the authorship of which would be enough to make a man famous even though he produced no other work of a like nature, but the plays of Shakespeare abound with other specimens. What are here given are deemed sufficient to demonstrate Shakespeare's knowledge of the essentials of oratory and the requirements of orators, and as these two objects are what the author set out to show, further testimony would be superfluous.

<sup>o</sup> "As You Like It," Act II. Scene I.

## How to Study Shakespeare

THE way to study Shakespeare is to examine the means whereby he produces his effects. While many of the beauties are apparent at first glance, many more must be dug for and brought to the light before they are comprehended. The injunction "seek, and ye shall find" is true as regards the finding of the store of wealth contained in Shakespeare, just as it is true concerning the gaining of spiritual knowledge.

Let us examine the following extract from Hamlet's soliloquy:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And, by opposing, end them?—To die,—to sleep,—  
No more;—and, by a sleep, to say we end  
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die,—to sleep;—  
To sleep! perchance, to dream;—ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause.<sup>1</sup>

Read the above passage again carefully, aiming to find out all that it contains.

<sup>1</sup> "Hamlet," Act III. Scene I.

## SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE

Now read it when so marked as to show some of the means Shakespeare employed in producing his effects:

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To be, or *not* to be, *that* is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And, by opposing, end them?—To die,—to sleep,—  
No more;—and, by a sleep, to say we end  
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation  
*Devoutly* to be wish'd. To die,—to sleep;—  
To sleep! perchance, to dream;—ay, *there's* the rub;  
For in that sleep of death *what* dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause.

When reading this passage the first time did you see all the points that you do after reading the second copy?

Let us examine more closely the peculiar arrangement of the words employed by the Dramatist, the arrangement that adds so much in stamping his meaning upon the passage, and we will then see how necessary it is to understand his mode of construction before we can comprehend fully all that the language contains.

There is a contrast between "to be" and "not to be," the question in Hamlet's mind being whether he should continue to live, or end his life with his own hand. He then reasons as to the nobler course for him to pursue, setting one plan against another: basely submitting to the injustice of fortune or ending the submission by committing suicide. The thought

## HOW TO STUDY SHAKESPEARE

then enters his mind that to die is only to sleep—nothing more than to fall into slumber. But wait, did he say to sleep? Why, then, one may dream, and dreams may be both good and bad, and because of this uncertainty as to the *kind* of dreams (the thought being brought out by placing emphasis on the qualifying word “what”) he hesitates to pass into the slumber of death. Many of these points will not be seen by the casual reader, but none of them can be missed by the reader who understands the means employed by writers and speakers in producing their effects and who reads with an enquiring mind.

Look for contrasts—one thought placed against another—examine the thought to find out whether it is negative or positive, note the qualifying word, and, above all, lay hold of the thought word; as,

*To sleep!* perchance, to *dream*; ay, *there's* the rub.

Examine the following extract from Hamlet's advice to the players:

O! there be players, that I have seen play,—and heard others praise, and that highly,—not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.<sup>2</sup>

Much discussion has occurred regarding the meaning of the latter part of this passage. One critic suggested that “men” should have “the” before it. The Shakespearean scholar Malone changes “men”

<sup>2</sup> “Hamlet,” Act III. Scene II.

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into "them." H. N. Hudson, one of the best of the many editors of Shakespeare's works, inclines to the belief that the Dramatist intended his meaning to be that men in general were so unnatural as to appear to have been made by nature's journeymen. None of these explanations seems necessary or correct. The reference appears to refer clearly to the players of the period, whose mode of acting brought down the censure of the prince. "I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably" must be taken in conjunction with what precedes it. ". . . there be players, that I have seen play." Hamlet's meaning apparently is that the actors whom he had seen play did their work so poorly as to make one think that the actors had been made by the hand of men, that they were mannikins, because they reproduced nature so poorly—enacted the parts in such an exaggerated and unnatural manner. "Players," "men," "them" and "they" all refer to the players that Hamlet had seen play. The word "men" as here used does not mean men in general but men in particular—the players.

Macbeth, after he has murdered Duncan, is requested by his wife to return to the chamber where lies the body of the late king and deposit there the daggers of the grooms upon whom the guilty pair aim to fasten the crime. He declines to do so. She then says to him :

Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers. The sleeping, and the dead,



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Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood,  
That fears a painted devil.<sup>3</sup>

By this, Lady Macbeth tells her lord that his fears are imaginary, and she chides him for his weakness. She reminds him that the dead are not real, that they are as pictures and consequently incapable of injuring him in any manner, and that his being afraid of them is like the child's fear of a painted (unreal) devil. By placing emphasis on the word "painted" the idea of this passage is conveyed by the speaker, and the only way that the reader will be able to grasp its meaning is by noting the fact that the word "painted" qualifies the word "devil" and tells us what kind of a devil it is that frightens the eye of childhood.

From what has been here written it will be observed that one of the important aids to grasping the meaning of Shakespeare is a study of his arrangements of the words that carry his thought. It signifies much whether Lady Macbeth says 'tis the eye of childhood that fears a devil, or whether she qualifies the meaning by using the word "painted." Therefore when studying Shakespeare look for the qualifying words that color so vividly the words they act upon. For instance:

Yet do I fear thy nature:  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness,  
To catch the *nearest* way.<sup>4</sup>  
Give me that man  
That is not passions slave, and I will wear him

<sup>3</sup> "Macbeth," Act II. Scene II.

<sup>4</sup> "Macbeth," Act I. Scene V.

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In my hearts core, ay in my *heart* of heart,  
As I do thee.<sup>5</sup>

Note that Lady Macbeth does not say to catch the way, but “to catch the *nearest* way;” that Hamlet does not say he will wear Horatio in his heart, but that he will wear him in his “*heart* of heart”—the very innermost recesses of his affections.

Shakespeare often employs the contrast for conveying his thought, and by this means he instantly flashes his idea upon the mind of the studious and capable reader; as,

Is this a dagger that I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come let me clutch thee:—  
I *have* thee not, and yet I *see* thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To *feeling*, as to *sight*?<sup>6</sup>

I cannot tell what *you* and *other* men  
Think of this life; but, for *my single self*,  
I had as lief *not be*, as *live to be*  
*In awe* of such a thing as I *myself*.<sup>7</sup>

From the foregoing instructions it must not be supposed that students of Shakespeare are advised to look upon words as words. Far from it. The advice is to heed the arrangement of the words and to look through the words into the thought they are used to express. But the position of a word has its value, and it is important that the reader should observe whether a word is qualified, or contrasted, or in opposition; in short, what its relationship is to the other words of the clause, phrase, or sentence.

<sup>5</sup> “Hamlet,” Act III. Scene II.

<sup>6</sup> “Macbeth,” Act II. Scene I.

<sup>7</sup> “Julius Caesar,” Act I. Scene II.

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Look for the thought word in all groups of words—the important word that conveys the ideas; as,

Is this a *dagger* that I see before me?

The idea here is expressed by the word *dagger*. The question being, is it a real *dagger*, or merely an imaginary one. The thought in a phrase or sentence may be varied as many times as there are words in the group; as,

Is this a *dagger* that I see before me?

Is *this* a *dagger* that I see before me?

Is this a *dagger* that I see before me?

Is this a *dagger* that I see before me?

and etc., but there is only one way of interpreting correctly this line, and that is by laying hold of the thought word and thus presenting the idea to the reader's own mind, or conveying it to the mind of the listener by means of the voice—stress being placed upon the emphatic word.

Note how the important words in the following extracts are responsible for the thought:

'Tis not my *profit* that does lead mine *honor*;  
Mine *honor*, *it*.<sup>8</sup>

Who *seeks*, and will not *take* when *once* 'tis *offered*  
Shall *never find* it *more*.<sup>9</sup>

Go to, then; you come to me, and you say,  
"Shylock, we would have *monies*:" You say so!  
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,  
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
Over your threshold: *monies* is your suit.  
What should I say to *you*? Should I not say,  
"Hath a *dog* money? is it possible,  
A *cur* can lend three thousand ducats?"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Antony and Cleopatra," Act II. Scene VII.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "The Merchant of Venice," Act I. Scene III.

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Be sure you understand the meaning of the words themselves. In case any are obscure or obsolete, look them up in the dictionary, and have a good glossary at hand for reference. While studying Shakespeare, and not reading him for entertainment alone, it will be found that the notes of some editors are helpful, but the student should not accept them as authoritative and above appeal under any circumstances. Some of the notes meant to elucidate the works of the Dramatist are ridiculous in the extreme, even when used by such editors as Johnson, Malone, Theobald, White, Rolfe and Hudson. In order that the word ridiculous may not appear too scathing when used in connection with the able men just mentioned, let us turn to the play of Julius Caesar as edited by H. N. Hudson and see what he has to say regarding the line, "His coward lips did from their color fly."<sup>11</sup> This seems so simple, and the meaning is so clear on the face, that it is strange that any editor should think a note necessary, and yet, this is what Hudson has to say regarding it: "This is oddly expressed; but a quibble, alluding to a coward flying from his colors, was intended." Is ridiculous too strong a word to apply to the use of such a note as this? The expression of the thought has no oddity about it. It is not a quibble. It means merely that because of fear the color left the lips of Caesar. Nothing more was meant by the Dramatist. Why, then, should editors read into the lines meanings that are foreign to them? If editors per-

<sup>11</sup> Act I. Scene II.

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sist in so doing, students must learn to discard notes—especially, when such notes are intended to interpret the author's meaning. The reader should search for the thought himself, should do his own digging, for, by so doing, he will strengthen his perception and improve his mentality generally.

Here are some notes, lacking in wisdom, to say the least, which are more apt to confuse the reader than to enlighten him.

Thou didst smile,  
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,  
When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt.<sup>12</sup>

What is wrong with the word deck'd as here used? Some say it is doubtful as to what is meant by it; one editor suggested that an old English word, *degg'd*, meaning *to sprinkle*, be substituted for it. "Deck'd the sea with drops full salt" needs no editing. It means, I have adorned (or bedecked) the sea with tears as salt as its own water.

This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a cover.  
The fish lives in the sea; and 'tis much pride,  
For fair without the fair within to hide.<sup>13</sup>

As regards this passage Hudson says: "It is not quite clear what is meant by this. Dr. Farmer explains it, The fish is not yet caught and thinks there is a reference to the ancient use of the fish-skins for book-covers. . . . Malone thinks we should read, 'The fish lives in the shell;' and he adds that 'the sea cannot be said to be a beautiful cover to a fish, though a shell may.' "

<sup>12</sup> "The Tempest," Act I. Scene II.

<sup>13</sup> "Romeo and Juliet," Act I. Scene III.

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How unnecessary are all these surmises, annotations and emendations of the wise men who would rewrite Shakespeare. It is well for them to define obscure phrases, translate idioms, give the meaning that obsolete words possessed in the days of their use, but to thrust aside the clear meaning of Shakespeare by "reading in" one of their own is absolutely wrong, and it is because of this "reading in" that so many editors are worse than useless. The note above quoted illustrates this point. Let us examine Shakespeare's lines that appear to have mystified so many of these gentlemen:

This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a cover.  
The fish lives in the sea; and 'tis much pride,  
For fair without the fair within to hide.

Lady Capulet desires Juliet to marry Paris. She has been extolling his beauty of form and charm of character, and in the lines quoted she states that he lacks only one thing to make him a perfect man—a wife. She is decrying bachelorhood and praising the married state, cleverly coloring her narrative so as to catch the romantic fancy of her young daughter. Here is an explanation of a passage that is clear on its face: "This precious book of love, this unbound lover" refers to Paris, a handsome young man who is unmarried (unbound). "To beautify him, only lacks a cover" means that he needs a wife to make him a perfect man as printed matter requires a cover to make it a book. "The fish lives in the sea" as man and woman live on the earth,

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“and 'tis much pride for fair without the fair within to hide,” simply means that it is a great error for man or woman to hide within oneself and exist as a single being. They should live within one another as “the fish lives in the sea,” immersed in love as the fish is enveloped by the water.

In *King Lear*, Act I. Scene IV., when the King demands to know of Goneril's steward the whereabouts of his daughter, and is treated with scant courtesy, he becomes enraged and demands to see her. When she finally appears she is much provoked, causing her father to exclaim:

How now, daughter! What makes that frontlet on?  
Methinks, you are too much of late i' the frown.

This is explained by Hudson thus: “A frontlet, or forehead cloth, was worn by ladies of old to prevent wrinkles.” This may be true, but it is very questionable that Shakespeare had any such idea of the word frontlet when he used it. Goneril came into the presence of her father with a frown on her face, therefore he reproved her for having such a front (or face) when in his company, telling her that too often of late has she had a frown upon her brow. If Shakespeare intended to use the word frontlet in the manner suggested by Hudson, he surely made a pretty mess of it. If, indeed, a frontlet is something worn to prevent wrinkles, and Lear is displeased at the wrinkles on Goneril's brow (her frown), why should he censure her for wearing a frontlet? Better take the words at their face value

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and not smother the thought by burying it in a far-fetched conclusion.

It may appear that the author has labored unnecessarily on this point, using a cannon, as it were, to kill a fly, but his object is to show the senselessness of much of the editing of Shakespeare, so as to warrant him in advising students not to be governed by the opinions of editors but to form them for themselves by a studious examination of the text.

Much credit is due the thoughtful men who labored so long and so hard to correct the errors that had crept into the printed works of Shakespeare, and the author has no intention to detract from the meed of praise to which they are entitled. But he feels called upon to register a protest against critics and editors injecting their own thoughts into the Dramatist's matter. He hopes his doing so cannot justly be considered an impertinence.

The advice so far given deals only with individual thoughts, but now we will consider them collectively as forming scenes, acts and plays. Remember, we are now dealing with the subject of *studying* Shakespeare as distinguished from *reading* him, therefore in order that we may know his works we must observe all their characteristics and become familiar with his workmanship.

There are several things for us to learn before we can intelligently know an author, among these being his manner of construction, the source of his plot (original or borrowed), and the powers he wields



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for producing his effects. It is these things that stamp an author's individuality upon his work and show it to have come from his brain.

In dealing with Shakespeare's construction of his plays we are to consider how far he is governed by what is known as the law of unity. This law of dramatic unity embraces the unity of time, the unity of place, and the unity of action.

So far as the plot is concerned it is well to know whether it is original or borrowed. If the latter, we should learn something of its source. A plot may be either simple or complex. It is simple when it deals with one story, and complex when it weaves several stories into a whole. The method of development of the plot may consist of a rise and fall of action, interest, or story, the crisis appearing in the middle of the play; or it may rush on to the culmination in the form of a catastrophe.

The third point to consider is what peculiar means Shakespeare employs for producing his effects. Here we should study his manner of telling his story, whether by the action of the characters, or by their speeches; the peculiar arrangement of the scenes; and his manipulation of the characters.

The law of dramatic unity means this: A drama must possess unity of action, unity of time, and unity of place. By unity of action is meant that the life of a play, its action, must proceed from one controlling cause and be governed by one purpose. By unity of time is meant that the development of the action must take place within the space of time

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that the actual occurrence would occupy. By unity of place is meant that the scene must transpire in one location.

Shakespeare was not governed by these laws, but generally acted so free of them that at first thought one is apt to think he was ignorant of them, but in the *The Tempest* he keeps so close to these unities as to indicate, at least, a knowledge of them. The fact that he was aware of the existence of the laws of unity is apparent in some of his earlier plays, but by refusing to be governed by them in his later master-pieces, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Lear*, it looks as though he did not entertain a very high opinion of them. It may be that his genius refused to be bound by any law and took its flight whithersoever his fancy led him. True, in the great majority of his plays he is controlled by some power respecting the unity of action, as they all spring from some particular motive and are governed by it throughout the whole play, but, as a rule, he pays little attention to the rules of unity of time and place. If we are governed by the Aristotelian definition of the law of the unity of action, that nothing must be admitted into a play that does not primarily pertain to the development of the plot, then we must acknowledge that Shakespeare, in many instances, discarded even the law of unity of action. But if, on the other hand, we hold this law to mean that many stories or themes may be developed in a plot provided these stories are so interwoven as to blend into the one main story or theme, as in *The Mer-*

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chant of Venice, then must we confess that Shakespeare respected such a law. In other words, he was not bound by inflexible rules but worked under pliable ones—he was governed by a principle.

Shakespeare's plots were, in the main, borrowed. So far as the stories go there is little that is original in his plays. Many of his characters, notably Mercutio, are of his creation, but the plots of his plays he gathered from many sources, taking the material of others he "touched it to finer issues."

Plot, in the sense in which it is used when speaking of a play, means the story around which the drama is constructed. The plot is worked out by incidents complex and confusing, twisting in and out, across and around at the choice of the author, until all is made clear in the last act.

Shakespeare uses principally the plot development that has been likened to an arch, as in most of his plays he has a rise in the incidents forming his plots up to the middle of the play and then a decline. This form of construction is emphasized in *Macbeth*, *Richard III.*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, and is used in most of the plays that are, in the main, the work of Shakespeare.

The arch-like structure of plot is magnificently illustrated in the tragedy of *Othello*. The story commences in the first act, rises to its height in the third act, and then passes down to its close at the end of the fifth act. At the moment in the third act that *Othello* says to *Iago*, "Now art thou my lieutenant," showing that he is convinced of the guilt

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of his wife, the climax, or the center of the arch, has been reached, and from that point the fateful story passes along to the catastrophe of Desdemona's murder, the unveiling of Iago, and the suicide of the broken-hearted Othello.

The form of plot may be either simple or complex. The Merchant of Venice and Lear are examples of the complex plot, as they are made of many stories, distinct combinations and separate actions that are woven together into a play, while The Tragedy of Hamlet, telling but one story that has Hamlet for its center, typifies clearly the simple plot. Shylock and Lear are likewise the pivots of The Merchant of Venice and of Lear, but in both these plays several stories are introduced pertaining to other characters and interwoven into a whole, while in Hamlet and in Julius Caesar no story is introduced that has not the central character for its object. This it is that makes a plot either complex or simple.

The plays of Shakespeare are written in iambic pentameter and prose, with other verse interspersed. For the information of the young student of these pages it may be well to state that an iambus is a foot of two syllables, an unaccented followed by an accented one; as *presume, contain*, etc. Pentameter is a line of verse having five feet, each foot containing two syllables or beats; as,

The qual | i ty | of mer | cy is | not strain'd.

Iambic pentameter, therefore, is a line of verse con-

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taining five feet, each foot having two syllables, the first one unaccented and the second accented; as,

O, par | don me, | thou bleed | ing piece | of earth.

Shakespeare did not follow blindly this rule of metrical construction, therefore we find in his works many double endings; such as,

This was | your hus | band. Look | you now | what fol | lows.

Here there is half a foot too much in the line, making eleven beats instead of ten, one more than is called for by the meter. This excess of syllables is also termed hypermetrical because of the excess in the measure, and is to be found most often in those plays that are supposed to have been written in the later period of Shakespeare's work. Hamlet contains many instances of this excess of measure, the famous soliloquy opening with a hypermetrical line:

To be | or not | to be | that is | the ques | tion.

The double ending is also known as the female ending.

It has been held by several editors that the approximate date of the birth of each play can be determined by internal evidence disclosing the frequency of double endings, the occurrence of "end-stopped" lines, the appearance of rhyme, the frequency of classical allusions, and the use of puns. These unquestionably are aids in determining the period when a play was written, but they are not infallible, and should only be accepted as conclusive when re-enforced by evidence of a different nature.

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The "end-stopped" line or couplet is one where the thought finishes with the line or the couplet; as,

Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?  
'Tis full three months since I did see him last:  
If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.<sup>14</sup>

The "run-on" line, known technically as the *enjambéd*, carries the idea through two or more lines; as,

Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love; for, at your age,  
The hey-day in the blood is tame; it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment  
Would step from this to this?<sup>15</sup>

There are also lines in Shakespeare where the number of actual feet is insufficient to make a complete verse of iambic pentameter, the deficiency being made up by a pause as,

Under my battlements. Come, you spirits

In this line, the pause after the word "come" takes the place of half a foot in the meter, giving the time that belongs to a whole foot to this monosyllable. Some editors advise repeating the word "come" in order to make the five feet. It is, however, unnecessary to do so, as the pause takes the place of the half foot. In some lines an extra word will be found; as,

And fill | me, from | the crown | to the toe, | top-full

<sup>14</sup> "King Richard II.," Act V. Scene III.

<sup>15</sup> "Hamlet," Act III. Scene IV.

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but this apparent error is remedied by blending the two words "to the" into one half of a foot. It is this refusal of Shakespeare to be bound by hard set rules that gives [www.this-poetry.com](http://www.this-poetry.com) wonderful power, flexibility and smoothness.

. . . The raven | himself | is hoarse, |  
That croaks | the fa | tal en | trance of | Duncan |  
Under | my bat | tlements. | Come, || you spirits |  
That tend | on mor | tal thoughts, | unsex | me here |  
And fill | me, from | the crown | to the toe, | top-full |  
Of dir | est cru | elty | ! | <sup>16</sup>

This pause is termed the Caesura, or sense, pause. It is often used in the manner indicated in this example. It is also employed by Shakespeare in the middle of a foot and in the center of the verse; as,

It is | the bright | day || that | brings forth | the adder. <sup>17</sup>

What is known as the "speech-ending" test, the ending of the speech with the line, is also of value in deciding the probable time of the writing of a play. Those of the supposed early period possess many speeches that end with the line, whereas those of the later period possess few. Here is an example of a speech ending on the line, taken from Love's Labor's Lost:

A wither'd hermit, five score winters worn,  
Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye:  
Beauty doth varnish age, as if new-born,  
And gives the crutch the cradle's infancy.  
O, 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine!<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "Macbeth," Act I. Scene V.

<sup>17</sup> "Julius Caesar," Act II. Scene I.

<sup>18</sup> "Love's Labor's Lost," Act IV. Scene III.





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Also,

He hath commission from thy wife and me  
To hang Cordelia in the prison, and  
To lay the blame upon her own despair  
That she fordid herself.<sup>22</sup>

The student of the plays of Shakespeare should not fail to note the plot development, grasp the central theme, and study carefully the bearing the characters have upon one another. One of Shakespeare's great principles was to always have a fixed purpose apparent in his work. Let the student examine each play with the object of finding this purpose. When found, it will make clear the object the Dramatist had for the creation of the drama along the lines he adopted.

As the author hopes this work will fall into the hands of young students, as well as those of mature years, he deems it well to explain some terms that, while perfectly plain to a large majority, may be obscure to a few. The words folio and quarto are used many times in this work, so in order that their meaning may be perfectly clear to all who read these pages, the following definitions are given: The word folio means having two leaves. When it is used in reference to printed matter, it signifies that the sheet of paper on which the printing appears has been folded once, thus making two leaves, each being one half of the sheet. Quarto means that the sheet has been folded twice, each sheet making four leaves.

<sup>22</sup> "King Lear," Act V. Scene III.

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The author trusts that the hints and suggestions contained in this chapter will prove a source of inspiration to all who would know how to study Shakespeare. The plays of the Bard of Avon are a priceless gift to humanity, and will prove to the faithful student, next to the study of Nature herself, the best of all means for gaining intellectual development along broad and natural lines.

## The Disputed Plays

IT IS evident to the author that in the collected works of Shakespeare there are plays that he merely "touched up" and others with which he had nothing whatever to do. Thirty-seven plays are included in most of the modern editions of the Dramatist's works, but from both internal and external evidence it appears that *The First Part of King Henry VI.*, *King Henry VIII.*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* are the productions of more than one mind, Shakespeare in these plays merely elaborating and embellishing the works of others.

There is conclusive external evidence to show that plays dealing with the subjects contained in *The First Part of King Henry VI.* existed long before the commencement of Shakespeare's career as a dramatist, and there is unmistakable internal evidence to show that much of this old matter is in the play that is now ascribed to him. In all his known works Shakespeare was fair in his estimation of the French, but in this play they are depicted as mean and cowardly. There are also passages that must have been added at a later day than when the play was originally written, as the versification in parts is more smooth, the imagery richer, and the emotions more deftly depicted. In fact, the play is

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so uneven in quality and style as to stamp it as being the work of at least two minds. This point can be demonstrated by comparing the well-constructed scene showing the dramatic rupture among the nobles in *The Temple Garden*, Act II. Scene IV., with the scene that precedes, or the one that follows it.

Much the same reasons given for declaring the major portion of *The First Part of King Henry VI.* to be the work of other hands than Shakespeare's apply to both *King Henry VIII.* and *The Taming of the Shrew.* Portions of these three plays are undeniably Shakespearean in their character, some passages clearly denoting that they emanated from the same mind that produced the master plays that are known to be Shakespeare's, one character in particular, Cardinal Wolsey, bearing the impress of his genius and showing that it came from the same source as did *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, but the presence of these genuine portions only emphasizes the spuriousness of the remainder.

*Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Timon of Athens* show little sign of his handiwork. In the opinion of the author, these three plays were entirely written by other men. It is likely that they were presented by their authors to the theatre for production, that Shakespeare did no more than rearrange them, and that they were attributed to him because it was to the interest of the management of the theatre to have them appear as the works of a known writer. This opinion is founded on a careful study of the

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plays and all the known circumstances surrounding them. It is here given for what it is worth in order that the student in studying Shakespeare may account in a plausible manner for the inequality of the work throughout certain of the plays that are ascribed to him.

With the stroke of a pen three works should not be stricken from the list of supposed Shakespearean plays, a fitting respect for the opinions of others demanding that reasons be assigned for their removal, so the author will here present what he considers his warrant for not including *Timon of Athens*, *Pericles*, and *Titus Andronicus* among the accepted works of the Dramatist.

*Timon of Athens* in no wise resembles the known works of Shakespeare. It possesses none of the characteristics of his style, his diction, his vocabulary, or his construction. It is almost devoid of action, so much so as to make it unsuited for the stage. It is a fact that Shakespeare wrote his plays for stage purposes—to be acted, and not read—why, then, should he compose a piece utterly unsuited for stage uses? Shakespeare was an actor and appreciated to the full the necessity of action in a play. He never neglected its introduction even into philosophical tragedies such as *Hamlet* or fanciful comedies such as *The Tempest*. Therefore, unless some sufficient reason is given for his having purposely omitted action in *Timon of Athens*, its absence, coupled with the failure to produce direct evidence to the contrary, constitutes good ground

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for deciding that the play was not of his making. As it appears in the original edition it has no arrangement into acts and scenes, nor are the stage directions at all explicit. The whole of some scenes and portions of others might be omitted without loss to the play, while many of the characters are weakly drawn and others are unnecessary. All these things are so un-Shakespearean, not appearing even in the Dramatist's earliest works, as to greatly strengthen the absence of action as a reason for the rejection of this play.

Titus Andronicus is the next play to consider. A play of this name is known to have been in existence when Shakespeare was a very young man, possibly not more than twenty years of age. Ben Jonson, writing in 1614, plainly states that *Andronicus* was known to the theatre-going public twenty-five or thirty years previous to that date, when Shakespeare was in his early twenties, or about the time he left Stratford. This early play may reasonably be set down as not coming from Shakespeare either in whole or in part. The first known edition of this play, a quarto published in 1600, does not credit the play to Shakespeare, but it appears in The First Folio among the tragedies. The hand of Shakespeare is nowhere to be seen from the opening to the close of the play, the versification being artificial and the characters unnatural. It seems to the author that there are sufficient inelegancies of style and manner in the play itself, so little evidence of

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Shakespeare in it, as to not only warrant but to demand its exclusion from his works.

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, is more Shakespearean than either ~~Timon or Andronicus~~, but there is no more outward evidence to warrant its assignment to the Dramatist than that which can be furnished for the other two plays and very little that is contained in the play itself. It does not appear in The First Folio, but was printed in quarto form in 1609, and reissued in 1611, 1619, 1630 and 1635. The play possesses some good passages but the early acts are weak and the entire play, except for these particular passages, bears no resemblance to the handiwork of Shakespeare. It is not in his style, nor does it bear the impress of his genius at any stage of his career.

Some editors claim that these three plays were written by Shakespeare during his early life as a dramatist, others say they are in the main the work of other men and that Shakespeare rearranged and improved them, but to the author's mind the plays themselves cry out against both decisions. Let a person familiar with the known works of Shakespeare, divesting himself of prejudice, read the three rejected plays, and he will, in all probability, reach the conclusion that they are no more the product of the Shakespearean mind than are The London Prodigal, The Life of Sir John Oldcastle, The Two Noble Kinsmen, and the other plays that were falsely attributed to him. The hand of Shakespeare is clearly seen tracing the lineaments of Rosalind, Juliet, Portia, Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Macbeth, and

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his other known productions, but nowhere can its influence be perceived in *Andronicus*, *Tamora*, *Pericles*, or *Timon*.

The opening of Scene III. Act II. of *Macbeth* is believed by many critics and editors to have been interpolated by the actors. It is, on the contrary, thoroughly Shakespearean and serves the purpose of emphasizing the fact that all the members of the household of *Macbeth* were made drunk in order that the murder of *Duncan* might the better be accomplished. Even *Macbeth* and his wife drank heavily that night so as to harden themselves to do the deed of murder, *Lady Macbeth* saying:

That which hath made them drunk, hath made me bold:  
What hath quench'd them, hath given me fire—

We find a warrant for claiming that entire plays and portions of others that have been credited to Shakespeare do not properly belong to him from the following facts: (1) There is a certain peculiarity of style running through all his productions that is strictly Shakespearean—that is, common to him and foreign to all others. (2) There is a harmony in his meter that gives it a character that produces smoothness or ruggedness as befits the impression to be conveyed. (3) The marvelous skill with which his characters are developed, distinct traits being shown in all. (4) Vividness of imagery that is invariably in accordance with Nature. (5) The strength of action that animates all his plays. (6) Perfect control over the coloring of the emotions by the char-



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acters. (7) A movement of characters as though governed by Nature and not by man.

Judging the thirty-seven plays by these standards it appears to the author that *Pericles*, *Timon*, and *Andronicus* should be wholly rejected, and that *The First Part of King Henry VI.*, *King Henry VIII.*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* should be accepted only in part.

## CHAPTER IX

# The Authorship of the Works Known as Shakespeare's

IT WAS not until 1856, two hundred and forty years after the death of William Shakespeare, that his right to be considered the author of plays which for so many years bore his name was called in question. In January, 1856, there appeared in Putnam's Magazine an article by Delia Bacon claiming that she had discovered the hidden fact that the writings known as Shakespeare's were really the work of Francis Bacon.

Delia Bacon was a woman of education and refinement, the daughter of Rev. David Bacon, an early Western Missionary, but no relation to Francis Bacon. She was born in Tallmage, Ohio, February 2, 1811. She early conceived the notion that Francis Bacon was the author of the works ascribed to William Shakespeare, and she became so possessed with the idea that she put aside all other pursuits and went to England in 1853 in search of facts to support her contention. She remained there five years, underwent many privations, and after going to Stratford-on-Avon with the avowed intention of opening the tomb of William Shakespeare in search of papers which she believed to be buried there, she went insane, was returned to her friends in Hart-

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ford, Conn., in April, 1858, and died there, September 2, 1859.

When about thirty-five years of age Miss Bacon had a love affair with ~~the~~ Rev. Alexander McWhorter, a clergyman ten years her junior, which turned out unfortunately for her, and had a distressing effect upon her mentality. This affair was gossiped about in every village, town and city in New England, and the experiences she then underwent undoubtedly account for her subsequent insanity. It is the opinion of many good judges that her mind became unbalanced at the time of this affair, and finally gave way under her privations and sufferings while in England. The mantle of charity, the charity of the world's silence concerning this epoch in the sad life of this well-meaning woman, should be thrown over her, for if she erred, she certainly suffered, and it should be borne in mind that she "loved not wisely but too well."

The result of her research and labors regarding the authorship of Shakespeare is told in a book entitled *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*, and it certainly must appear to an unprejudiced reader that this work contains many and strong indications that its author's mind was unbalanced at the time she was engaged in writing it.

At about the same time that Delia Bacon voiced her claimed-discovery, William Henry Smith, an Englishman, put forth the same idea in a paper he read before a debating society, which he after-

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wards put in the form of a letter and sent to Lord Ellesmere, the chairman of the Shakespearean Society. Mr. Smith then wrote a more detailed account of his version of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays and issued it in book form. This aroused a controversy which continues to this day.

It remained for an American, Ignatius Donnelly, to put forth a claim that he had discovered a cipher in the plays of Shakespeare that disclosed the fact that William Shakespeare was an illiterate, gross, sensuous creature, and that the plays were written by Francis Bacon.

Ignatius Donnelly was a politician, humorist, author and orator. He was born in Philadelphia, Pa., Nov. 3, 1831, and died in Minneapolis, Minn., Jan. 2, 1901. He was educated in the public schools of his native city, studied law, and was admitted to the Bar in 1852. In 1856 he removed to Minnesota, where he was elected successively lieutenant-governor and governor of that state. In 1863 he was elected to Congress and served three terms. These facts are given in order that it may be seen that Mr. Donnelly was a man of education and experience, and to show that if he erred in his conclusions it was not through ignorance. He was, however, a man who was inclined to wander after strange gods, for in 1872 he left his political party and followed the leadership of Peter Cooper, being chairman of the National Anti-Monopoly Convention that nominated Cooper for President of the United States, and in 1899 he

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was the nominee of the Anti-Fusion wing of the People's party for Vice-President.

Now let us consider the claims as set forth by Ignatius Donnelly in ~~what he calls~~ [www.libtop.com](http://www.libtop.com) The Great Cryptogram.

*The Learning of Shakespeare.* It is claimed by Donnelly and others that Shakespeare had little schooling, and they delight in quoting Ben Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek;" some others say that he possessed natural wit but no art, and that it was the general wonder he should be so excellent a poet with so little learning.

The known facts as to Shakespeare's schooling are these: His education was received at the grammar school of his native town. Here he studied the English branches and gained some knowledge of Latin. He is supposed to have attended this school for about six years. The information regarding the school life of Shakespeare is exceedingly meager, and nothing more regarding it than is here set down can honestly be claimed. There was, however, a period of five years in his life, soon after he went to London, during which we have absolutely no information concerning him. The fact is, that he apparently dropped out of existence between the years 1587 and 1592 except for his name being attached to a petition addressed to the Privy Council under date of November 1589. He may have been in London all that time, and it is surmised he was, and it is supposed that during this gap in his known life he was bettering his education generally, and

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particularly studying French and Italian. On March 3, 1592, Henry VI. was acted at the Rose Theatre, and it is considered by able authorities that this play was Shakespeare's First Part of King Henry VI. If this is correct, the year 1592 marks the known opening of Shakespeare's career as an author. In support of this contention, Israel Gollancz, in his *Annals of the Life of Shakespeare*, cites the following:

In this same year, 1592, on September 4, died Robert Greene; on the 20th day of the month his *Groatsworth of Wit* was published, edited by Chettle. In this work there is an address to his "quondam acquaintance that spend their wits in making plays, R. G. wisheth a better exercise and wisdom to prevent his extremities." Marlowe, Nash, and Peele, are probably the scholar-playwrights warned by Greene no longer to trust the players. "Base-minded men all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned: for unto none of you, like me, sought those burrs to cleave — those puppets, I mean, that speak from our mouth, those antics garnished in our colors. Is it not strange that I, to whom they have all been beholding: is it not like that you, to whom they have all been beholding, shall (were ye in that case that I am now) be both at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide* supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank-verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes fac-totum, is in his own conceit the only shake-scene in a country. O that I might entreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses: and let these apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions.

. . . Yet whilst you may, seek your better

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masters! for it is a pity men of such rare wits should be subject to such rude grooms."

The original of the travestied line is to be found in *The Third Part of King Henry VI*, "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide," and there can be no doubt that here we have the first direct evidence of Shakespeare's growing pre-eminence as an actor and as a playwright.

The reason for Greene's writing thus bitterly of Shakespeare was that the latter had made use of some of the former's material and worked it into his plays. After the appearance of the *Groatsworth of Wit*, Shakespeare undoubtedly was indebted to Greene for much of the material of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and previous to this period, during Greene's life, Shakespeare had not hesitated to work over some of Greene's ideas, and for this reason he called him "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers."

Three months after the appearance of the *Groatsworth of Wit*, its publisher, Chettle, issued this apology:

"I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his [i. e. Shakespeare's] demeanor no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art."

The schooling of Shakespeare may have been limited, but extensive schooling is not necessary to the making of a poet, a prose writer or a dramatist. That Shakespeare had schooling enough to enable

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him to read and write is conceded, that he read studiously is shown in his extensive knowledge of the characters and events mentioned and narrated in the Bible, and the fact that he was a close observer of Nature and a student of man is attested throughout his writings. He was, moreover, an omnivorous reader, and in his position of part owner of the Blackfriars and the Globe theatres he was brought in contact with the works of other dramatists whose ideas he did not hesitate to adopt and embellish; and it was his great ability to beautify and enlarge the ideas of others that constituted an important part of his peculiar genius. Take this trait away from Shakespeare and little remains, consequently the works known as Shakespeare's cannot justly be attributed to a purely original thinker and writer. He gathered information from all sources, worked the material over in his own mind, gave it out in his own manner, and it became, in its new garb, his own matter. It took many minds to furnish the mind of Shakespeare—his was a reservoir into which many tributaries flowed—but it required not the trained mind of a great scholar to fashion his plays. It demanded rather the qualities of a deep thinker, a keen observer and a clever workman; and these attributes William Shakespeare possessed. "The question is not who furnished the stone, or who owned the quarry, but who chiselled the statue."<sup>1</sup>

The question is then asked, Where are the books

<sup>1</sup> From a lecture on Shakespeare by Robert G. Ingersoll.



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that he read, and from which he gained the information that was worked into his plays? This question cannot be fully answered. We know, however, that such books as he possessed would not be found at his house in Stratford, because most of his literary labors were performed in London and his books would naturally be where his work was done. In his native town, Rowe tells us, "the latter part of his life was spent, as all men of sense will wish theirs may be, in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends," which tends to show that little of his literary work was done outside of London.

The Globe Theatre, of which Shakespeare was part owner, and where, most likely, much of his literary labor was performed, was destroyed by fire on June 29, 1613, and it is possible that Shakespeare's manuscripts and books were then destroyed. The fire was very rapid, and practically nothing was saved from the playhouse.

In Shakespeare's will he appoints his son-in-law, John Hall, and his daughter Susanna his executors, consequently if his books and papers were then in existence and under his control they would pass into their hands. After Shakespeare's death his daughter Susanna and her husband became puritanical in their religious views and turned against the theatre and all that related to it. It is likely they then destroyed all books and papers pertaining to the stage that had come into their possession by the will of Shakespeare.

Here, then, are two reasonable explanations for

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the inability to produce the books and manuscripts of Shakespeare.

If Shakespeare had been a disreputable, uneducated person such as the Baconians picture him, would it not have been ridiculous for him to put forth claims to the authorship of those wonderful productions? Would his fellow authors have acknowledged his claims? Would men like Essex and Southampton have associated with him and allowed him the use of their names and money? Is it not preposterous to even suppose that Bacon would select such a man as his mask? Look at the question from any or all of these standpoints, and it must appear that Shakespeare was a man of education and refinement, who was associated with gentlemen, and was capable of producing the works that have for so many years been ascribed to him.

It is known that Shakespeare placed no value, except a pecuniary one, upon his plays, and after they had served their purpose at the theatre he cared not what became of them. On the other hand, Bacon carefully and methodically arranged his written matter, much of it being preserved to this day, consequently it is but fair to assume that if Bacon had produced works far superior to any which he acknowledged as his, he would have retained the manuscripts and made some mention of them in his will, bequeathing them as a rich legacy unto his issue.<sup>2</sup> On this question Donnelly says:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> And, dying, mention it within their wills,

Bequeathing it as a rich legacy

Unto their issue.

—“Julius Caesar,” Act III. Scene II.

<sup>3</sup> “The Great Cryptogram,” page 99.

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When the crushing blow of shame and humiliation fell upon Francis Bacon in 1621, and he expected to die under it, he hurriedly drew a short will. It does not exceed in length one page of Spedding's book, and yet in this brief document he found time to say:

"My compositions unpublished, or the fragments of them, I require my servant Harris to deliver to my brother Constable, to the end that if any of these be fit, in his judgment, to be published, he may accordingly dispose of them. And in particular I wish the Elogium I wrote, *In felicem memoriam Reginae Elizabethae*, may be published. And to my brother Constable I give all my books; and to my servant Harris for his service and care fifty pieces of gold, pursed up."

And when Bacon came to draw his last will and testament, he devoted a large part of it to the preservation of his writings. He says:

"For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next ages. But as to the *durable part of my memory, which consisteth of my works and writings*, I desire my executors and especially Sir John Constable, and my very good friend Mr. Bosvile, to take care that of all my writings, both of English and of Latin, there may be books fair bound and placed in the King's library, and in the library of the University of Cambridge, and in the library of Trinity College, where myself was bred, and in the library of the University of Oxonford, and in the library of my lord of Canterbury, and in the library of Eaton."

Then he bequeaths his register books of orations and letters to the Bishop of Lincoln; and he further directs his executors to "take into their hands all my papers whatsoever, which are either in cabinets, boxes or presses, and them to seal up until they may at their leisure peruse them."

Not a word here regarding any plays or dramatic writings, no mention of any hidden cipher whereby

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his ownership to works far greater than any mentioned or disposed of in his will is to be proved. Is it not reasonable to suppose that, if for any reason he desired to hide his connection with the plays from the world during his life, he would, at the approach of death, have made public the fact that would have cast greater renown upon his life than any other of his performances? Would not this man who directs that all his writings shall be published in book form and deposited in libraries have mentioned the fact that he was the author of Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and Lear, if such had been the case? Would he not have directed that all these wonderful plays should be gathered together and put in enduring shape? Surely he would not have mentioned the Elogium and remained silent regarding the plays. A man as jealous of his literary reputation as Bacon was would never have bequeathed his register books of orations and letters to the Bishop of Lincoln, and made no disposition of the greatest dramatic literature of all times. Bacon lived until 1626, ten years after the death of Shakespeare, and yet he put forth no claim to the authorship of the plays while he lived, nor left any written claim to any title in them on his death. Such would not be consistent with our knowledge of the character of Bacon, if the plays had been the product of his mind.

The claim put forth by the Baconians that Shakespeare was a Catholic, Bacon a Protestant, and that the plays contain evidence to show that the author was a Protestant and that consequently Bacon

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wrote Shakespeare, is dealt with in another chapter of this book; but here a reply will be made to the outside evidence they offer concerning Shakespeare's Catholicity.

We are told that William Shakespeare of Stratford died a Catholic. We have this upon the authority of Rev. Mr. Davies, who says, writing after 1688, "he died a Papist." Upon the question of the politics of a great man, the leader of either one of the political parties of his neighborhood is likely to be well informed; it is in the line of his interests and thoughts. Upon the question of the one great man of Stratford we may trust the testimony of the clergyman of the parish. He could hardly be mistaken. There can be little doubt that William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon died a Catholic.<sup>4</sup>

This certainly is specious reasoning. At first glance it looks plausible, but when we consider that the evidence of the Reverend gentleman is written "after 1688," seventy-two years after the death of Shakespeare, and that he gives no authority for his statement, merely saying, "he died a Papist," the thing becomes a trifle "light as air" and should be given no credence. In the Presidential campaign of 1908 it was openly charged by several clergymen that William H. Taft was a heretic, a non-Christian, and therefore unworthy to be the chief magistrate of a Christian nation. Is the evidence of these men to be accepted as proof of the fact that President Taft did not believe in the teachings of Christ? These men, however, were contemporary with President

<sup>4</sup> "The Great Cryptogram," Chapter V. page 196.

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Taft, whereas the Rev. Mr. Davies gives his evidence seventy-two years after Shakespeare has "shuffled off this mortal coil." What, in reality, did the reverend gentleman know of the facts? Nothing. His evidence, therefore, amounts to nothing. Had it been cited that Shakespeare was thoroughly familiar with the services of the Roman Catholic Church, that he pictured her priests as good and holy men, depicting them in the characters of Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* and Friar Francis in *Much Ado About Nothing* as priests who would reflect honor upon any church, the evidence would have been worthy of consideration, but when it is merely stated that a Rev. Mr. Davies says "he died a Papist" it deserves only the consideration that is given hearsay testimony. The Baconians would make William Shakespeare a Catholic, Francis Bacon a liberal Protestant; and they claim that the characters of the Friars are the production of the mind of the tolerant Protestant.

The known facts regarding the religious training and belief of William Shakespeare are as follows:

The teacher of the school at Stratford at the time the boy Shakespeare attended it was the Rev. Thomas Hunt, Episcopal curate of the parish of Ludington which adjoined Stratford. He was in charge of this school from 1572 until 1580, consequently Shakespeare was under this Protestant clergyman from the time he was eight years of age until he left school.

Richard Bifield was vicar of the Stratford parish

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church where William Shakespeare and all his brothers and sisters were baptized. He was not only a Protestant, he was also a Puritan, being known throughout the country for the severity of his doctrines and his zeal in carrying them out. Within this Protestant church, within its chancel, lie buried Shakespeare, his wife, his daughter, his son-in-law. This certainly is strong evidence to show that the poet was not a Catholic.

It is not safe even to assume that John Shakespeare, the father of William, died a Roman Catholic. He was undoubtedly born a Roman Catholic, most Englishmen of his time were members of that church, the break between Henry VIII. and the Pope not occurring until 1531, but he held office under Queen Elizabeth, being chief burgess of Stratford, and was compelled to conform to the new religion in order to do so. By the statute of Elizabeth, 1558-9, all civil magistrates were compelled to take the oath known as the oath of supremacy, swearing to conform to the then established or reformed religion, and John Shakespeare must have done this before entering upon his duties as chief magistrate of Stratford. From all the evidence at hand it is only fair to assume that William Shakespeare was, in religion, what is known as a Protestant, though he never could have been a Puritan.

Now who was this Francis Bacon, this "tolerant Protestant?"

Francis Bacon was born in London, England, January 22, 1561, and died there April 9, 1626. He

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was the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon by his second wife, Anne, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, formerly tutor to Edward VI. During the reign of Henry VIII. the Bacons were supposed to be Protestants, but when Mary ascended the throne they conformed to the Catholic religion, heard mass and took the sacraments. When Elizabeth became queen they renounced the Catholic Church and became professed Protestants, thus suiting their religious professions to the exigencies of the times.

Sir Nicholas Bacon was a famous English statesman who was renowned for the clearness of his views, his knowledge of ecclesiastical matters, his learning, and his wisdom. He was Lord Keeper of the great seal in Queen Elizabeth's reign.

The mother of Francis Bacon was a woman of considerable force of character, much skill in the classical studies, well cultured, and a staunch member of the Puritan Church. From this stock, then, came the "tolerant Protestant."

Francis Bacon was undoubtedly a remarkable man. He possessed, perhaps, the greatest philosophical mind of modern times. He was a man of education, refinement and deep learning, but he was false to friendship and morally corrupt. When he was struggling for recognition at the court of Elizabeth, and well-nigh discouraged over his failure to secure advancement, the Earl of Essex interested himself in his behalf and made a strenuous effort in 1595 to have him appointed Attorney-General and, failing in this, petitioned the queen to appoint him



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to the solicitorship made vacant by the promotion of Coke. Failing in this also, he presented him with a piece of land worth about £1800. This, in those days, was a princely sum, and was given to Bacon by the noble Earl to allay the disappointment he experienced at his failure to secure office under the crown. How did Bacon repay this friend? When Essex, in 1601, was on trial for his life, charged with high treason, Bacon was present as one of the Queen's counsel, and when the evidence was apparently much in favor of the accused, Bacon, who was only a secondary counselor, unnecessarily took part in the discussion and attacked the evidence of the Earl of Essex who claimed that he had only done what was essential to the preservation of his life from the attacks of his enemies. Thus were the efforts of Coke, the principal counsel, who had endeavored to open up a means of escape for Essex, brought to naught, and thus did Bacon go out of his way to blast the life of the man who had many times befriended him when nothing more than his silence was necessary to his salvation.

Bacon's moral turpitude is shown in his behavior as judge when he accepted bribes to silence or control his convictions. In 1617 Bacon became Lord Chancellor and was entrusted with the great seal, under the title of Lord Keeper, but it was not long before he as basely betrayed the confidence of King James as he had previously betrayed the friendship of the Earl of Essex. This chapter in his life is described thus in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, an

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account which is made as favorable for Bacon as the circumstances could possibly allow:

On March 14th (1621) one Aubrey appeared at the bar of the House, and charged Bacon with having received from him a sum of money while his suit was going on, and with having afterwards decided against him. Bacon's letter on this occasion is worthy of serious attention; he evidently thought the charge was but part of the deliberate scheme to ruin him which had already been in progress. A second accusation (Egerton's case) followed immediately after, and was investigated by the House, who, satisfied that they had just matter for reprehension, appointed the 19th for a conference with the Lords. On that day Bacon, as he feared, was too ill to attend. He wrote to the Lords excusing his absence, requesting them to appoint a convenient time for his defense and cross-examination of witnesses, and imploring them not to allow their minds to be prejudiced against him, at the same time declaring that he would not "trick up an innocency with cavilations, but plainly and ingeniously declare what he knew or remembered." The charges rapidly accumulated, but Bacon still looked upon them as party moves, and was in hopes of defending himself. Nor did he seem to have lost his courage, if we are to believe the common reports of the day, though certainly they do not appear worthy of very much credit.

The notes bearing upon the interview which he obtained with the king, show that he had begun to see more clearly the nature and extent of the offences with which he was charged, that he now felt it impossible altogether to exculpate himself, and that his hopes were directed towards obtaining some mitigation of his sentence. The long roll of charges made upon the 19th of April finally decided him, he gave up all idea of defense, and wrote to the king begging him to show him favor in this emergency. The next day he sent in a general

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confession to the Lords, trusting that this would be considered satisfactory. The Lords, however, decided that it was not sufficient as a ground for their censure, and demanded a detailed and particular confession. A list of twenty-eight charges was then sent him, to which an answer by letter was required. On the 30th April his "confession and humble submission" was handed in. In it, after going over the several instances, he says, "I do again confess, that on the points charged upon me, although they should be taken as myself have declared them, there is a great deal of corruption and neglect; for which I am heartily and penitently sorry, and submit myself to the judgment, grace, and mercy of the court." On the 3rd May after considerable discussion, the Lords decided upon the sentence, which was, That he should undergo fine and ransom of £40,000; that he should be imprisoned in the tower during the king's pleasure; that he should be forever incapable of any office, place, or employment in the state or commonwealth; that he should never sit in parliament; or come within the verge of the court.

This is the man, then, according to the Baconians, who wrote:

Set honor in one eye and death i' the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently.

—*Julius Caesar, Act I. Scene II.*

What a farce for a confessed bribe-taker, a seller of justice, to prate of honor!

Mine honor keeps the weather of my fate:  
Life every man holds dear; but the dear man  
Holds honor far more precious-dear than life.

—*Troilus and Cressida, Act V. Scene III.*

For life, I prize it  
As I weigh grief, which I would spare: For honor,  
'Tis a derivative from me to mine,  
And only that I stand for.

—*The Winter's Tale, Act III. Scene II.*

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Does this sound as though it came from the man who penned, "I do again confess, that on the points charged upon me, although they should be taken as myself declared ~~red by them, there is an~~ a great deal of corruption and neglect?"<sup>6</sup> Would one who stands only for honor, beseech his king to mitigate the just punishment of a confessed crime? The two characters as here depicted will not blend. Bacon was not Shakespeare.

1. "No nobler soul, no broader mind ever existed than that revealed in the Plays."<sup>6</sup>

2. Bacon did not possess a noble soul.

3. Therefore, Bacon did not write the Plays.

Donnelly, in his Cryptogram, aims to prove Bacon's right to the authorship of the Plays by means of the similarity of expressions used in the plays and those used by Bacon in his known writings. Let us examine some of Donnelly's comparisons:

We turn to Bacon, and we find him referring to the common people as a *scum*. The same word is used in Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup>

Here is certainly a great discovery! Just think! Bacon refers to the common people as *scum*, Shakespeare also uses the word. Therefore, Bacon wrote Shakespeare! Would it not be as logical to say that Shakespeare wrote Bacon? This same false reasoning pervades the whole of Donnelly's claim. For instance:

<sup>6</sup> Bacon's "Confession and Humble Submission."

<sup>6</sup> "The Great Cryptogram," Chapter IV. page 174.

<sup>7</sup> "The Great Cryptogram," Chapter IV. page 176.

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"Bacon speaks of

'The vulgar, to whom nothing moderate is grateful.'<sup>8</sup>

"This is the same thought we find in Shakespeare:

'What would you have, your curs  
That like nor peace nor war.'<sup>9</sup>

Where is there anything analagous in these two expressions? One states that nothing that is moderate is grateful to the vulgar, while the other asks what they, who like neither peace nor war, would have. Surely there is no such similarity of expression here as to warrant any one in claiming that both extracts emanated from the same mind.

In The Great Cryptogram, pages 176 and 177, we find:

"Again Bacon says:

'The ignorant and rude multitudes.'<sup>10</sup>

'If fame be from the common people, it is commonly false and naught.'<sup>11</sup>

"This is very much the thought expressed in Shakespeare:

'The fool multiude that choose by show,  
Not learning, more than the fond eye doth teach.'<sup>12</sup>

"And also in

'He's loved of the distracted multitude,  
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes.'<sup>13</sup>

Where is the connection or the similarity?

"Bacon says:

'For in all times, in the opinion of the multitude, witches and old women and im-

<sup>8</sup> "Wisdom of the Ancients"—Diomedes.

<sup>9</sup> "Coriolanus," Act I. Scene I.

<sup>10</sup> "Wisdom of the Ancients."

<sup>11</sup> "Essay of Praise."

<sup>12</sup> "Merchant of Venice," Act II. Scene IX.

<sup>13</sup> "Hamlet," Act IV. Scene III.

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posters have had a competition with physicians.’<sup>14</sup>

“And again he says:

‘The envious and *malignant* disposition of the vulgar, for when fortune’s favorites and great potentates come to ruin, then do the common people rejoice, setting, as it were, a crown upon the head of revenge.’<sup>15</sup>

“And again he says:

‘The nature of the vulgar, always swollen and *malignant*, still broaching new scandals against superiors; . . . the same natural disposition of the people still leaning to viler sort, being impatient of peace and tranquillity.’<sup>16</sup>

“Says Shakespeare:

‘That like not peace nor war.’<sup>17</sup>

“And Bacon says again:

‘He would never endure that the *base multitude* should frustrate the authority of Parliament.’<sup>18</sup>

“See how the same words are employed by both.

Bacon says:

‘The base multiude.’

“Shakespeare says:

‘The rude *multitude* — the *base vulgar*.’<sup>19</sup>

Now what is there in all this to bolster up the claim that Bacon wrote Shakespeare? Absolutely nothing. It is astonishing that a man of intelligence should cite such instances as are here given as proof of similarity between the writings of the two men, because that quality is certainly lacking in all the examples that he quotes.

<sup>14</sup> “Advancement of Learning,” Book II.

<sup>15</sup> “Wisdom of the Ancients”—Nemesis.

<sup>16</sup> “Wisdom of the Ancients.”

<sup>17</sup> “Coriolanus,” Act I. Scene I.

<sup>18</sup> “History of Henry VII.”

<sup>19</sup> “The Tempest,” Act I. Scene II.

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The silliness of Donnelly's reasoning is beautifully illustrated by Shakespeare in Act IV., Scene II., of The Second Part of King Henry VI.

*Enter some, bringing forward the clerk of Chatham.*

SMITH. The clerk of Chatham: he can write and read and cast accompt.

CADE. O monstrous!

SMITH. We took him setting of boys' copies.

CADE. Here's a villain!

SMITH. Has a book in his pocket with red letters in 't.

CADE. Nay, then, he is a conjuror.

DICK. Nay, he can make obligations, and write court-hand.

CADE. I am sorry for 't: the man is a proper man, of mine honour; unless I find him guilty, he shall not die.

Come hither, sirrah, I must examine thee: what is thy name?

CLERK. Emmanuel.

DICK. They used to write it on the top of letters: 'twill go hard with you.

CADE. Let me alone. Dost thou use to write thy name? or hast thou a mark to thyself, like an honest plain-dealing man?

CLERK. Sir, I thank God, I have been so well brought up that I can write my name.

ALL. He hath confessed: away with him! he's a villain and a traitor.

CADE. Away with him, I say! hang him with his pen and ink-horn about his neck.

### THE AUTHOR OF THE PLAYS WAS AN ACTOR

Let us consider what evidence there is in the plays of Shakespeare to justify the assertion that their author was an actor.

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The writer of the plays evinces in their construction an intimate knowledge of the art of playwriting. He displays an insight into stagecraft that equals the beauty of his poetry and the brilliancy of his philosophy. He shows by the phraseology, the use of technical terms, and in the many references to the stage and to players, by the very atmosphere that envelopes the plays, that they are the product of one who lived in the mimic world. The plays show their author understood so thoroughly the drawing and characterizing of parts, the arrangement of incidents and scenes, the development of a plot, and the presentation of a play as to prove that the knowledge was such as could be gained only by one who had lived the life of an actor and studied the workings of the art of acting at first hand. Here is the proof:

Hamlet abounds with references to the stage and the actor's art, and contains the "advice to the players" which is an epitome of instruction in the art of acting. Here we have the sage, direct advice of the seasoned player, and not the mere empty general admonition of the critic. Ponder over this passage:

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hands, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a



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robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

. . . And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered; that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.<sup>20</sup>

Here we have the most perfect lesson in dramatic art that ever was penned. No one not thoroughly versed in the principles of acting could have written

<sup>20</sup> "Hamlet," Act III. Scene II.

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it. A critic, accustomed to witnessing plays from the auditorium, would not have possessed an insight into the technique of acting sufficient to enable him to express himself so clearly regarding the purpose of the player's art. The man who wrote these instructions to the players was not only a critic, nor only an actor, but he was accustomed to drilling actors. He was a stage director who was proficient in all the requirements of staging a play; he knew how an actor should make his "points" and he knew how to drill him in order that these "points" should be made. He tells the player to "speak the speech trippingly on the tongue," none but a person accustomed to using his voice in public would be apt to so express himself. A speaker knows how necessary it is to get the voice out of the mouth on to the lips, for only by so doing can the "mouthing" be avoided, and the "mouthing" is aptly compared with the bellowing of the town-crier who lustily cries out, making much noise but producing little speech. A writer might advise against "mouthing" but he would not possess the expert knowledge necessary for him to give the positive instruction to speak "trippingly on the tongue." The advice "nor do not saw the air too much" is such as would be given by an able stage-manger to an actor who was inclined to "overdo" his part; and the statement that he "must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness" is such a wise one, that its wisdom would not likely be discovered except by a man practiced in the art of holding "the mirror up

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to nature.' It has been claimed that the knowledge of the law shown in the plays of Shakespeare indicate that their author was a lawyer, but this advice to the players could never have originated in the brain of a man unless that man was a master of the art of acting. It is true that the author of the plays shows a knowledge of law and legal procedure, but nowhere in his works is to be found so keen an insight into legal questions as is displayed regarding matters pertaining to the stage. The legal information might have been gained from books, but the dramatic knowledge could have been obtained by stage experience alone.

1. The author of Shakespeare's plays was an actor.
2. Bacon was not an actor.
3. Therefore, Bacon did not write Shakespeare.

Not only does Shakespeare display his knowledge of acting, but he shows the influence the actor's life had on him by referring in many of the plays to things that pertain to the stage. For instance: He introduces a play in *Hamlet*, *The Murder of Gonzago*; in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Pyramus and Thisbe*; in *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Nine Worthies*; and in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the players in the Induction.

In *Hamlet*, Act II. Scene II., Hamlet, speaking of the players, remarks:

How chances it they travel? their residence, both  
in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Here we have evidence that the writer of these lines was aware of the fact that an actor suffered in

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prestige and profit when forced to leave the city and go into the smaller places in search of audiences. This fact might be known by some not connected with the theatres, but they would not be apt to make note of it.

Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Polonius the following :

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited; Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

Here we have the different kinds of plays defined in such a manner as to show the definer to be versed in the many styles of plays. After enumerating the principal classes, such as tragedy, comedy, etc., the playwright mentions individable (that is, not to be classed as either tragedy, or comedy) and unlimited (that is, not limited by a definition), and this particular classification undoubtedly shows a knowledge of the technical terms of the playwright's art such as could only be obtained by one experienced in its practice. "For the law of writ and the liberty" is also a professional term; meaning, speaking the lines as they are set down (writ) by the author or extemporizing (liberty) as the actor recites. The word "gag" is now used among actors to signify the idea that "liberty" conveyed in the days of Shakespeare. Actors now often speak of gagging a part; that is, putting one's own words

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or speeches into a part or introducing business into a scene other than as arranged by the author or stage manager.

In Act II. Scene II. Hamlet speaks of the players as being "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time," and states that "after your death you were better have a bad epitaph, than their ill report while you live." He also in the same scene describes the feigned passion of an actor, and states that he has heard that remorse has often been aroused in the breast of a guilty person by attendance at a play where, "by the very cunning of the scene," they have confessed their transgression. The scene ends with the sentence:

The play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Thus, in *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, we find a marvelous lesson in the art of acting, a composition that bears the strongest evidence of having been written by one thoroughly conversant with the staging of plays; the use of many words common only to actors; and a general atmosphere surrounding the entire play that is indicative of its author's close association with players.

Other references in the Plays to the stage, the actor, and the actor's art are as follows:

Macbeth, Act. V. Scene V.

Out, out, brief candle:  
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more.

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### Troilus and Cressida, Act I. Scene III.

Sometime, great Agamemnon,  
Thy topless deputation he puts on;  
And, like a strutting player, whose conceit  
Lies in his hamstring, and doth think it rich  
To hear the wooden dialogue and sound  
'Twi'x his stretched footing and the scaffoldage,—  
Such to-be-pitied and o'er-wrested seeming  
He acts thy greatness in:

### The Merchant of Venice, Act I. Scene I.

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;  
A stage, where every man must play a part,  
And mine a sad one.

### The Taming of the Shrew, Induction, Scene II.

Your honor's players, hearing your amendment,  
Are come to play a pleasant comedy;  
For so your doctors hold it very meet,  
Seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood,  
And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy:  
Therefore, they thought it good you hear a play,  
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,  
Which bars a thousand harms, and lengthens life.

### As You Like It, Act II. Scene VII.

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits, and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms:  
Then, the whining school-boy, with his satchel,  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school: And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow: Then, a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth: And then, the justice,

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In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,  
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part: The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound: Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

The strongest proof that William Shakespeare wrote the plays attributed to him is to be found within the plays themselves, but it is well to answer with outside evidence some of the assertions made by those who would rob him of his honors. One assertion is that there is no contemporary reference to him at all except as an actor; another, that he was looked upon as a "deserving man" a "Joannes Factotum" among the players. It is easy to prove both these statements false.

Ben Jonson knew William Shakespeare as a man, an actor, and an author, in his *Timber of Discoveries, Being Observations on Men and Manners*, written about 1620, but not printed until 1641, on *De Shakespeare nostrati*, he has this to say:

I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, 'Would he had blotted a thousand,' which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this but for their ignorance who chose that circumstance to commend their

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friend by wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candor, for I loved the man, and do honor his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped. *'Sufflaminandus erat,'*<sup>21</sup> as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so, too! Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him, 'Caesar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Caesar did never wrong but with just cause;'<sup>22</sup> and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.

This certainly is contemporary reference to him as an author. Ben Jonson was intimately acquainted with Shakespeare the actor, sang praises to Shakespeare the author, and never intimated but that he knew the man with whom he associated to be both the actor and the author.

In 1598, Francis Meres issued a book entitled "*Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury, being the Second Part of Wit's Common-wealth.*" One section of this

<sup>21</sup> "He ought to have been clogged."—Seneca.

<sup>22</sup> The passage now reads thus:

Know, Caesar doth not wrong; nor without cause will he be satisfied.

—"Julius Caesar," Act III. Scene I.

In reference to this point Hudson says:

Some question has been made whether this passage has reached us the same as originally written; and the doubt has grown from a remark in Ben Jonson's Discoveries. We agree with Mr. Collier that Jonson was speaking only from memory, which, so himself confesses, was "shaken with age now and sloth;" and so misquoted the Poet. Still it is not impossible that he may have quoted rightly from the play as he had heard it on the stage, and that Shakespeare may have afterwards corrected the passage.



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work is headed "A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets, with the Greek, Latin, and Italian Poets," and among many other references to Shakespeare is the following:

As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifuous and honey-tongued Shakespeare: witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugared Sonnets among his private friends, etc.!

Here is an author, writing at the period when the actor Shakespeare was making his reputation as a poet and dramatist, who testifies to his (the actor's) being known as the "honey-tongued Shakespeare," and to the fact that he distributed "his sugared Sonnets among his private friends." These friends knew the man Shakespeare intimately, and no question was raised during his lifetime regarding the identity of the actor with that of the author, and it remained for a poor, distracted, and mistaken woman, two hundred and forty years after the death of William Shakespeare, to put forth a wild theory, made of "trifles light as air," which has been seized upon and expanded by succeeding writers who would long ago have been forgotten had it not been for attaching themselves (even in an inglorious manner) to the undying name of the matchless poet and master playwright of all ages.

Shakespeare accumulated what, in his day, was considered a large sum of money, whereas, had he earned only the salary of an ordinary actor, were he the mere "deserving man" and "Johannes facto-

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tum'' as stated by Greene in his spleen, and harped upon by the Baconians, he never could have done so. During the life of Shakespeare no special value was placed on the plays as literary property, nor was any serious effort made to preserve them. Had Bacon been the author of these plays, is it not fair to assume that he would have profited pecuniarily from their production and retained copies of them? He certainly loved money sufficiently well to lay hold of it at every opportunity, and was exceedingly jealous of his literary productions. From all the evidence and circumstances at hand we are justified in thinking that the man who wrote the works known as Shakespeare's did so for a money consideration and no other. As soon as Shakespeare received his financial reward by producing the plays on the stage he cared not what became of them, but was content to allow them to pass out of existence; and had it not been that some of his fellow actors<sup>23</sup> took the pains to gather these plays together, and to issue them in 1623, seven years after the death of their author, such most likely would have been their fate.

The writings that are known to be Bacon's differ in every conceivable manner from those ascribed to Shakespeare, and were there absolute proof that William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon did not write the plays attributed to him, it would be impossible, from a comparison of those plays with the

<sup>23</sup> Heming and Condell, in their dedication of the folio of 1623, say they have collected the plays "only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare."

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known writings of Bacon, to attribute to Bacon their authorship. It is plainly seen that the author of King Lear was the author of Hamlet, but there is no internal evidence to show that the author of Novum Organum wrote those plays.

In conclusion: Bacon never claimed the authorship of the plays; from an examination of his known productions it is plain that he could not have written them; while, on the other hand, they bear every internal evidence to show they emanated from a man such as we know Shakespeare to have been; it was acknowledged by his contemporary writers and his fellow actors that he did produce them, and he had been in undisputed possession of them for two hundred and forty years. It seems clear that, taking all these facts into consideration, it should be conceded that William Shakespeare wrote the plays ascribed to him.

## CHAPTER X

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# The Genius of Shakespeare

IN considering the genius of Shakespeare we should weigh carefully the meaning of that word, because upon the premise thus laid down depends the conclusion that may be deduced from the evidence upon which the verdict must be rendered. If genius means the possession of an extraordinary faculty for original creation, then Shakespeare was no genius. But if, on the other hand, it means, as Emerson is inclined to define it, being receptive, then must we pronounce him one of the greatest geniuses of all time. He exemplified, as never did man before or since, that undulating power in Nature which is so eloquently described by Emerson in *The American Scholar*. That principle in Nature which is shown throughout all her works: in light and darkness; in heat and cold; in health and sickness; in hunger and satisfaction; in life and death. Shakespeare drank into his being the stories that Nature told him, he appropriated the songs of other men, but he gave them back again to the world enriched with the warmth of his own soul. Thus did he inhale the glories and truths of Nature, the productions of Plutarch, Marlowe and Greene, the plots of Italian and French authors, and the chronicles of Holinshed, but his exhalations gave us his own immortal works. His ability to learn from the book of Nature and to tell her

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stories anew, his capacity to extract from the works of men the grains of value that were encased in masses of matter, his power of smelting these scattered grains of thought and ~~causing them to assume~~ a form large enough to be of marketable value in the literature of the world, may surely be considered to constitute genius.

In his descriptions of material nature he was in harmony with all its works. When he speaks of the heavens, "this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire," we feel their presence bending over us; when he talks of the winds, we hear them howling around us; and when he pictures a flower, we smell its fragrance and behold its beauty.

His knowledge of man was equal to his knowledge of nature. He showed the workings of the mind and the emotions of the heart. With unerring skill he analyzed man, and with matchless ability he pictured nature. So boundless were his resources, and so intense was his instinct, that he employed hitherto unknown richness of language with which to clothe his thoughts. All this is tangible proof that no error is committed in ascribing genius to Shakespeare.

Thirty-seven plays, five poems, and one hundred and fifty-four sonnets are generally assigned to Shakespeare as the sum and substance of his work. His fame would have suffered very little had he written nothing but the plays, as his poems are far inferior to his dramas, and as his powers are best seen

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in his dramatic writings, they alone should be considered when analyzing his genius.

After all has been said in reference to what constitutes the genius of Shakespeare, it seems that it is best reflected in the fact that his great productions appear to have sprung spontaneously from his brain, and that he was not conscious of using any particular means, such as rules or set plans, in bringing them into being. He worked in conjunction with the principles of Nature, but it is not likely that he consciously did so. He wrote with the object of producing plays suitable for presentation on the stage, and in doing so, reproduced the impressions that Nature, in its twofold character of material and human, had made upon him. It is not likely even that he was aware of the fact that he was bringing forth creations that would exert an influence upon English literature greater than the works of all his contemporaries, not to speak of the productions of authors before and since his time. We have nothing to show that he valued his literary work except as a means of pecuniary profit; and that he was unaware of the value of the plays as literature, is attested by the fact that he took no pains to preserve them for coming generations. He could have little dreamed that the plays that possessed only pecuniary value to him, would be looked upon by succeeding generations as priceless treasures, enriching the English language and acting as sources of inspiration to all subsequent writers. This absence of appreciation of his work by Shakespeare is one of the surest indica-

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tions of his genius, as it is evidence to show that he must have produced his effects with that ease which is indicative of genius in all fields of endeavor. Had he set forth to produce a wonderful work, had he been governed by rules of time, place and action, had he measured and weighed every line, he might have been a skilled playwright, but he never could have been a genius. This is not to say that genius does not exercise care, that genius does not labor, because thoughtful application is one of the attributes of genius, but it is meant to declare that genius such as is shown in the plays of Shakespeare could only come from a mind that was absolutely unfettered. It is useless to search for the causes of his genius; it is impossible to show by designation wherein he was a genius. As the causes are lost in the graveyard of the past, and the effects, in the shape of his plays, alone survive, so also are the reasons that might be assigned as proof of his genius buried within the plays themselves. We know that the reasons are there, because we feel their presence; but being, as they are, so much a part and parcel of the plays themselves, it is impossible to detach them and bring them to the light of day and, in their individual forms, offer them as evidence of his genius. It does not suffice to show that he constructed his plots with great skill, that he drew his characters true to life, that his philosophy is beyond dispute, that his indicated knowledge of law is marvelous, that the expressive power of his words is beyond compare, and the beauty of his diction nowhere surpassed. These things are not

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individual indications of his genius to such an extent as to permit us to say, herein lies his transcendent power. Collectively, they may be called the means he employed for demonstrating his genius; but in themselves, they do not constitute it.

Of these things we may be assured: Shakespeare knew not how well he labored; Nature alone was his guide; he can be comprehended best by those who understand Nature, and his works are a priceless blessing to toilers in every field of effort.

A mystery surrounds the life of Shakespeare, and it is well that it should not be dispelled. An explanation of his works is impossible, because no explanation will satisfy the wants of all. Each must go to the fountain direct, and as he drinks of its wondrous waters he will find therein the properties that will satisfy his thirst. It is useless to analyze these properties; it is a waste of time to separate their ingredients. Let us preserve undefiled the spring whence flow these magic waters, and thank the God of Shakespeare and of us all for bestowing the sweet singer, the Bard of Avon, upon humanity.



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