LETTER X.

MY DEAR H.:--

It was a rainy, misty morning when I left my kind retreat and friends in Edinburgh. Considerate as every body had been about imposing on my time or strength, still you may well believe that I was much exhausted.

We left Edinburgh, therefore, with the determination to plunge at once into some hidden and unknown spot, where we might spend two or three days quietly by ourselves; and remembering your Sunday at Stratford-on-Avon, I proposed that we should go there. As Stratford, however, is off the railroad line we determined to accept the invitation, which was lying by us, from our friend Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, and take sanctuary with him. So we wrote on, intrusting him with the secret, and charging him on no account to let any one know of our arrival.

Well in the rail car, we went whirling along by Preston Pans, where was fought the celebrated battle in which Colonel Gardiner was killed; by Dunbar, where Cromwell told his army to "trust in God and keep their powder dry;" through Berwick-on-the-Tweed and Newcastle-on-Tyne; by the old towers and gates of York, with its splendid cathedral; getting a view of Durham Cathedral in the distance.

The country between Berwick and Newcastle is one of the greatest manufacturing districts of England, and for smoke, smut, and gloom, Pittsburg and Wheeling bear no comparison to it. The English sky, always paler and cooler in its tints than ours, here seems to be turned into a leaden canopy; tall chimneys belch forth gloom and confusion; houses, factories, fences, even trees and grass, look grim and sooty.

It is true that people with immense wealth can live in such regions in cleanliness and elegance; but how must it be with the poor? I know of no one circumstance more unfavorable to moral purity than the necessity of being physically dirty. Our nature is so intensely symbolical, that where the outward sign of defilement becomes habitual, the inner is too apt to correspond. I am quite sure that before there can be a universal millennium, trade must be pursued in such a way as to enable the working classes to realize something of beauty and purity in the circumstances of their outward life.

I have heard there is a law before the British Parliament, whose operation is designed to purify the air of England by introducing chimneys which shall consume all the sooty particles which now float about, obscuring the air and carrying defilement with them. May that day be hastened!

At Newcastle-on-Tyne and some other places various friends came out to meet us, some of whom presented us with most splendid bouquets of hothouse flowers. This region has been the seat of some of the most

zealous and efficient antislavery operations in England.

About night our cars whizzed into the depot at Birmingham; but just before we came in a difficulty was started in the company. "Mr. Sturge is to be there waiting for us, but he does not know us, and we don't know him; what is to be done?" C---- insisted that he should know him by instinct; and so after we reached the depot, we told him to sally out and try. Sure enough, in a few moments he pitched upon a cheerful, middle-aged gentleman, with a moderate but not decisive broad brim to his hat, and challenged him as Mr. Sturge; the result verified the truth that "instinct is a great matter." In a few moments our new friend and ourselves were snugly encased in a fly, trotting off as briskly as ever we could to his place at Edgbaston, nobody a whit the wiser. You do not know how snug we felt to think we had done it so nicely.

The carriage soon drove in upon a gravel walk, winding among turf, flowers, and shrubs, where we found opening to us another home as warm and kindly as the one we had just left, made doubly interesting by the idea of entire privacy and seclusion.

After retiring to our chambers to repair the ravages of travel, we united in the pleasant supper room, where the table was laid before a bright coal fire: no unimportant feature this fire, I can assure you, in a raw cloudy evening. A glass door from the supper room opened into a conservatory, brilliant with pink and yellow azalias, golden calceolarias, and a profusion of other beauties, whose names I did not

know.

The side tables were strewn with books, and the ample folds of the drab curtains, let down over the windows, shut out the rain, damp, and chill. When we were gathered round the table, Mr. Sturge said that he had somewhat expected Elihu Burritt that evening, and we all hoped he would come. I must not omit to say, that the evening circle was made more attractive and agreeable in my eyes by the presence of two or three of the little people, who were blessed with the rosy cheek of English children.

Mr. Sturge is one of the most prominent and efficient of the philanthropists of modern days. An air of benignity and easy good nature veils and conceals in him the most unflinching perseverance and energy of purpose. He has for many years been a zealous advocate of the antislavery cause in England, taking up efficiently the work begun by Clarkson and Wilberforce. He, with a friend of the same denomination, made a journey at their own expense, to investigate the workings of the apprentice system, by which the act of immediate emancipation in the West Indies was for a while delayed. After his return he sustained a rigorous examination of seven days before a committee of the House of Commons, the result of which successfully demonstrated the abuses of that system, and its entire inutility for preparing either masters or servants for final emancipation. This evidence went as far as any thing to induce Parliament to declare immediate and entire emancipation.

Mr. Sturge also has been equally zealous and engaged in movements for the ignorant and perishing classes at home. At his own expense he has sustained a private Farm School for the reformation of juvenile offenders, and it has sometimes been found that boys, whom no severity and no punishment seemed to affect, have been entirely melted and subdued by the gentler measures here employed. He has also taken a very ardent and decided part in efforts for the extension of the principles of peace, being a warm friend and supporter of Elihu Burritt.

The next morning it was agreed that we should take our drive to Stratford-on-Avon. As yet this shrine of pilgrims stands a little aloof from the bustle of modern progress, and railroad cars do not run whistling and whisking with brisk officiousness by the old church and the fanciful banks of the Avon.

The country that we were to pass over was more peculiarly old English; that phase of old English which is destined soon to pass away, under the restless regenerating force of modern progress.

Our ride along was a singular commixture of an upper and under current of thought. Deep down in our hearts we were going back to English days; the cumbrous, quaint, queer, old, picturesque times; the dim, haunted times between cock-crowing and morning; those hours of national childhood, when popular ideas had the confiding credulity, the poetic vivacity, and versatile life, which distinguish children from grown people.

No one can fail to feel, in reading any of the plays of Shakspeare, that he was born in an age of credulity and marvels, and that the materials out of which his mind was woven were dyed in the grain, in the haunted springs of tradition. It would have been as absolutely impossible for even himself, had he been born in the daylight of this century, to have built those quaint, Gothic structures of imagination, and tinted them with their peculiar coloring of marvellousness and mystery, as for a modern artist to originate and execute the weird designs of an ancient cathedral. Both Gothic architecture and this perfection of Gothic poetry were the springing and efflorescence of that age, impossible to grow again. They were the forest primeval; other trees may spring in their room, trees as mighty and as fair, but not such trees.

So, as we rode along, our speculations and thoughts in the under current were back in the old world of tradition. While, on the other hand, for the upper current, we were keeping up a brisk conversation on the peace question, on the abolition of slavery, on the possibility of ignoring slave-grown produce, on Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, and, in fact, on all the most wide-awake topics of the present day.

One little incident occurred upon the road. As we were passing by a quaint old mansion, which stood back from the road, surrounded by a deep court, Mr. S. said to me, "There is a friend here who would like to see thee, if thou hast no objections," and went on to inform me that she was an aged woman, who had taken a deep interest in the abolition of slavery

since the time of its first inception under Clarkson and Wilberforce, though now lying very low on a sick bed. Of course we all expressed our willingness to stop, and the carriage was soon driving up the gravelled walk towards the house. We were ushered into a comfortable sitting room, which looked out on beautiful grounds, where the velvet grass, tall, dark trees, and a certain quaint air of antiquity in disposition and arrangement, gave me a singular kind of pleasure; the more so, that it came to me like a dream; that the house and the people were unknown to me, and the whole affair entirely unexpected.

I was soon shown into a neat chamber, where an aged woman was lying in bed. I was very much struck and impressed by her manner of receiving me. With deep emotion and tears, she spoke of the solemnity and sacredness of the cause which had for years lain near her heart. There seemed to be something almost prophetic in the solemn strain of assurance with which she spoke of the final extinction of slavery throughout the world.

I felt both pleased and sorrowful. I felt sorrowful because I knew, if all true Christians in America had the same feelings, that men, women, and children, for whom Christ died, would no more be sold in my country on the auction block.

There have been those in America who have felt and prayed thus nobly and sincerely for the heathen in Burmah and Hindostan, and that sentiment was a beautiful and an ennobling one; but, alas! the number has been few who have felt and prayed for the heathenism, and shame of our own

country; for the heathenism which sells the very members of the body of Christ as merchandise.

When we were again on the road, we were talking on the change of times in England since railroads began; and Mr. S. gave an amusing description of how the old lords used to travel in state, with their coaches and horses, when they went up once a year on a solemn pilgrimage to London, with postilions and outriders, and all the country gaping and wondering after them.

"I wonder," said one of us, "if Shakspeare were living, what he would say to our times, and what he would think of all the questions that are agitating the world now." That he did have thoughts whose roots ran far beyond the depth of the age in which he lived, is plain enough from numberless indications in his plays; but whether he would have taken any practical interest in the world's movements is a fair question. The poetic mind is not always the progressive one; it has, like moss and ivy, a need for something old to cling to and germinate upon. The artistic temperament, too, is soft and sensitive; so there are all these reasons for thinking that perhaps he would have been for keeping out of the way of the heat and dust of modern progress. It does not follow because a man has penetration to see an evil, he has energy to reform it.

Erasmus saw all that Luther saw just as clearly, but he said that he had rather never have truth at all, than contend for it with the world in

such a tumult. However, on the other hand, England did, in Milton, have one poet who girt himself up to the roughest and stormiest work of reformation; so it is not quite certain, after all, that Shakspeare might not have been a reformer in our times. One thing is quite certain, that he would have said very shrewd things about all the matters that move the world now, as he certainly did about all matters that he was cognizant of in his own day.

It was a little before noon when we drove into Stratford, by which time, with our usual fatality in visiting poetic shrines, the day had melted off into a kind of drizzling mist, strongly suggestive of a downright rain. It is a common trick these English days have; the weather here seems to be possessed of a water spirit. This constant drizzle is good for ivies, and hawthorns, and ladies' complexions, as whoever travels here will observe, but it certainly is very bad for tourists.

This Stratford is a small town, of between three and four thousand inhabitants, and has in it a good many quaint old houses, and is characterized (so I thought) by an air of respectable, stand-still, and meditative repose, which, I am afraid, will entirely give way before the railroad demon, for I understand that it is soon to be connected by the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton line with all parts of the kingdom. Just think of that black little screeching imp rushing through these fields which have inspired so many fancies; how every thing poetical will fly before it! Think of such sweet snatches as these set to the tune of a railroad whistle:--

"Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins to rise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies.

And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes,
With everything that pretty bid
My lady sweet to rise."

And again:--

"Philomel with melody sing in our sweet lullaby,
Lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh."

I suppose the meadows, with their "winking Mary-buds," will be all cut up into building lots in the good times coming, and Philomel caught and put in a cage to sing to tourists at threepence a head.

We went to the White Lion, and soon had a little quiet parlor to ourselves, neatly carpeted, with a sofa drawn up to the cheerful coal fire, a good-toned piano, and in short every thing cheerful and

comfortable.

At first we thought we were too tired to do any thing till after dinner; we were going to take time to rest ourselves and proceed leisurely; so, while the cloth was laying, C---- took possession of the piano, and I of the sofa, till Mr. S. came in upon us, saying, "Why, Shakspeare's house is right the next door here!" Upon that we got up, just to take a peep, and from peeping we proceeded to looking, and finally put on our things and went over seriatim. The house has recently been bought by a Shakspearian club, who have taken upon themselves the restoration and preservation of the premises.

Shakspeare's father, it seems, was a man of some position and substance in his day, being high sheriff and justice of the peace for the borough; and this house, therefore, I suppose, may be considered a specimen of the respectable class of houses in the times of Queen Elizabeth. This cut is taken from an old print, and is supposed to represent the original condition of the house.

We saw a good many old houses somewhat similar to this on the road, particularly resembling it in this manner of plastering, which shows all the timber on the outside. Parts of the house have been sold, altered, and used for various purposes; a butcher's stall having been kept in a part of it, and a tavern in another portion, being new-fronted with brick.

The object of this Shakspeare Club has been to repurchase all these parts, and restore them as nearly as possible to their primeval condition. The part of the house which is shown consists of a lower room, which is floored with flat stones very much broken. It has a wide, old-fashioned chimney on one side, and opens into a smaller room back of it. From thence you go up a rude flight of stairs to a low-studded room, with rough-plastered walls, where the poet was born.

The prints of this room, which are generally sold, allow themselves in considerable poetic license, representing it in fact as quite an elegant apartment, whereas, though it is kept scrupulously neat and clean, the air of it is ancient and rude. This is a somewhat flattered likeness.
The roughly-plastered walls are so covered with names that it seemed impossible to add another. The name of almost every modern genius, names of kings, princes, dukes, are shown here; and it is really curious to see by what devices some very insignificant personages have endeavored to make their own names conspicuous in the crowd. Generally speaking the inscription books and walls of distinguished places tend to give great force to the Vulgate rendering of Ecclesiastes i. 15, "The number of fools is infinite."

To add a name in a private, modest way to walls already so crowded, is allowable; but to scrawl one's name, place of birth, and country, half across a wall, covering scores of names under it, is an operation which speaks for itself. No one would ever want to know more of a man than to see his name there and thus.

Back of this room were some small bed rooms, and what interested me much, a staircase leading up into a dark garret. I could not but fancy I saw a bright-eyed, curly-headed boy creeping up those stairs, zealous to explore the mysteries of that dark garret. There perhaps he saw the cat, with "eyne of burning coal, crouching 'fore the mouse's hole." Doubtless in this old garret were wonderful mysteries to him, curious stores of old cast-off goods and furniture, and rats, and mice, and cobwebs. I fancied the indignation of some belligerent grandmother or aunt, who finds Willie up there watching a mouse hole, with the cat, and has him down straightway, grumbling that Mary did not govern that child better.

We know nothing who this Mary was that was his mother; but one sometimes wonders where in that coarse age, when queens and ladies talked familiarly, as women would blush to talk now, and when the broad, coarse wit of the Merry Wives of Windsor was gotten up to suit the taste of a virgin queen,--one wonders, I say, when women were such and so, where he found those models of lily-like purity, women so chaste in soul and pure in language that they could not even bring their lips to utter a word of shame. Desdemona cannot even bring herself to speak the coarse word with which her husband taunts her; she cannot make herself believe that there are women in the world who could stoop-to such grossness.[L]

For my part I cannot believe that, in such an age, such deep heart-knowledge of pure womanhood could have come otherwise than by the impression on the child's soul of a mother's purity. I seem to have a

vision of one of those women whom the world knows not of, silent, deep-hearted, loving, whom the coarser and more practically efficient jostle aside and underrate for their want of interest in the noisy chitchat and commonplace of the day; but who yet have a sacred power, like that of the spirit of peace, to brood with dovelike wings over the childish heart, and quicken into life the struggling, slumbering elements of a sensitive nature.

I cannot but think, in that beautiful scene, where he represents Desdemona as amazed and struck dumb with the grossness and brutality of the charges which had been thrown upon her, yet so dignified in the consciousness of her own purity, so magnanimous in the power of disinterested, forgiving love, that he was portraying no ideal excellence, but only reproducing, under fictitious and supposititious circumstances, the patience, magnanimity, and enduring love which had shone upon him in the household words and ways of his mother.

It seemed to me that in that bare and lowly chamber I saw a vision of a lovely face which was the first beauty that dawned on those childish eyes, and heard that voice whose lullaby tuned his ear to an exquisite sense of cadence and rhythm. I fancied that, while she thus serenely shone upon, him like a benignant star, some rigorous grand-aunt took upon her the practical part of his guidance, chased up his wanderings to the right and left, scolded him for wanting to look out of the window because his little climbing toes left their mark on the neat wall, or rigorously arrested him when his curly head was seen bobbing off at the

bottom of the street, following a bird, or a dog, or a showman; intercepting him in some happy hour when he was aiming to strike off on his own account to an adjoining field for "winking Mary-buds;" made long sermons to him on the wickedness of muddying his clothes and wetting his new shoes, (if he had any,) and told him that something dreadful would come out of the graveyard and catch him if he was not a better boy, imagining that if it were not for her bustling activity Willie would go straight to destruction.

I seem, too, to have a kind of perception of Shakspeare's father; a quiet, God-fearing, thoughtful man, given to the reading of good books, avoiding quarrels with a most Christian-like fear, and with but small talent, either in the way of speech making or money getting; a man who wore his coat with an easy slouch, and who seldom knew where his money went to.

All these things I seemed to perceive as if a sort of vision had radiated from the old walls; there seemed to be the rustling of garments and the sound of voices in the deserted rooms; the pattering of feet on the worm-eaten staircase; the light of still, shady summer afternoons, a hundred years ago, seemed to fall through the casements and lie upon the floor. There was an interest to every thing about the house, even to the quaint iron fastenings about the windows; because those might have arrested that child's attention, and been dwelt on in some dreamy hour of infant thought. The fires that once burned in those old chimneys, the fleeting sparks, the curling smoke, and glowing coals, all may have

inspired their fancies. There is a strong tinge of household coloring in many parts of Shakspeare, imagery that could only have come from such habits of quiet, household contemplation. See, for example, this description of the stillness of the house, after all are gone to bed at night:--

"Now sleep yslaked hath the rout;
No din but snores, the house about,
Made louder by the o'er-fed breast
Of this most pompous marriage feast.
The cat, with, eyne of burning coal,
Now crouches 'fore the mouse's hole;
And, crickets sing at th' oven's mouth,
As the blither for their drouth."

Also this description of the midnight capers of the fairies about the house, from Midsummer Night's Dream:--

PUCK. "Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with, weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the scritch-owl, scritching loud,
Puts the wretch, that lies in woe,
In remembrance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night,
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide:

And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic; not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house:
I am sent with, broom, before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

OBE. Through this house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire:
Every elf, and fairy sprite,
Hop as light as bird, from brier;
And this ditty after me
Sing, and dance it trippingly."

By the by, one cannot but be struck with the resemblance, in the spirit and coloring of these lines, to those very similar ones in the Penseroso of Milton:--

"Far from all resort of mirth,

Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm;
While glowing embers, through the room,
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom."

I have often noticed how much the first writings of Milton resemble in their imagery and tone of coloring those of Shakspeare, particularly in the phraseology and manner of describing flowers. I think, were a certain number of passages from Lycidas and Comus interspersed with a certain number from Midsummer Night's Dream, the imagery, tone of thought, and style of coloring, would be found so nearly identical, that it would be difficult for one not perfectly familiar to distinguish them. You may try it.

That Milton read and admired Shakspeare is evident from his allusion to him in L'Allegro. It is evident, however, that Milton's taste had been so formed by the Greek models, that he was not entirely aware of all that was in Shakspeare; he speaks of him as a sweet, fanciful warbler, and it is exactly in sweetness and fancifulness that he seems to have derived benefit from him. In his earlier poems, Milton seems, like Shakspeare, to have let his mind run freely, as a brook warbles over many-colored pebbles; whereas in his great poem he built after models. Had he known as little Latin and Greek as Shakspeare, the world, instead of seeing a well-arranged imitation of the ancient epics from his pen, would have seen inaugurated a new order of poetry.

An unequalled artist, who should build after the model of a Grecian temple, would doubtless produce a splendid and effective building, because a certain originality always inheres in genius, even when copying; but far greater were it to invent an entirely new style of architecture, as different as the Gothic from the Grecian. This merit was Shakspeare's. He was a superb Gothic poet; Milton, a magnificent imitator of old forms, which by his genius were wrought almost into the energy of new productions.

I think Shakspeare is to Milton precisely what Gothic architecture is to Grecian, or rather to the warmest, most vitalized reproductions of the Grecian; there is in Milton a calm, severe majesty, a graceful and polished inflorescence of ornament, that produces, as you look upon it, a serene, long, strong ground-swell of admiration and approval. Yet there is a cold unity of expression, that calls into exercise only the very highest range of our faculties: there is none of that wreathed involution of smiles and tears, of solemn earnestness and quaint conceits; those sudden uprushings of grand and magnificent sentiment, like the flame-pointed arches of cathedrals; those ranges of fancy, half goblin, half human; those complications of dizzy magnificence with fairy lightness; those streamings of many-colored light; those carvings wherein every natural object is faithfully reproduced, yet combined into a kind of enchantment: the union of all these is in Shakspeare, and not in Milton. Milton had one most glorious phase of humanity in its perfection; Shakspeare had all united; from the "deep and dreadful"

sub-bass of the organ to the most aerial warbling of its highest key, not a stop or pipe was wanting.

But, in fine, at the end of all this we went back to our hotel to dinner. After dinner we set out to see the church. Even Walter Scott has not a more poetic monument than this church, standing as it does amid old, embowering trees, on the beautiful banks of the Avon. A soft, still rain was falling on the leaves of the linden trees, as we walked up the avenue to the church. Even rainy though it was, I noticed that many little birds would occasionally break out into song. In the event of such a phenomenon as a bright day, I think there must be quite a jubilee of birds here, even as he sung who lies below:--

"The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill;
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray."

The church has been carefully restored inside, so that it is now in excellent preservation, and Shakspeare lies buried under a broad, flat stone in the chancel. I had full often read, and knew by heart, the inscription on this stone; but somehow, when I came and stood over it, and read it, it affected me as if there were an emanation from the grave beneath. I have often wondered at that inscription, that a mind so

sensitive, that had thought so much, and expressed thought with such startling power on all the mysteries of death, the grave, and the future world, should have found nothing else to inscribe on his own grave but this:--

Good Friend for Iesus SAKE forbare
To digg T-E Dust EncloAsed HERe
Blese be T-E Man T spares T-Es Stones
Y
And curst be He T moves my Bones
Y

It seems that the inscription has not been without its use, in averting what the sensitive poet most dreaded; for it is recorded in one of the books sold here, that some years ago, in digging a neighboring grave, a careless sexton broke into the side of Shakspeare's tomb, and looking in saw his bones, and could easily have carried away the skull had he not been deterred by the imprecation.

There is a monument in the side of the wall, which has a bust of Shakspeare upon it, said to be the most authentic likeness, and supposed to have been taken by a cast from his face after death. This statement was made to us by the guide who showed it, and he stated that Chantrey had come to that conclusion by a minute examination of the face. He took us into a room, where was an exact plaster cast of the bust, on which he pointed out various little minutiae on which this idea was founded. The

two sides of the face are not alike; there is a falling in and depression of the muscles on one side which does not exist on the other, such as probably would never have occurred in a fancy bust, where the effort always is to render the two sides of the face as much alike as possible. There is more fulness about the lower part of the face than is consistent with the theory of an idealized bust, but is perfectly consistent with the probabilities of the time of life at which he died, and perhaps with the effects of the disease of which he died.

All this I set down as it was related to me by our guide; it had a very plausible and probable sound, and I was bent on believing, which is a great matter in faith of all kinds.

It is something in favor of the supposition that this is an authentic likeness, that it was erected in his own native town within seven years of his death, among people, therefore, who must have preserved the recollection of his personal appearance. After the manner of those times it was originally painted, the hair and beard of an auburn color, the eyes hazel, and the dress was represented as consisting of a scarlet doublet, over which was a loose black gown without sleeves; all which looks like an attempt to preserve an exact likeness. The inscription upon it, also, seemed to show that there were some in the world by no means unaware of who and what he was.

Next to the tomb of Shakspeare in the chancel is buried his favorite daughter, over whom somebody has placed the following quaint

inscription:--

"Witty above her sex, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistress Hall.
Something of Shakspeare was in that, but this
Wholly of him, with whom she is now in bliss;
Then, passenger, hast ne'er a tear,
To weep with her that wept with, all--
That wept, yet set herself to cheer
Them, up with comfort's cordial?
Her lore shall live, her mercy spread,
When thou hast ne'er a tear to shed."

This good Mistress Hall, it appears, was Shakspeare's favorite among his three children. His son, Hamet, died at twelve years of age. His daughter Judith, as appears from some curious document still extant, could not write her own name, but signed with her mark; so that the "wit" of the family must have concentrated itself in Mistress Hall. To her, in his last will, which is still extant, Shakspeare bequeathed an amount of houses, lands, plate, jewels, and other valuables, sufficient to constitute quite a handsome estate. It would appear, from this, that the poet deemed her not only "wise unto salvation," but wise in her day and generation, thus intrusting her with the bulk of his worldly goods.

His wife, Ann Hathaway, is buried near by, under the same pavement. From the slight notice taken of her in the poet's will, it would appear that

there was little love between them. He married her when he was but eighteen; most likely she was a mere rustic beauty, entirely incapable either of appreciating or adapting herself to that wide and wonderful mind in its full development.

As to Mistress Hall, though the estate was carefully entailed, through her, to heirs male through all generations, it was not her good fortune to become the mother of a long line, for she had only one daughter, who became Lady Barnard, and in whom, dying childless, the family became extinct. Shakspeare, like Scott, seems to have had the desire to perpetuate himself by founding a family with an estate, and the coincidence in the result is striking. Genius must be its own monument.

After we had explored the church we went out to walk about the place. We crossed the beautiful bridge over the Avon, and thought how lovely those fields and meadows would look, if they only had sunshine to set them out. Then we went to the town hall, where we met the mayor, who had kindly called and offered to show us the place.

It seems, in 1768, that Garrick set himself to work in good earnest to do honor to Shakspeare's memory, by getting up a public demonstration at Stratford; and the world, through the talents of this actor, having become alive and enthusiastic, liberal subscriptions were made by the nobility and gentry, the town hall was handsomely repaired and adorned, and a statue of Shakspeare, presented by Garrick, was placed in a niche at one end. Then all the chief men and mighty men of the nation came and

testified their reverence for the poet, by having a general jubilee. A great tent was spread on the banks of the Avon, where they made speeches and drank wine, and wound up all with a great dance in the town hall; and so the manes of Shakspeare were appeased, and his position settled for all generations. The room in the town hall is a very handsome one, and has pictures of Garrick, and the other notables who figured on that occasion.

After that we were taken to see New Place. "And what is New Place?" you say; "the house where Shakspeare lived?" Not exactly; but a house built where his house was. This drawing is taken from an old print, and is supposed to represent the house as Shakspeare fitted it up.

We went out into what was Shakspeare's garden, where we were shown his mulberry--not the one that he planted though, but a veritable mulberry planted on the same spot; and then we went back to our hotel very tired, but having conscientiously performed every jot and tittle of the duty of good pilgrims.

As we sat, in the drizzly evening, over our comfortable tea table, C---- ventured to intimate pretty decidedly that he considered the whole thing a bore; whereat I thought I saw a sly twinkle around the eyes and mouth of our most Christian and patient friend, Joseph Sturge. Mr. S. laughingly told him that he thought it the greatest exercise of Christian tolerance, that he should have trailed round in the mud with us all day in our sightseeing, bearing with our unreasonable raptures.

He smiled, and said, quietly, "I must confess that I was a little pleased that our friend Harriet was so zealous to see Shakspeare's house, when it wasn't his house, and so earnest to get sprigs from his mulberry, when it wasn't his mulberry." We were quite ready to allow the foolishness of the thing, and join the laugh at our own expense.

As to our bed rooms, you must know that all the apartments in this house are named after different plays of Shakspeare, the name being printed conspicuously over each door; so that the choosing of our rooms made us a little sport.

"What rooms will you have, gentlemen?" says the pretty chamber maid.

"Rooms," said Mr. S.; "why, what are there to have?"

"Well, there's Richard III., and there's Hamlet," says the girl.

"O, Hamlet, by all means," said I; "that was always my favorite. Can't sleep in Richard III., we should have such bad dreams."

"For my part," said C----, "I want All's well that ends well."

"I think," said the chamber maid, hesitating, "the bed in Hamlet isn't large enough for two. Richard III. is a very nice room, sir."

In fact, it became evident that we were foreordained to Richard; so we

resolved to embrace the modern historical view of this subject, which will before long turn him out a saint, and not be afraid of the muster roll of ghosts which Shakspeare represented as infesting his apartment.

Well, for a wonder, the next morning arose a genuine sunny, beautiful day. Let the fact be recorded that such things do sometimes occur even in England. C---- was mollified, and began to recant his ill-natured heresies of the night before, and went so far as to walk, out of his own proper motion, to Ann Hathaway's Cottage before breakfast--he being one of the brethren described by Longfellow,

"Who is gifted with most miraculous powers
Of getting up at all sorts of hours;"

and therefore he came in to breakfast table with that serenity of virtuous composure which generally attends those who have been out enjoying the beauties of nature while their neighbors have been ingloriously dozing.

The walk, he said, was beautiful; the cottage damp, musty, and fusty; and a supposititious old bedstead, of the age of Queen Elizabeth, which had been obtruded upon his notice because it might have belonged to Ann Hathaway's mother, received a special malediction. For my part, my relic-hunting propensities were not in the slightest degree appeased, but rather stimulated, by the investigations of the day before.

It seemed to me so singular that of such a man there should not remain one accredited relic! Of Martin Luther, though he lived much earlier, how many things remain! Of almost any distinguished character how much more is known than of Shakspeare! There is not, so far as I can discover, an authentic relic of any thing belonging to him. There are very few anecdotes of his sayings or doings; no letters, no private memoranda, that should let us into the secret of what he was personally who has in turns personated all minds. The very perfection of his dramatic talent has become an impenetrable veil: we can no more tell from his writings what were his predominant tastes and habits than we can discriminate among the variety of melodies what are the native notes of the mocking bird. The only means left us for forming an opinion of what he was personally are inferences of the most delicate nature from, the slightest premises.

The common idea which has pervaded the world, of a joyous, roving, somewhat unsettled, and dissipated character, would seem, from many well-authenticated facts, to be incorrect. The gayeties and dissipations of his life seem to have been confined to his very earliest days, and to have been the exuberance of a most extraordinary vitality, bursting into existence with such force and vivacity that it had not had time to collect itself, and so come to self-knowledge and control. By many accounts it would appear that the character he sustained in the last years of his life was that of a judicious, common-sense sort of man; a discreet, reputable, and religious householder.

The inscription on his tomb is worthy of remark, as indicating the reputation he bore at the time: "Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem" (In judgment a Nestor, in genius a Socrates, in art a Virgil.)

The comparison of him in the first place to Nestor, proverbially famous for practical judgment and virtue of life, next to Socrates, who was a kind of Greek combination of Dr. Paley and Dr. Franklin, indicates a very different impression of him from what would generally be expressed of a poet, certainly what would not have been placed on the grave of an eccentric, erratic will-o'-the-wisp genius, however distinguished. Moreover, the pious author of good Mistress Hall's epitaph records the fact of her being "wise to salvation," as a more especial point of resemblance to her father than even her being "witty above her sex," and expresses most confident hope of her being with him in bliss. The Puritan tone of the epitaph, as well as the quality of the verse, gives reason to suppose that it was not written by one who was seduced into a tombstone lie by any superfluity of poetic sympathy.

The last will of Shakspeare, written by his own hand and still preserved, shows several things of the man.

The introduction is as follows:--

"In the name of God. Amen. I, William Shakspeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gentleman, in perfect

health and memory, (God be praised,) do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following; that is to say,--

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

The will then goes on to dispose of an amount of houses, lands, plate, money, jewels, &c., which showed certainly that the poet had possessed some worldly skill and thrift in accumulation, and to divide them with a care and accuracy which would indicate that he was by no means of that dreamy and unpractical habit of mind which cares not what becomes of worldly goods.

We may also infer something of a man's character from the tone and sentiments of others towards him. Glass of a certain color casts on surrounding objects a reflection of its own hue, and so the tint of a man's character returns upon us in the habitual manner in which he is spoken of by those around him. The common mode of speaking of Shakspeare always savored of endearment. "Gentle Will" is an expression that seemed oftenest repeated. Ben Jonson inscribed his funeral verses "To the Memory of my beloved Mr. William Shakspeare;" he calls him the "sweet swan of Avon." Again, in his lines under a bust of Shakspeare, he says,--

"The figure that thou seest put,
It was for gentle Shakspeare cut."

In later times Milton, who could have known him only by tradition, calls him "my Shakspeare," "dear son of memory," and "sweetest Shakspeare." Now, nobody ever wrote of sweet John Milton, or gentle John Milton, or gentle Martin Luther, or even sweet Ben Jonson.

Rowe says of Shakspeare, "The latter part of his life was spent, as all men of good sense would wish theirs may be, in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends. His pleasurable wit and good nature engaged him in the acquaintance, and entitled him to the friendship, of the gentlemen of the neighborhood." And Dr. Drake says, "He was high in reputation as a poet, favored by the great and the accomplished, and beloved by all who knew him."

That Shakspeare had religious principle, I infer not merely from the indications of his will and tombstone, but from those strong evidences of the working of the religious element which are scattered through his plays. No man could have a clearer perception of God's authority and man's duty; no one has expressed more forcibly the strength of God's government, the spirituality of his requirements, or shown with more fearful power the struggles of the "law in the members warring against the law of the mind."

These evidences, scattered through his plays, of deep religious

struggles, make probable the idea that, in the latter, thoughtful, and tranquil years of his life, devotional impulses might have settled into habits, and that the solemn language of his will, in which he professes his faith, in Christ, was not a mere form. Probably he had all his life, even in his gayest hours, more real religious principle than the hilarity of his manner would give reason to suppose. I always fancy he was thinking of himself when he wrote this character: "For the man doth fear God, howsoever it seem not in him by reason of some large jests he doth make."

Neither is there any foundation for the impression that he was undervalued in his own times. No literary man of his day had more success, more flattering attentions from the great, or reaped more of the substantial fruits of popularity, in the form of worldly goods. While his contemporary, Ben Jonson, sick in a miserable alley, is forced to beg, and receives but a wretched pittance from Charles I., Shakspeare's fortune steadily increases from year to year. He buys the best place in his native town, and fits it up with great taste; he offered to lend, on proper security, a sum of money for the use of the town of Stratford; he added to his estate in Stratford a hundred and seventy acres of land; he bought half the great and small tithes of Stratford; and his annual income is estimated to have been what would at the present time be nearly four thousand dollars.

Queen Elizabeth also patronized him after her ordinary fashion of patronizing literary men,--that is to say, she expressed her gracious

pleasure that he should burn incense to her, and pay his own bills: economy was not one of the least of the royal graces. The Earl of Southampton patronized him in a more material fashion.

Queen Elizabeth even so far condescended to the poet as to perform certain hoidenish tricks while he was playing on the stage, to see if she could not disconcert his speaking by the majesty of her royal presence. The poet, who was performing the part of King Henry IV., took no notice of her motions, till, in order to bring him to a crisis, she dropped her glove at his feet; whereat he picked it up, and presented it her, improvising these two lines, as if they had been a part of the play:--

"And though, now bent on this high embassy,
Yet stoop we to take up our cousin's glove."

I think this anecdote very characteristic of them both; it seems to me it shows that the poet did not so absolutely crawl in the dust before her, as did almost all the so called men of her court; though he did certainly flatter her after a fashion in which few queens can be flattered. His description of the belligerent old Gorgon as the "Fair Vestal throned by the West" seems like the poetry and fancy of the beautiful Fairy Queen wasted upon the half-brute clown:--

"Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,

And stick musk roses in thy sleek, smooth, head,
And kiss thy fair, large ears, my gentle joy."

Elizabeth's understanding and appreciation of Shakspeare was much after the fashion of Nick Bottom's of the Fairy Queen. I cannot but believe that the men of genius who employed their powers in celebrating this most repulsive and disagreeable woman must sometimes have comforted themselves by a good laugh in private.

In order to appreciate Shakspeare's mind from his plays, we must discriminate what expressed the gross tastes of his age, and what he wrote to please himself. The Merry Wives of Windsor was a specimen of what he wrote for the "Fair Vestal;" a commentary on the delicacy of her maiden meditations. The Midsummer Night's Dream he wrote from his own inner dream world.

In the morning we took leave of our hotel. In leaving we were much touched with the simple kindliness of the people of the house. The landlady and her daughters came to bid us farewell, with much feeling; and the former begged my acceptance of a bead purse, knit by one of her daughters, she said, during the winter evenings while they were reading Uncle Tom. In this town one finds the simple-hearted, kindly English people corresponding to the same class which we see in our retired New England towns. We received many marks of kindness from different residents in Stratford; in the expression of them, they appreciated and entered into our desire for privacy with a delicacy which touched us

sensibly.

We had little time to look about us to see Stratford in the sunshine. So we went over to a place on the banks of the Avon, where, it was said, we could gain a very perfect view of the church. The remembrance of this spot is to me like a very pleasant dream. The day was bright, the air was soft and still, as we walked up and down the alleys of a beautiful garden that extended quite to the church; the rooks were dreamily cawing, and wheeling in dark, airy circles round the old buttresses and spire. A funeral train had come into the graveyard, and the passing bell was tolling. A thousand undefined emotions struggled in my mind.

That loving heart, that active fancy, that subtile, elastic power of appreciating and expressing all phases, all passions of humanity, are they breathed out on the wind? are they spent like the lightning? are they exhaled like the breath of flowers? or are they still living, still active? and if so, where and how? Is it reserved for us, in that "undiscovered country" which he spoke of, ever to meet the great souls whose breath has kindled our souls?

I think we forget the consequences of our own belief in immortality, and look on the ranks of prostrate dead as a mower on fields of prostrate flowers, forgetting that activity is an essential of souls, and that every soul which has passed away from this world must ever since have been actively developing those habits of mind and modes of feeling which it began here.

The haughty, cruel, selfish Elizabeth, and all the great men of her court, are still living and acting somewhere; but where? For my part I am often reminded, when dwelling on departed genius, of Luther's ejaculation for his favorite classic poet: "I hope God will have mercy on such."

We speak of the glory of God as exhibited in natural landscape making; what is it, compared with the glory of God as shown in the making of souls, especially those souls which seem to be endowed with a creative power like his own?

There seems, strictly speaking, to be only two classes of souls--the creative and the receptive. Now, these creators seem to me to have a beauty and a worth about them entirely independent of their moral character. That ethereal power which shows itself in Greek sculpture and Gothic architecture, in Rubens, Shakspeare, and Mozart, has a quality to me inexpressibly admirable and lovable. We may say, it is true, that there is no moral excellence in it; but none the less do we admire it. God has made us so that we cannot help loving it; our souls go forth to it with an infinite longing, nor can that longing be condemned. That mystic quality that exists in these souls is a glimpse and intimation of what exists in Him in full perfection. If we remember this we shall not lose ourselves in admiration of worldly genius, but be led by it to a better understanding of what He is, of whom all the glories of poetry and art are but symbols and shadows.