# SHAKSPERE'S DEBT

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# LATIN POETRY,

studied in connexion with the classical tendencies of the Sixteenth Century.

May, 1912. Percy C. Brown.

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask - Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge.

Matthew Arnold: "Shakespeare".

Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature.

Dryden: "Essay of Dramatic Poesie".

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# INTRODUCTION.

The question of Shakspere's learning and, in particular, of his classical attainments has exercised the ingenuity of critics from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present day. The controversy takes its origin from Jonson's line:

"And though thou hadst small Latine and less Greeke",

a famous but unfortunate utterance, famous because it came from one who knew Shakspere well, unfortunate because, as a casual remark, it has attracted the attention of the critic to the neglect of worthier subjects of enquiry. For ever since the rugged old classicist wrote his eulogistic verses to Shakspere's memory, whole armies of critical dryasdusts have wrangled drearily over the poet's more or less of Greek and Latin; pedants without number, and scholars, who should have known better, have battened as voraciously as Egyptian locusts on every word and expression that seemed to possess even the remotest colour of classicism. No other utterance, surely, has given rise to a more senseless and futile discussion or to a pedantry more absurd and laborious in the whole annals of our literary criticism. The canaille arose during the century succeeding the death of Shakspere, and the discussion, far from dying out, has continued intermittently until a comparatively recent date without the remotest possibility of a satisfactory conclusion.

It has been our practise in the following pages to consider those theories only which bear the stamp of probability and to disregard views of a more or less chimerical and lunatic nature in which Shaksperian criticism abounds. We have also endeavoured to

separate as far as possible from the mass of absurdity and hypercriticism matter which appears sound and valuable and of real importance for the illustration of our subject.

Further, a merely superficial reading of this voluminous criticism will be sufficient to convince the student that the relative importance of Shakspere's direct borrowing from the classics has been singularly overrated. Comparatively it is not of very great importance to the student, and still less to the average appreciative reader of Shakspere, if the poet borrowed this phrase from Seneca and that from Horace. Assertions of this kind, too, are generally open to very serious doubt, often defy all attempts at proof, and on investigation indicate, in the majority of cases, that Shakspere had read the literary works of his own day rather than those of Roman antiquity. The true and vital influence of the classical element is to be determined less by tabulating direct and conscious borrowings of phrase and fable, than by a more general enquiry into the writer's spontaneous employment of classical story as a fine embellishment to his work. We have not, however, neglected the necessary tabulation of parallels and reminiscences, but, while endeavouring to give it due prominence, we have studiously avoided the method of those earlier critics whose laborious inventories almost rival the railway time-table in dryness.

Criticism of the latter kind, then, is of minor importance in dealing with such a subject as a poet's debt to classical literature, and more especially is it so in the case of Shakspere. We

find, moreover, in our enquiry, that those passages in which the poet was more directly indebted to the Latin cannot in the main compare in poetical beauty with others that are less suggestive of their original. In illustration we need only compare Shakspere's use of the classical element in "The Merchant of Venice" with the classical element of the poems and of the earlier plays such as "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Two Gentlemen of Verona". In Shakspere's maturer work slavish borrowing from classical authorities is replaced by a freedom and originality of treatment; vivid reminiscences of the beauties of ancient story throng the imagination of the poet and issue forth reincarnate in a garb of most beautiful verse. Then it is that Shakspere's classical knowledge is most fruitful and productive; then it is that his Muse, inspired by those marvellous visions of ancient myth and fable, pours forth such resplendent and unpremeditated verse as is almost without parallel in the whole range of his work. Of what importance is the fable itself or its probable source; of what importance is the mere fact that the poet borrowed it? Our primary concern is not with the fact; nor is the poet's. His true business is the expression of Truth in terms of Beauty, and in tracing this expression we shall be able to determine the more important influence of the classical element on his works.

This aspect of the question has been kept steadily in view throughout. It has been our main endeavour to consider Shakspere's general attitude towards the classics, the nature of his debt, his particular affinity with the Latin poets, the limits of

their influence, and the manner in which he has woven their material into the fabric of his works. To this end we have found it convenient throughout to deal with Shakspere's treatment of the Latin writers more or less in connexion with the classical tendencies of the Elizabethan age of which the poet's work is so perfect an expression. At the same time the views of critics on the subject of the poet's classical reading and probable school training have received due attention.

We would repeat that it is of comparative unimportance whether Shakspere knew the classical masterpieces in the original or whether he drew his material from other sources. Whenever the subject of Shakspere's classical knowledge is raised the first question of the critic is, as Professor Sonnenschein has said, "What crib did he use?" (1). Now it is of great interest to us that Shakspere knew Ovid and Virgil: the use he made of the crib is merely a question of secondary importance. We have nevertheless endeavoured to differentiate throughout our enquiry between reminiscences of the original and those which may have been derived from other sources.

In conclusion we quote a statement by Mr. Boas as expressing the true attitude that should be taken up by students when dealing with the question of Shakspere's classical attainments. "There are critics," he writes,"who regard the whole question of the dramatist's classical knowledge as trivial, but everything depends on the spirit in which it is approached. To merely make a

(1) "Shakespeare and Stoicism".

pedantic inventory of Shakspere's educational attainments or short-comings is a congenial task to the Dryasdusts of literature. But a modest and loyal endeavour to discover how far the mightiest genius of romantic art was familiar with the classical master-pieces, whose supremacy in the sphere of the drama he was the first to challenge with complete success, is not only entirely legitimate, but is of genuine importance". (1).

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(1) "Shakspere and his Predecessors", 101.

## CHAPTER I.

## SHAKSPERE'S LEARNING.

"He understode Latine pretty well, for he had been in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the countrey".

(Aubrey, from Mr. Beeston).

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

So wrote Dr. Johnson in the famous Preface to his edition of 1765. Two years later appeared Richard Farmer's "Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare", which work Johnson himself declared had "completely finished the controversy beyond all further doubt". But in spite of the great critic's statement Farmer's "Essay" is very far from being decisive; indeed the much vexed question of the sources whence Shakspere derived his classic material remains to this day, and in all probability will always remain, an open one.

Although we by no means wish to underrate the testimony of Shakspere's contemporaries, particularly that of his friend Jonson, we willventure to state that the tradition of the poet's lack of scholarship emanated, in all probability, from the jealousy of the University Wits. Jonson, it is true, had no intention of depreciating Shakspere when he penned his memorial verses, but it must be remembered that his attitude during the great poet's lifetime was one of critical hostility, the outcome, perhaps, of that party rivalry which centred round his own work and that of

his mild and disinterested fellow-dramatist. Of this professional animus there can be no question, both from the testimony of contemporary writers (1), and from what we know of Jonson's rancorous disposition, which vented itself in contemptuous disparagement of those who differed from his literary opinions. Although Jonson gave Shakspere all honour "on this side idolatry", he could yet heap disparagement and ridicule on certain absurdities and inequalities in the works of his popular rival, particularly on Shakspere's want of "art" and of critical scholarship in the dead languages, and on his careless violation of the classic Unities.(2) It must be remembered, too, that Jonson was a scholar who plumed himself on his encyclopoedic knowledge and critical appreciation of the classic writers, and that if, on the one hand, his own proficiency would enable him to speak of Shakspere's attainments with absolute certainty, a wide though uncritical acquaintance with Greek and Latin would, on the other hand, appear slight and trivial to a pedant who boasted that he was better versed, and knew more, in those languages than any poet in England.

Shakspere alone among the great writers of his day, with the notable exception of Jonson, received no University education, a misfortune which, in the eyes of the Academic party, would certainly brand him as an ignoramus lacking in that distinction which was then associated with the study of the New Learning. At least

(1) In the "Returne from Parnassus", Shakspere is represented as having administered a "purge" to Ben Jonson.

(2) See Note A.

he is so regarded in the "Returne from Parnassus" (1), and it is not difficult to conceive that Nashe alludes to him when he speaks, in his prefatory address to "Menaphon", of those who "feed on naught but the crumbs that fall from the translator's trencher" and who "can scarce Latinise their neck-verse if they should need".

Leonard Digges follows the tradition in his verses "Upon Master William Shakespeare", published in 1640, in which he makes the following uncritical observations:

> "Next Nature only help'd him, for look thorough
> This whole book, (2) thou shalt find he doth not borrow
> One phrase from Greeks, nor Latine imitate,
> Nor once from vulgar languages translate".

And so the tradition grew and was accepted by practically all the writers of the early eighteenth century. Dryden had confirmed Jonson's statement that Shakspere had "small Latin and less Greek", but had maintained that it was to the poet's honour and glory that he could dispense with such media in his interpretation of Nature. Nicholas Rowe, Shakspere's first biographer, following the seventeenth century view, believes that the poet's acquaintance with Latin authors was such as he might have picked up at school: he could remember tags of Horace or of Mantuan but he was unable to read Plautus in the original. "It is without controversy," he writes, "that in his works we scarce find any trace of any thing that looks like an imitation of the ancients. The delicacy of

(1) Part 2. Act V. Sc. 3.

(2) The verses were intended for insertion in the First Folio.

his taste, and the natural bent of his own great genius, (equal, if not superior, to some of the best of theirs,) would certainly have led him to read and study them with so much pleasure, that some of their fine images would naturally have insinuated themselves into, and been mixed with, his own writings; so that his not copying at least something from them, may be an argument of his never having read them". We are rather inclined to assert, by a similar process of reasoning, that the worthy biographer had himself paid a similar compliment to Shakspere as the poet is alleged to have paid to the ancients. Rowe's further statement that a comparative lack of classical scholarship may have been rather to the poet's advantage was answered by Gildon in his "Essay on the Stage" where it is urged that Shakspere's reading in Ovid and Plautus (with whom, the writer claims, the poet was certainly acquainted) had proved no disadvantage but rather the reverse. John Dennis, on the other hand, argues that the deficiency in art displayed in Shakspere is sufficient proof of his ignorance of the classics, an ignorance, he urges, that redounds much to the national honour. "He who allows", he says, "that Shakespeare had learning and a familiar acquaintance with the Ancients, ought to be looked upon as a detractor from his extraordinary merit and from the glory of Great Britain". (1). Addison, following the tradition, likens Shakspere to "the stone of Pyrrhus' ring which...had the figure of Apollo and the Nine Muses in the veins

(1) "On the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare", 1711.

of it produced by the spontaneous hand of Nature". (1).

The burden of these early appreciations is that "strength and nature made amends for art". Pope, Theobald, and Warburton believed that Shakspere had at any rate a wider knowledge of the classics than had been previously supposed, and Sewell declares that he found evident traces in Shakspere of knowledge of the Latin language. (2). Upton and Zachary Grey are more outspoken. They saw in Shakspere a man of profound reading and eagerly clutched at anything that would prove his deliberate imitation of the Ancients. (3). About the same time Peter Whalley, in his "Enquiry into the Learning of Shakespeare", claimed that the dramatist was more indebted to the Ancients than was commonly imagined.

With the publication of Dr. Johnson's "Preface" a certain amount of common-sense, which had been more or less lacking in the disquisitions before mentioned, was brought to bear upon the subject. It is Johnson who points out that Shakspere may have used an English translation of the play upon which the "Comedy of Errors" is founded, and who gives the death blow to the absurd criticism of the poet's relation to the Unities. Then followed Dr. Farmer's "Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare", a detailed

(1) "Spectator" No.597.

(2) "Preface to supplementary volume of Pope's Shakespeare".

(3) What more conclusive parallel could be desired than the line "Go you before and I will follow you", (Richard III), undeservingly immortalised by Grey, and its striking counterpart in the now famous "I prae, sequar" of Terence's "Andria"?

reply to the arguments of Upton and his fellow pedants, in which the writer endeavours to show that Shakspere had no claim whatever to classical scholarship and that passages which had been cited as instances of the poet's classical learning are to be found in translations and in the works of contemporary writers. (1). But although Farmer effectively demolished Upton and Whalley, he is very far from proving his own case. His work is a good piece of destructive criticism but it is by no means conclusive. However, the views therein expressed were practically accepted as final until William Maginn, in 1837, proclaimed the essay a "piece of pedantic impertinence not parallelled in literature" and endeavoured to demolish Farmer in turn.

Mr. Spencer Baynes was the first to investigate the matter of Shakspere's education. (2). Basing his conclusions on the work of the contemporary educational reformers Brinsley (3) and Hoole, (4) he endeavours to construct the curriculum of studies most probably pursued in the Free School at Stratford; and the late Professor Collins, by a comparison with the curriculum of Ipswich Grammar School in 1528, makes similar investigations in the matter. (5).

(1) Many of the arguments are unconvincing. For instance, Farmer would infer from Shakspere's use of North's Plutarch that the poet was almost completely ignorant of the classics. The unanswerable comment of the Rev. Alexander Dyce sufficiently disposes of this fallacy. "If he could not read Plutarch in the original," writes the great critic, "I will only observe that not a few worthy gentlemen of our day, who have taken their degrees in Oxford or Cambridge, are in the same case."
(2) Fraser's Magazine, Dec. 1879 and Jan. 1880. These two articles are reprinted in his "Shakespeare Studies".
(3) "Ludus Literarius".
(4) "New Discoverie of the Old Arte of Teaching Schoole".
(5) "Studies in Shakespeare", Chap. 1.

The course of studies as conjectured by these two writers seems suggestive of a classical training of a wider and more varied scope than is usually supposed to have fallen to Shakspere's lot. It must be remembered however that we have no direct evidence as to the nature of the Stratford School curriculum, nor have we any definite proof that Shakspere ever attended there. The evidence supplied by the plays with regard to the poet's probable schooling will be considered in the next chapter.

That Shakspere had some knowledge of Latin no one will be inclined to doubt, and modern critics for the most part are agreed that Shakspere is far more indebted to the Latin classics than has been previously allowed. The whole trend of Shaksperian criticism has shown an ever increasing recognition that his knowledge was wider than that with which tradition has accredited him. His works as a whole show a fairly wide acquaintance with certain of the chief Latin poets and a remarkably extensive knowledge of the ancient mythology. Of Shakspere's familiarity with Ovid there can be no question; we have almost certain evidence that he was conversant with the original as well as with Golding's translation. Virgil he also knew but to a much less extent, while of direct Latin influence other than that of these two poets there is comparatively little that may be traced with any degree of certainty.

The average critic, however, has been alarmingly positive in his statements, either upholding the view of Shakspere's unutterable ignorance, or lauding his learning to the very skies. There are therefore two general statements, quite epigrammatic in style, to

which the opposing schools of criticism adhere. The dictum that "the man who doubts the learning of Shakespeare has none of his own" is the watchword of one school of thought, and the equally forcible statement of Dennis: "He who allows that Shakespeare had learning and a familiar acquaintance with the Ancients, ought to be looked upon as a detractor from his extraordinary merit", is the view of the other. The whole truth is to be sought for, as is usually the case, somewhere between the two extremes. There are many views, however, that at first sight appear to be diametrically opposed but turn out on closer examination to be quite compatible and often mutually illustrative. We may, for instance, accept Aubrey's statement that Shakspere "understode Latine pretty well" without by any means rejecting Jonson's remark about the poet's "small Latin and less Greek".

Shakspere was not a finished scholar, nor did the method of the scholar appeal to him. As a rule he chose his material from the readiest authorities. Why then should it appear surprising that the poet pursued a similar plan in the particular choice of his classical subjects; why should critics regard him as an ignoramus for so doing? Shall we condemn him, forsooth, that he utilised every available means to the perfecting of his art, condemn him that he did not scorn external aid to help him bear off the Fleece of golden Antiquity! To Shakspere the classics were a garden filled with bright store of rich and varied sweets; small blame to him that he chose to enter it by the convenient wicket-gate of translation. We judge a poet's performance by the use he

makes of his material, not by the method he pursued in obtaining it. Shakspere assimilated all that he read. Transmuted by his fervid imagination, the subject matter issued forth again branded by the indelible stamp of his marvellous individuality so that the trace of its source was often completely obliterated. Of him it may be said as of his character Posthumus:

"All the learnings that his time
Could make him the receiver of, . . . he took
As we do air, fast as 'twas minister'd;
And in's spring became a harvest".

Shakspere was no deep student of the classics. For useless learning - the minutiae of scholarly criticism which find no real place in aesthetic composition - Shakspere had no curiosity whatever. The didactic element, including scholarly accomplishment, stands in the same relation to the body of a poet's work as the bones to the human body, and when the purely didactic element is permitted to start out of its setting the poet's creation becomes as ugly as a skeleton. He is purely and primarily poet, not a moralist, a scholar, or a teacher. Not that he may dispense with study; but he will learn more by the momentary flash of inspiration than the laborious bookworm will glean in a year by the aid of his rushlights. We might imagine Shakspere himself endorsing the words of Biron:

"Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others' books".

The bookworm's calling is not the poet's. Filled with his brave

translunary things, the poet will ennoble and beautify the common objects of earth,

"Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality".

Nor is the poet an inspired maniac, writing without the aid that a conscious perfecting of his powers may give. Many of the greatest speeches in Shakspere's plays often remind us of the labour that their composition entailed. The poet's great gift is his power of assimilation. Scholarship is only of secondary importance; with or without it the poet will make his own whatever may serve the purposes of his art. Such a poet was Shakspere; such was Goethe the man of widest acquirements in modern times; such, too, was Keats, while Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning, although they could read with facility and pleasure the classics of Greece and Rome, were by no means minute scholars and pedants after the order of Jonson and Casaubon.

Shakspere, like Goethe, obtained most of his material at second hand. There can be little doubt that our dramatist availed himself to the full of translations and other aids. It is nothing very surprising. It was a custom which he shared with many other writers, whether chroniclers, poets, or historians, of his day. He no doubt knew enough Latin to spell out a passage of Cicero or of Ovid with comparative ease, for in Shakspere's day Latin was read and taught much as we read and teach French now.

We cannot build up a case in favour of the poet's ignorance from the fact that he had an indolent inclination towards the use of English versions. Shakspere had certainly enough culture for his purpose; what learning he possessed was always ready to his service. His was no brain

"dry as the remainder biscuit
After a voyage",

no musty lumber room of quaint and useless material, or nook for observations which he might vent in mangled forms. "If he had little Latin and less Greek", writes Lowell, "might he not have had enough of both for every practical purpose on this side pedantry? The most extraordinary, one might almost say contradictory, attainments have been ascribed to him, and yet he has been supposed incapable of what was within easy reach of every boy at Westminster School. There is a knowledge that comes of sympathy as living and genetic as that which comes of mere learning is sapless and unprocreant, and for this no profound study of the languages is needed." (1).

We cannot do better than conclude with Jonson's estimate of "Virgil", under which name the work of Shakspere is described in the "Poetaster":

(1) "Shakespeare Once More". Essays on the English Poets, 115.

"His learning savours not the school-like gloss,
That most consists in echoing words and terms,
And soonest wins a man an empty name;
Nor any long or far-fetched circumstance
Wrapp'd in the curious generalities of arts;
But a direct and analytic sum
Of all the worth and first effects of arts.
And for his poesy, 'tis so ramm'd with life
That it shall gather strength of life with being,
And live hereafter more admired than now".

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## CHAPTER II.

### SHAKSPERE'S SCHOOLING: INFLUENCE OF OVID.

"And then the whining schoolboy with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school".

("As you like it").

George Steevens, one of the shrewdest of eighteenth-century commentators, has thus summed up in a few weighty words the ascertained facts of Shakspere's life: "All that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare, is: that he was born at Stratford-upon-Avon - married and had children there - went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote poems and plays, returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried". (1). It is true that, in the light of more recent research, certain obscure periods and incidents of the poet's life have been more or less clearly defined, but our knowledge of Shakspere's schooling, as of many other stages of his career, is still somewhat hazy and rests almost entirely upon a basis of conjecture.

The best account of Shakspere's probable education has been written by Mr. Spencer Baynes, to whose work we referred in the preceding chapter. The circumstantial evidence in favour of the poet's attendance at Stratford Grammar School is certainly very strong. "Whatever differences of opinion may exist", says our authority, "as to the actual extent of Shakespeare's classical knowledge, there can be no doubt that he had a very fair education; and it is almost equally certain that he must have obtained it in the Grammar School of his native town". (2).

What was the nature of a Grammar School curriculum at that period, and how far is Mr. Baynes' supposition in the case of Shakspere warranted by internal evidence?

(1) Note on Shakspere's 93rd Sonnet.

(2) Shakespeare Studies, 149.

In accordance with the usual custom Shakspere would probably enter the upper school about the age of seven, that is, at the time when his father, John Shakspere, was chief Alderman of Stratford. The main element in the educational system of the Grammar School was, of course, Latin, which pupils would begin at seven and would probably continue to their fifteenth or sixteenth year; Shakspere, we have good reason to suppose, left in 1578 on the completion of his fourteenth year owing to some alteration in his father's circumstances. It is probable that Shakspere first learned his rudiments, as was customary, in the lower school under the supervision of the A-B-C- darius before passing into the Grammar School proper. Reminiscences of school apparatus are very frequent in the earlier plays: the Horn Book with its criss-cross and rudiments of spelling is referred to in "Love's Labour's Lost", (1) and the A.B.C. Book with the Catechism in "King John" (2). Again, in "Love's Labour's Lost", there is an allusion to the copy-book (3), and, in the "Winter's Tale", to the metal counters probably used in the teaching of elementary arithmetic. (4).

During his first and second years in the upper school Shakspere would be drilled in Lily's Latin Grammar and in Latin conversation

(1) V.1. 47. Vide also "Rich. III", Act 1. 1. 54.

(2) 1. 1. 192. Vide also "Two Gent.", II. 1. 23.

(3) "Fair as a text B in a copy-book". (V. 2. 42). These references may be taken for what they are worth; the evidence that they supply is practically nugatory.

(4) "I cannot do't without counters" (IV. 3. 37) c.f. also "Troilus" II. 2. 28.

much in the manner in which French is now learned, the usual books being the "Sententiae Pueriles", and the Colloquies of Erasmus and of Corderius. In his third and fourth years he would take up Cato's "Maxims", Aesop's "Fables", the "Eclogues" of Mantuan, and parts of Ovid and Cicero. In his fifth and sixth years he would continue reading Ovid's "Metamorphoses", parts of Virgil, Terence, and Horace, with a comedy of Plautus and a tragedy of Seneca and selections from the Satirists. "In going through such a course", writes Mr. Baynes, "unless the teaching of Stratford was exceptionally inefficient, the boy must have made some progress in several of these authors, and acquired sufficient knowledge of the language to read fairly well at sight the more popular poets and prose writers such as Ovid and Cicero". (1). The masters in Shakspere's day, it has been ascertained, were at least men of average ability: the head-master, Walter Roche, a Fellow of Corpus College, Oxford, was a teacher at the school from 1570-72, and two others whom we may mention, Simon Hunt and Thomas Jenkins, from 1571-77, and from 1577-78 respectively.

Such were the influences under which the poet's boyhood was most probably nurtured. "The whole round of school influences and associations", remarks Mr. Baynes, "from the simple piety of criss-cross row and the elementary difficulties of the primer, to the harsh constructions of Persius and the pagan horrors of Seneca's "Medea" and"Thyestes" - must have melted as years went by, almost unconsciously perhaps, into the capacious and retentive mind of the

(1) "Shakespeare Studies", 175.

that it is "a playing-day", asks the boy "some questions in his accidence".

Evans. Come hither, William; hold up your head; come.

Mrs. Page. Come on, sirrah; hold up your head; answer your master, be not afraid.

Evans. William, how many numbers is in nouns?

Will. Two. - - - -

Evans. What is fair, William?

Will. Pulcher. - - - -

Evans. - What is "lapis", William?

Will. A stone.

Evans. And what is a stone, William?

The boy, who is evidently becoming somewhat confused at so severe a cross-examination, forgets his school-room answer and informs the parson that a stone is "a pebble". The worthy man, who is not exactly of exemplary patience, breaks in:

"No, it is "lapis": I pray you, remember in your prain," and little Will repeats the word as he collects his wits to answer the inevitable questions on the Article and Pronoun. (1). The catechism continues and poor little William blunders again over his Accusative case and the Vocative, which is "caret":

(1) The answers to Evans' questions appear on pages 1 & 2 of the Grammar. "In Nounes be two numbers, the singular, and the plurall. The Singular Number speaketh of one: as "Lapis" a stone. The plurall number speaketh of mo than one; as "lapides", Stones". The set examples of adjectives are "Bonus", Good, and "Pulcher", Fayre.

marvellous boy, and helped with the life of nature in the fields and woods, and the civic stir and social movements of the town, to prepare and qualify him for his future work". (1).

Shakspere had a wide education. Nevertheless, although he must have been an omnivorous reader, the main element in his education as a writer was not derived from the study of books. Reading and observation must go hand in hand, and there can be no doubt that in Shakspere these two necessary qualifications as a writer were most felicitously blended. He was a student of men and of books as Chaucer was. Like Chaucer he was not "textuel ", but the alchemy of his marvellous genius and poetic imagination turned all that it touched into gold. "In discussing the question of Shakespeare's learning," writes Stapfer, "it must never be left out of sight that poets are possessed of an instrument which is not in the hand of every student - the instrument of genius." (2). The young Shakspere, surely, was no ordinary boy, and his latent powers, if they developed slowly, developed none the less surely. The great world of human activity was his school-room: his book was Nature herself.

Turn we now to the evidence supplied by the plays. From the opening of Act 4 of the "Merry Wives" we learn that Shakspere knew something of the Latin grammar then in vogue in the schools. Little Will Page, who "profits nothing in the world at his book", is summoned before the awful presence of Sir Hugh Evans, who, ignoring the fact

(1) Ibid. 178.

(2) Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity, 104.

Evans. Well what is your accusative case?

Will. Accusativo, hunc.

Evans. I pray you, have your remembrance, child; accusativo, hung, hang, hog.

- What is the focative case, William?

Will. O, - vocativo, O.

Evans. Remember, William; focative is "caret", - which mistress Quickly declares is "a good root". (1). William quits himself commendably over his genitive case plural, but when he is asked to show some declensions of his pronouns, forsooth he has forgot; whereupon the parson, with a warning, dismisses him.

Shakspere's sympathies throughout are extended towards little William, while he allows Mrs. Quickly's wit full license to the manifest confusion of the choleric old pedagogue. Is it not conceivable that the poet who had suffered, perhaps, as sound a drilling in his Latin grammar was, like his little namesake, "a good sprag memory" and "a better scholar than we thought he was"? (2).

Apparent allusions to school methods are also numerous. In the fourth and fifth Acts of "Love's Labour's Lost" the schoolmaster interlards his conversation with scraps of Latin such as might have been employed in the usual school-room intercourse and Latin colloquies with the students:

(1) The second page of the Grammar explains William's hesitative answer: "The Vocative case is knowne by calling or speaking to: as O magister, O Mayster. . . . Vocativo o musa" and so on. The declension of the pronoun occurs some pages further on.
(2) The latter tribute of praise is somewhat doubtful as it is bestowed upon the boy by his fond mother who has "no understanding for cases, and the numbers of the genders". The line "Homo is a common name to all men"(Henry IV. pt.1) is from the Grammar, while numerous Latin phrases and references to grammar-book Interjections, and such like, have little importance for our enquiry.

Hol. The deer was, as you know, in "sanguis, - blood; ripe as a pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of "coelo, - the sky, the welkin, the heaven; and anon falleth like a crab on the face of "terra", - the soil, the land, the earth". (IV. 2.)

Truly, as Sir Nathaniel says, the epithets of Master Holofernes are "sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least".

References to Aesop's Fables are very frequent in Shakspere. More important is the allusion to Mantuan whose pastorals enjoyed an enormous and undeserved popularity in the school-room of the sixteenth century. In the same scene of "Love's Labour's Lost" the old pedagogue quotes with a mighty gusto the opening lines of the first Eclogue:

"Fauste, precor, gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra
Ruminat, - and so forth. Ah! good old Mantuan!
I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice; . . . . . old Mantuan, old Mantuan! who understandeth thee not, loves thee not."

In the same scene, also, occurs one of Shakspere's earliest references to his favourite Ovid. Jaquenetta has submitted to the superior intelligence of the parson the learned and unintelligible letter of Monsieur Biron, and the good man is painfully conning it when Holofernes breaks off from his eulogy of Mantuanus and turns his attention to the epistle: "Under pardon, sir, what are the contents? or rather, as Horace says in his -" He stops abruptly as he glances at the writing. "What, my soul, verses?

Nath. Ay, sir, and very learned.

Hol. Let me hear a staff, a stanza, a verse; lege, domine."

Whereupon the curate reads them out, to the accompaniment of the

usual ecclesiastical sing-song and with a studious lack of proper accentuation, something after the manner, perhaps, in which the modern preacher quotes Browning. The ear of the pedant is evidently offended at the recital for he proceeds to take the parson to task in the orthodox school-room manner: "You find not the apostrophes, and so miss the accent: let me supervise the canzonet." The ecclesiastic meekly surrenders the document and the pedagogue gravely delivers his authoritative judgment: "Here are only numbers ratified; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, caret. Ovidius Naso was the man: and why, indeed, Naso; but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention! Imitari is nothing: so doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the tired horse his rider". The poet, perhaps, had heard a similar criticism passed on his own early attempts at verse-making. (1). In any case it is evident from the scenes in "Love's Labour's Lost" and the "Merry Wives" that he had no great respect for the teaching profession.

But to return. Works of Ovid are occasionally mentioned in the dramas. In "Titus" IV. 1, young Lucius recognises in the arms of Lavinia the copy of the "Metamorphoses" that his mother had given him, and in the "Taming of the Shrew" Hortensio apparently refers to the "Ars Amatoria". (2). Yet another reference to Ovid's

(1) See note B.

(2) IV. 2. "I read that I profess, the 'Art of Love'. The first folio reads, however, 'the Art to Love'."

work occurs in "Titus". The distracted Andronicus and his friends enter carrying weapons of the chase and arrows that are to serve as winged messengers to the gods. (Titus is speaking):

"'Terras Astraea reliquit':
Be you remember'd, Marcus, she's gone, she's fled.
Sirs, take to your tools. You, cousins, shall
Go sound the ocean, and cast your nets,
Happily you may find her in the sea;
Yet there's as little justice as at land." (IV. 3.)

The Latin hemistich is taken from the first Book of the "Metamorphoses", from a setting peculiarly analagous in horrible situation, where the poet sings of those carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts which drove Astraea, the goddess of Justice, from the polluted earth:

"Victa iacet Pietas: et Virgo caede madentes
ultima caelestum terras Astraea reliquit." (l. 150).

On the first of the following quotations from the "Heroides" we cannot insist for it occurs in a play that cannot be regarded as Shakspere's own composition:

"Di faciant, laudis summa sit ista tuae", (1)

"Hic ibat Simois; hic est Sigeia tellus;
Hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis". (2)

Mr. Baynes was the first to notice that Shakspere's Fairy Queen

(1) "I. Henry VI", Act 1. 3. 48; "Her." II. 66.
(2) "Shrew" III. 1. 28; "Her." II. 33.

Titania derived her name from the text of the "Metamorphoses". Golding never introduces the name but gives a periphrasis wherever it occurs. (1). Further, the line in "Titus" descriptive of the rape of Lavinia,

"Forc'd in the ruthless, vast, and gloomy woods" (IV. 1. 54).

is apparently an echo of the Ovidian verse

"In stabula alta trahit silvis obscura vetustis"

relating to the violation of Philomela in the sixth Book. Again, the passage in "King John":

"for you are born
To set a form upon that indigest
Which he hath left so shapeless and so rude" (V. 7. 25),

seems to be a reminiscence of Ovid's "Rudis indigestaque moles" in the description of Chaos in the first Book of the "Metamorphoses".(2) Finally, there appears to be a reminiscence of the "Ars Amatoria" in Juliet's words,

"At lovers' perjuries, they say, love laughs." (3).

They exactly reproduce Ovid's line:

"Jupiter ex alto periuria ridet amantum,"

although it is just as probable that Shakspere derived the commonplace from some other source. The name and character of Autolyous in the "Winter's Tale" was evidently borrowed from Ovid's "Metamorphoses". He is here described as "Autolyous, furtum ingeniosus

(1) "Dumque ibi perluitur solita Titania lympha." (III. 173) Golding here renders "Titania" by "Phebe".
(2) Golding's version reads: "a huge rude heape, and nothing else but even".
(3) "Romeo", II. 2. 92.

ad omne . . . patriae non degener artis", while in Shakspere he is represented as an adept in the art of legerdemain and describes himself as "littered under Mercury" and "a snapper up of unconsidered trifles".

Two other references to Ovid prove that Shakspere had at least some knowledge of that writer's biography. Both passages refer to the poet's exile at Tomi. In the "Taming of the Shrew" Tranio says:

"Let's be no stoics, nor no stocks, I pray;
Or so devote to Aristotle's checks,
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjur'd" (1. 1. 31.);

and in "As You Like It", Touchstone says:

"I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths". (III. 3.).

It is in the Poems, of course, that Shakspere's familiarity with Ovid is most clearly exemplified. The title page of "Venus and Adonis" bears the following motto, taken from one of Ovid's most famous elegies, then inaccessible to the poet in translation:

"Vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo
Poculo Castalia plena ministret aqua". ("Amores" I. 15).

"It is a striking fact", remarks Mr. Baynes, "that the keynote, as it were, of Shakespeare's public career as a poet should have been struck by a quotation from a section of Ovid's poems not yet translated into English". Marlowe's version was not published till 1596 or later, but although Shakspere may possibly have seen it in manuscript it is just as likely that he found the passage in the original; nor will we go so far as to discard the evidence, as M. Jusserand does, on the strength of the former possibility.

It appears then that Shakspere was to some extent acquainted

with Ovid in the original; but the greater part of his knowledge was derived, as is universally admitted, from Golding's translation of the "Metamorphoses". The evidence that Shakspere used this version rests mainly on the parallel (first pointed out by Farmer) between the opening of Prospero's fine speech:
"Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves", and Golding's rendering of Medea's incantation in the seventh Book of the "Metamorphoses":
"Ye ayres and windes: yo Elves of Hilles,of brookes, of woods alone
Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everychone". (1).
But Shakspere's splendid lines do not owe everything to Golding's doggerel. The late Professor Collins shows that Shakspere not only followed Golding but also the original,and that in many cases he has reproduced touches from the Latin which Golding fails to notice. (2). "How admirably", he adds, "has Shakespeare caught the colour, ring, and rhythm of the original, and how utterly are they missed in the lumbering homeliness of Golding".

Several translations from Ovid's works had appeared before Shakspere's day. After the middle of the sixteenth century there are, besides Golding's "Metamorphoses", Turberville's "Heroides" (1567), Underdowne's "Ibis" (1569), and Churchyard's "Tristia" (1580). These were followed in 1597 by Marlowe's version of the "Elegies" and the "Amores", Browne's "Remedie of Love" (1599), and others in the early years of the seventeenth century. Of these,

(1) Golding VII. 265. c.f. "Tempest", V. 1. 33 sq.
(2) "Studies in Shakespeare", 36.

Golding's "Metamorphoses" is the most important. It was first published in 1565, a second edition appearing in 1587, and, as we have seen, it is certain that Shakspere was acquainted with it. It is almost as certain that he knew his Ovid in the original also as will be more apparent when we come to deal with the question of "Lucrece". Mr. Baynes, indeed, is of the opinion that Shakspere was to some extent familiar with the original before he knew Golding's translation. "Probably no critic", he writes, "would deny that Shakespeare was familiar with Ovid, but many maintain, as Farmer did, that his knowledge was derived solely from translations, and especially from Golding's translation of the "Metamorphoses". That Shakspere well knew this vigorous and picturesque version is certain; but I feel equally confident, from what has already been said, that his study of Ovid in the original was begun at Stratford School, and had been voluntarily extended to his chief poems before he became acquainted with any translation". (1).

It will be advisable at this point to make a passing reference to the famous copy of Ovid, supposed to have been used by Shakspere, which is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. This book - a copy of Ovid's "Metamorphoses" - bears on the title page the signature "Wm. Shr."; opposite, apparently in a seventeenth century hand, is written: "This little Booke of Ovid was given to me by W. Hall who sayd it was once Will. Shakspere's; T.N. 1682". The genuineness of the inscription has of course been questioned, but the vague

(1) "Shakespeare Studies". 206.

allusiveness together with the abbreviations are certainly unsuggestive of forgery.

But it is in general style and treatment rather than in particular borrowings from the text that Shakspere's earlier works, and particularly the Poems, are reminiscent of Ovid. As we shall see in the following chapters, there is much in the expression and ornamental effect of Shakspere's verse that recalls the Ovidian manner. Moreover, the Elizabethan discovered a certain analogy of temperament between the two poets. The epithets which were usually applied to Ovid in the Elizabethan age were precisely those with which Shakspere and his work were characterised. Further, Francis Meres associates the name of Shakspere with that of Ovid in the well-known passage of the "Palladis Tamia" (1598): "As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness his "Venus and Adonis", his "Lucreece", his sugred sonnets among his private friends".

Shakspere in his affinity for Ovid occupies an almost unique position even among Elizabethans. Critics have even gone so far as to state that Shakspere was ambitious of becoming the English Ovid. He certainly treats his poems quite seriously as the motto to the "Venus" proves, and seems to challenge comparison with the poet from whom he drew his fables. But it must be remembered that Shakspere's Poems, as well as his earliest dramas, were mainly written in the conventional literary mode. The young poet was certainly attracted both by this kind of poetry and also by the fame and

reputation which it would entail. Whether the youthful Shakspere did or did not conceive the idea of emulating Ovid we cannot determine, but it is certain that the appeal of "Venus's Clerk" was so powerful that its effect is traceable from the earliest to the very latest of his compositions.

We shall now proceed to trace in detail the nature and extent of Ovidian indebtedness in the Poems.

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## CHAPTER III.

## SHAKSPERE AND OVID.

### "Venus and Adonis".

"Ovidius Naso was the man: and why, indeed, Naso; but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention! 'Imitari' is nothing."

("Love's Labour's Lost" IV.)

We saw in the last section that Shakspere was not only acquainted with Arthur Golding's version of the "Metamorphoses" but that he also apparently knew his Ovid in the original. We have now to deal with the "Venus" and the "Lucrece", a pair of poems which have for their basis two well known and well worn themes of the ancient mythographers. In reviewing these poems, based as they are on Ovidian story, we shall not only see how closely Shakspere followed his model, but we shall be able to place the poet of Republican Rome side by side with the mighty bard of Elizabethan England and draw in sharp outline many important comparisons and contrasts between them.

At the outset there arises an interesting question with regard to the sources of Shakspere's poems. Why did the poet draw on Ovid at all; why did he not go to sources more modern and, apparently, more accessible? The legends of antiquity, those of Ovid in particular, had appeared for centuries in our literature in various forms and paraphrasings; why then did not Shakspere, instead of harking back to Ovid the general source and fountain-head, draw on the channels of his English contemporaries and predecessors? Shakspere certainly did make use of such versions, but it is also an undoubted fact that the greater part of Shakspere's mythology was not so indirectly derived but that, for the most part, it came either direct from the Latin of Ovid, or direct from Golding's doggerel version of the "Metamorphoses".

The Elizabethan often preferred to draw on the rich wealth of the classics rather than on the less opulent treasury of his own

countrymen; besides, adaptations from the classical authors and glowing reincarnations of their life-breathing fables were then all the vogue. Further, the ancient writers were quite as accessible, perhaps more so, to the Elizabethan than the English writers themselves. Add to this the fact that Ovid was then the universal favourite and there is little that is surprising in Shakspere's choice of material. Let us take the case of "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece". For the mere outline of the story Shakspere might have consulted in each case the rhyme-doggerel versions of his time or the works of the older English poets, Chaucer, Gower, and Spenser. There are, in the poems several indications that point to a use of English sources, but it is still more evident that Shakspere derived the main part of his material from the well-thronged storehouse of"Venus' Clerk" as Chaucer did before him.

But if Shakspere found his framework in Ovid,it was Chaucer who suggested the method of treatment and who supplied him with a model for his romantic narrative. "Ovid", writes Mr. Wyndham, "with his power of telling a story and of eloquent discourse, his shining images, his cadences coloured with assonance and weighted with alliteration; Chaucer, with his sweet liquidity of diction, his dialogues and soliloquies - these are the "only true begetters" of the lyric Shakespeare". (1).

With Ovid Shakspere displays a wonderful intimacy and a natural, tender familiarity in which he stands almost alone among the poet's

(1) "The Poems of Shakespeare", Intro. 81.

Elizabethan admirers. The spirit of that brilliant writer more than of any other Latin poet seems to have been the most congenial to his own, and there is no doubt that his work had an almost irresistible fascination for the youthful Shakspere. Nor is the reason far to seek. Many passages in the first group of comedies seem to point to an early association with Ovid, probably dating, as we saw, from the poet's school days and matured by subsequent reading; and although Shakspere, as far as we can gather, was no great student or lover of books, it is possible that his subsequent knowledge and his greater intimacy with the Latin poet may have grown out of the recollections of his youthful studies. Moreover, the poetry of Ovid was most congenial to the Renaissance spirit, and in Ovid Shakspere found, as many had found before him, a storehouse of superbly-embroidered and fascinating material, full of life, of colour, and of movement, and of a brilliance and spontaneity springing from native inspiration and a passion for the poetic art. Shakspere, we may safely assume, would also read those chivalric and fantastical allegories, the offspring of Aristo and the fanciful school of Italy, as well as the works of the amorous and mythological school of which Marlowe was the representative. But he deliberately turned his back on the former with its romantic unreality, its quaint symbolism, its calm and dreamy atmosphere far removed from the turmoil of life, and, in his vigour of soul and passion for the world and its realities, followed as deliberately the "godless, muscular lustiness" of Marlowe, Greene and Peele.

To us there can be no greater contrast than that which exists

between the sweet, strange dreamland of the idealist Spenser and the great world of Shakspere, pulsing with life, with passion, and with fire - a world which the author of the Poems would find mirrored to an eminent degree in those fascinating scenes, full of dramatic vigour, of tender pathos and of spontaneous outbursts of genuine feeling, which crowd the varied canvas of the "Metamorphoses". From Ovid, the most modern of all the ancients, Shakspere would imbibe something of that love of human nature and of that passionate sympathy with life in all its phases which were so vital to him and from which he could rarely, if ever, be sundered.

Again, what a tremendous appeal would that treatment of love, that penetrative insight into female character, that wonderful exposition of the subtle and labyrinthine workings of the human heart, to the delineation of which Ovid gives so prominent a place - what an appeal would such a subject make to the youthful author of "Venus" and "Lucrece"! "Ovid", writes Mr. Baynes, "was unrivalled among Roman poets in his power of delineating the perplexing, but, in the strictest sense, fatal logic of female passion, its sudden moods and contradictory impulses, its wild vehemence or self-consuming reserve, its pathetic tenderness, unsuspected strength, and absolute devotion". We need scarcely pause to illustrate how all these characteristics find expression in the poems of Shakspere.

There is one side of Ovid's prolific genius, the dramatic, which influenced the youthful poet to an even greater extent than the qualities mentioned above. The majority of the Ovidian episodes have within them all the germs of drama; in other words they are

dramatic in substance but non-dramatic in form. Here lies the secret of the marvellous appeal that these legends made to the Elizabethan dramatist. The Latin poet simply gives the bare details of the story, a series, as it were, of dramatic situations in embryo - a catalogue of surprising incidents often of a tender and passionate nature - capable of extensive elaboration under the moulding influence of a fine poetic imagination. The Elizabethan playwright took these for his material, working in details and incidents of his own as, for instance, in the case of Lyly's "Gallathea", a play which is based on Ovid's tale of Iphis and Ianthe and which the dramatist has amplified in order to serve his special purpose. In the same way Shakspere took the bare framework of Ovid's narrative, developed the hints and suggestions of the original, and, by the vitalising power of his wonderful poetic imagination and by the riches of his over-plethoric thought, invested the whole with a wealth of beauty and a luxuriance of imagery which are essentially his own.

With these preliminary remarks we will now consider to what extent the "Venus and Adonis" is indebted to its classic original.

The material of this poem is derived from the brief sketch of Venus and Adonis which follows on the tragic story of Myrrha in the tenth Book of the "Metamorphoses", crucial hints being also drawn from the episode of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the fourth Book, and from the boar-hunt in Calydon in the eighth. Shakspere would have read these legends in Golding's translation, perhaps in the Latin also, but of this latter point we cannot be certain. There is little

or no trace of the original text in the "Venus and Adonis"; Golding's version and, to some extent, the versions of the English poets seem to have supplied Shakspere with the materials and suggestions for his work. "In spite of his deep obligation to the great Roman", writes Sir Sidney Lee, "Shakespeare did not confine his early poetic studies to him. There are ample signs that he filled out Ovid's brief and somewhat colourless narrative on lines suggested by elder English contemporaries, Spenser and Marlowe, Lodge and Greene". (1).

The picture of Venus and Adonis as given by Spenser in his description of Castle Joyeous (2) has little in common with Shakspere's poem; but the account of the death of Astrophel in Spenser's elegy is in many respects similar to the death of Adonis in Shakspere. As regards the metre of the poem, Mr. Wyndham points out that the stanza need not have been borrowed from the "Scylla's Metamorphosis" of Lodge, published in the same year as "Venus and Adonis", for the "staffe of six verses" had been described in the "Arte of English Poesie" as "not only most useful, but also very pleasant to th' eare"; (3) and although critics are for the most part agreed that Shakspere was familiar with Lodge's prefatory sketch of the story, Shakspere's poem, in all essentials, owes little or nothing to its supposed model. Further, Sir Sidney Lee is trusting to doubtful evidence when he mentions Marlowe's "Hero and

(1) "Venus and Adonis", Intro. 14.

(2) "Faerie Queene" III. 1. 34-8.

(3) "The Poems of Shakespeare", Intro. 79.

Leander" as a probable source. The poem was left unfinished by Marlowe at his death in 1593, the year in which "Venus and Adonis" was published, and it is doubtful whether Shakspere had seen it in manuscript. The poet would find little or nothing that would be of use in Thomas Peend's "Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis" (1565), but the two lyrics in Greene's prose romance "Never Too Late" (1590) may have had some influence on his work. (1) The two writers by whom Shakspere was mainly influenced, then, were Ovid and Chaucer. "Briefly", says Mr. Wyndham, "the poem has nothing to do either with studious imitations of the Classics or with the "rhyme doggerel" that preceded them, for it throws back to the mediaeval poets' use of Ovid: to Chrétien of Troyes, that is, the authors of the "Roman de la Rose", and Chaucer, who first steeped themselves in the "Metamorphosis", and then made beautiful poems of their own by the light of their genius in the manner of their day." (2).

But it is with Ovid that Shakspere shows the greater familiarity. "Apart from verbal coincidences", says Sir Sidney Lee, "some of its leading characteristics - the free employment of pictorial imagery, and the frank appeal to the senses - indicate that Ovid, whether in the Latin original or in the English translation, was a primary source of inspiration".

(1) The date of the "Sheepheard's Song of Venus and Adonis" by Henry Constable has not been ascertained; but it has little in common with Shakspere's poem.

(2) "The Poems of Shakespeare", Intro. 80.

The story of Venus and Adonis as told in the tenth Book of the "Metamorphoses" occupies a place of comparative unimportance. It is a sort of complement to the horrible story of Myrrha and serves as an introduction to the more detailed episode of Hippomenes and Atalanta with which the lovesick goddess entertains her youthful paramour. The story proper tells how Venus, smitten by the beauty of Adonis, warns him against the ferocity of the boar, and, how as she woos him, she recounts the story of Hippomenes and Atalanta. Then, with a final caution against hunting the less timorous game, she leaves him. Adonis is slain by a boar, the goddess returns and makes lamentation over him, and transforms his blood into a flower.

Shakspere's story begins with the wooing of Adonis thus introduced by Ovid as a prologue to Venus' relation of her story:

"Sed labor insolitus iam me lassavit, et ecce
Opportuna sua blanditur populus umbra,
Datque torum caespes: libet hac requiescere tecum."
Et requievit humo, pressitque et gramen et ipsum,
Inque sinu iuvenis posita cervice renidens
Sic ait, ac mediis interserit oscula verbis". (1).

The representation of Adonis as coy and coldly unresponsive to the advances of the goddess seems to be unwarranted by the original narrative. The attitude of the youth as conceived by Ovid is not very clearly set forth. He is apparently not so unresponsive to

(1) "Met." X. 554. For the parallel situation in "Venus" see especially 17-18; 43-44.

Cytherea as is Shakspere's Adonis and there appears to be no classical authority for Shakspere's representation. It is highly probable that the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, as related in the fourth Book, was responsible for this perversion, and that it furnished Shakspere with certain hints for the amorous altercation which serves as a pivot on which the story turns. Further, the two authentic sonnets of "The Passionate Pilgrim", which have all the appearance of rough preliminary sketches in relation to the longer poem and which also treat of Adon's disdain of the goddess, bear evident traces of the story of Hermaphroditus:

"Sweet Cytherea, sitting by a brook
With young Adonis, lovely, fresh, and green,
Did court the lad with many a lovely look,
Such looks as none could look but beauty's queen". (1)

In the line which follows, however,

"She told him stories to delight his ear",

Shakspere reverts to the tale of Atalanta in the original narrative in the tenth Book. The other sonnet follows very closely the incidents in the fable of Hermaphroditus: the situation, the heat of the day, the ardent desire of the goddess, and particularly the touches in the latter part of the poem, bear a striking resemblance

(1) The setting is evidently unsuggestive of the story proper. Compare the following passage:

"Then we will fetch thee straight
Adonis painted by a running brook,
And Cytherea all in sedges hid." ("Shrew", Induction).

to Ovid's narrative. (1) And many passages in the "Venus and Adonis" recall the same story. The address of the goddess at the opening of the poem seems to echo Salmacis' greeting, (2) and the lines

"pueri rubor ora notavit
nescia quid sit amor: sed et erubisse decebat "

are evidently suggestive of Shakspere's Adonis. (329-30). Also the verses

"Poscenti Nymphae sine fine sororia salten
Oscula, iamque manus ad eburnea colla ferenti,
'Desinis? aut fugio, tecumque' ait 'ista relinquo'".(334-36) (3)

remind us of the central theme of the poem.

Ovid's description of Hermaphroditus gleaming in the waters after his plunge (4) not only recalls Shakspere's own gleaming metaphors and effects of alliteration but seems also to find an echo in the poet's comparison of Adonis' hand to

"A lily prison'd in a goal of snow
Or ivory in an alabaster band."

The impatient struggles of the disdainful youth were apparently

(1) "Met." IV. 340-53.

(2) l. 7. sq. c.f. Golding 389:
"She thus begon: O childe most worthie for to bee
Estemde and taken for a God . . ."

(3) "When at the last the Nymph desirde most instantly but this,
As to his sister brotherly to give hir there a kisse,
And therewithall was clasping him about the Ivorie necke,
Leave of (quoth he) or I am gone, and leeve thee at a becke
With all thy trickes." (Golding, 410).

(4) "In liquidis transluceat aquis, ut eburnea siquis
Signa tegat claro vel candida lilia vitro." (354).

suggested by the efforts of Heramphroditus to escape from the embrace of Salmacis:

"Strive, struggle, wrest and writhe (she said) thou froward boy
thy fill,
Do what thou canst thou shalt not scape". (Golding).

Shakspere was by no means the first English poet to represent this trait in the character of Adonis. Spenser neither in "Astrophel" nor in the "Faerie Queene" makes mention of the youth's coyness, but it is otherwise in the "Sheepheardes Song" of Henry Constable, and Marlowe makes a special point of it in his "Hero and Leander". (1). Sir Sidney Lee is of the opinion that it was from Marlowe that Shakspere derived the hint. "Marlowe's genius", he writes, "exercised a powerful fascination over Shakspere's youth, and in all probability under such influence Adonis' disdain of the goddess of beauty became the central motive of his first poem". But it was in the sphere of drama only that Marlowe's influence affected the early work of Shakspere: it is doubtful whether the author of the Poems had seen any of Marlowe's non-dramatic verse at so early a date. It is far more likely that the dainty little song in Robert Greene's "Never Too Late" suggested this crucial incident in the story:

(1) The poet here describes how
"Venus in her naked glory strove
To please the careless and disdainful eyes
Of proud Adonis that before her lies".

"Sweet Adon, darest not glance thine eye
(N'oserez-vous, non bel ami?)
Upon thy Venus that must die?
(Je vous en prie, pity me). . . ."

It is probable, too, that Lodge's account of Adonis' death and Cytherea's despair was known to Shakspere, and it may be that the main story of Glaucus' repulsion of the ardent Scilla - a perversion of another Ovidian narrative, effected by reversing the position of the two principal characters - suggested a like method of treatment to the author of "Venus and Adonis".

Shakspere's vivid description of the boar was directly suggested by Ovid's account of the hunting in Calydon in the eighth Book of the "Metamorphoses" where the brute is thus vigorously depicted:

"Sanguine et igne micant oculi, riget ardua cervix,
Et setae similes rigidis hastilibus horrent:
Santque velut vallum, velut alta hastilia setae". (1).

These lines are thus rendered by Golding:

"His eies did glister blud and fire: right dredfull was to see
His brawned necke, right dredfull was his haire which grew as thicke
With pricking points as one of them could well by other sticke.
And like a front of armed Pikes set close in battel ray,
The sturdie bristles on his back stood staring up alway."(2)

(1) "Met." VIII. 284. The last line of the quotation is not inserted in many editions of Ovid's works.

(2) Book VIII. 376.

A comparison with the powerful description of the monster in "Venus and Adonis" will show that Shakspere was probably indebted to English translation:

"On his bow-back he hath a battle set
Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes;
His eyes, like glow-worms, shine when he doth fret;
His snout digs sepulchres where'er he goes;
Being moved, he strikes whate'er is in his way,
And whom he strikes his cruel tushes slay.

His brawny sides, with hairy bristles arm'd,
Are better proof than thy spear's point can enter;
His short thick neck cannot be easily harm'd;
Being ireful, on the lion he will venture:
The thorny brambles and embracing bushes,
As fearful of him, part, through whom he rushes". (1).

In the stanza following, Venus describes to the unheedful Adonis the blind and brutal insensibility of the boar to the youth's own peerless beauty:

"Alas! he nought esteems that face of thine,
To which love's eyes pay tributary gazes;
Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips, and crystal eyne,
Whose full perfection all the world amazes;
But having thee at vantage, (wondrous dread!)
Would root these beauties as he roots the mead".

(1) "Venus", 619.
But Shakspere's lines, if they owe anything at all to Golding, are far different in colour and in spirit to the translator's doggerel. They possess the ring and the verve of the original; and more especially do they recall the Latin verse in alliterative effect.

The goddess in Ovid's narrative gives her paramour a similar warning:

"non movet aetas,
Nec facies, nec quae venerem movere, leones
Setigerosque sues, oculosque, animosque ferarum". (1).

Again, Ovid represents Venus in the guise of the huntress Diana as chasing the more timorous game, such as hares (pronos lepores), and stags, and avoiding the wild boar. (2). She advises Adonis to follow her example in thus "pursewing game of hurtlesse sort", which warning she repeats before she leaves him:

"Hos tu, care mihi, cumque his genus omne ferarum,
Quae non terga fugae, sed pugnae pectora praebent
Effuge: ne virtus tua sit damnosa duobus". (705).

Here again Shakspere follows his model:

"But if thou needs wilt hunt, be ruled by me:
Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,
Or at the fox, which lives by subtilty,
Or at the roe, which no encounter dare:
Pursue these fearful creatures o'er the downs,
And on thy well-breath'd horse keep with thy hounds". (673).

(1) "Met." X. 574.
"Thy tender youth, thy beawty bryght, thy countnance fayre and brave
Although they had the force to win the hart of Venus have
No powre ageinst the Lyons, nor ageinst the bristled swyne,
The eyes and harts of savage beasts doo nought too theis inclyne".
(Golding).

How different, again, are Shakspere's musical lines from the imperturbable homeliness of the translation.

(2) "Met." X. 535. sq.
"And of thees same shee warned also thee
Adonis for too shoone them, if thou wouldst have warned bee.
Be bold on cowards (Venus sayd) for whose dooth advance
Himself against the bold may hap to meet with sum mischaunce".
(Golding).

Several of Shakspere's minor touches may or may not be reminiscences of the original. In line 902, for example, the poet's description of the boar's foam-flecked mouth

"bepainted all with red
Like milk and blood being mingled both together"

recalls a similar figure in Golding's rendering:

"The scalding fome with gnashing hoarse which he did cast aside,
Upon his large and brawned shield did white as Curdes abide":

a figure, if the passage be a reminiscence, suggested rather by Golding than by Ovid. (1). Many other similarities might be discovered by minutely comparing Shakspere's poem with Golding. We have attempted no such comparison here. It is an exercise that each student may undertake for his own amusement but which, to the generality of critics, would afford but little important or conclusive evidence.

So much for the sources of the poem. It hardly seems necessary to insist that the numerous hints and suggestions which Shakspere derived from Ovid and from other writers in no way detract from the originality of the poet's work. The main interest of the poem does not lie in the story and its evolution, but in the passionate intensity, the colouring of the narrative, the luxuriance of the imagery. Still more remarkable is the wonderful music of the verse and also the natural sweetness with which the poet describes each rural sight, each rural sound, of native

(1) "Fervida cum rauco latos stridore per armos
Spuma fluit, dentes aequantur dentibus Indis." ("Met." VIII, 287)

Arden. Shakspere did not learn this from Ovid. Sir Sidney Lee truly remarks that the setting of the scene "amid flowers blooming under the languorous heat of summer skies is outside the scheme of the Latin and Greek writers", (1) but we cannot agree with him when he goes on to state that Shakspere was indebted indirectly to the Greek elegists, through the Italian poets Parabosco and Tarchagnota, for these and similar hints for the background of his poem. "The sunlit atmosphere", he writes, "no less than the flower-strewn grove seems redolent of an Italian origin"; they are reminiscences, he continues "too numerous to preclude the suggestion that Shakspere was unacquainted with the latter and absorbed some of their ornaments and episodes". (2).

There is much in the "Venus and Adonis" that recalls the brilliance and hard glitter of Italian poetry; but to us it seems very unlikely that our Nature's Darling, living as he did the open-air life of a country youth, should have been indebted to any book for the introduction of a setting which his own experiences and environment would naturally suggest. The descriptions of the varying aspect of the sky, of the "gentle lark" waking the morning, the picture of the snail, the horse, the hare and hounds, in their wonderful truth to nature, certainly point to a tender intimacy with outdoor phenomena and to observation of the closest kind. To us it is of the highest significance that these passages, and not those which were suggested by other writers, are among the most beautiful

(1) "Venus and Adonis", Intro. 26.

(2) Ibid. 26.

in the whole poem.

In passing from the subject matter to the language and the ornamental effects, we cannot but notice the striking similarity in style, expression, and general treatment, between the English poem and ~~those of~~ Ovidian story. The vigorous and exuberant play of fancy as exhibited in the careless introduction and detailed elaboration of discursive episodes, the fire and heat of a glowing imagination, the frank and shameless appeal to the senses, the wonderful freshness and inexhaustible spontaneity, the over-facility of expression and perfect command over versification, the effects of alliteration, the gleaming metaphors, together with the accumulation of puns conceits and far-fetched illustrations, are precisely the counterpart of the Ovidian manner. Shakspere resembles Ovid, too, in his artistic subordination of the background to human passions and interests. He never degenerates into mere landscape painting - into the delineation of rural scenery for its own sake; the setting is simply intended to enhance the interest in the main actors with whom the phenomena of nature, as depicted by both poets, are generally in sympathy.

The tone of moral reflectiveness in the Poems which affords so striking a contrast with Ovidian license and sordid dissipation will be dealt with in the course of the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### SHAKSPERE & OVID: "LUCRECE".

**Limits of Ovidian Influence on the Poems.**

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"And Shakspere thou whose honey-flowing vain,
(Pleasing the world) thy praises doth contain,
Whose Venus and whose Lucrece (sweet and chast)
Thy name in fame's immortal book have plac't,
Live ever you, at least in fame live ever,
Well may the body die, but fame die never."

BARNFIELD,

"Poems on Divers Humours".

The poems of Shakspere are a pair of companion pictures - highly-wrought works of art, beautifully and richly dight. The "Venus" is a full-length portrait of female lust and passion, the "Lucrece" a delineation, also at full-length, of the same fatal incontinency in man. Both topics were singularly well-worn; the story of Lucrece, especially, had been for centuries the stock example of unswerving conjugal fidelity to Western civilisation. In each case, the poet's work was consciously imitative; in each case classical story was employed as a ground-work; but it (~~and what~~) is still more significant for our purpose, that Shakspere preferred to choose much of his material from Ovid, from Golding's translation for his "Venus", from the Latin of Ovid's "Fasti" for several incidents and touches in "Lucrece". (1). The latter story had been told already by the Greek historians, by Livy and by Ovid; in English verse by Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, and in prose by Painter. (2). Shakspere might have found the bare facts of the story in any of these writers, but the immediate source is difficult to determine as there is necessarily little essential difference between the points of the narrative. We turn, therefore, from the mere appropriation of facts to study Shakspere's method of treating them, & we find that, whatever the other influences may have been, the poet's

(1) There is no mention of an English translation of the "Fasti" before 1640.

(2) We may also add "The Grevious Complaynt of Lucrece", licensed in 1568, and "The Death of Lucryssia" in 1570, which are not extant.

obligations to Ovid are certainly the most pronounced. However, the position taken up by Mr. Baynes, who finds the "Lucrece" almost entirely indebted to Ovid, is open to serious question. His study of "Venus and Adonis" is open to a similar objection, for he does not differentiate between reminiscences of original and translation. We find, on close examination of the poem, that the "Lucrece" was mainly indebted to Ovid and to Chaucer, whose joint influence, as we have seen, was mainly apparent in the earlier poem. (1). It is to these two writers that the Shaksperian treatment bears the closest resemblance. More especially do the facts of the story correspond, even in minute detail, with the facts of the Latin writer; but what is even more noticeable, the fluency and lightness of touch, the imagery, the illustrations, conceits, puns and turns of phrase all point to Shakspere's affinity with Ovid, poetarum ingeniosissimus.

In the first place there are many details which are peculiar to Ovid and to Shakspere. The verse "Nunc primum externa pectora tacta manu" (746) has been noticed by Shakspere alone:

"Her breasts, . . .
A pair of maiden worlds unconquered
Save of their lord, no bearing yoke they knew". (407).

Also the touch

"Quid, victor, gaudes? haec te victoria perdet" (811);
"A captive victor that hath lost in gain." (730).

(1) Ovid "Fasti" II. 721-852; Chaucer "Legend of Good Women".

Further Ovid's "Ter conata loqui, ter destitit" (823) reappears only in Shakspere:

"Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire,
Ere once she can discharge one word of woe" (1605).

Still more significant, the action of the father and husband in prostrating themselves on Lucretia's corpse is peculiar to the versions of Shakspere and Ovid:

"Stone-still, astonish'd with this deadly deed,
Stood Collatine and all his lordly crew;
Till Lucrece' father that beholds her bleed,
Himself on her self-slaughtered body threw". (1)

Finally, the late Professor Collins has shown that Shakspere's introduction of the description of Brutus is not only an indication of the closeness with which the poet follows his original, but is also a proof of his scholarship. "The Latin", he writes, "is obscure and difficult: "Brutus adest, tandemque animo sua nomina fallit," that is, stultifies his name ("brutus" stupid ) by the courage he shows. This Shakspere interprets in the stanza:-

"Brutus, who pluck't the knife from Lucrece' side,
Seeing such emulation in their woe,
Began to clothe his wit in state and pride,
Burying in Lucrece' wound his follies show.
He with the Romans was esteemed so
As silly jeering idiots are with kings". (1807-12). (2)

(1) "Lucrece" 1730; vide also 1772. c.f. "Fasti" 835:
"Ecce super corpus communia damna gementes
Obliti decoris virque paterque iacent".

(2) "Studies in Shakespeare", 17.

So much for Shakspere's knowledge of Ovid. It is rather surprising that the learned Doctor Farmer made no mention of the "Rape of Lucrece" in his enquiry into the matter of Shakspere's learning. Many critics, too, since Farmer, have assumed that the poet was incapable of reading a story in the Latin.

The use that Shakspere has here made of Ovid's narrative throws much light on his artistic methods and deserves to be studied in detail. It would also be an interesting study to compare Shakspere's method with Chaouer's, as we may do the more readily since Chaucer has followed Ovid's narrative with the same fidelity as Shakspere did. Chaucer, professing to follow Livy and Ovid, describes in the course of his poem the incidents which aroused Sextus' fatal passion; Shakspere retails them in a prose "Argument" and plunges straightway in medias res. He is rigidly confining himself to the matter in hand, the rape of Lucrece. Both Shakspere and Ovid make a special point, let us note, of the heroine's chastity as the main incentive to the accomplishment of the vile deed:

"Verba placent et vox, et quod corrumpere non est;
Quoque minor spes est, hoc magis ille cupit"; (765)

"Haply that name of chaste unhapp'ly set
This bateless edge on his keen appetite." (1)

(1) "Lucrece", 8. Some critics believe, however, that the more condensed expression of Livy: "cum forma tum spectata castitas incitat", (omitted by Painter) supplied the hint.

Shakspere has not followed the order of events as given by Ovid. The description of the effect of Lucrece' beauty on lustful Tarquin, for instance, is very close to Ovid's, but Shakspere has reversed the incident, beginning with the last line of the Ovidian passage:

"Ense latus cingit, tergaque pressit equi." (784) (1)

Shakspere's divergences from Ovid are all made with a view to rounding off his own version of the story and with the object of concentrating the attention on the central theme. For this reason he does not insist, as Ovid does, on the interview of Sextus with Lucrece at Collatium when the villain's lustful appetite was aroused, but reserves Ovid's passage for the bed-chamber scene, the central description of the poem. And how wonderfully has Shakspere developed into a highly finished picture the bare suggestions and slighter realistic touches of the Latin story! It is on these casual hints thrown out by his authorities that he has built up the most striking episodes in the poem. The extraordinary minuteness of his observation has reproduced even the allusion to the colour of Lucrece' hair in that beautiful picture of the heroine as she lies sleeping in her loveliness: (2)

(1) The whole incident is given in "Fasti" II 761-84. With line 784 compare "Lucrece" 1-12; 43-9. Shakspere of course may have made use of Chaucer's narrative which is a free version of the Latin.

(2) The detail has been noticed by Shakspere and Chaucer only:
"Forma placet, niveusque color, flavique capilli" (763);
"Hire yelow heer, hir shap, and hir manere
Hir hewe". ("Legend", 1747). Some critics, however, think that the touch was simply dictated by the prevailing fashion - that it is a subtle allusion to the golden locks of the Virgin Queen.

"Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheath'd their light,
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,
Till they might open to adorn the day.

"Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her breath;
O modest wantons! Wanton modesty!
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,
And death's dim look in life's mortality:
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify,
As if between them twain there were no strife,
But that life lived in death, and death in life." (397).

Mr. Wyndham has compared the incidents which Shakspere borrows from Ovid with those of Chaucer. "The two poets", he writes, "omit and retain different portions: Chaucer, on the whole, copying more closely, paints on a canvas of about the same size, whereas Shakespeare expands a passage of 132 lines into a poem of 1855. Chaucer," he continues, "omits Lucretia's unsuspecting welcome of Tarquin, making him 'stalke' straight into the house 'ful theefly'. Shakespeare retains the welcome, and reserves the phrase 'into the chamber wickedly he stalks', for a later incident." (1).

Both Shakspere and Chaucer seem to follow Ovid's description of the invasion of the bed-chamber, but Shakspere expands it and

(1) "The Poems of Shakespeare", intro. Mr. Wyndham also emphasises the parallel situation of Shakspere's Tarquin and Ovid's Myrrha, who are both "delayed, but not daunted, by lugubrious forebodings in the dark." (81).

repeats many of its main incidents. For instance, Tarquin's threat to Lucrece is repeated no less than three times, twice in the fearful midnight colloquy, and again in the heroine's account of her undoing. (1). Ovid condenses the matter into two lines:

"Instat amens hostis precibus, pretioque, minisque:
Nec prece nec pretio, nec movet ille minis,"

but as Mr. Baynes has shown, Shakspere expands them into ten stanzas "unfolding in order each class of villainous motive, the entreaties, the promises and the threats, as they are urged with cruel force on the affrighted Lucrece's ear". (2).

Shakspere and Chaucer both echo Ovid's simile of the wolf and the lamb:

"Sed tremuit, ut quondam stabulis deprensa relictis,
Parva sub infesto cum iacet agna lupo", (799).

but with a difference in the method of appropriation. "Chaucer accepts the illustration", writes Sir Sidney Lee, "but strips it of its vivid colouring:

"Ryght as a wolfe that fynt a lambe alone,
To whom shal she compleyne or make mone?" (1798-9).

Shakspere," he continues, "catches far more of the Ovidian strain (677-9)

"The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries;
Till with her own white fleece her voice controll'd
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet <u>fold</u>". (3).

(1) "Lucrece", 807-10; 552-65: 666-72: 1632-38.

(2) "Shakespeare Studies", 236.

(3) "Lucrece", intro. 13.

Shakspere, indeed, has made far more of the openings for poetic elaboration which the original affords than Chaucer has. The reproduction of touches such as Ovid's "niveus color" (763) is quite alien to the Chaucerian method of treatment. Shakspere, on the contrary, reproduces them with characteristic rapidity and minuteness in his references to Lucretia's 'lily hand' and the 'snow-white' of her 'dimpled chin'. We are of the opinion that critics show a lack of insight into Shakspere's artistic method when they regard such minutiae as mere stock-in-trade, for a scrupulous care in following an original is one of the poet's main characteristics. Tarquin's reflexion on Lucretia's look and heightened colour, for example, does not escape the observation of Shakspere, but there is no reference to it, or indeed to any such realistic details, in the prose versions of the legend:

"Hos habuit vultus, haec illi verba fuere;
Hic decor, haec facies, hic color oris erat (773).

So Shakspere's Tarquin:

"Quoth he, 'She took me kindly by the hand,
And gazed for tidings in my eager eyes;
Fearing some hard news from the warlike band
Where her beloved Collatinus lies.
O, how her fear did make her colour rise!'"

Certain details in the lucid prose "Argument", together with a few slight verbal reminiscences in the poem itself, seem to indicate that Shakspere had read Livy's account, or, which is far more likely, the free prose version of the same in Painter's "Palace of

Pleasure". In the Argument Shakspere states that, in answer to the messengers despatched by Lucrece, her father came "accompanied with Junius Brutus," and Collatine "with Publius Valerius". These details were evidently supplied by Painter's version, for Ovid does not even mention Valerius, nor does he explicitly state that Brutus accompanied Lucretius but simply that he was present at the tragedy ("Brutus adest"). But Shakspere, continuing his account, states that,"bearing the dead body to Rome, Brutus acquainted the people with the doer and manner of the vile deed", a statement which is neither warranted by Livy and Painter nor yet by Ovid. The detail, however, may have been suggested by Chaucer who, although professing to follow Livy and Ovid, seems to imply that the tragedy took place in the Capital and not at Ardea:

"Of hir had al the toun of Rome routhe,
And Brutus by hir chaste bloode hath swore,
That Tarquyn shulde y-banysshed be therfore,
And al his kynne; and let the peple calle,
And openly the tale he tolde hem alle;
And openly let cary her on a bere
Thurgh al the toun, that men may see and here
The horryble dede of hir oppressyoun." (1861 sq.)

It is noticeable too that Chaucer makes a further digression when he says that the body of Lucrece was displayed at Rome, for Livy and Ovid plainly state that it was shown in Ardea only.

Two minor points of difference may be mentioned. Painter hints that the slave whom Sextus intended to slay for a proof of

Lucretia's guilt was a fellow of his own household: "his (i.e. Sextus') slave". Ovid has "famulum" simply, but the villain in Shakspere's poem vows more appropriately that he will kill a servant of Lucretia's household ("some worthless slave of thine"), a point which had been noticed by Chaucer ("thy knave"). Again, another slight deviation from Ovid's text is sometimes illustrated by a phrase in Livy's version. Shakspere's lines,

"His hand, as proud of such a dignity,
Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand
On her bare breast," (1)

seem to have been suggested by Livy's "sinistraque manu mulieris pectore oppresso" rather than by the "positis urgetur pectora palmis" of Ovid. (2). Such comments as these, however, savour too much of hypercriticism. It is quite possible that Shakspere made the latter divergence from Ovid without consulting any authority, just as he may not have followed Chaucer in the choice of the possessory epithet in interpreting Ovid's 'famulum'. The poet may have followed his own discretion, as in the former case, without any hint from his authorities.

The conclusion of the "Lucrece" was probably suggested by Ovid. The speech of Brutus in the market place, as recorded by Livy, would have detracted from the main interest of Shakspere's story. So, too, would the murder of Sextus as recorded by Livy and by Painter. Shakspere simply concludes his narrative, as Ovid does, with the

(1) Lucrece", 437. c.f. also 463.

(2) The alliterative effect in Shakspere's passage is precisely the counterpart of Ovid's line.

ravisher's "everlasting banishment".

The Chaucerian influence - mainly an influence of manner as in "Venus and Adonis" - is very considerable. It is most clearly marked in the long-drawn allegorical addresses to Time, to Place, and to Opportunity, which recall the expressions of melodious misery in the fourth and fifth Books of Chaucer's "Troilus". Artistically considered, however, this "helpless smoke of words" is as entirely unsuitable to the context as the conceits and laboured witticisms which Ovid puts into the mouth of the youth Narcissus in the throes of his dying agony. Similarly out of place, also, is the lengthy description of the painting of Troy, which, although bearing a subtle relation to the theme of treachery in the poem, is quite out of proportion to the bulk of the story.

Sir Sidney Lee, in summing up the indebtedness of the poem, writes: "Neither the individuality of style nor the substantive originality of many details in Shakspere's poem can be questioned. But it is clear that, working on the foundations laid by Ovid, he sought suggestions for his poetic edifice in Livy, and in such successors of the classical poet and historian as Chaucer and Bandello. Nor can it be lightly questioned that he absorbed sentiments and phrases from many contemporary English verse writers with whom his muse acknowledged sympathetic affinity." (1).

(1) "Lucrece", intro. 21. The chief, besides Chaucer, were Daniel ("Complaint of Rosamond"), Watson, Constable, and Giles Fletcher.

The limits of Ovidian influence upon the Poems of Shakspere are very clearly defined. In the first place the Poems owe little that is really essential to the influence of classical legend: the treatment of the facts-that is, the main glory of the work - is Shakspere's own, and the main beauties of both poems are essentially due to the poet's own observation and invention. We have already instanced, in the case of the "Venus", the wonderful descriptions of natural scenery and the realistic touches of animate nature expressive of a minute and sympathetic observation. All through Shakspere's early work, even amid the piled-up horrors of "Titus Andronicus", the country breeze blows fresh and strong from the woodland glades of Arden. In "Venus", however, the atmosphere of the country is everywhere present, even the variations of the weather being reproduced with remarkable fidelity. But there are other and more important points of difference. Of far greater significance in the light of Shakspere's subsequent development is the reflective insight and the underlying purpose of the poems which stand out in bold relief from the purpose of Ovid. There is the Ovidian license in all its fulness, but there is also something more: a certain moral reflectiveness and ethical significance even in these early productions for which we may seek in vain in the shameless sensuality of classical legend.

The acts of immorality in the "Metamorphoses", perpetrated for the most part by the deities themselves, are recounted with the gusto of poetic exuberance. The artistic effect is glowing and brilliant in the extreme, though absolutely devoid of moral

sensibility and purpose. There is no place for serious thought and moral reflexion in the avowed animalism in which the poet revels: gods and mortals alike are depicted as oblivious to all canons of morality. Biblis, intent on the gratification of an incestuous passion, puts everything aside in order to attain her desire, finding justification for her actions in the precedent of Jupiter himself. Myrrha, the prey of a similarly unlawful craving, is only arrested by the horrible nature of her crime when she has gone too far to draw back. And the actions of the gods themselves afford no less flagrant examples of conscious and deliberate immorality.

The underlying subject of Shakspere's poems and of their Latin counterparts is substantially the same, namely, a perfectly frank treatment of a degrading sensual love. Ovid gives us a brief sketch of this passion as displayed in either sex in his rapid delineation of the Goddess of Love on the one hand and of villainous Tarquin on the other. Shakspere goes further and elaborates the details of the legends into a pair of highly-finished portraits, not, however, for the sole purpose of picturesque enlargement. The same passion which governs the whole of the varied element of the "Metamorphoses" is celebrated by Shakspere with all the effervescence of youthful enthusiasm, but it never completely carries him off his feet; he can still survey the passion from without and estimate with remorseless accuracy its true worth. It is here that Shakspere's superiority lies. He is preeminently the poet of inexorable moral law, affording, in his

profundity and high moral seriousness, a striking contrast not only to many of the superficial and licentious writers of antiquity but also to many of his immediate contemporaries and predecessors. The life of Shakspere, as shadowed in his works, is a life of continual and strenuous effort after self-control; and it is to this watchful self-discipline over the inordinate strivings of passionate impulse that his exalted position as the greatest poet of Human Life is largely due.

The "Venus and Adonis", like Marlowe's "Hero and Leander", represents the early Renascence spirit in its very quintessence and is even more detailed in its realistic delineation of sensual passion. But Shakspere's poem is no mere riot of paganism. It does not express absolute, unrestrained joy in sensuality, that total abandon to lustful passion so characteristic of Ovidian story to which the "Hero and Leander" is so closely akin. Shakspere's Adonis differentiates between love and lust:-

"Call it not love, for love to heaven is fled,
Since sweating lust on earth usurp'd his name;
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame;
Which the hot tyrant stains, and soon bereaves,
As caterpillars do the tender leaves.

Love comforteth, like sunshine after rain,
But lust's effect is tempest after sun;
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done.

Love surfeits not; lust like a glutton dies:
Love is all truth; lust full of forged lies." (787-98).

But in spite of this forcible rhetoric Shakspere is obviously in sympathy with his passionate heroine all through the poem. "This occasional and tardy morality", writes Mr. Symonds, "or intellectual recognition of the real folly of the passion exhibited, does not make very much difference to the tone of the poem. It is undoubtedly true, it is decidedly artistic, its possible presence sharply divides the modern poet and his world from the world of the Roman poet, but its moral influence on the poem itself is an influence purely external and apart: the heart of the poet is with Venus, if his head respects Adonis. The important thing to note is, that a sense of moral fitness being here present, though only as an adjunct or appendage, and by no means as a guiding principle, this quality, strengthened with the experience and the growing calmness of years, may in time become a guiding principle and prompt to quite other kinds of work". (1). The exaltation of love as a divine passion and the condemnation of "sweating Lust" put into the mouth of Adonis represents a distinct break from the poets of the ancient world. "In this reproof of the pagan goddess of love," remarks Mr. Baynes, "the higher note of the modern world is struck fully and clearly."

This attitude is still more definitely taken up in the "graver labour" of Shakspere's "Lucrece". The condemnation of

(1) "Venus and Adonis", intro. 16.

"black lust" is here repeated, but in a louder key and with infinitely more pathos. The chaste heroine reasons with lustful Tarquin but without avail. No appeal of hers, however piteous, can soften a mind and heart blinded by selfish passion, nor may his eyes be opened to the degrading influence of his intended crime. Lucrece,

"The picture of pure piety
Like a white hind under the grype's sharp claws,
Pleads in a wilderness, where are no laws,
To the rough beast that knows no gentle right,
Nor aught obeys but his foul appetite."

But love and virtue though seemingly defeated by lust are yet triumphant:

"Proud chastity is rifled of her store,
And lust, the thief, far poorer than before."

Ovid certainly gives a suggestion of this moral standpoint in his admirable verse

"Quid, victor, gaudes? haec te victoria perdet",

but Shakspere repeats it and develops it all through his poem in a manner quite alien to the Latin mythographer. The morality is no longer occasional and perfunctory as in the earlier poem; it is, on the contrary, the most striking feature of the whole work - the dominant note in the scale of its varied emotions.

But much of the effect of this morality is neutralised by a regretable extravagance of language and discursiveness of episode, by the use of conceited and grandiose expression instead of a

stylistic purity and simplicity that would have made a far greater and more direct appeal to the imagination and the heart. To use an expression from the "Lucrece" which we have quoted before, there is too much "helpless smoke of words," a defect which is due in the main to the immaturity of youth. Ovid's works suffer from a similar defect; his shortcomings in general are strikingly analogous to those blemishes in Shakspere which incurred the just censure of Ben Jonson. Nevertheless, between the great Elizabethan with all his defects, and the Ovid of Roman antiquity there is a great gulf fixed. Shakspere is essentially moral, Ovid, in the widest sense of the term, essentially immoral. Like the deep bass of an organ the moral tone breathes and vibrates through Shakspere's work, softly in the poems, louder and more clearly in the Sonnets, and finally in full diapason through the ever-deepening music of the dramas.

The glory of human love and its self-sacrificing devotion, with all the higher strains of noble womanhood, could never be adequately expressed by the nerveless chords of the pagan lyre. In spite of his loftiest endeavours and however exalted his aim, the poet was still like a bird with a broken wing, bound and circumscribed by the laws of its prison-house and never destined to soar into the heavens. "Nowhere, indeed," writes Mr. Baynes, "is the vital difference in the social axes of the ancient and modern world more vividly seen, than in the contrast between the Lesbias, Delias, and Corinnas of Roman poetry, and the Mirandas, Portias, and Imogens of Shakespeare's dramas. In the one we have the monotonous

ardours and disdains, the gusts and glooms, the tricks and artifices belonging to the stunted life of lower impulse; in the other, the fadeless beauty and grace, the vivacity and intelligence, the gentleness and truth of perfect womanhood." (1).

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(1) "Shakespeare Studies", 249.

## CHAPTER V.

## VIRGIL.

"Iudicio Pylium, genio Socratem, Arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, populus moeret, Olympus habet".

(Shakspere's Monument).

Virgil is the only other Latin writer whose direct influence on Shakspere's work is at all considerable and whose appeal can in any way compare with that of the Latin mythographer. The debt to Ovid, however, is quite four times as great and is, besides, far wider in scope; for Shakspere's knowledge of Virgil is confined almost entirely to three or four poetical episodes, while the dramatist, as we have already seen, not only displays a remarkably extensive knowledge of the works of his favourite authority but is also somewhat akin to him in poetic genius.

The reason of this comparative lack of appreciation for Virgil is not far to seek. Obviously there could be little or no affinity between the emotional temper and dramatic genius of Shakspere and the severe restraint and lofty idealism of the great Roman, whose work is one of the most notable monuments of dignified and concentrated art. "Virgil", remarks Mr. Baynes, "lacks the unstudied descriptive charm, the elegiac sweetness, the emotional and picturesque variety, as well as the vivid dramatic touches which, in his early days, so powerfully attracted Shakespeare towards Ovid".(1) However much Shakspere may have admired Virgil, if we may for the moment assume that he read him in the Latin, that serene beauty where all the Muses' charm flowers often in a lonely word may never be said to have attracted him. Ovid stirred the young poet's feelings to their very depths; Virgil and the epic writers of antiquity left him cold.

This may be said not only of Shakspere but also of his

(1) "Shakespeare Studies", 226.

contemporaries generally. An insatiable passion for life, a boundlessness of aspiration and a fervent love of beauty led the Elizabethan to the classics of Greece and Rome. The ancient masterpieces were not merely regarded by the Elizabethan as material for school exercises and word-splitting - as a means to the acquisition of a certain amount of "scholarship" - but as a rich mine of wealth, a storehouse of poetic fable expressive of the most vital truth. The spirit of Ovid was far more congenial to the Elizabethan, far more in key with the prevailing tendencies of the age than the spirit of Virgil. Moreover, as we have already seen, the dramatic character of the Ovidian fables - mere outlines capable of infinite development - would be far more useful and attractive to the writers of the period than the fully developed epic descriptive of the majesty of Imperial Rome. Ovid was everywhere popular; he was, with Virgil, among the first to receive the attention of the translator and successfully rivalled the great epic poet in the popularity of the schoolroom. Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and other great poets came under the irresistible spell of his genus, Milton affirming in one of his Latin elegies that but for the poet's unfortunate exile he would have surpassed Virgil and rivalled even Homer:

"O utinam vates nunquam graviora tulisset
Ille Tomitano flebilis exul agro;
Non tunc Ionio quicquam cessisset Homero,
Neve foret victo laus tibi prima, Maro." (1).

We will now proceed to a brief review of the Virgilian element in the works of Shakspere.

The episodes on which the poet has drawn most frequently and which seem to have made the deepest impression on his mind are three in number. First in order of importance is the account of Sinon's treachery and the fall of Troy, particularly the episode of the death of Priam; second, the story of Dido and the false Aeneas; third the famous description of the Underworld. It is interesting to note that there is in all three a prevailing and characteristic element of sensationalism which would undoubtedly appeal to Shakspere and his audience, for to the average Elizabethan play-goer sensationalism was the sine qua non of dramatic representation. As early as 1563 the infernal machinery of Virgil's sixth "Aeneid" had been adapted into English verse by Sackville, and all three themes are favourite topics of allusion in the writings of the age. Moreover, of the several episodes in the Aeneid, these three contain in great profusion the germs of drama and lend

(1) Eleg. I, 21-4.

"I would that, exiled to the Pontic shore,
Rome's hapless bard had suffer'd nothing more;
He then had equalled even Homer's lays,
And, Virgil, thou hadst won but second praise". (Cowper).

Milton's opinion certainly underwent a complete revolution in later years while in Chaucer and Spenser Virgil vies almost successfully with Ovid.

themselves most especially to the heightening of dramatic effect.

The vivid account of the fall of Troy as described by Aeneas is referred to again and again by Shakspere. The lengthy digression in "Lucrece" introducing the elaborate picture of cloud-kissing Ilion and her woes is clearly derived from Virgil's powerful description in the second book. (1). Sir Sidney Lee points out that the idea of this realistic narrative may have been suggested by a passage in the first Aeneid which describes how a picture of the Trojan war arrests Aeneas' attention in the palace at Carthage. (2). Shakspere was apparently fond of this pictorial device. Is it merely an accident that Lucentio chooses a passage from the famous map-drawing scene in Ovid when he reveals his passion to Bianca under colour of a pretended Latin lesson? (3). Again, may not the idea of Lavinia's writing in the sand with a staff owe its suggestion to the episode which describes how Ulysses drew on the beach of Calypso's island a plan of Troy with its fortifications and encampments?

"Ille levi virga (virgam nam forte tenebat)
Quod rogat, in spisso litore pingit opus,
Haec, inquit, Troia est (muros in litore fecit):
Hic tibi sit Simois: haec mea castra puta.
Campus erat (campumque facit) quem caede Dolonis
Sparsimus, Haemonios dum virgil optat equos."

(1) "Lucrece" 1366-1582. c.f. "Aen." II, 76 sq.

(2) "Aen." 1. 456-655.

(3) "Her" 1. 33-4. The passage is quoted in Section II.

Further, a metaphorical allusion to the same device occurs in a later passage of Shakspere's "Lucrece":

"While with a joyless smile she turns away
The face, that map which deep impression bears
Of hard misfortune, carv'd in it with tears". (1)

But Shakspere's long description, although entirely out of all proportion to the rest of the poem, is not merely tagged on to the main story: it is, as Mr. Baynes indicates, essentially related to the central idea of the poem. We cannot do better than follow Dr. Furnivall in quoting Mr. Baynes' lucid account almost in its entirety. "There is", he writes, "an obvious connexion between the general cause or ground motive of the more famous tragedy (i.e. of the fall of Troy) and Lucrece's own dark fate. But by a skilful stroke the immediate agent in the ruin of cloud-kissing Ilion is associated as a kind of prototype with the destroyer of Lucrece's peace. The most prominent figure in the pictured tragedy as described by Lucrece is Sinon, and Sinon represents the same union of outward truth and inward guile, of saintly seeming and diabolical purpose, which had secured for Tarquin his fatal triumph. As Lucrece moralises on the figure, this tragic resemblance suddenly breaks out. (2). This ominous resemblance acquires all the greater significance from the fact that Tarquin himself had recently acted the part of Sinon in relation to the

(1) "Lucrece", 1711.

(2) "Lucrece", 1526-46.

beseiged inhabitants of Gabii. Lucrece must have been well acquainted with this sinister exploit, and it would almost inevitably recur to her mind while gazing on the innocent-looking figure of perjured Sinon. In thus weaving Virgil's narrative of the fall of Troy into Ovid's story of Lucrece Shakespeare utilised his early studies and produced in his own modest words a "pamphlet" of "untutored lines", which remains a unique example of pictured sorrow." (1).

The influence of Virgil in this poem is somewhat slight in comparison with that of Ovid, but the Virgilian incident evidently made a profound impression on Shakspere's mind for he refers to it again and again in his dramas. The figures of Hecuba, of Priam and of Pyrrhus in the description of Troy's painted woes are but slightly sketched in:

"Many she sees, where cares have carved some,
But none where all distress and dolour dwell'd,
Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,
Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,
Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies". (2).

But these unfinished sketches are elaborated in the more detailed description given by the First Player in "Hamlet". (3). The

(1) "Shakespeare Studies", 243.

(2) "Lucrece", 1445-49. Vide also 1485: "Lo, here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies".

(3) We cannot pause here to enter into the controversy that centres round this passage.

mythology is based on Virgil's dramatic account in the second "Aeneid", (1) where Pyrrhus (Pelides) is mentioned as one of the heroes of the Wooden Horse. Virgil describes his attack on the palace and the gleam of his brazen armour:

"Vestibulum ante ipsum primoque in limine Pyrrhus
Exsultat telis et luce coruscus aena." (469).

The poet, however, represents Pyrrhus' armour as black:

"The rugged Pyrrhus, - he, whose sable arms,
Black as his purposes, did the night resemble".

The description of the aged Priam and of the fall of the palace which follow are also ultimately traceable to the same source; (2) but the poet has heightened the sensationalism by the addition of several touches which are not to be found in the original narrative. The collapse of the burning palace is poetically associated with the fall of Priam:

"Then senseless Ilium, (3)
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear".

The murderer pauses. Then follows the splendid, though somewhat bombastic, epic simile of the thunder-storm:

(1) "Aen." II. 438-558.

(2) "Aen." II. 509-11, 465-67; 624.

(3) "Ilium" is apparently used as a designation of Priam's palace. The whole passage is essentially rhetorical and undramatic and was evidently selected or composed by Shakspere to illustrate the peculiar poetical taste of his protagonist.

"But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death: anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region: so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
A roused vengeance sets him new a work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam".

Finally, the picture of Hecuba in her scanty clothing, running barefoot through the burning palace, owes nothing to the original but is a realistic touch of the poet's invention.

There is scarcely a play of Shakspere's in which the tale of Dido and of Troy is not referred to. Priam is again mentioned in "Henry IV", a seemingly inaccurate recollection of a passage in the second "Aeneid" where the shade of Hector appears to Aeneas warning him of danger and the hero awakes to find the city in flames:

"Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,
Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
And would have told him half his Troy was burnt". (1).

Shaksperian references to the tale of Troy are so numerous that we have space only for the insertion of a few. In the "Comedy of

(1) II Henry IV, Act 1. 1.70. c.f. "Aen." II. 268-97.

Errors" Aegeon, requested by the Duke to tell his story, begins as follows:

"A heavier task could not have been imposed,
Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable," (1.1.31)

the lines being suggested by the opening verse of Aeneas' speech when the lovesick queen requests him to tell once more the tale of Troy divine:

"Infandum, regina, iubes renovare doloram". (1).

Allusions to the story of forsaken Dido as told in the fourth Book of the Aeneid are very numerous and in the main substantially accurate. Hermia, in her vow to keep promise with Lysander, swears

"by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Trojan under sail was seen"

and in the "Tempest" the two dull-witted conspirators repeatedly refer to "widow Dido". Tamora, again, recalls a famous scene in the fourth Aeneid when she invites her dusky paramour to a rest

"such as was suppos'd
The wandering prince and Dido once enjoy'd
When with a happy storm they were surprised,
Curtain'd with a counsel-keeping cave."

Queen Margaret refers to the story of Cupid, in the guise of the boy Ascanius, subduing the heart of stricken Dido:

(1) "Aen." II. 3. c.f. also "Titus" III. 2. 27. Further references to Aeneas' story and the treachery of Sinon occur in "Titus" V. 3. 80 and "Cym." III. 4. 57.

"How often have I tempted Suffolk's tongue
(The agent of thy foul inconstancy)
To sit and witch me, as Ascanius did,
When he to madding Dido would unfold
His father's acts, commenc'd in burning Troy." (1)

Shakspere, like Chaucer, frequently makes mistakes. Lucentio tells Tranio that he is

"as dear
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was", ("Shrew", 1.1.49),

but in Virgil it is Anna who says that Dido is dear to her:

"Anna refert: O luce magis dilecta sorori" (IV. 31).

Another and more famous mistake apropos of Dido occurs in the garden scene of the "Merchant of Venice" and will be examined in the next chapter.

Ceres description of Iris, in the "Tempest", as the "many-colour'd messenger" with "saffron wings" is an obvious reminiscence of Virgil's glowing picture in the fourth Aeneid:

"Ergo Iris croceis per coelum roscida pennis
Mille trahens varios adverso sole colores
Devolat." (700) .

In a succeeding passage Ceres says:

"High'st queen of state,
Great Juno comes; I know her by her gait".

This is apparently a reminiscence of the "divom incedo regina" (2)

(1) II Henry VI, Act II. 2. c.f. "Aen." 1. 175 sq.

(2) "Aen." I. 46.

or of the "vera incessu patuit dea" descriptive of the goddess Venus (1), although, as Farmer points out, there is a similar reference in John Taylor the Water Poet. Certain other Virgilian allusions seem to suggest that Shakspere was familiar with the first Book. Gloucester quotes the following line from the first "Aeneid":

"Tantaene animis coelestibus irae?", (2)

and in the same play occurs the sentence "Gelidus timor occupat artus" which some commentators illustrate by Virgil's "subitus tremor occupat artus" - a passage which Shakspere might very well have found in Ovid. It is doubtful whether the "gelidus pavor occupat artus" of Lucan, quoted by Mr. Anders, gave Shakspere his suggestion (3).

Aegeon's description of the storm recalls the graphic picture of the tempest in the first "Aeneid". Aegeon says:

"For longer did we not retain much hope,
For what obscured light the heavens did grant
Did but convey into their fearful minds
A doubtful warrant of immediate death". (4).

Virgil describes in sounding verse the sudden darkness, black night

(1) Ibid. 405.

(2) II Henry VI, Act 2. 1. 24.

(3) "Shakespeare's Books", ch.1, p.31. Shakspere's work in this drama, as in the case of other dramas from which we have quoted, cannot be precisely determined. Parallels from the doubtful plays are by no means to be pressed.

(4) "Errors", I. 1. 66.

brooding on the waters, and the danger which threatened the mariners on every hand:

"ponto nox incubat atra.
Intonuere poli, et crebris micat ignibus aether,
Praesentemque viris intentant omnia mortem", (89)

of which last line Shakspere's verse may have been a translation.

The idea of Ariel's appearance as a Harpy may have been suggested by Virgil's description of the descent of these monsters during the banquet of Aeneas and in his companions.(1) Shakspere's stage direction runs as follows:

"Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel, like a harpy; claps his wings upon the table; and, with a quaint device, the banquet vanishes". (2). The clapping of Ariel's wings may be a recollection of Virgil's "magnis quatiunt clangoribus alas". Mr. Anders notices a further reminiscence in Ariel's defiance of Alonzo and his fellows as they stand on their guard with drawn swords:

Ariel: "the elements
Of whom your swords are temper'd, may as well
Wound the loud winds, or with bemock'd at stabs
Kill the still-closing waters, as diminish
One dowle that's in my plume: my fellow-ministers
Are like invulnerable". (3).

(1) "Aen." III. 224 sq.

(2) "Tempest", III. 3.

(3) "Aen." III. 234 sq. "Shakespeare's Books" 32.

The incident is thus rendered by Phaer:

"Their swords by them they laid . . .
And on the filthy birdes they beat, that wild sea rocks do breede
But fethers none do from them fall, nor wound for stroke doth bleede,
Nor force of weapons hurt them can".

Virgil's powerful description of Fame seems also to have appealed to Shakspere, for the appearance of Rumour, "painted full of tongues", in the induction to the Second Part of "Henry IV." for the purpose of spreading lying reports is an obvious reminiscence of the monster as depicted in the Fourth Book:

"Monstrum horrendum, ingens, cui quot sunt corpore plumae,
Tot vigiles oculi subter - mirabile dictu, -
Tot linguae, totidem ora sonant, tot subrigit aures." (181)

In "Much Ado" Shakspere refers to her as "Lady Fame" and in the "Merchant of Venice" as "my gossip Report". (1). There is also an allusion to Ovid's description of the House of Fame (a notable source of Chaucer's poem) in "Titus Andronicus":

"The emperor's court is like the house of fame
The palace full of tongues, of eyes, and ears" (2),

but the latter line seems to suggest confusion with Virgil's description of the monster as quoted above.

Shakspere also shows some acquaintance with certain incidents

(1) "Ado", II. 1. 221., "Merch." III. 1. 7. Vide also "King John", IV. 2. 123; "Pericles", III. Prol. 22.

(2) "Titus", II. 1. 126. Chaucer's mistakes in classical allusion are very similar to those of Shakspere. In the "Hous of Fame" the poet, in a similar description of Fame, has committed an even more ludicrous blunder in rendering Virgil's "pernicibus alis" by "partriche's wings".

in the sixth Book of the Aeneid, and more especially with the infernal machinery of Hades therein described. The Emperor's speech, for instance, in "Titus Andronicus",

"The angry northern wind
Will blow these sands, like Sibyl's leaves, abroad",

is a reminiscence of Aeneas' prayer to the Prophetess:

"Foliis tantum ne carmina manda
Ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis." (74)

In the same play, Titus says:

"Why suffer'st thou thy sons, unburied yet,
To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?" (1. 2. 24)

- a reference to Virgil's beautiful and pathetic picture of the souls of unburied mortals by the gloomy river, stretching out their arms in longing for the further shore. (1). The utterance of the Ghost in "Hamlet",

"But soft! methinks I smell the morning air",

recalls, as Theobald points out, the words of Anchises thus rendered by Dryden:

"But now farewell! I vanish with the night,
And feel the blast of heaven's approaching light" (967) (2);

but the idea is a mere commonplace. For the same reason the simple words of Paris,

"Sweet flower, with flowers thy bridal bed I strew",

(1) "Aen." VI. 325, 329.

(2) "Aen." V. 738.

need not have been suggested by Anchises' speech on Marcellus. (1). By far the greater portion of Shakspere's infernal mythology is put into the mouth of the bombastic Pistol and will be dealt with in the next chapter.

In the case of the above references, borrowings, and adaptions, it is almost as probable that Shakspere had the original before him as that he had read the English translations. The versions accessible at the time were certainly of little value and would in many cases have cost Shakspere much trouble in the construing. Among the chief English versions were Caxton's "Aeneid" (1490), the complete version by Gawayne Douglas (1513), the blank verse translation of the second and fourth Books by Surrey (circ. 1545), Phaer's "Virgil" (1562), and the amusing version of the first four Books of the "Aeneid" in hexameters by Stanyhurst (1583).

Shakspere, who is in the best sense the representative of his age, found little in Virgil that really appealed to him. In spite of the amazing beauty and finish of the "Aeneid" and the "Georgics" - a beauty, perhaps, which would not commend itself to the uncritical writers of the age - Virgil made comparatively little impression on the Elizabethan mind.(2) Yet for these virtues, coupled with his noble profundity, the Latin epic writer ranks among the first of ancient poets at the present day, and Ovid, precisely for the lack of these characteristics, is relegated to a position quite inferior. The Elizabethan cared little about the poetic style of his models and

(1) "Aen." VI. 883. "Romeo", V. 3. 12.

(2) Spenser is a notable exception. Not only did the style & spirit of Virgil appeal to him, but many incidents & situations in the "Faerie Queene" & elsewhere are described in Virgilian language. Ovid is used, of course, as a mere storehouse of fable.

delighted less in the suggestions of intellect than of sense. Ovid's glowing and, in a sense, immoral delineations of the nude captivated the Elizabethan fancy far more than did the work of any other ancient poet. Marlowe in his "Hero and Leander", Shakspere in "Venus and Adonis", treat of their subject with an Ovidian frankness which would be regarded in the case of a present-day poet as a decided example of bad taste; for the Elizabethan's outlook on life had nothing of the straight-laced modern tendencies. Ovid is now prized for his elegance, for his spontaneity, and for the glowing colour of his imagery; he is no longer regarded as a writer of the first rank and as a mine of beautiful and inspiring poetic fable.

There is certainly a great deal in Shakspere's later view of life that recalls the ~~great~~ Roman Virgil,

"majestic in his sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind".

Both had heard, in their higher moments, the still, sad music of humanity; both were oppressed, as Wordsworth was, by the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world, but their main attitude towards life was absolutely antipodal. Shakspere was a dramatic Realist, Virgil an epic Idealist. Shakspere accepts the fact; he does not lay down any moral law but he shows us the results arising from its violation, the innocent suffering with the guilty - Cordelia lying dead in the arms of Lear, and the tragic loading of the bed in the last terrible scene of "Othello". He keeps within the limits of the knowable and makes no endeavour to

pursue his enquiries beyond the state of death. Beyond the life of man he knew nothing, cared for nothing, as far as his art was concerned. "The rest is silence".

With a mind similarly oppressed by the mystery of existence, the Idealist pursues with an eagle flight the human soul to its various stages of progressive existence in the dim world beyond the grave. He pictures the gathering of the shades on the dark shore of Styx, self-slaughtered Dido wandering in the ghostly gloom, and the Fields of Grief and of Elysium where due rewards and punishments are meted out. We have a powerful foreshadowing of a future state where all wrongs will be righted. On all these and such like subjects Shakspere is significantly silent. Throughout his work there is a profound sense of the impotence of our poor human reason and insight to penetrate the shadowy region of the Unknown; Shakspere is the poet of Human Life, and Man was his sole concern: "Satis est vixisse".

"In many things", Owen Felltham has beautifully and truly said, "we may sound Nature, in the shallows of her revelations. We may trace her to her second causes; but, beyond them, we meet with nothing but the puzzle of the soul, and the dazzle of the mind's dim eyes". (1). And this Shakspere of all poets has most clearly realised.

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(1) "Resolves; Divine, Moral, and Political".

## CHAPTER VI.

## SHAKSPERE AND CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY.

2. Serv. "Dost thou love pictures? we will fetch thee straight
Adonis painted by a running brook
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath,
Even as the waving sedges play with wind.

Lord. We'll show thee Io as she was a maid,
And how she was beguiled and surpris'd,
As lively painted as the deed was done.

3. Serv. Or Daphne roaming through a thorny wood,
Scratching her legs, that one shall swear she bleeds;
And at the sight shall sad Apollo weep,
So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn."

("Taming of the Shrew").

Among the many distinguishing characteristics of Elizabethan literature the extraordinary rage for classical mythology is surely one of the most remarkable. All the literary men of the time, with the notable exception of Bacon, were essentially bound by ties of sympathy with the glorious past and the no less glorious present, while every sphere of learning and of culture - the scientific world of Bacon not excepted - was eloquent of an almost superstitious reverence for antiquity and mythological fable. The buried treasures of the past had been revealed but lately to the awakening world and the eyes of men were dazzled by their splendour. An inordinate intoxication seemed to have overwhelmed mankind, and the revelation which followed as the unrolling splendours of classicism were displayed gave a mighty impulse to the nation's genius. The strong tide of reaction had at length set in, sweeping away with irresistible might all the old tyranny and asceticism, and men awoke once more to the glory of the common world around them. The whole course of life was revolutionised, the shackles of Mediaevalism were cast off, and the rejection of the old bigoted faith and shallow learning was followed by a return to that sense of interest in the affairs of human life which it had been the chief aim and effect of Mediaeval Christianity to discourage and depress. The terrible night had been rolled away and the light of old Olympus shone out upon the awakening world and once again its wonderful deities held sway over the heart of man.

It was in this tremendous revelation that the Elizabethan found authority for the rich life of the senses. The art of the preceding

Age in its almost unswerving contemplation of the spiritual was superseded by an art whose basis was the sensuous - life in all its manifold variety of interest and passion; and it was the mythology of the ancients as revealed in the plethora of amazing splendour in the pages of Ovid that became the inexhaustible storehouse on which the Elizabethan drew for the exercise of his poetic imagination. It was in Ovid that Shakspere and the great artists of his age found the fullest, the readiest, and the most charmingly ornate expression of this gospel of the senses. "It was Ovid", says Mr. Kilburn Root, "the brilliant, the sensuous, least spiritual of the ancients, who became the poet's poet, the painter's poet, the dominant influence in the art of the Renaissance. It is the mythology of Ovid that crowds the pages of Boccaccio and Chaucer; it is the divinities of Ovid that elbow the virgins and saints in every picture gallery of Europe; it was to Ovid that Shakespeare, called of some the "child of the Renaissance", turned for the classical allusions which the taste of the sixteenth century demanded in its literature". (1).

It has been said that the Renascence loved the classics not wisely but too well. In England, as elsewhere, the rage for antiquity ran to the most ridiculous extremes. It became a regular custom among writers to introduce, in and out of season, references to mythology and ancient history and to quote with inordinate frequency from the Latin authors. It was John Lyly's "Euphues", a novel ~~that~~ which had an immense vogue at the time, that was mainly responsible for

(1) "Classical Mythology in Shakespeare", Intro. 2.

the popularisation of this learned fashion in our literature. The drama itself is extraordinarily rich in classical allusion, and in many cases the mania for classicism has led writers to a violation of all the rules of dramatic propriety and relevance. In many cases the names of gods and goddesses, together with commonplace expressions from Greek and Roman literature, are bandied about by the dramatis personae without the least regard for characterisation on the part of the playwright. Many of the appeals to classical authority, too, are quite absurd and entirely without point. It will be remembered that Shakspere himself, through the medium of Falstaff, indulges in a good-humoured laugh at this Euphuistic rage for antiquity in the well-known simile of the pitch that, according to the report of ancient writers, doth defile.

The influence of the Universities was to a large extent responsible for this literary fashion; it was also in some measure owing to their predilections that the Latin classics rather than the Greek became the objects of scholarly attention. Queen Elizabeth herself was no mean scholar and the Court and society were remarkable for a pedantic taste in classical mythology. "It was paganism", says Taine, "which reigned at the court of England;" and old Ascham referring in his "Scholemaster" to this pagan influence says: "These bee the inchantements of Circes, brought out of Italy to marre mens maners in England; much, by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fonde bookes of late translated out of Italian into English". (1).

(1) Stapfer gives some amusing extracts from Warton's "History of English poetry" which admirably illustrate this extraordinary mania for classical mythology (Vide "Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity", 26-7).

Though Shakspere cared little enough for the classics, we have reason to suppose that the legends of antiquity made a direct appeal to his imagination and exercised a beautiful influence on many of the noblest portions of his work. Numerous classical allusions are to be found scattered through the dramas, but their introduction is marked by a perfect naturalness and facility as contrasted with that irrelevance and awkwardness of usage so often characteristic of other playwrights. It was that timeless, over-frequent reference to the ancient mythology of which we have spoken that earned the inaccurate comment of Kempe in the "Returne from Parnassus". "Few of the University", he says, "pen plays well: they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and of that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down, aye, and Ben Jonson too." And yet Shakspere steeped himself in "that writer Metamorphosis" quite as much as the very playwrights with whom he is contrasted.

Shakspere's mythology is essentially Ovidian, being in the main definitely traceable to the "Metamorphoses". A careful distinction, however, should as far as possible be drawn between the more detailed and recondite allusions indicative of original reading and those of a more general nature, the stock-in-trade of the multitude, such as might have been introduced apart from any familiarity with the classics whatever. Shaksperian allusions of the latter type are extremely numerous and for obvious reasons we shall not insist on them; they may have been derived, as in the case of Keats' classical allusions, from the works of other English poets. But there are,

on the other hand, allusions (~~which~~ that) point to a more or less definite knowledge of the ancient mythographers. Of these by far the greater number are ultimately or immediately traceable to Ovid, and the remainder, with one or two exceptions, to Virgil, while those of the more general type may in nearly every case be attributed directly or indirectly to the same two Latin writers. (1).

The treatment of classical mythology in the earlier plays often recalls the lyrical expression of the Poems, and allusions to the same fables often recur, as is natural, in works which we know to have been practically synchronous. Thus the Ovidian influence on the Poems is as evident in the play of "Titus Andronicus", and what is still more interesting, the parallel allusions in drama and poems lend additional support to the weightier evidence on which the authenticity of "Titus" is founded. (2). This important analogy, together with the similar insistence in "Lucrece" and in "Titus" on horrible themes, has been emphasised by the late Professor Collins. "The picture of the self-slain Lucrece," he writes ". . . . . is quite as revolting as the picture of the mutilated Lavinia. Nor are the mythological and classical allusions common to "Titus" and to the Poems less remarkable. Thus in the Poems and in "Titus" there are references to Hecuba going mad with sorrow, to the miseries of the aged Priam, to the debate between Ajax and Ulysses, to Diana and her nymphs, to Orpheus charming the nether Powers, to Sinon's betrayal of Troy, while, in both, the story of

(1) Mr. Root overlooks the fact that a great number of Shakspere's allusions may have been suggested by the works of English authors.
(2) The play contains 53 allusions in all and affords a striking contrast with the comparative rarity of allusion in the dramas almost contemporaneous.

Tereus and Philomela is dwelt upon with curious pertinacity." (1). The allusions, fourteen of which are clearly traceable to Ovid and the same number to Virgil, are mainly more or less detailed and seem to suggest that the poet was not far advanced from his school-days or that he had perhaps renewed his studies in the old mythology.

The story of the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, one of the main incidents on which the plot turns, is palpably modelled on the horrible story of Tereus and Philomela. Shakspere insists on the analogy throughout:-

"Fair Philomela, she but lost her tongue,
And in a tedious sampler sew'd her mind;
But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee;
A craftier Tereus hast thou met withal,
And he hath cut those pretty fingers off
That better could have sew'd than Philomel". (2).

The incidents in the third and fourth scenes of the second Act are full of reminiscences of the same fable. The method employed by Lavinia in exposing her violators and the ghastly banquet which Titus places before the inhuman Tamora distinctly recall Philomela's ingenious device and Procne's serving up to Tereus the flesh of his child. (3). The latter incident, of course, may possibly have

(1) "Studies in Shakespeare", 117.

(2) "Titus" II. 5. 39.

(3) Other references to the fable occur in II. 3. 43; II. 5. 26; IV. 1. 41; V. 2. 195. We have already remarked that the line "Forc'd in the ruthless, vast and gloomy woods" bears a remarkable resemblance to Ovid's "In stabula alta trahit silvis obscura vetustis".

been suggested by the legend of Atreus in the "Thyestes" of Seneca; and the "barren, destested vale" where Bassianus is murdered and Lavinia ravished may be a reminiscence of the haunted, sunless wood where Atreus slays his nephews. (1).

In the early histories, and in the earlier comedies such as "Two Gentlemen of Verona" and the "Comedy of Errors", there are very few allusions to the classics: "Love's Labour's Lost", revised in 1598, is to be classed as regards frequency of allusion with the plays of the later period. It is at this stage, the period of the histories and comedies, that the influence of the Ovidian mythology is most strongly marked. The play best calculated to illustrate its treatment is "The Merchant of Venice", in which drama, as Mr. Root suggests, Shakspere's skill in the employment of classical fable is best exhibited. "Of the twenty-eight allusions" he writes, "thirteen are detailed, and several are highly elaborate. Of the detailed allusions ten are to Ovidian story, and embrace such subjects as Orpheus, Midas, Argus, Thisbe, the rescue of Hesione, Hercules and Lichas; and to the story of Medea and Jason there are three separate allusions." We cannot do better than illustrate from certain of the above legends, as treated in "The Merchant of Venice" and elsewhere, the conception the poet entertained of classical mythology and his method of incorporating it into his works.

In the beautiful opening of the fifth Act - a charming contrast

(1) "Thyestes" 650.

with the storm and stress of the great trial scene - Shakspere has introduced a set of allusions unrivalled both for loveliness and propriety in the whole range of his work. In a setting admirably in key with the sentiment - Portia's garden revealed in the glory and the mystery of romantic night - Lorenzo and Jessica linger over the beautiful legends of antiquity, singing as it were in antiphonies, sweetened by the harmony of their own unclouded passion, the inspiring tale of lovers of the long ago. Although the passage is so well known, its beauty is ever fresh to the reader and we make no apology for its insertion here:

Lor. "The moon shines bright:- in such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise, - in such a night
Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls,
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

Jes. In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismay'd away.

Lor. In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

Jes. In such a night
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Aeson."

What marvellous music! As we hear its raptures, we are tempted to exclaim with Comus, himself enchanted by the tones of the Lady's Echo-Song:

"How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled!"

The poet rarely tunes his mythology to a higher pitch of poetic utterance. The glory is all Shakspere's. We forget the mythographer whose earthlier harmonies are blended with the nobler music of a greater master. Hazlitt tells us that "Shakespear alone could describe the effect of his own poetry.

O, it came o'er my ears like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour."

The well-known lines, if they are at all applicable to Shakspere's verse, may never be more fittingly applied than here.

Such music is characteristic of Shakspere's lyric movements. The hearts of Lorenzo and Jessica vibrate with its power. To them it is a music that is the food of love - a music that, with an ever-deepening intonation, ascends the highest heaven of sublimity as Lorenzo, raising his eyes to the floor of heaven, murmurs to his Jessica and to the enchanted night the legend of the music of the Spheres, the most wonderful in ancient story:

"There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,

Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Surely the poet's imagination never soared a loftier flight than this. The strain is of a higher mood. It is

"A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one".

Such is the spirit in which the younger Shakspere employs the mythology of the ancients. The work is peculiarly his own; it is Shakspere, not the classics. The whole scene flows as it were, to a happy murmur of music, and as is to be expected the famous Legend of Orpheus and his wonderful powers finds an appropriate introduction.

The poet's love of music - if we may so far interpret dramatic utterances as having a personal significance - is well attested by many tender references to the sister Art throughout his poetry. It certainly seems natural that the beautiful myth, which was, to the ancient mind a figure of its power and charm, should have had a peculiar fascination for Shakspere. Further, it may be of interest here to note that music probably appealed to Shakspere, as to the ancients, chiefly in its capacity as a soothing or pacific force. "Almost always", writes Professor Bradley, "he (Shakspere) speaks of music as having a softening, tranquillising, or pensive

influence. It lulls killing care and grief of heart to sleep. It soothes the sick and weary, and even makes them drowsy. Hamlet calls for it in his hysterical excitement after the success of the play scene. When it is hoped that Lear's long sleep will have carried his madness away, music is played as he awakes, apparently to increase the desired 'temperance'. It harmonises with the still and moonlit night, and the dreamy atmosphere of newly-wedded lovers." (1). In "A Midsummer Night's Dream", we may add, the mermaid's dulcet and harmonious breath has power to charm the sea; and again, in the "Tempest", the most exquisitely musical of the dramas, Ferdinand recognises the same soothing influence in that mysterious melody which seemed, to his charmed senses, to invest the island with an atmosphere of magic:

"This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion".

In this scene Lorenzo describes to Jessica the tranquillising and restraining influence of an air of music on a race of youthful and unhandled colts, offering it as an explanation of the charming of inanimate nature by the Thracian bard:

"Therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature". (2).

(1) "Oxford Lectures on Poetry", 336.

(2) The song at the opening of "Henry VIII", Act III, refers to the same phenomenon.

There can be little doubt that Ovid is 'the poet' here referred to, and that the particular passage may be found in Books ten and eleven of the "Metamorphoses". The opening lines of the latter Book seem to be the most probable source:

"Carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum
Threicius vates et saxa sequentia ducit." (1).

A further reference to the same myth seems to point to Ovidian influence. Proteus advises the Duke to assail the ears of Silvia with a serenade beneath her chamber-window, for nothing but such sweet complaining grievance will win her:

For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews,
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded depths to dance on sands". (2)

The second line is an obvious reminiscence of the story of Orpheus' murder in the opening of the eleventh Book of the "Metamorphoses", where the poet describes how the spears and stones of the Thracian women had no power to hurt the bard while his music was heard above the uproar. The sentiment of the first line is unsupported, of course, by classical authority.

The story of Jason, Medea, and Aeson, is also a favourite subject of allusion in the plays of Shakspere. The poet, it seems, was conversant with the striking narrative in Book seven of the "Metamorphoses". It is conceivable also that Ovid's vivid account

(1) Golding, Mr. Root points out, renders "ducit" by "draws".
(2) "Gent.", III. 2.

of Medea's wondrous alchemy supplied hints for the cauldron scene in "Macbeth". Hecate, the queen of darkness and of awful shapes, sings in her mystic chant:

"Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound;
I'll catch it ere it come to ground",

a passage which seems to echo Ovid's "addit et exceptas luna pernocte pruinas". (1). The tale of mystic ingredients used by Shakspere's witches has certainly little in common with Ovid's catalogue. The poet may have gathered suggestions from other sources, and in any case for a scene such as this Shakspere need not of necessity have consulted Ovid at all.

The numerous references to the legend of Pyramus and Thisbe, and especially the delightful burlesque in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", certainly justify the conclusion that the story had some interest for Shakspere. The poet almost certainly knew the story as told in Ovid or in Golding. (2). The allusion in "The Merchant of Venice":

(1) Golding's rendering is somewhat quaint: "She put thereto a deaw that fell upon a Monday night"!

(2) The tale had been told in English by Chaucer in his "Legend of Good Women", and by Thomson in a poem entitled "New Sonet of Pyramus and Thisbie". In both Chaucer and Shakspere occurs the expression 'wicked wall', while Bottom's "now will I to the chink, to spy an I can hear my Thisby's face" seems to burlesque Thomson's lines

"That he might see his Thisbie's face/And she his sight".

"In such a night

Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,

And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,

And ran dismay'd away",

seems to echo Golding's rendering:

"Whome (i.e. the lioness) Thisbe spying furst

A farre by moonelight, thereupon with fearfull steppes gan flie.'

Such, then, is Shakspere's early attitude towards the ancient mythology. In the later plays a gradual change in tone becomes apparent and the charming and serious use of classical legend is pervaded by a spirit of raillery and scepticism. This change of attitude may be well illustrated, as Mr. Root suggests, by contrasting the beautiful opening of the fifth Act of "The Merchant of Venice" with the following playful speech of Rosalind:

"No, faith, die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love-cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have lived many a fair year, though Hero had turned nun, if it had not been for a hot midsummer night; for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont and being taken with the cramp was drowned: and the foolish chroniclers of that age found it was 'Hero of Sestos'. But these are all lies: men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love". (1).

(1) "As You Like It", IV. 1.

This attitude, according to Mr. Root, is characteristic of the plays of the same period. "When we add", he continues, "that in the Second Part of "Henry IV", "The Merry Wives", and "Much Ado", written all of them at about the same time as "As You Like It", the mythological allusions are of the same character, or even more broadly humorous, that of the thirty allusions in "Much Ado" twenty-five are playful or scoffing, we are safe in affirming that Shakspere's attitude has changed, that he has recognised the insincerity of the Ovidian system and finds in it only the material for a jest". (1). It is certain that Shakspere found the Ovidian system quite inadequate for the expression of his profounder researches into the mysteries of human life and that in the more serious episodes of his earlier dramatic compositions this inadequacy was most clearly realised. "The Merchant of Venice", says Mr. Root, "abounds in mythological allusions, but not a single instance of such allusion is to be found in the great trial scene in Act IV. Of the twenty-five mythological allusions in "Romeo and Juliet", all but five occur in Acts 1 and 2, four are in Act 3, one allusion is spoken by Paris in Act 4, and none at all in Act 5. As the tragedy darkens, as the seriousness deepens, mythology weakens and disappears." (2). "Hamlet", the writer goes on to illustrate, affords further proof of this treatment; and here, moreover, allusions to the more serious Virgil almost entirely supersede Ovidian fable. In the later period of Shakspere's

(1) See Note C.

(2) Intro. 9.

tragedies, classical mythology, as we should expect, almost entirely disappears; (1) the grander and more sublime aspects of myth are alone dwelt upon. Moreover, the mythology of Shakspere's final period seems to suggest that the poet was searching it for a deeper significance and for a hiddsn moral purpose.

An interesting comparison may be drawn between Shakspere's treatment of classical mythology and Chaucer's. In the earlier works of each poet there is a somewhat careless and irrelevant introduction of classical story. This applies more especially to Chaucer, for Shakspere rarely makes use, as Chaucer does, of an exhaustive series of catalogic parallels for purposes of illustration. Later, however, when ~~Chaucer~~ he had been influenced by the Renascence spirit of Italy, ~~his~~ Chaucer's use of classical illustration displays a broader knowledge of the Latin authors. (2).

But it is in that humorous treatment of ancient legend, peculiar to both poets in their maturity, that the greatest resemblance is traceable. One of Shakspere's chief aims in composing "Troilus" was to bring the characters of the Trojan war to the plane of ordinary life, and in Chaucer, also, we observe a similar tendency to divest ancient fable and custom of its popular dignity and to clothe it in a modern garb of the ludicrous. (3). Both poets in their youth would have a certain reverence for the sources to which

(1) In "Julius Caesar" there are five allusions, in "Measure for Measure", two, in "Othello", eleven, in "Macbeth", eight, and in "Lear", five.

(2) His work is never entirely free, however, from high-piled parallelism.

(3) In the "Hous of Fame", for example, Chaucer refers to Hercules "that with a sherte his lyf lees".

they were largely indebted, and in a similar way, for their material, but as they progressed in poetical emancipation from their youthful studies, the fables of antiquity would naturally lose that halo of veneration with which the poets enshrouded them in earlier years. The classics are not merely drawn upon in their later works for picturesque illustrations; the fables become part and parcel of the work and help to bring home the story to the reader. In short, the classical element is brought increasingly into contact with the ordinary affairs and interests of life, an inevitable development in the work of two such realists as Chaucer and Shakspere. As a natural consequence, therefore, the classical element is subjected to a freer method of treatment and occasionally masquerades, as we have said, in the garment of the ludicrous and the mock-heroic. In illustration we might mention Chaucer's admirable story of the Cock and the Fox, particularly the humorous altercations between Chanticleer and his worthy spouse, and as an illustration of the poet's similar method of looking at classical legend we might instance the delightful speech of Rosalind on the shortcomings of dispassionate man in all ages and Chaucer's dryly humorous description of Phaeton in the Third Book of the "Hous of Fame".

"The sonnes sone, the rede,
That highte Pheton, wolde lede
Algate his fader cart, and gye.
The cart-hors gonne wel espye
That he ne coude no governaunce,
And gonne for to lepe and launce,

Til Jupiter, lo, atte laste,
Him slow, and fro the carte cast.
Lo, it is not a greet mischaunce,
To lete a fole han governaunce
Of thing that he can not demeine?"

Similarly, again, Chaucer wonders, as the eagle bears him aloft, whether Romulus or Ganymede experienced quite so much pain in the transit, while Shakspere's Benedick, as he wrestles with a reluctant rhyme, expresses his candid opinion that he has suffered more extremity for love than any of the ancient worthies: "Leander, the good swimmer, Troilus, the first employer of panders, and a whole book full of these quondam carpet-mongers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why, they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self, in love". (1)

Such are the main differences in Shakspere's treatment of classical mythology. But though the treatment may vary, the law of dramatic propriety which, in the case of classical allusion, may be regarded as a particular instance of the more general law, is rarely, if ever, violated. The allusions are in nearly every case suited to the context and to the character of the person who usds them. In "Titus" and in "Lucrece", as we saw, the introduction of the more horrible and revolting incidents of mythology materially enhance the tragedy; in "The Merchant of Venice", again, propriety of allusion is apparent throughout; and in "Macbeth", Hecate, queen of the grim powers of darkness, presides over the terrible scene together with those awful and phantasmal beings that dwell

(1) Our comparisons are necessarily somewhat precarious, because the Shaksperian passages are obviously dramatic.

"In Stygian cave forlorn

'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy".

Shakspere certainly makes mistakes, but they are rarely of a vital and fundamental nature. They arise from his indifference to mere fact - again a particular case of the general rule. He could make erroneous references to the myth of Hercules and the golden apples (1) and wrongly suggest that the swan was sacred to Juno, but he could not, in common with many of the writers of his day, indulge in an indiscriminate employment of classical mythology without regard to relevance of character and context.

In the fifth Act of "The Merchant of Venice" there is a passage that is as remarkable for its singular inexactitude of classical allusion as for its extraordinary beauty. We have quoted the passage before. Lorenzo says:

"In such a night

Stood Dido with a willow in her hand

Upon the wild sea-banks, and waft her love

To come again to Carthage". (2)

Shakspere has apparently confused Virgil's narrative with the story of Theseus and Ariadne as told by Ovid in the tenth chapter of the "Heroides". Shakspere's lines not only crystallise the Ovidian story; they have also an inexpressible charm - that "curiosa

(1) In "Love's Labour's Lost", IV. 3. 341, and in "Coriolanus", IV. 6. 99, Hercules is represented as plucking the golden apples; and in "Pericles", I. 1. 27, the term "Hesperides" is used to signify the name of the garden.

(2) The passage is quoted by Matthew Arnold as illustration of the so-called "natural magic" which, he maintained, is the peculiar inheritance in our poetry of the Celtic influence.

felicitas" - which we do not find in the bare Latin narrative. The forsaken Ariadne mounts an eminence on the moonlit shore of her lonely island and looks out over the sea. She calls to the deserter Theseus to return, and when there is no response but the echo of her own voice among the hollow rocks, she endeavours to draw her lover's attention by waving her white veil upon a wand:

"'Quo fugis'" exclamo "scelerate revertere Theseu,
Flecte ratem! . . . . .
. . . . . .
Si non audires, ut saltem cernere posses,
Iactatae late signa dedere manus.
Candidaque inposui longae velamina virgae
Scilicet oblitos admonitura mei". (1)

The legends of antiquity, then, supplied Shakspere with a variety of rich material for the ornamentation of his verse and for glowing and apposite illustration. Many of the poet's most beautiful and most famous figures are drawn from classical fable. Thus Hamlet, drawing a verbal picture of his noble father, says:

"See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury,
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill".

(1) "Her." X. 35-42. It is quite as probable (perhaps more so) that Shakspere read the incident in Chaucer. ("Legend of Good Women", 2193-2205).

The humbled Richard, as he descends from the castle walls to meet Bolingbroke, likens his abasement to that of Phaeton, hurled headlong down the steeps of heaven:

"Down, down, I come; like glistering Phaeton,
Wanting the manage of unruly jades."

Again, when Bassanio dilates on the beauties of Portia he compares her sunny locks to a golden fleece, and her suitors to so many Jasons

"Who make her seat of Belmont Colchos strand."

One of the most beautiful and suggestive of Shakspere's mythological references occurs in the fourth Act of "A Winter's Tale". How beautifully the maiden Perdita is pictured as she walks in her state among the flowers at the rural feast, like Proserpina of old in the fair field of Enna! And Perdita, too, must be borne away by Florizel as Proserpin from her flowers

"Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered - which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world".

What could be lovelier than the tender appeal of Shakspere's lost maiden to the maiden-queen of ancient story?

"O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that, frighted, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! 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 Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength". (1).

In many cases Shakspere merely makes a subtle allusion to ancient mythology without definite reference. From the speech

"Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth",

it seems probable that the poet was thinking of such famous stories of faithful women as are found in Ovid's "Heroides", Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women", and Gower's "Confessio Amantis". The Duke in "Twelfth Night" thus covertly refers to the legend of Actaeon:

"O when my eyes did see Olivia first,
Methought she purg'd the air of pestilence:
That instant was I turn'd into a hart;
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
E're since pursue me". (2).

Finally, how unspeakably pathetic is the mournful cry of the child-changed Lear as he awakes from his heavy slumber and, seeing the figure of Cordelia bending over him, compares his own unhappy state

(1) The story is told in "Metamorphoses" V. 359-500. For the incident of the flowers see 389-99 and especially 392, - "aut violas aut candida lilia carpit." A more complete list of flowers is given in "Fasti" IV. 437-443.

(2) Act I. sc. 1. c.f. Shelley's allusion to himself in "Adonais" 31.

to that of tortured Ixion:

"You do me wrong, to take me out o' the grave:-
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead". (IV, 7, 45-8).

The privilege of classical allusion is by no means confined to Shakspere's higher and more sedate characters; it extends to the lower orders as well, but with a distinction that is peculiarly appropriate. The conversation of the poet's humorous creations is occasionally pointed with mythological lore, often amusingly inaccurate and almost invariably characterised by a glaring incongruity. Launcelot Gobbo's speech in the scene where he tries confusions with his old father is a case in point:

"Talk not of master Launcelot, father," he says, "for the young gentlemen (according to fates and destinies, and such odd sayings, the sisters three, and such branches of learning) is, indeed, deceased; or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven".

Not less delightful is the rant and the bungling mythological references of Bottom and his crew:

"I could play Ercles rarely", says Bottom, "or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split:

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;

And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates."

Again, in the famous dramatic interlude, the hero and heroine thus proclaim their vows through the hole in the wall:

Pyr. "Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.
This. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.
Pyr. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.
This. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you!"

How natural it is! How delightfully do these glaring blunders, while provoking our unbridled mirth, also enhance our interest in these rude, honest fellows and serve to throw their characters into bolder relief. We recall a similar realistic touch in Fielding, in the chapter where the world-famous Squire Western describes to Allworthy the experiences he underwent at an unexpected introduction into some polite society in the Metropolis: "D---n me", he cries, "I'd rather be run by my own dogs, as one Acton was, that the story-book says was turned into a hare, and his own dogs killed un, and eat un."!

Nothing less than the Fates and the mythology of the infernal regions will satisfy the classical taste of the sensationally-minded person of the lower order. The utterances of the bombastic Pistol are invariably heightened by sounding phrases introducing the "sisters three", the names of ancient celebrities, terrific

exclamations of "base Trojan!", and mighty oaths by the infernal river. "Dost thou thirst", he says, "base Trojan

To have me fold up Parca's fatal web?"

Again, in the humorous scene in the Boar's Head Tavern, mine Ancient commends Mistress Tear-sheet "to Pluto's damned lake, . . . to the infernal deep, with Erebus and tortures vile also", and, when warned to cease brawling, proceeds with additional fervour in the same strain:

"Shall pack-horses", he cries,
"And hollow-pamper'd jades of Asia,
Which cannot go but thirty miles a day,
Compare with Caesars, and with Cannibals,
And Trojan Greeks? Nay, rather damn them with
King Cerberus; and let the welkin roar.
Shall we fall foul for toys?" (1)

Bardolph endeavours to "quoit him" down the stairs, but mine Ancient draws his sword:

"What!", he says, "shall we have incision? Shall we imbrue:-
Then death rock me asleep, abridge my doleful days!
Why then, let grievous, ghastly, gaping wounds
Untwine the sisters three! Come, Atropos, I say,"

and he is bundled downstairs.

Shakspere's verse, in common with that of his age, is exceptionally rich in classical personification. "The aspect of

(1) II. Henry IV, Act II. 4. See Note D.

mythology," says Mr. Root, "which appealed most deeply to Shakspere, which he most fully and vitally incorporated into his own thoughts, is that original aspect of the system which gives a divine personality to the great forces of nature. The sun in its rising and its setting, the "gray-eyed dawn", and the "black-browed night"; the procession of the seasons from "well-apparelled April" to "old Hiems" with his "thin and icy crown"; "great Neptune's ocean" and the "mutinous winds"; the crash of Jove's dread thunderbolt - to express his appreciation of all these, Shakspere has constant recourse to the forms of expression given us by the ancients, or, still more significantly, imitates their methods of thought without employing their exact terms."

This expression of the processes of the world of nature in terms of human activities makes a special appeal to the student of the arts at the present time. In conclusion, therefore, we will endeavour to bring out the unrestrained artistic freedom of Shakspere and his age by imagining the view that a sensitive artistic spirit would take of the conditions under which poetry is endeavouring to flourish to-day. Place side by side the era of analytical enquiry with the wonderful imaginative era of ancient Greece, famed throughout the ages for its magnificent outburst of poetry and its wonderful achievements in plastic art. Place the age of Science in contrast with the age of Queen Elizabeth. What is the difference? - Poetic imagination, the distinguishing feature of the earlier eras, is disappearing, rapidly fading into insignificance before the advancing powers of Materialism. Within the last hundred years

the beautiful myths of the ancients, and, what is really vital, that ideality which is the very life and soul of poetry, have withered before the deadly blast of scientific enquiry. Science has waxed not only in power but also in arrogance; the artistic realm is overshadowed by the scientific. Even the vital and spiritual truths of poetry must be materialised and must go into the scientific melting-pot.

A universal wail went up from the poets at this ruthless disillusionment. Science, to Poe, is the true daughter of the ravager Time - a vulture, whose wings are dull realities, preying upon the poet's heart. How then should the poet love her?—

"How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood?"

It is the apotheosis of disillusion. To indulge in a little surmise: were it possible for us to catch a glimpse of the poet's vision,

"The living Throne, the sapphire-blaze
Where angels tremble while they gaze",

should we not see also the scientist with his spectroscope resolving it into its various elements? The poet of Lamia sings:

"Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine." (1)

We have lost the spirit of wonder and of awe. The glorious phenomena of the universe, the fields, the hills, the mystery and beauty of the sea, if they may happen sometimes to claim our attention, often leave us cold. All the glorious pageantry of the skies, "huge cloudy symbols of a high romance", and that glittering array which passes in royal splendour over the face of night, have become for us a mere procession of bodies moving in space, with no power as of yore to burn and brand into man his nothingness.

"On old Aegina's rock, and Idra's isle
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile"

sings the poet of the pre-scientific age;

"There sinks the nebulous star we call the Sun,
If that hypothesis of theirs be sound"

is the harsh music typical of the age of science. Shall not the artist cry out against this deadly solvent of the imaginative energies of man - cry out in the language of the melancholy poet in Milton for a glimpse of the ancient world of Greece:

(1) This poem is merely the expression of a mood in Keats. A similar subordination of the intellectual & philosophical to the emotional & the sensuous is [illegible] in the concluding lines of the chapter.

"But, O sad virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musaeus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek";

or in the words of the most spiritual of our poets who, in his passionate outcry against the same cold worldliness, exclaimed:

"Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn." (1).

How beautifully free from this deadening spiritual depression were the ancient Greeks, and how free were Shakspere and the other great writers of the Renascence era! In Shakspere's day the imaginative tendencies of the ancient world were blended with, not overwhelmed by, the business of the present and researches in the world of matter. Much as the Elizabethan loved the world about him - and surely in no other age was the joy of life so keen as in the spacious times of great Elizabeth - the wings of his soul were by no means paralysed, nor was the poet then confined, as now, to the sphere of the palpable and the gross. It was with the imagination

(1) See Note E.

and the wonderment of a poet that the noble Elizabethan, even in the face of death, went to discover countries yet unknown. He saw the beauty of the world around him, and, helped by the poetical machinery of the ancients, expressed what he saw in terms of surpassing beauty. He did not forget, as many of our modern scientists have forgotten, that scientific speculation is but one method in the attainment of truth -that the truths of Art and of Science are not opposed to each other but are mutually complementary.

The mythological world of Shakspere, reincarnate from the pages of Ovid, will live. Our great poet, typical of the poets of his age, saw far more in the Ovidian fables than Ovid himself saw, and in the poetical embellishment with which he has enriched the comparatively bare material of the Roman mythographer we have a work unimpeachable in artistic propriety, fadeless in beauty, nor yet devoid of spiritual significance. (1).

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(1) See Note F.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE INFLUENCE OF SENECA:

### The Romantic and Classical Dramas.

Mitis. Does he observe all the laws . . in it?

Cordatus. What laws mean you?

Mitis. Why, the equal division of it into acts and scenes, and . . . . . his true number of actors; the furnishing of the scene with grex or Chorus, and that the whole argument fall within the compass of a day's business.

Cordatus. O no, these are too nice observations.

Mitis. They are such as must be received, by your favour, or it cannot be authentic.

Cordatus. Troth, I can discern no such necessity.

(Ben Jonson).

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In the opening of the preceding chapter we endeavoured to summarise the outstanding characteristics of the Renascence revival and their effect on the literature of Elizabethan England. We saw that, under the influence of that mighty awakening, the whole conception of art was revolutionised and that the poetic imagination, unfettered by crabbed Mediaevalism, pursued with enthusiastic delight the glorious path that the rediscovery of the classics had opened up. We showed, too, that Ovid became the universal authority of the new life and that, owing to the uncultured taste of the time, he was exalted, in spite of all his imperfections, far above his greater Hellenic predecessors.

But Ovid was by no means alone in his influence. The cause of Latin poetry as against the Greek was upheld by another disciple of the mightier Hellenism, namely by Seneca, a poet who rivalled even Ovid in popularity and whose influence was, perhaps, even wider and more far-reaching. The fact that the Latin tragedian of the decadence, and not Sophocles, stood for the universal model of classical tragedy in the sixteenth and even in the seventeenth century is yet another indication of the crudity of contemporary English taste. Seneca's popularity, attested directly by eulogistic references and indirectly by the flattery of imitation, was as unmerited as it was enormous. Nashe, in his Preface to "Menaphon", comments on the universal assiduity in studying English versions. "English Seneca," he says, "read by candle-light yields many good sentences as 'Blood is a beggar', and so forth." Meres, too, remarks in his "Palladis Tamia" that "as Plautus and Seneca are accounted

best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds". No mention whatever is made of the great Attic dramatists.

In the drama, as elsewhere, classical taste reigned supreme until the example of Marlowe and of Shakspere decided the victory in favour of Romance. No play that was not impregnated by the classical spirit and that did not bear the stamp of classical form was acceptable either to the scholar or to the more enlightened among the multitudes. The native drama had already become an object of ridicule, while the melodramatic Seneca was exalted, both for form and for subject-matter, as the ideal type in the realm of dramatic representation. Long after the triumph of the Romantic Drama, the defeated forces of classicism continued the desultory struggle. The work of Marlowe and Shakspere, truly English as it was and the lasting glory of our literature, was by no means universally accepted. The severe classical form and spirit, defended by the eloquence of Sidney, was mightily upheld by Jonson. Reversions to Seneca are numerous: plays such as Daniel's "Philotus" and "Cleopatra" were produced in spite of the Romantic triumph. In Milton the protest is heard again, though more faintly, and the example of Addison marks yet another stage in the lingering strife. Senecan influence was surely one of the most fruitful in effect on our great literature. Let us add, however, that the lack of a nice, critical appreciation was not the only reason for the Elizabethan bias towards Seneca. It was to a large extent due to the general popularity and facility of acquisition of the Latin

language as against the Greek, to the inspiration and example of Italy, and to a revulsion, perhaps, from the crudity of form in the popular drama.

Seneca's characteristics as a dramatist, so detrimental in their effect on the generality of our playwrights, were derived for the most part from Euripedes. The great forte of the Roman tragedian lay in the conception of dramatic situation, in vivid description, in rhetorical declamation, and in inordinate sententiousness, all of which characteristics are present in a higher degree in Seneca than in his predecessor. These traits are reproduced in the Elizabethan Senecan dramas, notably in the typical instance of Sackville and Norton's "Gorboduc". This play, "full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style", was followed, in 1568 by "Tancred and Gismunda", described in its dedicatory epistle as, "in stateliness of show and depth of conceit, for true ornaments of poetical art, inferior to none of the best in that kind, no, were the Roman Seneca the censurer". The melodramatic tone of Seneca, the unheard of crimes sometimes recounted by the nuntius but occasionally committed on the stage - characteristics well exemplified by the "Medea" and the "Thyestes" - made a direct appeal to the Elizabethan playwright and to the depraved taste of his audience. Medea in the one play and Atreus in the other became to the Elizabethan dramatist the stock examples of barefaced criminality. "In their open profession of villainy", writes Mr. Vaughan, "in their deliberate effort to amaze and appal mankind,

there is little doubt that these characters are the ancestors of a whole class which meets us again and again in the Elizabethan drama. Barabas in the "Jew of Malta", Lorenzo in the "Spanish Tragedy", Richard of Gloucester, these are the most familiar examples of it. But it reappears in "Antonio's Revenge" and "The Malcontent" of Marston; and through him it was transmitted to the Atheist, we may add perhaps to the Revenger, of Tourneur. And a softened echo of it is to be found in the "White Devil" of Webster. In many of these the groundwork of Seneca is doubtless crossed with reminiscences of Machiavelli, or rather the image of that sinister figure which popular imagination had conjured up. But the debt to Seneca is unmistakable. And it is one of the points in which his influence on the Elizabethans is most clearly marked and most fruitful of imaginative effect." (1).

Such, then, in brief was the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan tragedy. For the proper appreciation of this element in Shakspere a study of Senecan influence on the earlier drama, which we cannot attempt with any fulness here, is quite essential. There is certainly much in Shakspere that is Senecan, but on the question of Shakspere's knowledge of the Latin tragedian critics are divided. The poet may have read Seneca in the Latin, or in the several English translations, or his knowledge may have been still more indirectly derived from the dramatic literature of the time. There can be little doubt that Shakspere had read the English Senecan

(1) "Types of Tragic Drama", 92.

plays, as "Titus", "Richard III", and "Hamlet" abundantly testify; and we have seen that the whole of Shakspere's early work, both lyric and dramatic, was to a large extent modelled on the writers of his day. On the question of sources Dr. Cunliffe writes: "Whether Shakspere was directly indebted to Seneca is a question as difficult as it is interesting. As English tragedy advances, there grows up an accumulation of Senecan influence within the English drama, in addition to the original source, and it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the direct and the indirect influence of Seneca. . . In the case of Shakspere we cannot be absolutely certain either way. Professor Baynes thinks it is probable that Shakspere read Seneca at school; and even if he did not, we may be sure that, at some period of his career, he would turn to the generally accepted model of classical tragedy, either in the original or in the translation." (1). Mr. Robertson is inclined to adopt Farmer's view that Shakspere's classical knowledge was almost entirely drawn from indirect sources, while Professor Collins, on the other hand, definitely states that the poet read Seneca in the original and not in the lumbering and unsatisfactory English version accessible at the time. The truth, perhaps, lies somewhere between these two statements as an examination of the internal evidence goes to prove.

In "Hamlet", Seneca is referred to by name. Polonius, rehearsing the merits of the players, says: "Seneca cannot be too

(1) "The influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy" 66. (Extracted from Robertson "Shakspere and Montaigne" 74).

heavy, nor Plautus too light"-a statement which, to some critics, presupposes an intimate knowledge of the two dramatists referred to. In "Titus Andronicus" the"Hippolytus" of Seneca is twice quoted from memory in the Latin. The lines,

"Magni Dominator poli

Tam lentus audis scelera? tam lentus vides", (IV. 1. 82.)

seem to be an imperfect recollection of "Hippolytus", 671-2:

"Magne regnator deum" etc.

Another recollection, apparently, occurs in the second Act of the same play:

"Sit fas aut nefas . . .

Per Styga, per manes vehor", (II. 1. 133) c.f. "Hippolytus", 1180:

"Per Styga, per amnes igneas amens sequar!"

Malcolm's speech,

"Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak

Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break" (1)

is apparently a reminiscence of the "Curae leves loquuntur: ingentes stupent" of Seneca, (2) but there is every reason to believe that it was a stock phrase in the drama of the time. It appears, for example, in "The Misfortunes of Arthur":

"Small griefs can speak: the great astonish'd stand",

but Mr. Robertson thinks that Shakspere found the commonplace in Montaigne's essay "Of Sadness". (3).

(1) "Macbeth", IV. 3.

(2) "Hippolytus", 615.

(3) "Montaigne and Shakspere", 68.

In the following lines from "King John", as Mr. Cunliffe points out, there is a reminiscence of Seneca in the Latin:

"A sceptre, snatch'd with an unruly hand,
Must be as boisterously maintained as gain'd:
And he that stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up."

c.f. "Hercules Furens", 341-5:

"Rapta sed trepida manu
Sceptra obtinentur: omnis in ferro est salus.
Quod civibus tenere te invitis scias,
Strictus tuetur ensis: alieno in loco
Haud stabile regnum est". (1)

The simile, in Richard III, of the swelling of the waters before a storm is often quoted as a direct reminiscence of "Thyestes", 957-60:

"Mittit luctus signa futuri
Mens, ante sui praesaga mali.
Instat nautis fera tempestas,
Quum sine vento tranquilla tument". (2)

But Shakspere's lines are simply a versification of a passage in his authority, Holinshed's "Chronicles", the idea of which was almost certainly suggested by the Latin original:

(1) Vide Collins, "Studies in Shakspere", 24.

(2) "By a divine instinct men's minds mistrust
Pursuing danger: as, by proof we see
The water swell before a boist'rous storm". (II. 3. 42).

"Before such great things men's hearts of a secret instinct of nature misgive them: as the sea without wind swelleth himself some time before a tempest" (3. 721).

Mr. Anders quotes a parallel, discovered by Professor Brandl, between Lady Macbeth's invocation to the spirits and the first monologue of Seneca's "Medea", but the English version which he quotes in support of this reminiscence bears but a vague and general resemblance to Shakspere's famous lines. (1). The cry of the protagonist in"Macbeth":

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red,"

is quoted by Theobald as reminiscent of Seneca's "Hippolytus" (715 sq.) and "Hercules Furens" (1323 sq.). But, as Mr. Robertson justly remarks, the lines were almost certainly suggested by the drama of the time (2). "These declamations," he says, "deriving as they do, to begin with, from Aeschylus are seen from their very recurrence in Seneca to have become stock speeches for the ancient tragic drama; and they were clearly well fitted to become so for the mediaeval. The phrases used were already classic when Catullus

(1) "Macbeth", I. 5. 41.

(2) "Montaigne and Shakspere", 76. The general inconclusiveness of the parallels cited by Dr. Cunliffe is demonstrated on 77-9.

employed them before Seneca:

Suscipit, O Gelli, quantum non ultima Thetys
Non genitor Nympharum, abluit Oceanus.

In the Renaissance we find the theme reproduced by Tasso; and it had doubtless been freely used by Shakspere's English predecessors."

Of far greater importance is the indirect influence of Seneca on motive and on subject-matter. Both "Henry VI" and "Titus", which represent Shakspere's earliest attempts at drama, are impregnated by Senecan influence, the latter being written as a concession to the public taste. The plays which were before the people at the period of Shakspere's dramatic apprenticeship belong to that species of drama which may be called the tragedy of horror. It is in such works as "Gorboduc", "Selimus", "Soliman and Perseda", "The Jew of Malta", the "Pre-Hamlet", and, above all, "The Spanish Tragedy", which had a tremendous vogue, that we may find the explanation of Shakspere's horrible tragedy. In these dramas the Senecan element is patent. The Pre-Hamlet, for instance, bears evident marks of Senecan influence. (1). The horrible feast in the fifth Act of "Titus" recalls, as we saw, a similar scene in the "Thyestes". The whole play smells of blood; it is a ghastly carnival of horrors, and as such it would make a special appeal to the depraved audience of the time. "The more murders", writes the late Professor Collins, "and suicides, massacres and mutilations a

(1) Nashe, in his Preface to "Menaphon" says that "English Seneca, . . . if you intreate him faire in a frosty morning, will afoord you whole "Hamlets", I should say handfulls of tragical speaches."

play contained, the more ghastly and horrible its details, the more certain was it to find favour. Thus we have the author of the First Part of "Selimus", which is almost as horrible as "Titus", taking leave of his audience with the words:

"If this first part, gentles, do like you well,
The second part shall greater murders tell".

Critics have often hazarded conjectures as to the probable future of the English drama had it been moulded entirely by the classical, and particularly by the Senecan, type. The imitation of the ancients by French and Italian poets certainly met with a fair amount of success, but similar attempts by English playwrights were generally unsuccessful and only served to reveal an undramatic turn of mind. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the fact that the Senecan influence on Elizabethan drama was in a way productive of good. The study of Seneca brought with it a purer taste and a loftier ideal. It grafted on the formless growth of our early drama a carefulness in composition, a gravity of diction, and a harmoniousness of construction that was peculiarly beneficial to its development.

The style of the Senecan drama was, in accordance with the weight and gravity of its matter, solemn, reflective, and strongly tinged with sonorous declamation. "Gorboduc", which Sidney holds to be its best English representative, is the only exception in his sweeping denunciation of our stage, a play, he affirms, that would be absolutely unrivalled but for the unfortunate violation of the Unity of Time. But Sidney could never have conceived when he wrote

his "Apologie" what a tremendous reaction was imminent. His contempt for the popular stage with its buffoonery and skimble-skamble is by no means unaccountable. There was, on the one hand, the lofty, dignified, and well constructed drama of antiquity and, on the other, the coarse, rambling, and incompact productions of his contemporaries and it is not difficult for us to understand Sidney's attitude. It was the work of Marlowe and of Shakspere that gave the death-blow to the Senecan play, and every true dramatist of the day felt by a common instinct that the path pursued by these two mighty champions was the only true path to walk in.

Many of Shakspere's earlier creations are strongly reminiscent of characters in the English Senecan drama. Aaron is evidently modelled on Barabas in the "Jew of Malta", who, with Lorenzo in the "Spanish Tragedy", was then the most popular villain of the Senecan type on the Elizabethan stage. But Shakspere's play positively out-Herods Herod in its appeal to the depravity of the audience. In the first scene of the fifth act, for instance, the villainous Aaron outdoes all the representatives of this horrible fraternity in his criminal professions:-

"Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves,
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors". (1)

The employment of the Ghost, and more especially of the ghost who comes to execute vengeance, was the Senecan device that was most fruitful of effect on the Elizabethan theatre. The most famous of

(1) The late Professor Collins, however, is inclined to consider the passage as a ludicrous parody of Marlowe's horrible drama.

Seneca's spirits is that of Thyestes in the "Agamemnon". "Here", says Mr. Vaughan, "the ghost of Thyestes is essentially the spirit of revenge. And that was the specific form under which the ghost passed into the tragedy of the Elizabethans. The most notable instance of this is to be found in the "Spanish Tragedy", the most popular play of its time, in which the ghost of the murdered Andrea, hand in hand (so to speak) with the Spirit of Revenge, appears at the beginning of each Act to incite the living to exact vengeance for his death. And the ghost of "Hamlet", the most famous of all dramatic spirits, is clearly an offshoot of Andrea, though an offshoot grafted by the hand of genius." (1). Madness, murder, mutilation and revenge, with all the lurid apparatus of horror, these are the main themes of Senecan tragedy so faithfully reproduced in the Elizabethan drama.

The influence of Seneca was not only manifested in the realm of classical tragedy. It is as clearly traceable in the Romantic Drama of Shakspere's contemporaries and predecessors, traceable too, as we have already seen, in the Shaksperian drama itself. Our classical drama was more or less strictly under the restraint of classical rules and followed with due fidelity the machinery and dramatic devices of the Senecan plays, particularly in its use of the Ghost, the Nuntius, and the Chorus. But the nobler dramatic growth of Elizabethan romanticism could never have flourished under the rigorous pruning of rusty classical rules. For the classical

(1) "Types of Tragic Drama", 94.

drama, characterised by a calm and dignified inaction, the Nuntius was peculiarly necessary, but his tedious and inartistic method of relation would have been manifestly unpopular on the Romantic stage distinguished as it was by vivid and copious action. The strict classicist, on the other hand, could never have sanctioned the awful fatality through which Shakspere's "Hamlet" rushes to its overwhelming conclusion, nor could he have gazed, without the accompaniment of strong shudders, on the heartrending climax of "Othello". But the rapidity and fire of the Romancists more than compensates for the loss of the stereotyped form and decorous treatment of the classical drama. This vital difference between the two great dramatic schools cannot be better illustrated than by contrasting Shakspere's "Antony and Cleopatra" with Daniel's play on the same subject. In the latter, a late Elizabethan reversion to Seneca, the death of the heroine is tamely announced by the nuntius, while, in Shakspere, the tragic end of Cleopatra, magnificently enacted "coram populo", is the crowning glory of the drama.

To the so-called Classical Unities our dramatist was serenely indifferent. "Shakespeare never troubled himself about the legislators of Parnassus or even did them the honour of recognising their existence". This attitude, alluded to by Stapfer, is eminently characteristic of our exalted poet. "Macbeth" may bear some resemblance in spirit to the tragedy of the ancients; the action of the "Comedy of Errors" or of the "Tempest" may confine itself within the orthodox limits of time, but we cannot therefore

infer that Shakspere was experimenting in the composition of drama according to classical laws. In the case of the "Tempest", the action is only of three hours' duration, but we feel conscious that events are speeding far too fast. We are in another world, a wonderful fairy-world peopled by powerful and glorious spirits, a world governed by laws of which we know nothing. In the "Comedy of Errors" it is highly probable that Shakspere did not deliberately confine the action "within the compass of a day's business". It is far more likely that he simply followed the nature and scope of the subject, the matter of the Plautine comedy conveniently arranging itself within the limits of a twenty-four hours' action. Again, the exclusion of the comic element from "Macbeth" - with the exception of the Porter Scene, which is sometimes erroneously considered as an interpolation - has led certain critics to suppose that Shakspere was endeavouring to imitate the unmixed tragedy of the ancients. Sidney, who could not conceive of any 'untying' of poetic laws, had already objected to the popular drama as a "mongrel tragi-comedy, neither right tragedy nor right comedy", and had condemned his favourite for its unfortunate breach of the classical unities. But Shakspere saw that the success or failure of a play depended upon other and deeper causes. Of great importance, therefore, in this connexion is the casual reference to the question thrown out by the artist himself, who was by his practice, in serene indifference to theory, upsetting for ever the laws of Aristotle and Sidney. In "Hamlet", old Polonius introduces "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" he continues, "nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men." In the contest between the law of writ and the liberty, the liberty triumphed on our stage, and in it Shakspere achieved the most notable success that the world of letters has ever known.

For nice distinctions and pedantic literary customs, then, Shakspere had no interest. His stage is the world, and on that stage the incidents of human life are portrayed as they naturally happen and not as a spasm of twenty-four hours' duration confined to a single place.

It was mainly owing to the practical difficulty of creating the necessary dramatic illusion that Shakspere made use of the Chorus. Prefixed to each Act of "Henry V", the speech of this functionary informs the audience of the progress of events and aids its imagination in the requisite transitions of place and time. Further, in the opening of the fourth Act of the "Winter's Tale", the Chorus informs the spectator that he will assume, ~~(under)~~ in the name of Time, the privilege of a rapid flight:

"I . . . now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime,
To me or my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap; since it is in my power

To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom. Let me pass
The same I am, ere ancient'st order was,
Or what is now receiv'd . . . . . .
. . . . . Your patience this allowing,
I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing,
As you had slept between."

To the untrammelled mind of a critic this liberty is as legitimate to the dramatic wayfarer as to the ordinary traveller who lingers at his ease over the scenic beauties of his route but rides post through the arid wastes that intervene. Shakspere is not here excusing himself for brushing aside conventional restrictions, nor is he condemning the Unities: he is simply following out his own dramatic plan without attempting to provoke a controversy on the difference of his methods from those pursued by other writers. Again, in "Pericles", ancient Gower as Chorus makes a similar statement, transporting the audience from "bourn to bourn", from "region to region".

"We commit no crime", he says
"To use one language, in each several clime,
Where our scenes seem to live".

It will be apparent that these Choruses have nothing in common with classical usage. They "confine themselves," as Stapfer has well said, "to explaining the action, and to supplementing by their commentaries the inadequacy of the representation, or to narrating what the poet necessarily made take place behind the scenes; they

fulfil, in fact, the office of prologues, which would be a much fitter name for them". To what, then, in Shakspere does the classical Chorus correspond? Here we touch upon a vital point of difference between the structure of two great dramatic types. A Shaksperian play appears throughout as pure drama while an ancient tragedy is on the face of it double, a combination of drama and lyric. Now it is the lyric element in the Romantic play that corresponds to the ancient chorus, the lyric element which, instead of being concentrated in choric interludes, is dissipated throughout the poem in the form of soliloquy and lyrical outburst. "Macbeth" of all other Shaksperian tragedies certainly approaches nearest to the spirit of ancient drama. The same irony underlies the movement of the story, and its appalling action is suggestive of the oracular mysteries of the old tragedians. The despair of the protagonist finds wonderful and appropriate expression in passionate lyric utterance and in awful soul-torturing soliloquy. And the lyric element "in toto" may be said to stand in the same relation to the rest of the drama as the choric ode stands to the dramatic element of ancient tragedy. It is this abundant lyric outpouring in "Macbeth", as Mr. Vaughan well points out, that goes far to check the repulsion that we feel for the protagonist. Lyrical dialogue and soliloquy represent the nearest imaginative equivalent in modern drama for the choric interlude; and nowhere in Shakspere is the true nature of this modern equivalent so well portrayed as in the tragedy of "Macbeth".

We may well conclude this chapter with a review of the

influence of the Senecan spirit on Shaksperian tragedy. In the grim and spirit-haunted atmosphere of "Macbeth" there is much that recalls the dramatic horrors of Seneca, but of Senecan atrocity for atrocity's sake we find no trace. In this respect "Titus Andronicus" affords a notable contrast. There the concentrated horror of Senecan tragedy lives again; the poet was writing in conscious imitation of the popular drama of his day, in imitation, that is, of a drama powerfully impregnated by Senecan influence. But his nobler poetic nature, his potential originality of thought, is by no means subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand. Shakspere is supremely an artist, and the appeal of Beauty even in this early period of his dramatic apprenticeship triumphs over the low monotony of Senecan dreariness that he had set himself to represent. Horrible, certainly, is the vision of Lavinia, her body "lopp'd and hew'd" by "stern ungentle hands", but how beautifully is the effect of horror counteracted by the music and pathos of the verse. Through the awful veil of crime and bloodshed the true Shakspere repeatedly discloses himself to our view, and whatever else in the play may be laid to the account of other writers, in passages such as these we may surely see traces of his hand:

"O, had the monster seen those lily hands
Tremble, like aspen-leaves, upon a lute,
And make the silken strings delight to kiss them,
He would not then have touch'd them for his life!
Or had he heard the heavenly harmony
Which that sweet tongue hath made,

He would have dropp'd his knife, and fell asleep
As Cerberus at the Thracian poet's feet".

And again:

"O, that delightful engine of her thoughts,
That blabb'd them with such pleasing eloquence,
Is torn from forth that pretty hollow cage,
Where, like a sweet melodious bird, it sung
Sweet varied notes, enchanting every ear!"

Such is the play of "Titus Andronicus" to which the reader no longer turns for its dreary Senecan tale of slaughter, but for the wonderful music of the verse and for the delightful glimpses of rural Arden in the background which relieve the unnatural horror of the plot.

In following a recognised form of writing, therefore, Shakspere is not altogether the slave of the public. How much more so in his later work. The dramas of Shakspere's maturity represent life as a whole, not one particular aspect of life. Ovid and Seneca, in imitation of whom his early writings were in some measure produced, are no longer his masters: they become his equals and, in the end, his slaves. In "Macbeth", therefore, the Senecan element is sternly subordinated to the main theme. The Senecan flavour is present: grisly terrors are abroad; the air is filled with beckoning shapes and calling shadows dire. But Shakspere is a master of his art. The play is no longer a tissue of classical legend and school reminiscence woven together in the form of a horrible fantasia: it is a highly-wrought piece of art, a

wonderful organic whole. Shakspere is not writing a Senecan play; he is delineating the story of a soul. And we are not revolted by the awful nature of the plot. We stand in the presence of human life as it really is; we assist behind the scenes at a life-tragedy. More, we are permitted to observe each successive stage in the corruption of a heart that was once free from open, traitorous intentions, the ruin of a mind that was once pure and noble, a mansion for all lovely forms. And as the twilight shadows gather round the world-weary soul of the protagonist, as his day of life falls into the sere, the yellow leaf, to be finally overwhelmed in the great Night, we are not oppressed by the weight of unnatural horror and unreasoning deeds of slaughter. The jarring discord only serves to attune our ear to the strains of melting harmony into which it is destined to be resolved. The artist is ever present. Gloom, as well as tragic tension, is counterbalanced and relieved as Shakspere alone knew how to relieve it, while the deeper tones of the tragic symphony, that roll with the tumultuous roar of multitudinous seas, are sweetened, softened, and tranquillised again and again into the most beautiful utterances of lyric harmony. So Macbeth, racked and tortured by remorseful memories:

"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: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

And again, when the horrid deed has been perpetrated, Macbeth has heard a mysterious voice deny him for ever the solace of sleep:

"Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep!
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast."

Finally, the passage that occurs immediately after the arrangement of Duncan's murder, where the pleasant aspect of the castle, from which the king is doomed to come forth no more, lulls, by a bitter irony, all his cares to sleep:

Dun. "This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Ban. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet does approve
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here; no jutty frieze, buttress,
No coign of vantage, but this bird hath made
His pendent bed, and procreant cradle: Where they
Most breed and haunt, I have observed, the air
Is delicate".

Shakspere, our myriad-minded, universal dramatist, can be as free from Senecan influence as from the trammels of recognised dramatic forms. He might say of both, in the words of his Chorus in the

"Winter's Tale":

"it is in my power
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## SHAKSPERE AND PLAUTUS: "THE COMEDY OF ERRORS".

### With a Note on the Unity of Place.

"As Ælius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus' tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase, if they would speak English".

Meres.

"Palladis Tamia" 1598.

The "Comedy of Errors", one of the earliest of Shakspere's dramatic efforts, must have been a play dear to the heart of the theatre-going public. Had we been present at its first performance on the popular stage we should have been conscious that a master of farcical comedy had arisen, and we should also have felt that our fashionable craving for the eccentricities of "mistaken identity" had been more than satisfied.

But is this all? As the players withdraw amid the boisterous enthusiasm of a delighted audience, and as we wend our way from the crowded theatre, is there no other feeling that has been quickened and intensified except an unregenerate love of the ludicrous and an equally unregenerate craving for liquid refreshment? Has our appetite for drama merely been pampered and cloyed by the light and pleasant food of laughter, or has it been also satisfied by a more lasting sustenance?

Let us assume - as we may with all due modesty - that our dramatic taste is somewhat higher than the average among those "men of understanding" commonly called "groundlings", and let us imagine ourselves present at the performance of the play. There we sit on the stage, among other fortunate and enlightened members of the audience, while the young gallant beside us is amusing himself with his three several kinds of tobacco and languidly commenting upon the disreputable conduct of the groundlings standing beneath, who are also amusing themselves after their kind by hurling apples and what-nots at the curtain. Suddenly the actors come forth; the noise of the tumult is gradually hushed. The

play has begun. What is this? An old grey-headed merchant stands bound and guarded before a man of princely bearing, and as he speaks his countenance is darkened by sorrow, for he stands there in peril of his life.

"Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
And by the doom of death end woes and all".

Bowed down, as he is by humility, his pleadings have been still in vain; he has broken the laws of a powerful State and is condemned to die unless ransom shall be duly paid. As the Duke ends his speech the merchant, with a heavy cheer, acquiesces in the inevitable justice of the sentence. World-weary, cast destitute upon a hostile shore by the wind-obeying deep, with no gleam of hope to lighten the approaching night - unconscious symbol of his clouded fortunes - he yearns already for the solace that death will bring:

"Yet this my comfort; when your words are done,
My woes end likewise with the evening sun".

What is this! Is not the blue curtain hung aloft to signify that the Sock, and not the Buskin, holds the stage? Have we not come to see a merry farce, an English rendering of that well known and boisterous "Menaechmi" of Plautus, composed by one Shakspere the actor? - The answer is a simple one. We have come to see Shakspere's "Menaechmi"; we are assisting at a truly Shaksperian comedy of "errors", not at an imitation or mere reproduction of the "Menaechmi" of Plautus.

. . . . . .

It is at least probable that the story of Shakspere's drama was well known to the play-goer, as well as to the reading public of the time, for the "Menaechmi" of Plautus was one of the most popular of the plots of comic accident that had come down to modern times from remote antiquity. It was certainly a favourite among the dramatists of the Continent and that at a very early period in literary history, for the stage of Italy, of France, and of Spain each possesses its own versions of the Plautine comedy whether in adaptation or in paraphrase. We do not mention these foreign ramifications, however, as having any direct connexion with Shakspere's choice of subject, for there is no certain indication that Shakspere used any other version than the Latin of Plautus. Of this there was a somewhat flat translation by William Warner, which Shakspere may have seen in manuscript. (1). It was not published until 1595, a full year later than the usual date limit assigned by critics to the "Comedy of Errors". Moreover, those who have examined the English version will agree with Ritson that there is scarcely a thought, phrase, or name peculiar to Warner to be traced in Shakspere's work; plot as well as names and matter may have been drawn equally well, and with little or no effort on Shakspere's part, from the Latin original. There is no proof whatever, and but a slender probability, that the poet had seen

(1) ""Menaecmi", a pleasant and fine conceited comedie taken out of the most excellent wittie Poet Plautus", by W. W. In the Preface Warner tells us that he had "diverse of this Poettes comedies Englished for the use and delight of his private friends who in Plautus owne words are not able to understand them". There is no evidence to prove that Shakspere was on terms of friendship with Warner, nor is there any evidence that Shakspere was unable to worry out the drift of a Plautine comedy from the Latin.

Warner's translation.

This reasoning proving futile and inconclusive, critics have fallen back on another line of argument. Steevens, Malone, and others incline to the belief that a play called "The Historie of Error" supplied Shakspere with his dramatic basis and with much of his dialogue, incident, and character, - that the whole play was simply recast by Shakspere and furnished with several additions of his own invention. (1). Here again the reasoning ends in a cul-de-sac, for the play is unfortunately not extant so that it is impossible to arrive at any definite conclusion on the matter of Shakspere's alleged indebtedness. All that we know of the old play is that it was "shown at Hampton Court on New Yere's Daie at Night, 1576-77;" there is not one iota of proof that it was even founded on the Plautine comedy of the "Menaechmi".

In any case it is now impossible to determine the immediate source of Shakspere's play, especially as nothing of a conclusive nature may be established from internal evidence. Many critics uphold the view that Shakspere used Warner's version or the old comedy simply and solely because they refuse to the poet that little erudition that is requisite in order to gather the drift of the original. After all, however, the question of the actual source whence Shakspere drew his material is not a vital one, although we may not bring ourselves to believe Mr. Morley's

(1) Malone thinks that it is probable that the name "Surreptus" (or "Sereptus") appended to the name of the Ephesian Antipholus in the Folio may have been suggested by this play.

statement that it is a question "of no importance". (1).

There are several notices of Shakspere's "Comedy of Errors" in contemporary literature, the name of the poet being occasionally coupled, to his own advantage, with that of Plautus. The reference in the "Gesta Grayorum" to a "'Comedy of Errors', like to Plautus his Menechmus", that was "played by the players" at Gray's Inn one night in December 1594, is almost certainly a reference to Shakspere's play. But a more important notice for our purpose occurs in Meres' "Palladis Tamia": 'As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy witness his "Gentlemen of Verona", his "Errors"', and so forth.

Hazlitt would certainly not have mentioned the play as an example of Shakspere's excellence in comedy, as equal, if not superior, to the comic productions of Plautus. "This comedy," he writes, "is taken very much from the Menaechmi of Plautus, and is not an improvement on it. Shakespear appears to have bestowed no great pains on it, and there are but a few passages which bear the decided stamp of his genius. He seems to have relied on his author, and on the interest arising out of the intricacy of the plot. The curiosity excited is certainly very considerable, though not of the most pleasing kind. We are teazed as with a riddle, which notwithstanding we try to solve." This passage seems to

(1) "Comedy of Errors" (Cassel). The author believes, however, that it is "very likely that Shakespeare knew the play in the original", adding that, in Shakspere's day, "Plautus was commonly read in schools".

suggest that Hazlitt had mistaken the true function of the art-form that he was attempting to criticise; he appears to have understood the play as a comedy proper rather than as a farce. In this case the following criticism upon the "Comedy of Errors" from Coleridge's "Literary Remains" will sufficiently dispose of Hazlitt's objections:

"The myriad-minded man, our, and all men's, Shakspere, has in this piece presented us with a legitimate farce in exactest consonance with the philosophical principles and character of farce, as distinguished from comedy and from entertainments. A proper farce is mainly distinguished from comedy by the licence allowed, and even required, in the fable, in order to produce strange and laughable situations. The story need not be probable, it is enough that it is possible. A comedy would scarcely allow even the two Antipholuses; because, although there have been instances of almost indistinguishable likeness in two persons, yet these are mere individual accidents, "casus ludentis naturae", and the "verum" will not excuse the "inverisimile". But farce dares add the two Dromios, and is justified in so doing by the laws of its end and constitution. In a word, farces commence in a postulate, which must be granted." Hazlitt apparently did not grant this necessary postulate and his criticism therefore appears rather in the light of commendation than of censure. For the main intention of both Plautus and Shakspere was to stimulate the curiosity by presenting a riddle which we should endeavour to solve. Shakspere has gone even further and heightened the complexity of the original.

Once improbability is granted, we cannot censure the poet for making a "confusion worse confounded". Shakspere is perfectly justified, as Coleridge has said, by the laws of farce; and how admirably has he made use of the liberty allowed by his subject by introducing the two Dromios. This deviation from Plautus - one of the most important deviations from the original plot - goes to indicate that Shakspere was certainly not the slave of his original. Even in this, one of the very earliest of his dramas, he has been able to free himself from the trammels of close imitation. In fact, it is evident from a superficial comparison that Shakspere's work is virtually a new play built upon the basis of the old. (1).

Shakspere's comedy has been lauded at the expense of its Latin counterpart without due recognition of the fact that each is commendable as a characteristic production of its age and clime. Further, much of the difference between the style and subject matter of the two plays is undoubtedly due to the essential peculiarities of Shaksperian and Plautine comedy as an art-form, and to the different nature of the stage and audience for which each was produced. As this is a point upon which, as it appears to us, critics have made but too little comment, we shall spend a little time in viewing the two forms of comedy side by side.

In the first place we must not fail to notice that, in spite

(1) Mr. Cunningham has given a list of Shakspere's dramatis personae and compared it with the characters in the Plautine comedy. Shakspere retains the twin Menaechmi, the Traveller and the Citizen, the Mulier being represented by Adriana, Erotium by the Courtezan, Messenio by Dromio of Syracuse, and the Medicus by Dr. Pinch. He discards the parasite Peniculus, the Senex, the father-in-law of the Citizen, and the cook and maid of Erotuim, but adds the Duke of Ephesus, Aegeon, Dromio of Ephesus, Balthasar, Angelo, two merchants, Luciana, Luce, and Aemilia. (Intro. to Arden Shakespeare).

of many essential differences, there is much similarity in structure between the comedies of Plautus - indeed of Roman comedy generally - and those of Shakspere. Firstly, the Chorus, that distinctive mark of ancient drama, which had rapidly declined under Aristophanes is entirely absent from Plautine comedy. (1). The double form of art in which lyric was combined with dramatic disappears, therefore, with the loss of the Chorus, and Roman comedy, instead of being a continuous whole, approaches to the modern structural form with divisions corresponding to the separate Acts. The multiplication of these sub-divisions would mark the preliminary step towards the modern change of scene, and, pushed to its logical extreme, would entail the assumption of intervals of time between the various stages of the drama, both of which are, of course, often essential elements in the dramatic art of Shakspere. Further, the lyric element which, as is usual in ancient drama, is concentrated in the Chorus is now scattered through the play, and much of the general function of the Chorus is taken up by Prologue and Epilogue. Soliloquy also appears quite frequently as a dramatic device. (2).

In all these points Plautine comedy may be said to be an anticipation of the more modern Shaksperian form; but with these

(1) The "Piscatores" of "Rudens" II may possibly be regarded as an exception.

(2) The Plautine "Prologue" is closely akin to the Shaksperian, that is, it is absolutely outside the action and no longer the opening scene of the play. As in Shakspere, then, it is a sort of external comment upon the drama and is usually not assigned to a member of the dramatis personae.

technical "rapprochements" the resemblance practically ends. Plautus' essential characteristics as an artist occupy but a single nook in the universal mind of our supreme poet. His dramatic range is limited, confined as a narrow sea, while Shakspere's is an whole ocean broad.

To return to the particular case of the "Comedy of Errors", let us remark how closely Shakspere has followed Plautus in the working out of the plot, investing every incident with the boisterous mirth of his original and even adding to the fun and excitement. But this is by no means all. Shakspere in addition has raised the tone of the Latin comedy and added such a glorious wealth of new invention that his play is virtually an original one. There is a total absence of Plautine harshness of manners - a point in which the old comedy is eminently characteristic of its time - and in its place there is a comparative wealth of characterisation, and a lofty and dignified seriousness even amid the uproarious merriment of farce that is quite alien to the Plautine spirit. The extent of Shakspere's originality as contrasted with the limitations of Plautus is well summarised in Stapfer's admirable study of the play in his "Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity". "Plautus", he writes, "is by no means liberal in his treatment of his personages, whose characters are strictly limited to the essential feature necessary to explain their line of conduct; this leading motive once indicated, he endows them with no other sentiments whatever, such as would be required to make them in any way completely life-like. To brotherly love, for instance, he gives full and adequate

expression, but he reduces all the complexity of human nature to this one emotion, which stands out from all other good qualities in isolated relief. The same poverty is evinced in the development of the plot: one and undivided according to classical rules, the Latin comedy proceeds towards the final end, true to the teaching to be given later on by Horace, without losing itself in any sinuous byways of fancy. Shakspere's comedy is, to begin with, richer and more varied in incident than that of Plautus, and is possessed of an extra couple of twins, slaves to the two brothers. . . . . The slaves present a repetition, not only of the likeness that exists between their masters, but also of their sentiments and actions, to which they form a sort of parody.".

Viewed as a whole, Shakspere's drama is much more varied, rich, and interesting in its incidents than the "Menaechmi" of Plautus. We become aware of the difference at the very outset when we compare the opening of the two plays. In both the necessary previous information had to be introduced, and the means adopted in each case throws much light on the divergent methods of the two artists. "No art is displayed", writes Stapfer, "in the setting forth of the "Menaechmi", which merely begins with a prologue according to classical usage; but the "Comedy of Errors" opens grandly with two majestic forces - the state, and paternal love." The first scene is certainly well written, but Stapfer surely goes too far when he affirms that the opening of the "Errors" is "unsurpassed by any in the annals of the stage". Plautus' introduction, then, follows the stereotyped custom of the ancients;

it was the practise of the stage in his day and the audience expected it. Shakspere's introduction is far more pleasing to us; it is more artistic, more natural, and is touched with a pathos which the Latin bard could never feel.

We have already observed that Plautus does not trouble to bring out the essential complexity of human nature by means of a subtle differentiation between his dramatis personae, and that he has no notion of rendering them more life-like by developing the broad traits of their characters. Now there is much of this lack of development in the "Comedy of Errors", but it proceeds from an entirely different motive. The delineation of character in the "Menaechmi" follows Plautus' usual plan, but Shakspere's method in the "Errors" broadened as he became more mature. This comparative lack of character development arises from the fact that Shakspere was mainly interested in the intricacies of plot, in mere personal mistakes and their whimsical results, so that artistic elaboration of this kind became neglected. Nevertheless, it is in these minute realistic touches, comparatively rare though they be, that Shakspere's comedy stands out in bold contrast with that of Plautus. The Latin poet is content merely with a study in black and white; Shakspere's picture is rendered more subtle and pleasing by the artistic introduction of half-tones, by the delicate gradations of an artistic light and shade.

In the first place there is much discrimination in Shakspere's delineation of the two Antipholi. The delicacy and melancholy of the Syracusan stands out in contrast with the rougher and commoner

character of his brother, and there is a touch of poetry about him which is well brought out in his love passages with Madam Luciana. The strain is somewhat conventional and occasionally far-fetched, as one would naturally expect in a youthful composition:

"O, train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note,
To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears.
Sing, siren, for thyself and I will dote;
Spread o'er the silver waves by golden hairs,
And as a bed I'll take them and there lie,
And in that glorious supposition think
He gains by death that hath such means to die:
Let love, being light, be drowned if she sink!"

(III. 2. 45.)

Shakspere's play is essentially poetical, Plautus' is as essentially prosaic.

Not only does Shakspere surpass the Latin bard in the exuberance of his mirth, by the variety and quick succession of incident, but also in his more generous and discriminating treatment of human nature. Stapfer notices that the Ephesian Antipholus, though cast in a commoner mould than his brother, "is not, however, devoid of all sense of delicacy and honour, and is far removed from the coarseness of moral fibre shown by the husband of the "Menaechmi" who begins by purloining his wife's mantle. On the contrary,", continues Stapfer, "his first laudable intention is to present his wife with a gold chain" - in Plautus it is a dress - "which he has bought for her". It is only when his wife, in mistake, dutifully

shuts the door in his face that he makes up his mind to bestow his present elsewhere. (1). It is to be noticed, however, that the gift goes eventually to the proper person.

The Roman lack of courtesy and chivalry in the treatment of women, which is naturally represented by Plautus, is absent, of course, from Shakspere. There is indeed no lack of refinement; Adriana is represented as full of wifely love and tenderness even in the midst of her jealousy, and by the addition of Luciana Shakspere has added a further charm and completeness to the story. Throughout the treatment of these moral relations, as disclosed by the "Menaechmi", we observe Shakspere's delicacy of touch, particularly in the introduction of the love episode with its charming lyric colouring. As an example of Shakspere's delineation of womanhood let us quote the following passage in which Adriana expresses her sensitive affection to her supposed husband:

"Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine:
Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine;
Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,
Makes me with thy strength to communicate:
If aught possess thee from me, it is dross,
Usurping ivy, briar, or idle moss."

Shakspere's masterly delineation of the twin Dromios need not detain us. They are subtly distinguished one from the other and breathe

(1) This central incident Shakspere borrowed from another play of Plautus, the "Amphitryon", in which the husband is prevented from entering his house by Mercury while Jupiter enjoys his wife Alcmena.

a genuinely Shaksperian humour which adds immensely to the laughable eccentricities of the play.

Two of Shakspere's additional characters, however, claim our attention here, namely the Duke of Ephesus and old Aegeon, the father of the twin brothers. In these two persons is centred the main dignity and seriousness of the play, and more especially is the necessary relief from the boisterous mirth of farce brought out by the tale of the tragic fortunes of the captive merchant. Here lies the supreme difference between the "Comedy of Errors" and the "Menaechmi" of Plautus. Just as we see, in the sympathetic delineation of the women, the Shakspere of the future, so in the mingling of Aegeon's tragic story with the lightness and gaiety of farce we have an adumbration of Shakspere's later view of the close interrelations that exist between comedy and tragedy. Shakspere is not satisfied by the mere blending together of two Plautine fables. His mind is overshadowed by a world more richly, more profoundly conceived than the mere reproduction of these stories could suggest. The opening scene of the play not only supplies the necessary explanation of the action, but gives the audience an insight into the misfortunes of the past and casts a lowering cloud over the future. Further, the serious element is so artistically interwoven with the main theme and is so clearly and impressively delivered in the opening of the play that the attentive reader or play-goer may never lose sight of it amidst all the errors and perplexities which follow. The Duke himself sums up the feeling of the audience when he sees at length into the real

state of affairs and recalls the old man's narrative:

"Why, here begins his morning story right".

Just before the denouement, however, Aegeon's despair rises to the highest pitch of pathos when his own son fails to recognise him in the hour of trial:

"Not know my voice! O time's extremity,
Hast thou so crack'd and splitted my poor tongue
In seven short years, that here my only son
Knows not my feeble key of untun'd cares?"

It is in such passages as these that Shakspere's divergence from Plautus is most apparent, in such pathetic utterances as these, both in the "Errors" and in "Titus Andronicus", that we hear a faint and distant echo of that tremendous passion of fatherly love, overwhelmed in the agony of distress, that was to find its consummation in the heartrending story of King Lear.

Thus, to the very close of the drama, the serious interest mingles itself with the laughable incidents of farce and imparts to the whole a higher spiritual significance. All the characters are eventually brought into a happy reunion, and the Duke himself lays aside his dignity for a time to go along with the others "to gossip at the feast". The whole jarring discord resolves itself into a perfect harmony. And just as Shakspere could not fail to invest his original - as indeed, he invested everything that he touched - with a large intermixture of poetic feeling, so he has imparted to the play an indefinable touch ~~(that)~~ which makes the reader apprehend that, beyond the mysterious play of what erring

men call chance, there is the still more mysterious ruling of a higher power. The erring characters of the farce, at the end of their perplexities, might well say with Shakspere's noble, tragic hero:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will".

. . . . . .

The majority of comic dramatists endeavour that their particular art-form shall be like a faithful mirror in which the life around them may find unerring and vivid reproduction. Plautus, however, with many others among his brethren of the comic Muse, has gone further. His glass not only presents to us the ordinary occurences of contemporary society: it has also reproduced, with painful vividness, even the sordid details and common, inartistic background in which those events took place. Plautus had no notion of a dramatic environment of ideal conception. The scene is rigidly confined to one spot, and often presents to the view merely an uninteresting house and street, or occasionally, in addition, a portion of landscape in the vicinity. (1). The atmosphere

(1) The unity of Place is even more scrupulously observed by the Roman comedians than by the Greek.

is close and confined; the woods, the hills, the fields, the living radiance of sea and sky, the music of waters and the song of birds, of these he gives us no suggestion. How pleasant is the contrast when we turn to the drama of Shakspere. To us, this widening and purification of the atmosphere is one of the most delightful feelings we experience in passing to Shakspere from Plautus. We come, as it were, from a Purgatory, cabined, cribbed, confined, to a realm of loveliness and radiance,

"An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams."

Even in the darkest of his tragedies our great dramatist gives us many a glimpse of beauty in the background - the martlet-haunted portal of a castle; a lovely garden breathing the perfumed atmosphere of a Southern night; the lofty cliffs to seaward with the haunting murmur of the ocean. In his comedies, especially, we are transported again and again from the sordid trivialities of daily life and its familiar scene, from the turmoil of towered cities, to a world, far, far from here where

"The sunshine in the happy glens is fair;
And by the sea, and in the brakes
The grass is cool, the sea-side air
Buoyant and fresh, and mountain flowers
More virginal and sweet than ours."

Such is one of the effects of the relaxation of the Place Unity in Shakspere. The Elizabethan stage had perhaps as little furniture as the Roman, but the audience might be wafted to any

scene and clime on the magic wings of verse at the mere caprice of the playwright. "It is a fortunate circumstance", writes Collier, "for the poetry of our old plays that painted moveable scenery was then unknown; the imagination of the auditor only was appealed to, and we owe to the absence of painted canvas many of the finest descriptive passages in Shakespeare. The introduction of scenery gives the date to the commencement of the decline of our dramatic poetry". (1). Again, Hallam writes: "Even in this age the prodigality of our theatre in its peculiar boast, scene-painting, can hardly keep pace with the creative powers of Shakespeare. It is well that he did not live when a manager was to estimate his descriptions by the cost of realising them on canvas, or we might never have stood with Lear on the cliffs of Dover, or amidst the palaces of Venice with Shylock and Antonio". (2).

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(1) History of Dramatic Poetry, Vol. III.

(2) Literature of Europe, Vol. III. Chap. 6.

## CHAPTER IX.

## REMINISCENCES OF OTHER WRITERS.

"The result of the controversy must certainly, either way, terminate to our author's honour: how happily he could imitate them, if that point be allowed; or how gloriously he could think like them, without owing anything to imitation".

(William Theobald)?

It remains now to consider the numerous reminiscences of those Latin authors with whom Shakspere displays but little familiarity. Of these, the conjectural parallels with Horace, Catullus, Persius, Juvenal, Terence, and Lucretius are the most remarkable, although the student, should he feel disposed to consult the catalogic pages of literary pedants, may extend the list, already sufficiently formidable, to his own edification and entertainment.

What had Shakspere read in these poets? Do the passages to which critics refer us suggest any reasonable probability that Shakspere was familiar with their alleged Latin counterparts, or are these parallels purely accidental? Here we enter more or less into the realm of conjecture, or rather into that department of criticism which is occupied in the nice and judicious balance of probabilities. In the first place it is important to notice that the Latin poetry now under consideration was not accessible, as far as we know, in English versions, so that parallelism with these poets would go to prove that Shakspere had read something of the originals. Now Shaksperian recollections of these and other authors have been quoted "ad nauseam", so much so that even the spirit of the patient critic waxeth faint and cries aloud for respite as he reads them.

It is largely upon the strength of this evidence, reliable or unreliable, that the poet has been exalted by some to a high position among the most learned sons of Parnassus. But the sanity of their criticism is open to very serious question. Much of it is nothing more or less than criticism run mad; and moreover it is

a mania that is very closely akin to that masterpiece of all literary lunacies, the Baconian Theory. How easily do we read our own ideas and interpretations into Shakspere! The traveller endows him with his minute recollections of other countries, and the musician with the profoundest knowledge of his own art; but above all does the pedant kill the poet with kindness when he burdens him with his peculiar store of superfluous Greek and Latin. Shakspere has been sent to Italy and to Ireland; he has been both lawyer and soldier, sailor and archer; more, he has swept the whole scale of religious belief from Roman Catholicism to the creed of the Fifth-Monarchy Man. But more especially is he the pedant. Many of the most vapid commonplaces in his work were "evidently suggested", to use Theobald's expression, by the Latin and Greek even though they might have readily suggested themselves to a schoolboy of fourteen who had just learned his "mensa". At the same time, too, that critics exalt the poet's classical knowledge, they unconsciously reduce his wonderful originality of thought and supreme power of imagination to the vulgar level of the modern sentimental novelist. We have already made a passing reference to this ridiculous criticism. We shall therefore merely content ourselves in this section with blotting our paper with a few typical examples.

At the outset, among the numerous pages of these catalogic parallels - and with exemplary patience we have conned a sufficiency - we have found few or none that possess any real significance for our enquiry, the majority being so unspeakably gratuitous that they

made far less appeal to our judgment than to the more necessary virtues of our patience and resignation. Zachary Grey and his luminous "I prae, sequar" reminiscence have provoked the derision of all subsequent criticism, but even he must pale his uneffectual fire before the portentious dawn of Baconian pedanticism. The following effort of parallelism, for example, loses but little of its lustre on comparison with Grey's more famous masterpiece: (Macbeth is speaking)

"Your highness' part
Is to receive our duties",

a passage which Theobald hastens to illustrate by Aeolus' speech to Juno in the First Aeneid:

"'Tis yours, O Queen, to will
The work, which duty binds me to fulfil" (Dryden) (1)

For purposes of convenience, Theobald's examples of parallelism are here gathered under two heads: firstly, those which may be termed, not unjustly, "lunatic", and secondly, those which are palpable commonplaces.

In passage after passage of the plays we are invited to discern a borrowing from writers such as Aelian, Petronius, Claudian, Statius, Lucan, Homer, Musaeus, St. Augustine, and a host of others both Latin and Greek, the very thought of which would have turned the brain of a Jonson or a Scaliger. Thus the fine speech of the banished Duke in praise of his woodland home ("As You Like It" II.1.)

(1) "The Classical Element in the Shakespeare Plays", 370.

becomes a mere paraphrase of Horace; Adam's complaint to Orlando,

"Know you not, master, to some kind of men
Their graces serve them but as enemies"

and ending:

"O what a world is this, when what is comely
Envenoms him that bears it"

"strongly recalls" Juvenal's argument (Sat. X. 325): "Nay, what did his virtuous resolve avail Hippolytus, or what Bellerophon?" and also, "This most noble and beautiful of the patrician race is hurried off, wretched man that he is, to be sacrificed by the eyes of Messalina"! (1).

Again, if we will believe this remarkably ingenious writer, the idea of the line

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin"

is a mere borrowing from Juvenal, (2) and Posthumus' beautiful exclamation as he embraces Imogen,

"Hang there like fruit, my soul
Till the tree die",

"may have been borrowed from a passage in Buchanan's tragedy, where Iphis says to her father, Jephthes:

If ever clasping you in my little arms,
I have hung, a sweet burden from your neck". ("Jephthes I. 218)

So much for the first type of parallel. A few instances of

(1) "The Classical Element", 210.

(2) Ibid. 235.

Shakspere's supposed debt to a single Latin author may serve as illustration of the other kind.

"The undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns (Hamlet III. 1. 79) is evidently taken from Catullus:

'Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum
Illuc, unde negant redire quanquam' . . . .

Miranda uses language taken from Catullus in speaking to Ferdinand:

'I am your wife, if you will marry me;
If not, I'll die your maid: to be your fellow
You may deny me; but I'll be your servant,
Whether you will or no'. (Tempest III. 1. 83)

This," continues Theobald, "is evidently a reminiscence of the following,

'Si tibi non cordi fuerant connubia nostra,
Attamen in vestras potuisti ducere sedes.
Quae tibi jucundo familiarer serva labore,
Candida permulcens liquidis vestigia lymphis
Purpureave tuum consternans veste cubile'".

(Catullus Nup. Pel. et Tel. 158)

Could Theobald possibly be ignorant that the tender speech, which he here refers to the Latin, is a dominant expression in the vital meaning of the play, (1) and that Miranda's simply eloquence is indeed but the prompting of her plain and holy innocence? Again,

(1) The idea of Service.

"Adriana also borrows from Catullus :

"Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine;
Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,
Makes me with thy strength to communicate".

(Comedy of Errors II. 2. 175).

. . . . 'Lenta qui velut assitas
Vitis implicat arbores
Implicabitur in tuum
Complexum'.

The singular frequency of allusions to Catullus," the writer continues, "gives a strong presumption that the poet was well acquainted with this classic author, - a poet not usually read in schools." (1). These absurdities are only equalled by the writer's parallels between passages in Bacon and passages in Shakspere which are supposed to point to community of authorship. For instance, we are informed that the phrase "diluculo surgere" from Shakspere's "Twelfth Night" is traceable to Bacon's "Promus", "a work, moreover" - and this is the point - "not published when the play was written". (p.90). But unfortunately for Theobald this phrase, and many similar scraps of Latin scattered through the plays, may also be traced to Lily's Grammar.

The evidence supplied by examples of parallelism such as the above is absolutely worthless and inconclusive. The idea of the

(1) "Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light", 300.

passage from the "Comedy of Errors", for example, might have been supplied by a myriad of writers from Catullus onwards. To quote an instance that at once occurs to us: Ovid's Vertumnus makes use of precisely the same sentiment in his wooing of the virgin Pomona, as told in the fourteenth Book of the "Metamorphoses", and Shakspere surely might more readily have found the commonplace in Golding than in Catullus. (1).

On such foundations as these Theobald builds his theory that the plays were written by an "excellent scholar" - by a man "who possessed . . . . . every qualification which Shakespeare lacked". With such arguments as these, would he discover to universal opprobrium the mythical W.S., removing for ever the disguise in which the real poet was wont to masquerade. (2). Far be it from us to apply to the learned author of the "Shakespeare Studies" the prompt retort of Bully Bottom as he walks "translated" before the stupefied gaze of Snout. We will merely add that the whole edifice that Theobald constructs is as insubstantial as Bottom's dream: "it hath no bottom".

We may now mention, very briefly, a few of the more striking reminiscences of the Latin authors.

The Horatian parallels are interesting though inconclusive,

(1) Circiter 660. A literal translation reads: "There was an elm opposite, widely spread with swelling grapes . . . . . 'But if this trunk', he said, 'stood unwedded, it would have nothing to attract beyond its leaves; this vine, too, while it finds rest against the elm, joined to it, if it were not united to it, would lie prostrate on the ground'".
The figure of the "maritus ulmus" and "nupta vitis" was quite a commonplace even in Ovid's day.

(2) This modest task the author sets forth in one of the Mottoes to the book, an extract from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" which treats of Bottom's "re-translation".

but, cumulatively, they are certainly remarkable. As the chief of them have been so often noticed by critics we need not transcribe them here. We will confine our references to the more sane conjectures on the subject, and nowhere are they so clearly set forth or the illustrative passages so carefully selected as in the work of the late Professor Collins. (1). When we consider that the Odes were inaccessible in English, these passages are certainly very significant.

Horace is sometimes quoted in the original. Theobald refers to the lines in "Titus": "In Titus Andronicus Demetrius reads a scroll (IV. 2. 20) -

"Integer vitae scelerisque purus,
Non eget Mauri (sic) iaculis nec arcu".

This is from Horace". . . . (2). But Theobald is careful to give us only half of the quotation. Chiron recognises the passage and observes: "O, 'tis a verse in Horace; I know it well: I read it in the Grammar long ago." (3) Similarly, the quotation from Terence in the "Taming of the Shrew" (I. 1. 167),

"Redime te captum quam queas minimo",

was not taken from the original for Shakspere follows Lily's use of the altered form. The original in "Eunuchus" I. 1. 30 reads:

(1) The parallels with Horace occur on pages 26-8 of the "Studies in Shakespeare". Our other parallels are largely taken from the same book.

(2) "The Classical Element", 222.

(3) "The couplet stands twice in Lily's Grammar, on leaf 23, as an instance of the Ablative case, and in Part II, under the head of 'De generibus carminum', where Horace is named". (Anders).

"Quid agas? nisi ut te redimas captum quam queas minimo". Further, the line is given in Udall's "Floures of Latine speakyng selected and gathered oute of Terence". (1560). It appears in the altered form as found in Lily and in Shakspere and is, moreover, "translated into englyshe".

The Shaksperian reminiscences of Juvenal are none the less remarkable. In "Antony and Cleopatra" the famous sentiment of Satire X, 346 is expressed:

"We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
Deny us for our good: so find we profit
By losing of our prayers". (II. 1. 5.)

The passionate speech of Lear, impregnated by the fierce spirit of the raging thunderstorm,

"Tremble, thou wretch
That hast within thee undivulged crimes". . . . .

has also been compared with a passage in the same writer. (1). Warburton's conjecture that Hamlet's "satirical rogue" is a reference to the Latin poet is more certain, and the Prince's description of decrepit old age, which he retails for the benefit of old Polonius, is remarkably similar to the satirist's vivid but awful picture in Satire X. Again, the passage describing the parasite in the famous Third Satire,

"Igniculum brumae si tempore poscas,
Accipit endromiden: si dixeris 'aestuo', sudat",

(1) Sat. XIII, 223-6. The sentiment in each of the above may have suggested itself to Shakspere independently of Juvenal.

is strongly reminiscent of the wheeling and turning of Hamlet's strange "water-fly" in his conversation with the Prince. (1).

Still more remarkable are the two passages in which Shakspere recalls Persius. The lines

"Nunc non e tumulo fortunataque favilla
Nascentur violae?" (Sat. I. 39.)

express the very sentiment of Laertes:

"Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring;"

while the despairing, world-weary cry of Macbeth

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death".

is peculiarly reminiscent of the passage in the Fifth Satire:

"Cras hoc fiet". I dem cras fiet. "Quid? quasi magnum
Nempe diem donas." Sed quum lux altera venit,
Jam cras hesternum consumimus. Ecce aliud cras
Egerit hos annos et semper paulum erit ultra".

(1) The same incident occurs, however, in the German "Hamlet".
Hom. . . . . Signor Phantasmo, 'tis horribly cold.
Phant. Ay, ay, 'tis horribly cold.
Hom. No it is no more cold.
Phant. You're right, my lord, just the happy medium.
Ham. But now it is very hot.
Phant. O what a dreadful heat!"

The late Professor Collins believes that it is not unlikely that Shakspere had read some Lucretius, but it is hard to accept his supposition. "No parallels, indeed," he writes, "can be pointed out which may not be mere coincidences"; and a study of the passages which he submits certainly point to that conclusion. Mr. Anders has discovered a similarity between the passage in "King Lear", compared by the late Professor to a passage in Juvenal:—

"We came crying hither:
Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air,
We wawl and cry"

It occurs in a sentence in the Proem to the seventh Book of Holland's "Pliny":

"Man alone, poor wretch, she (Nature) hath laid all naked upon the bare earth, even on his birth-day, to <u>cry and wraule</u> presently from the very first houre that he is borne into the world".

. . . . . .

Many critics forget, in their haste to establish the fact of a poet's indebtedness, that there is a mysterious community of sentiment that binds together the great thinkers of every age and tongue. In general, indebtedness may only be clearly established when an unusual sentiment is found to be common to two or more

writers. But even if this be granted, we cannot establish the case unless we know that the alleged borrower had direct access to the work on which he is supposed to have drawn; and further, there must be either a striking verbal similarity or a peculiar distinctiveness of sentiment common to the passages in question.

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# CONCLUSION.

As we have now come to the conclusion of our examination of Shakspere's use of classical material, it will be advisable to notice a few points in his general attitude with regard to it.

Shakspere's use of classical sources is by no means different from his more general attitude towards the bulk of his dramatic material. In the "Errors" he has used the Latin comedy of Plautus (whether in the original or in translation is immaterial in this connection) much in the same way as he afterwards used Holinshed's Chronicle and the novels of Greene and Lodge. He chooses from his authorities those incidents only which will aid him in setting forth his story; he connects them together in his own way, emphasising details and situations where the exigencies of his plot call for emphasis, and finally presents the story to his audience as he himself has conceived of it. He uses the incidents of his original, that is, only as the materials of his own invention. Such was his method in the "Comedy of Errors"; such, too, was his method in the Poems.

Shakspere cared little or nothing about the ancient writers of comedy and tragedy. He read them, whenever possible, at second hand and troubled not a jot about their peculiarities of construction. It is Gervinus' idea that Shakspere was deeply versed in Seneca and Plautus. "If Shakespeare had had occasion at any time to name his ideal", he writes, "and to denote the highest examples of dramatic art which lay before him, he would have named none but Plautus and Seneca". We need not pause here to insist upon the absolute gratuitousness of the German critic's theory. Shakspere

was perhaps even more completely indifferent towards Plautus and Seneca than towards Holinshed and Sir Thomas North; all were little or nothing more to him than storehouses of material, rich mines of wealth on which he might draw at will.

That Shakspere's earlier taste should lead him to classical ground for his subjects is by no means unaccountable. His earliest efforts, namely the Poems, "Titus", and the "Comedy of Errors", were all built, in fact, upon the basis of classical fable. Classical antiquity and its lineal descendant the Italian Renascence dominated the whole art and taste of the time, and it is surely only natural that Shakspere's first literary attempts should be made in imitation of them and of the works of the dominant spirits of the time. But Shakspere was never entirely at his ease when circumscribed by the restraints of classical antiquity. His earliest work in a measure shows it. His development, we observe, was gradual; he began by imitating the classic writers, becoming little by little emancipated from their influence and from that of his English contemporaries, until he rose at length to a noble height of freedom and originality. Shakspere was pre-eminently a practical man. "He saw", writes Stapfer, "that the time for classical simplicity was irrevocably past," and that the public stood in need of "more highly spiced entertainments".

That the "Comedy of Errors" does not rank high among Shakspere's productions is not only due to the poet's immaturity, at the time of its composition; it may also be accounted for by the cramping influence which his selection of materials entailed.

Nevertheless, the skill with which Shakspere, even thus early, wove his material together was an admirable token of his later perfection. It was in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", a play which represents the high-water mark of Shakspere's earlier comedy, that the poet thought fit to free himself from restraint by turning his back on the narrow classical system of his authorities, and to substitute, in place of its trammels and conventionalities, the glorious freedom of his own fairy-world.

Stapfer admirably sums up Shakspere's general attitude towards the classics in a single sentence: "As regards classical antiquity", he writes, "he had no literary passion for it of any kind; he was neither its foe nor its friend, and regarded it merely as a vast storehouse of materials for his art".

. . . . . .

Shakspere's knowledge was not textual. His was the most receptive of human minds, and all that he has touched he has made his own. The dreary controversy that centres round the question of his scholarship may continue until the crack of Doom, but in spite of the most searching criticism, Shakspere's supreme impersonality will for ever forbid us to pluck out the heart of his mystery. "We may account for Jesus Christ, but we may never account for Shakspere", we remember to have heard the late

Professor Collins say; and his words are no exaggeration. The mind of William Shakspere was indeed the most marvellous and complex that was ever given to mortal man. We may never account for Shakspere. He was "for all time", and for all time he will stand as the unique and most gigantic of Life's many mysteries.

"For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at. - Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow."

F I N I S.

# NOTES.

## NOTE A (Chapter I.)

This paragraph expresses our view somewhat imperfectly. We find that there is little or no evidence to prove that Ben Jonson "disparaged" Shakspere's work. He regarded Shakspere, no doubt, as a rival, but his remarks, if they are at times ill-natured, never exceed the bounds of fair criticism.

The passage in "The Returne from Parnassus", again, cannot be said to be in any way conclusive. It is upon Jonson's own statements that we must take our stand. "I loved the man", he writes, "and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any . . . He redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than pardoned." And the sentiments that Jonson expressed in prose he has expressed still more emphatically in verse.

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NOTE B (Chapter II.)

Latin compositions in verse and prose were not unfrequent among the more educated at this period. Further, it was not uncommon for friends to communicate with each other in Latin. Malone refers to letters addressed by one Sturley to Richard Quiney of Stratford which are interspersed with Latin phrases and one of which is entirely in Latin. (1). Again, from a Latin letter written by Richard Quiney the younger, probably as a school exercise, Malone infers by analogy that Shakspere himself was probably not unproficient in such composition. (2). "Shakspere," writes Stapfer,". . . . . knew Latin as well as any man of his time; and in his time the educated portion of the public knew it better than they do now." And again: "In the sixteenth century Latin was still almost a living language; . . . . . many men of letters and of learning continued to write it. It was, in fact, an ordinary element in the education of both men and women, and there is no shadow of reason for refusing it to Shakespeare". (3).

. . . . . .

(1) "Prolegomena", II. 102.

(2) Ibid. 561.

(3) "Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity", 100 and 102.

## NOTE C (Chapter VI.)

Shakspere's attitude towards the ancient myths was in no way fixed and definite but varied, as is to be expected, at different periods of his dramatic activity. Mr. Root differentiates in an interesting manner between what he conceives to be the several methods of treatment during the various stages, but does not, it seems to me, make sufficient allowance for the changes necessarily produced on the character of the myths by the idiosyncrasies of the persons who employ them, and by the subject matter of the plays themselves. In the case of "Much Ado" and the "Merry Wives" we should naturally expect a less serious vein of classical allusion. Similarly, we should be prepared for a considerable proportion of more serious allusions in "As You Like It" and in "Twelfth Night" It is the character of the person and the plot of the play that is, in the main, the determining factor. If Launcelot Gobbo indulges in classical allusion or if Benedick and Beatrice bandy with mythology, their use of it must be in harmony with their character. The same rule applies, of course, to the mythological tone of a play.

Further, it is impossible to determine the chronological order of the plays by examining the various changes in the use of classical allusion. Mr. Root's method of enquiry leaves the possibility of the dramatic recurrence of a previous mood entirely out of the question. (1). All that we may say is: that Shakspere's

(1) I find that I have been anticipated in my remarks on this method of determining the chronology of the plays. See "Shakespeare Jahrbuch", 1904, 264.

attitude towards the mythological system was modified with the growing calmness of his steady literary development. As a youth he would revel in

"Taffata phrases, silken terms precise,
Thrice-piled hyperboles"

and in all the conceits, puns, and far-fetched paradoxes of the Italian and Ovidian style; but in his later years his attitude would approximate more closely to that of Dryden in the "Preface" to the Fables. He would say, with Dryden, that such conceits and jingles were "only glittering trifles, and so far from being witty, that in a serious poem they are nauseous, because they are unnatural." Romeo, adult and serious and oppressed by the mystery of life and its weary burden, indulges no more in commonplace similes and prettinesses of phrase; Shakspere, when face to face with the awful shadow of crime, his heart rent by the cry of human misery, abandons for ever the more trivial aspects of Ovidian mythology.

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## NOTE D (Chapter VI.)

The opening lines of the speech are a parody of Tamburlaine's exclamation in Marlowe's play:

"Holla! ye pamper'd jades of Asia,
What! can ye draw but twenty miles a day".

But Mrs. Quickly takes it all seriously. "By my troth", she says, when Pistol has put the finishing touches to his ranting speech, "by my troth, captain, these are very bitter words".

The ridiculous plays "Damon and Pythias", "Cambyses", and "Appius and Virginia" evidently supplied Shakspere with the material for his several burlesques. Falstaff's ridicule is conscious and intentional, (Vide I. "Henry IV.", Act II, Sc. 4), but Pistol is quite serious. He is proud of his grandiloquent style which he has picked up from such plays as those mentioned above, plays which were noted for their bombast and rant, for their absurd vocabulary and alliterative expressions, and for their cheap classical mythology. Theseus' criticism of the Athenian mechanicals, who have a similar faith in their own powers,—

"If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men",

is equally applicable to Pistol.

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## NOTE E (Chapter VI.)

Many artistic spirits of to-day, perhaps, would be pagans. Wordsworth himself, were he living now, would probably be even more emphatic in his longing for the world of the Imagination, even though it might bring him face to face with paganism.

Let us make our meaning clear. It is not our object in this note to advocate a return to the pagan system. Like Wordsworth, the artist of to-day may have no contempt for civilisation and for scientific theories and speculation, and yet he may long for the Greek myths and their wonderful imaginativeness even though he feels their inadequacy as a modern symbolism. The two points of view are entirely different: the truths of poetry are not at variance with those of Science. Wordsworth would see in the Brook no Naiad of Grecian imagination, but rather a manifestation of the Eternal Soul, clothed

"With purer robes than those of flesh and blood". (1).

No; we would not have again the myths of Greece, even if it were possible; but better far for the poet the imaginative age of Nature-myth than the spiritual depression of the present and of the last half century.

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(1) Miscellaneous Sonnets, XXX. I.

## NOTE F (Chapter VI.)

A thoughtful writer, Maurice Morgann, has made an incidental reference to this question in his original and delightful "Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff". "There is indeed", he writes, "nothing perishable about him (Shakspere) except that very learning which he is said so much to want. He had not, it is true, enough for the demands of the age in which he lived, but he had perhaps too much for the reach of his genius and the interest of his fame. Milton and he will carry the decayed remnants and fripperies of ancient mythology into more distant ages than they are by their own force entitled to extend; and the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid, upheld by them, lay in a new claim to unmerited immortality".

That this statement contains some amount of truth no one, I think, will be prepared to deny; but certain of the remarks are open to serious objection.

The myths of ancient Greece as transmitted to the ages by Roman art have sufficient merit as poetry to preserve them from being overwhelmed in the oblivion of Time. (1). Ovid's elegance as a writer of fable - it is for his facility and elegance of style, that golden cadence of poesy, that we read him to-day - will be a sufficient assurance of immortality apart from the weighty sanction of England's poets. This sanction the "Metamorphoses" certainly

(1) We are now considering them apart from their comparative shallowness of subject matter.

have; but they are no decayed mythological "remnants and fripperies" that our poets have encircled with a halo of immortality. How fresh are they still to the imagination of the student, those wonderful myths of the world of Greece and Rome! Still through the ages dawns the glory of Olympus peopled with its deities and its light-footed nymphs; the cold Naiad is still sitting beneath the cool translucent wave, while in the ancient forest is the shady fount of Dian and her maidens. We hear the voice of Syringa among the vocal reeds of Ladon, the lyre of Orpheus discoursing such music as won the ear of Pluto, and the pipe of Pan to which fauns and satyrs dance in fairy wildernesses. What a world of marvel to the author of "Comus" and the "Midsummer Night's Dream": what a world of mystic wonder to him who conceived the soft, sweet dreamland of the "Faery Queene"! To the mind of the poet the ancient myths are no mere tissue of empty trivialities, but have often the fadeless beauty and the deep significance of the truest poetry. They are creatures of the imagination. None the less splendid do they appear in their setting among other and more original work of Shakspere, of Spenser, and of Milton. Many famous passages in Milton's earlier poetry and many of the noblest passages in Shakspere owe their beauty almost entirely to a skilful and appropriate introduction of some classic fable, so vitalised by the poets' fertile imagination, and so splendid with the gorgeous apparel of their verse, that we have no mere shrivelled and lifeless refacimento of some worn out story, but a new and vital

creation of marvellous beauty. (1). Take a particular instance: the tale of Orpheus and the ancient belief in the music of the spheres, that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ears of God. Consider how these, which are among the loveliest of ancient myths, and others not less beautiful have ennobled and enriched the poetry of succeeding ages. To go no further than Shakspere and Milton; - would there be no considerable loss if from "Lycidas", "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" and from "The Merchant of Venice" these and other mythological fables there reincarnate were deleted?

Further, can it be truly said that the offspring of Shakspere's learning is alone ephemeral, as Mr. Morgann would have us believe, and that his learning alone may detract from his genius and fame? All the mere accidents of time and place, the prevailing fashions of his or any other age, which must needs find expression in poetry, are perishable; but such accidents cannot be said to militate to any appreciable extent against the appeal of a genius such as Shakspere's, or to detract aught from the interest of his fame. The rage for classical antiquity was one of the most

(1) This does not apply, of course, to certain other poets who have made use of classical material, whether it be history or myth. The dramatic work of Jonson, for example, is inspired by the spirit and the letter of antiquity - a sort of dead reproduction of the past analogous to that after which Raphael was striving when he wished to lay bare the ruins of Rome for the admiration of posterity. Such a barren and comparatively cold representation of antiquity, when placed in contrast with the living, breathing reincarnations of Shakspere, reminds us forcibly of the vital difference between Pygmalion's ivory image and the human being into which it was transformed by the power of the Goddess.

remarkable features of Shakspere's day, and,as is to be expected, classical allusion figures largely in the poet's work. Far from being the most perishable part,it is one of its lasting glories as it has been the object of this chapter to show. Caviare to the general it may be,together with much more that is of far greater moment, (1) but ignorance of minor points does not exclude us from the soul of the dramas; and it is the soul that matters.

Finally, when we read those passages in Shakspere that recall Ovid and his "Metamorphoses", we forget the original story. It is Shakspere that we are reading, Shakspere of whom we are thinking. The glory is all his own; he has made his own use of Ovid's material and the work is therefore virtually original. It is but a matter of course that Ovid's poetry is invested with a new interest from the very fact that Shakspere drew upon it; but the same will apply also to North's "Plutarch", to Greene's "Pandosto", and to Holinshed's "Chronicles".

We will certainly agree with Mr. Morgann's statement that Shakspere had not enough "learning" for the demands of the age in which he lived, but is it not patent to all that of learning,in the wider sense of the term,Shakspere had more than sufficient, more than any other of his day, nay, more than has ever been given to any other man?

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(1) Passages of mythological allusion, with much of that superabundance of poetry in which the Elizabethan audience delighted, are the first to go in modern Shaksperian representation.

# APPENDIX.

## CLASSICAL NAMES AND LATINISMS.

"All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase."
(Tennyson).

We are not aware that any critic has remarked how large is the percentage of Shakspere's dramatis personae whose names bear the stamp and association of classicism. That a dramatist should make use of such conventional titles in an age when literature was largely influenced by the Renascence revival is no doubt of small significance, for the colour and association of antiquity was sought after not only in the world of letters but also in every other sphere of life. Yet Shakspere's classical names are, cumulatively, rather remarkable, and many of them are certainly not of the conventional order. Nor is this choice of names of less significance because the poet may have borrowed them from the dramatis personae of contemporary playwrights. Shakspere must have followed his own discretion in employing them, just as he exercised this discretion, though to a far greater extent, in the choice of details and incidents from his various authorities.

A characteristic example of Shakspere's choice is the name "Titania", which he took from Ovid's text. Golding, who was certainly no poet, never saw the musical charm of this beautiful name or he would have used it in his version in place of those harsh periphrases which he goes out of his way to introduce. The poetry of the name, however, appealed to Shakspere and he has given it to one of the most airy and poetical of his earlier creations, set in a play which is unrivalled for the marvellous music of its verse. And just as Shakspere's Titania derives her name from the Huntress-Queen of Ovid's "Metamorphoses", so the names 'Autolycus', 'Proteus', 'Chiron', and many others may have

been suggested to the poet by his readings in Golding's translation and other books of ancient mythology.

We have spoken of Shakspere's love of musical names; let us add that, as far as we can remember, he has the nicest ear for the melody of names among all our English poets. Their familiarity to the reader by no means detracts from their unparallelled beauty: Imogen, Celia, Miranda, Sylvia, Julia, Mariana, Juliet, Rosalind, Olivia, Viola, Hermione, Desdemona, Cordelia, Hermia, Helena. What a royal list of names! Many of the most beautiful, too, are coloured by classicism. Think of the maiden of the "Tempest",

"Admir'd Miranda!

Indeed, the top of admiration; worth

What's dearest to the world!",

or the sweet, lost child of "A Winter's Tale", or again, of Marina, perhaps the last of Shakspere's beautiful creations, the sea-sensitive maiden of "Pericles". What's in a name? Juliet tells us that her lover, even as the Rose if one should change her name, were he not Romeo called, would still be her Romeo and the same. So would the heroines of Shakspere, beloved wherever the name of Shakspere has been heard,

"Retain that dear perfection which they owe

Without their title,"

although we feel, for our part, that this music is admirably in key with the sweetness of their characters and the nobleness of their actions.

Celia - 'Aliena' in the hour of her changed fortunes -, Julia,

and Sylvia, remind us of the conventional but beautiful pseudonyms which the Roman poets bestowed on their mistresses. Again, Phebe, Mopsa, and Dorcas are the conventional shepherdesses of ancient literature; Lavinia, the unfortunate maiden of "Titus", recalls the name of Virgil's heroine; while Iris, Juno, Ceres, Hymen, Hecate, and many of the greater and lesser deities of the old mythographers, take their part in the action of Shaksperian drama. The heroes of the Trojan War appear in "Troilus and Cressida", and all the ancient celebrities are to be found in Shakspere's Roman plays. These latter, however, are Romans in name only. They did not appear on the Elizabethan stage arrayed in toga or in other civil or military dress of their period. The playwright of the sixteenth century had no notion of, or care for, archaeological detail: his Romans were Englishmen, Elizabethans in dress no less than in manners of speech. (1).

Shakspere is occasionally at fault in the scansion of his proper names. Stephano in the "Tempest" appears in "The Merchant of Venice" as Stephāno:

"My friend Stephano signify, I pray you,
Within the house, your mistress is at hand;"

and in "Hamlet" the name 'Hyperion' has suffered from a similar mistake in the accent:

"Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself",

(1) Ben Jonson's Roman characters are in some respects an exception.

a mistake which Keats has followed in his poem of the same name.

Of greater interest and importance is Shakspere's use of Latinised words and forms of expression. Of the use of Latin words we might give many examples from the plays had not this work been rendered superfluous by the compilers of lexicons. We must not fail, however, to refer to a portentious monument of misplaced pedantry which we owe to the unwearied energy of the Baconians. We refer to the fourteenth chapter of Theobald's "Shakespeare Studies" entitled "The Classic Diction of Shakespeare". We shall have little to say of this remarkable essay for all that is necessary has already been said by the late Professor Collins in his chapter on the "Bacon-Shakespeare Mania". Theobald has endeavoured to prove that the Latin coinages and "linguistic experiments" which he has discovered in the plays are nearly all to be found in Bacon, and that, according to his argument, as Shakspere was no classical scholar, Bacon is the true author of the coinages and therefore of the plays attributed to Shakspere. Now really! Yet in spite of the extraordinary brilliancy of the reasoning, the whole phenomenon vanishes away into thin air when we come to study the English language as it existed in Shakspere's day and in the decades preceding. It is a study which our ingenious writer did not trouble to make, with the result that Mr. William Willis has demonstrated the absolute futility of the reasoning in his work "The Baconian Mint", where Theobald's allegations are subjected to the closest scrutiny. "I feel certain", writes Mr. Willis, "that Shakespeare became furnished with words by his acquaintance with the

Latin language, by his knowledge of the rich and varied literature existing in his native tongue, and by intercourse with the cultivated men of his age". Of Bacon's supposed coinages he writes: "I can say that not one of the words adduced by Mr. Theobald is a word introduced into the language by Lord Bacon. I am satisfied that Shakespeare derived in the matter of language, no assistance from Lord Bacon"; and the writer adds with justice: "Mr. Theobald ought, in my opinion to cancel the fourteenth chapter of his work, entitled "The Classic Diction of Shakespeare".

Turning to Shakspere's dramatic style, we are immediately arrested by his wonderful and daring use of sounding words of Latin origin and of classical turns of phrase. In the great speeches of his nobler creations, especially in passages descriptive of solemn incidents or of mighty deeds, the style is raised to the highest pitch of declamatory pomp and eloquence:

"I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, Father, Royal Dane: O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urn'd,
Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again? What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature,

So horridly to shake our disposition,

With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?"

What could be more noble, more magnificent! The significant word in each expression is Latin in derivation, while in the seventh line of the quotation there is, perhaps, an imitation of the Latin hendiadys. The whole speech in its profundity and solemn, stately movement recalls the noble depth and sonority of the funeral march of Chopin or of Beethoven, and re-echoes, in its phrasing, the nobler movements of the latter artist's great C Minor Symphony.

Yet Shakspere can touch our hearts with the sweet simplicity of his native Saxon as well as raise our minds to the contemplation of the noble and magnifical by the glorious pomp and deep-sounding eloquence of his Latinised style. In the same play we listen to a very different speech on the theme of death and funeral as the Queen bends weeping over the body of poor Ophelia and scatters her tribute of flowers:

"Sweets to the sweet: farewell!

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;

I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,

And not have strew'd thy grave".

Think again of the sweet, simple purity of Arviragus' address to the prostrate body of his fair comrade Fidele:

"With fairest flowers,

While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,

I'll sweeten thy sad grave: thou shalt not lack

The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor

The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath".

Contrast, again, the pure and unpretentious diction of the sweet Miranda with the solemn declamation of the enchanter Prospero in his broodings upon the vanity of human life:

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

Shakspere lived and wrote at a time when the English language had begun to be established. As a country youth he first learned the simple, unadorned English of the Warwickshire yokel, but on going up to London he became familiar with those modes of expression which were pouring into English from the Latin and Romance languages. The new ideas were calling for new words to express them, and the new words were already becoming popular by the increase of printing and by the frequency of translation. These new coinages, however, were not at that time properly mingled with the old currency of the mother-tongue, and were on that account, perhaps, used with a more exact

appreciation of their meaning. (1). It is probable that their amalgamation with the Saxon and Norman elements was brought about largely by the instrumentality of the stage.

Shakspere, like other great and popular artists, does not deliberately seek after peculiar and out of the way modes of expression, but instinctively makes use of the current dialect of his time - a language, that is, which would be generally comprehensible. He does not wrest a word from its normal signification, except for the purpose of making it a more suitable vehicle for the weight of thought or stress of passion that was necessary for the purposes of his own dramatic style. His wonderful imagination, on the contrary, brings out the full resources of power or of pathos from every word. He has perfect command, as we have already seen, over the scholarly as well as the home-bred Saxon element. When he wrote that most tremendous of lines,

"The multitudinous seas incarnadine",

he was instinctively aware that the homely English of rural Arden could never have supplied such a wealth of high-sounding epithet. Not that Shakspere troubled himself with any theory as to the fitness of this or that thought or expression. He is throughout true to his dramatic style and to the tone of his various plays, but above

(1) The popular author of to-day could not write such a line as Jonson's
"Men may securely sin, but safely, never",
when such expressive words as 'horrid' and 'awful' have become the current coin of the careless and sentimental schoolgirl.

all is he true to nature. He has sounded every chord of dramatic utterance from the stately and dignified speech of Hamlet to the lumbering trivialities of language which make up the common, but none the less natural, jargon of Mrs. Quickly.

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