

‡ A New Study of the
Sonnets of Shakespeare

By Parke Godwin

“Looke, what thy memorie cannot containe
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt finde
The children nurst, delivered from thy braine,
To take a new acquaintance of thy minde.”

Sonnet 77.

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PREFACE.

THE greater part of what is contained in this volume was originally prepared as an informal address to a small circle of friends; but as it soon became evident that the subject could not be brought within the compass of that mode of communication, the author was induced to change the matter he had in hand into the more formal and deliberate shape of an essay. It would have been better for him, in order to avoid possible repetitions, oversights, and peculiarities of diction not suited to an elaborate treatise, if he had written the whole work over again, but he was warned against that labor by his advancing years, which might add to, instead of decreasing, the defects of his performance.

In submitting the work as it is to the judgment of his readers, the author desires to direct their attention particularly to two things: first, the Method of Investigation, which consists in interpreting the sonnets from their own words almost exclusively, and without recurring to any supposed extraneous incidents

in the life of the great poet, of which we know absolutely nothing; and, second, to the main result of the application of that method,—a division of the sonnets, in which nearly one half of them are found to relate to the passionate experiences of the poet under the different influences of a true and a false affection, while the other half (or a little more than half) are found to relate to his poetic development,—his aspirations, aims, struggles, disappointments, and final successes.

By this means, the sonnets are lifted from a low level of petty concern,—“a cat-and-dog fight,” as Butler, a recent commentator, has said,—up to a high point of æsthetic interest and significance. They now present the poet during an early formative period of his career, when he was laying the foundation of his character, and of an artistic skill which has had no parallel.

It is more than possible that in presenting these conclusions I have made some mistakes of detail, either as to the construction I have put upon this sonnet or that, or as to the place I have assigned to it in the general exposition: but such errors are of minor importance;—and the main question is, whether the principal view at which I have arrived is the correct

view or not; for if it be the correct view, it amounts to a complete revolution in this branch of Shakespearian literature. Let the public decide.

P. G.

NEW YORK, June 3, 1900.

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INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER FIRST.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SONNETS.

A LATE historian of English literature tells us that at one time in the reign of Queen Elizabeth there was an outbreak of sonnet-writing, which for mass and beauty has never been paralleled.¹ It was a form of verse which, having long held sway in Italy, passed through France into England, where it became a fashion. Introduced by Wyatt and Surrey about the year 1550, it was taken up by a great many others, and among them by Thomas Watson, whom Spenser calls "the noblest swain that ever piped upon an oaten quill," then by Spenser himself, the foremost poet of his age, and finally by Sir Philip Sidney, who, as scholar and soldier, enjoyed a universal popularity. In the course of time nearly everybody who could write verses at all wrote them in this style; a dozen different collections of them were published before 1596; and it is estimated that more than two thousand

¹ *A History of English Literature*, by George Saintsbury, p. 79.

specimens were in circulation, if not always printed, by the end of the century.

Among those touched by the common impulse, was a young versifier of Stratford-on-Avon, named Shakespeare, who wrote more than 154 poems of the kind, all strictly conformed to the conventional manner, — three quatrains of alternate rhymes, ending in a couplet, — and some of them to the conventional spirit.

Every person of culture who reads the Sonnets nowadays is pleased to find in most of them fertility of thought, beauty of imagery, and mellifluous versification,¹ but having read

¹ With some exceptions: Walter Savage Landor, in spite of his high admiration of the poet, maintains that the Sonnets, while they exhibit intensity and strength of thought, lack the imagination which is his main characteristic (*Works*, vol. iv., p. 56). Elsewhere, also, Landor (vol. iv., p. 12) remarks that not a single one is very admirable, and few sink very low. "They are hot and pothery with much condensation and delicacy, like a raspberry jam, without cream, crust, or bread, to break its viscosity." Hallam wished that the Sonnets had never been published, but that was on moral not æsthetic grounds. His words are: "There is weakness and folly in all excessive misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by those touches of nobler sentiment that abound in this long series of sonnets. But there are also faults of a merely external nature. The obscurity is often such as only conjecture can penetrate; the strain of admiration and tenderness would be too monotonous were it less unpleasing; and so many frigid conceits are scattered around that we might almost fancy the poet to have written without genuine emotion, did not a host of other passages attest the contrary."

them he is at a loss to know precisely what they are all about. Are they, he asks himself, a continuous poem, or so many isolated poems? Are they autobiographical or dramatic; or are they poems at all in the proper sense, and not enigmas, concealing under a poetic garb some deep and occult philosophy? Each of these questions has been answered affirmatively and negatively with equal zeal and ingenuity. In the complete editions of Shakespeare's *Works* the editors have tried their hands at solving the several difficulties, but not with much success; and bulky volumes have been prepared to prove various theories as to their design and significance, which carry no conviction with them beyond the immediate circle of authorship.¹

These differences of opinion are largely due to a certain obscurity in the Sonnets themselves: they do not carry their meaning on their face, like the Sonnets of Dante, Petrarch, and other Italian writers which preceded them, or like those of Spenser, Sidney, Drummond, Constable, etc., which were contemporaneous, or, again, like those of Bowles, Keats, Wordsworth, and Mr. and Mrs. Browning, which have

¹ See Massey's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Armitage Brown's *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems*, 1838, and others, which, however, I cite at second-hand.

come afterwards. They allude to situations that have now passed entirely out of memory; they indulge in conceits and plays upon words which rather perplex than help the understanding of them; and often they admit locutions, which, if not wholly obsolete, are yet very different from our accepted forms. Indeed, in reading them, it sometimes happens that we come upon passages which at first seem clear and intelligible, but which on closer scrutiny, like the face of a dumb man, get indefinite and vague.

Not a little of this obscurity is to be ascribed to the manner in which the Sonnets were introduced to the public,—which was such as not only to render corruptions of the text inevitable, but to suggest many misleading collateral questions. They were first alluded to incidentally in 1598 by one Francis Meres, a Master of Arts in both Universities, and more or less familiar with the literature and literary men of his time. A book of his called *Paladis Tamia, or Wit's Treasury*, contained a discourse on “Our English Poets Compared with the Greek, Latin, and Italian Poets,” wherein he referred to Shakespeare many times, and always in terms of eulogy. “The sweet, witty soul of Ovid,” he says, “lives in

mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare. Witness his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, and his sugared sonnets among his private friends."

"Shakespeare among the English," he goes on to say, "is excellent in both kinds for the stage: for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Comedy of Errors*, his *Love's Labor's Lost*, his *Love's Labor's Won*" (supposed by most critics to have been the original of *All's Well that Ends Well*), "his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and his *Merchant of Venice*; and for tragedy, his *Richard II.*, his *Richard III.*, his *Henry IV.*, his *King John*, his *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo and Juliet*." This list, dividing *Henry IV.* into its two parts, mentions no less than thirteen plays in all, although it does not include the *Taming of the Shrew*, nor *Pericles*, commonly referred to this early time.

Whether the "sugared sonnets" spoken of above were the same as those we now have can not be known positively, but it is more than probable that they were. As they are cited in proof of the poet's merit and distinction, along with such writings as the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the *Merchant of Venice*, the two *Richards*, and *King John*, it is not at

all likely that they would have been allowed to perish.

Besides, there is a strong presumption as to the identity of many of them, raised by a fact which is none the less convincing because it is indirect and casual. In the year 1599,—the year after Meres's allusion,—a book was published called *The Passionate Pilgrim*, which contained several poems by Shakespeare and, among the rest, two sonnets, now known as Nos. 138 and 144, the first of which (No. 138) refers to a love adventure in which the lovers are on the most friendly, familiar, and even jocose terms, while the second (No. 144) shows that this relation has been changed into one of suspicion and distrust. The poet is now assured that he has been betrayed by his lady, while he expresses a painful fear of the friend. These sonnets thus disclose an amatory experience, which must have had its beginning, its intermediate incidents, and its result, and are evidently parts of a more extended whole, which whole we find in the Sonnets as they have come down to us. They describe, as we shall see, the personal appearance and accomplishments of the lady, the gradual approaches of the swain, their increasing intimacy, the rise of disturbing suspicions, the poet's complete

illusion for a time, and then the final rupture and separation of the parties. The inference, therefore, would seem to be inevitable that these sonnets, at least, were extant before 1599.

The Sonnets, however, were not put forth in book form until the year 1609—eleven years after the mention of them by Meres,—when the poet had acquired a greatly increased fame as a playwright, and a widespread curiosity obtained as to what else he might have written. Of this curiosity the publishers took advantage, and, looking up everything that purported to be his, gave it to the world. In the case of the sonnets, the successful hunter was one Thomas Thorpe, who was not so much a printer or a publisher as a literary purveyor, and already responsible for some twenty considerable volumes.

Getting possession in some way or another of these sonnets, Mr. T. T. issued them, as a quarto, with this peculiar title: "*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, never before imprinted. At London by G. Eld. for T. T.¹ and are to be sold by Wm. Apsley, 1609." A few copies read "and are to be sold by John Wright, dwelling at Christ's Church Gate." In addition to the

¹ This T. T. is identified with Thomas Thorpe by an entry in the *Stationers' Register*, under date of May 20th.

sonnets, this volume contained also a complete poem of considerable length and remarkable beauty, called "The Lovers' Complaint."

If Thorpe had confined his enterprise to the simple issue of the poems he would have rendered us an invaluable service ; but he appears to have been ambitious on his own account and so prefixed to his quarto this dedication :

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .
 THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .
 MR. W. H. ALL . HAPPINESSE .
 AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
 PROMISED .
 BY .
 OVR-EVER-LIVING-POET .
 WISHETH .
 THE WELL-WISHING .
 ADVENTVRER IN
 SETTING .
 FORTH .

T. T.

This bit of quaintness, in which Mr. Tommy Thorpe tried to show off his wit, has proved to be a perfect mare's nest to the critics, who have found no end of perplexity in its terms. In the first place, they ask, what did Tommy

mean by the phrase "the onlie begetter"? Ordinarily it would mean the author of the sonnets, or the person by whom they were written. But that has not satisfied the mystery-mongers, — some of whom contend that the "onlie begetter" was the person by whom they were inspired, or to whom they were addressed, which is rather a forced use of the words, — to say nothing of the fact that several persons seem to be involved, female as well as male. Others contend that the "onlie begetter" was the person who procured them, or got them together for the printer, — an equally strange locution, just as it would be to say that the lad or lass who furnishes us with strawberries in the summer is the begetter of strawberries.

Then, again, who was Mr. W. H., said to have been this "onlie begetter," and for whom T. T. wishes all happiness and the immortality promised by the ever-living poet? The answers have been almost as many as the writers on the subject. It was, says one, the Earl of Southampton, an early friend and patron of the poet, the initials of whose family name, Henry Wriothesley, are simply reversed; no, says another, it was the young Earl of Pembroke, who was also an intimate friend of the bard; not at all, exclaims a third, it was

William Hart, a nephew of the poet, mentioned in his will, and who probably purloined the copy; or, more likely, adds a fourth, William Hathaway, his brother-in-law, who had access to his papers; or, finally, it was one William Hughes, plainly referred to in line 7, Sonnet 20, although nobody has ever yet discovered who William Hughes might happen to have been.

I shall not discuss these various wranglings further than to say that, in my guess, which is as good as another's, Mr. Tommy Thorpe, having read a deal in the early sonnets about begetting "a son," and also in the later sonnets about one Mr. Will,—a pun on the author's name,—and desiring at the same time to be quaint and funny for himself, put the two together in order to tell us how the exclusive author ("the onlie begetter") was no other than W. H. (Will Himself), or the veritable Master William Shakespeare. He resorted to this device, no doubt, in the hope thereby of averting the wrath of the poet, whose wares he had surreptitiously acquired and given to the public.

Thorpe's dedication was really of no moment in itself, or as a help to the interpretation of the poems. It was a little trick of his own, to further his own purposes, perhaps to excite

a curiosity which might promote the sale of his book. It was an habitual practice of publishers of the time to affix dedications to their works, confined to initial letters merely, such as Mr. O. S., Mr. B. W., Mr. R. L., etc., and among them Mr. W. H. was a good deal in favor. There are several books of this sort still extant and notably a collection of pious poems by one Southwell, a Jesuit, who wishes his patron, Mr. W. H., a long life and the achievement of all his desires.¹

Thorpe's Quarto, however, as it is our only authority for the sonnets, is exceedingly important, and at once suggests several inquiries that ought to be determined before we proceed to their interpretation. The first of these relates to

I. *Their Authenticity and Correctness.*

That the poems were written by Shakespeare admits of no doubt. They were in circulation privately, according to Meres, for nearly twenty years during his lifetime, and much discussed among his friends. They were published seven years before he died, and attracted a great deal of attention because of his growing fame as a

¹ See Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 400.

playwright. Yet no one of his contemporaries, so far as we can learn, ever questioned their origin. Within twenty years after his decease, while many of his friends were still alive, they were republished, and, as the writer of an introduction said, "with the same purity that the author when living avouched." It was reserved for the long-eared quidnuncs of the present century, who invented the Baconian nonsense, to raise even the thinnest mist of a doubt on the subject. One of these¹ insists that they were written by any one of a half-dozen wits of the time, provided it was not Shakespeare; and another has dug up for the authorship a mastodon as big as the latest dinosaurus of Wyoming.² He maintains, in the face of the most positive, various, and well-authenticated historical evidence,—contemporary opinion, the witness of "comrades" and intimate friends, the records of books still extant, and many of the most convincing incidental confirmations,—that "the Sonnets were not written by Shakespeare, but were written to him as the patron or friend of the poet; that while Shakespeare

¹ See *Hamlet's Note-Book*, by William D. O'Connor (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1885).

² *Testimony of the Sonnets as to the Authorship of the Shakespearean Plays and Poems*, by Jesse Johnson. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1899.

might have had something to do with some of the plays," their real author was "'a great poet,' 'a dreamy and transforming Genius,' [*sic*] who wrought in and for them that which is imperishable, and so wrought although he was to have no part in their fame and perhaps but a small financial recompense"; and that "it is the loves, griefs, fears, forebodings, and sorrows of the student and recluse, thus circumstanced and confined, that the Sonnets portray."¹ "Wonderful, wonderful!" as Celia exclaims, and then again "most wonderful!" Let us only admit the exceedingly natural and simple supposition that the greatest poet of the ages, who "lived for sixty-five or seventy years in London," during one of the most inquisitive as well as enlightened periods of history, and whose works made an epoch in the annals of literature, never revealed himself in any other way to man, woman, or child that we know of, not even by name,—let us admit that small assumption, and the Sonnets are "no longer mysterious or inexplicable." Their author may be the unparalleled Ignotus of all time, but they are as translucent as Mother Goose.

But while Shakespeare was the writer of the

¹ Johnson, page 3, but see also p. 92.

Sonnets, he had nothing to do with their publication. The very form of the title-page, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, is proof positive of this. All his other works—the narrative poems and the early quartos—are said to be “by William Shakespeare,” which is the customary and prescriptive style of an author who ventures on his own account. Besides, the Quarto, as printed, abounds in typographical and other errors which might easily have escaped the eyes of a proof-reader, but not those of the writer himself. Thus, for example, in Sonnet 48, *their* is put for *thy* no less than four times, making nonsense of the verse; Sonnet 126 wants the final couplet, which is indicated by parentheses, thus (), an obvious expedient of a printer, but not of an author; again, in Sonnet 144, the second line repeats the close of the first line, making bad sense as well as bad measure, which could not have eluded the writer; and No. 145 is not a Sonnet at all, but a bit of octosyllabic doggerel, which a writer of Shakespeare's judgment would not have retained in the collection. As the poems issued under his own auspices, like the *Venus and Adonis* and the *Lucrece*, have few typographical faults, we have a right to conclude that the Sonnets, which are full of

them, could not have had the benefit of his supervision.

2. *The Order of Arrangement.*

The order in which the Sonnets are printed in the Quarto has been thought by many of great importance, though I do not myself see why the sequence of the subject-matter should depend upon the numerical sequence. A poet, writing in a commonplace-book from day to day, might treat of one theme to-day and of another to-morrow, as his mood suggested, and yet number his pieces consecutively, without implying any connection between them. Indeed, whole weeks might intervene in which he would be absorbed in different topics, without recurring to any particular one. Shakespeare's Sonnets read, on the first view, as if they had been written in this piecemeal way. Ninety-nine out of a hundred readers would say of them at once with Mr. Grant White, that as they stand "they are distractingly and remedilessly confused." None the less Professor Dowden insists that they now stand as first written. "Repeated readings have convinced me," he says, "that the sonnets stand in the right order, sonnet connected with sonnet"; yet he immediately recognizes a grand break at No.

126, and several smaller intermediate breaks which he calls *l'envoi*.¹ The connections he finds between consecutive sonnets are often so forced and remote that one can hardly think that he takes himself seriously. In fact, he does distrust his own discernment, and "freely warns the reader" that he has perhaps, in some instances, fancied points of connection which have no real existence. But there is no "perhaps" about it: in several instances he lugs them in together by the head and shoulders or by main force. I cannot for the life of me discern the affinities that appear to have been patent to him between the 18th and 19th, the 19th and 20th, and so on up to the 33d; or between the 34th and 35th, and the 37th and 38th, and so on to the 45th; or between the 49th and 50th, and so on up to the 56th; or between the 58th and 59th, and so on to the 65th; and I might cite dozens of others, in which it is as difficult to find any relativity as it would be to find a needle in a haystack. Groups of sonnets show themselves everywhere, as we shall afterwards see, but between them are gaps which, if "not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church door," are enough.

¹ *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare*. By Edward Dowden. New York, Appleton & Co., 1887.

It is significant that in the earliest edition of the Sonnets after the Quarto—that of 1640—no attention whatever is paid to the order; the poems are distributed as the editor pleases, and generally in clusters under particular titles; and that edition is followed by Gildon, Sewell, Lintot, and other editors of the eighteenth century. More recently, Knight, one of the most intelligent and judicious of judges, departs widely from the accepted order, whenever he wishes to illustrate what he considers subjects that ought to be grouped,—jumping *ad libitum* from No. 18 to No. 90, from No. 22 to No. 110, then back again to No. 62, etc. In this freedom he is followed by Hudson, who arranges the poems in zigzags,—going from No. 18 to No. 55, from No. 21 to No. 139, and from No. 126 to No. 22. It is needless to add that all the more elaborate commentators, especially those who have written great books about them, feel themselves warranted in adapting the order of the poems to the exigencies of their theories.

My own notion is, that when Shakespeare wrote the sonnets in his table books he numbered them in the order in which they were written, without reference to their connections of theme; and afterwards, when he copied them

or allowed them to be copied for circulation among his friends, he adhered to the same desultory arrangement, with the exception perhaps that to one sonnet he affixed an especial number for purposes of elucidation which I shall hereafter point out.

3. *The Date of Composition.*

A more important point, in fact a vital one in this inquiry, is the time at which the sonnets were composed. Were they all, or the most of them, in existence in 1597 when Meres alludes to them as circulating from hand to hand? or were they still comparatively new when they were put into book form by Thorpe in 1609? Dowden,¹ summing up the prevailing opinion about them, says that "the general characteristics of the style lead us to believe that some of the sonnets, as, for example, Nos. 1-17, belong to a period not later than *Romeo and Juliet*" (which would be, taking the earliest edition of that play, about 1591, or, taking the later edition, about 1597), "while others, as Nos. 64-74, seem to echo the sadder tones heard in *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*" (which would be for both about 1602-3).² "I

¹ *Sonnets*, Introduction, p. xlv.

² That is, after *Much Ado, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, All's Well, Othello*, and *Lear*.

can not think," he goes on to say, "that any of the sonnets are earlier than Daniel's *Delia* (1592), which I believe supplied Shakespeare with a model of this form of verse¹; and though I can allege no strong evidence for the opinion, I should not be disposed to place any later than 1605." Boas agrees in the main with this conclusion, putting the sonnets after the narrative poems, *i. e.*, after 1594;² and George Brandes, in a still more recent work,³ fixes the date about 1601, which would be after Shakespeare had written the thirteen plays ascribed to him by Meres, and added to them *Henry V.*, *Julius Cæsar*, the first draft of *Hamlet*, and those unsurpassed comedies, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. He was then in the thirty-seventh year of his age, of prosperous fortunes, of wide renown as an author, and held in the highest esteem as a man by "divers of worship."⁴ In fact, he had been noted for several years already, not only for "his facetious grace in writing,

¹ Daniel most likely came after Shakespeare as a writer of sonnets.

² *Shakespeare and His Predecessors*, by F. L. Boas. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.

³ *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, By George Brandes. The Macmillan Co., 1898.

⁴ Chettle's *Kind-Harte's Dreame*, 1592.

but for his civil and excellent demeanor, and uprightness of dealing."

All of these gentlemen shot wide of their mark: the Sonnets were of much earlier date than they suppose; and the proof of it is "those general characteristics of style," on which Mr. Dowden relies.¹

(1) While some of them are crude enough, as Hudson says, "to have been the handiwork of a smart schoolboy," they have all of them more or less marks of immaturity. The most conspicuous of these are the identical and bad rhymes in which they abound, such as "moment" and "comment," "decrease" and "increase," "open" and "broken," "astronomy" and "quality," "key" and "survey," and a great many others no less abominable, which a practised writer could have easily avoided. I might add, too, as showing youthfulness and want of skill, that the thought is so often greatly in advance of the power to express it; or, an ambition of aim not carried out by the execution; but why resort to these rather dispu-

¹ The only writer who has fixed upon an early date is Samuel Butler, whose work, printed after this chapter was written, assigns the writing of the sonnets to the period between 1585 and 1588, but, as he carries his pretensions so far as to name not only the month but the part of the month in which each sonnet was written, he gives a sort of ludicrousness and absurdity to the whole subject.

table indications of style, when so many of the sonnets themselves declare directly or by inevitable inference that they are the work of an inexperienced hand? Take, for example, No. 16, one of a series of seventeen sonnets, in which the writer describes his pen as a "pupil-pen," or a pen not yet a master of its art; or No. 25, which presents its author as in humble circumstances, and quite unknown to the public; or No. 29, in which he speaks of himself as neither a favorite of fortune, nor of public opinion, but an outcast from both; envying the better positions, and desiring the qualities which he does not possess; or No. 32, in which he depreciates his verse as rude and easily outstripped by that of other writers; or Nos. 33 and 34, lamenting the disappointments of his career, which once promised well but is now covered over by clouds; or No. 36, which complains that he is made tame or is disabled as a writer by the intense enmity of fortune; or No. 38, which confesses that the efforts of his Muse are of slight effect and not acceptable to the taste of his day; or No. 69, which complains that his merely external accomplishments are appreciated, while his finer qualities are overlooked or disparaged; or No. 72, which tells that the poet is really ashamed of what he brings forth, and

that it has nothing of excellence in it ; or No. 80, which claims for his lines no merit but the simple merit of sincerity of sentiment ; or No. 88, which deplors that he is full of faults and weaknesses ; and others, like the 110th, 111th, 117th, in which he accuses himself of having wandered away from truth and beauty to court popular favor by appeals to a low public sentiment. Assuredly, such things could have been said by Shakespeare of himself only in his callow days—when he was still struggling with his youthful limitations, and before he had attained a full consciousness of his higher powers.

(2) Then again, in addition to these thirty sonnets are others, which seem to form series, like Nos. 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, in some of which he admits the superiority of his rivals and despairs of reaching their heights of excellence, and proposes to withdraw from the field ; while in others he complains that certain rivals had imitated his manner to such an extent as to deprive him of the credit of originality, and thereby rendered him commonplace. Either of these positions, as I think, his concessions of his own inferiority, or his complaints of a damaging imitation, could have been assumed only at the very outset of his career, and before he had achieved any of those wonderful

works which placed him at the head of his kind, and beyond hailing distance of competition. As the author of the earlier poems and some of the earlier plays he might have been followed and even surpassed by a few of his contemporaries, like Greene, Marlowe, Peele, and Lodge, but as the author of his greater comedies, tragedies, and historical pieces he stood alone.

One thing at least is quite certain,—that these sonnets in which he deploras his own obscurity, deprecates his poverty, brands his faults and errors with severe reproaches, and tells of his struggles with the Muse, must have been written before the *Venus and Adonis* and the *Lucrece* appeared in 1593-4, because when those poems were made public they were received, as a late biographer says, “with unqualified enthusiasm.” “The critics,” he adds, “vied with each other in the exuberance of their eulogies, in which they proclaimed that the fortunate author had gained a permanent place on the summit of Parnassus.”¹ Poets themselves distinguished, like Draper, Clerke, Weever, Carew, and, best of all, Spenser, call him “the honey tongue,” “the unmatched,” “the modern Catullus” “whose Muse is full of high thought’s invention.”

¹ Lee’s *Life of Shakespeare*, pp. 78, 79.

(3) Then again, as we shall see more fully hereafter, are sonnets (more or less connected) in which the poet weeps the estrangement of his higher ideals (88-93): confesses his own departure from the better methods of art, as a cause (100-103), resolves to return to rightful ways (107-112, 117, 118), and finally rejoices in the conquest of himself, and the consequent acquisition of a mastery which assures him an immortal triumph (123-125, 55). In all this one discerns the unmistakable signs of an incomplete development.

Taking, then, these several considerations together,—the youthful tone of the sonnets, the repeated confessions of poverty and obscurity by the poet, his complaints of the rivalry of others, and the marked similarities in many respects between the sonnets and the earlier poems and plays,—the conclusion becomes inevitable as to the time of their composition.

We cannot fix the precise year in which they were written, but we may assign the period within which they were written. It covered the time between 1582, about the date of his marriage, and 1592, when he had become more or less famous both as an actor and a playwright. A few of them may have been

executed after 1592, especially those of personal compliment addressed to friends and those in which he boasts of his poetic triumphs, but the great body of them must have belonged to the time I have designated.

If it be objected to this view that, in several of the sonnets, the poet speaks of himself in terms which imply age, as when he writes: "my days are past the best" (138), or, "as crushed and o'erdone by time's injurious hand" (63), or, "as bated and chopped with tanned antiquity" (62), or, as being at that time of life "when yellow leaves, or none, do hang upon the boughs" (73), etc., I answer, first, that many of these expressions are to be taken, as we shall see, in an æsthetic and not physical sense; and, secondly, as Grant White suggests, "that owing to the shorter span of human life in those days, a man was regarded as old before he had reached the thirties." Shakespeare himself, in Sonnet 2, describes a person who had attained to forty winters only, as having "deep trenches," (wrinkles) in his face, "sunken eyes," and of a coldness of blood that needed to be warmed. It was, moreover, a conventional practice of the poets then to exaggerate their years and deplore their "senectitude and decay," as may be seen in Daniel,

Drayton, Barnfield, and others who were not yet at middle age. Even in our own times, we know that Byron, who died at thirty-six, proclaimed a little while before that he was "in the sere and yellow leaf."

To this brief history of the Sonnets it is perhaps well to add that they never acquired the popularity of Shakespeare's plays or of his other poems: for while the *Venus and Adonis* and the *Lucrece* passed rapidly through several editions, the Sonnets were not republished until 1640,—thirty-one years after the Quarto was published, and twenty-four years after the poet's death. They then appeared in a medley with other poems, and in groups "distributed seemingly at random," as Hudson says, and under headings which had no more to do with the poems than the marginal notes in our old Bibles have to do with the text as the Higher Criticism construes it now. It was entitled *Poems* (sometimes *Poemes*) by *Will Shakespeare, Gent.* It omitted seven of the best sonnets, gave two, 138 and 144, in the corrupt form of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, and though a few misprints are corrected others are introduced. In his preface the publisher avers that the poems "appear in the same purity, as the author when living announced,"

most likely an invention of the publisher to commend his wares.

During the seventeenth century, the public seems to have been satisfied with the Folios of 1623, 1632, 1663, 1664, and of 1685 (which included seven spurious plays attributed to Shakespeare, but excluded the poems as if they were not worthy of the association). It was not until the eighteenth century (about 1709), when Rowe printed the first critical edition of the plays (followed by a reprint in 1714), that Lintot put forward an edition of the poems, which was followed subsequently by Gildon (1710), Sewell (1725), Pope (1725), and Steevens (1728). The most of these, singular to say, took Benson's farrago for their model. Steevens, indeed, in an early edition of Johnson's *Shakespeare*, reprinted the poems but excluded the sonnets, because, as he said, "the strongest act of Parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service." The Rev. Edward Malone, in 1780, seems to have been the first editor to approach an estimation of the true value of the Sonnets. Even he was exceedingly cautious in his commendations, but he is entitled to the praise of having restored the Sonnets to public admiration 170 years after

their first appearance. Since Malone, a great many new and elegant editions have appeared, among which an edition by Palgrave, and an edition by Dowden, are by far the best, although the latter is disfigured by the eccentric interpretations in which the editor indulges.

CHAPTER SECOND.

OF FORMER EXPOSITIONS OF THE SONNETS.

THE historian of English literature already cited says that "no vainer fancies this side of madness ever entered the human mind, than certain expositions of the Sonnets of Shakespeare."¹ This is not an exaggerated judgment, and the number of these fancies is no less remarkable than their absurdity.²

These varied views might be neglected

¹ *A History of English Literature*, by George Saintsbury, vol. ii., p. 18.

² They are so numerous, indeed, that Professor Dowden, in his admirable essay (*Shakespeare: His Mind and Art*, by Edward Dowden, p. 350. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1881), has been able to distribute them into classes, as a naturalist does his weeds and insects. The principal kinds, he says, are as follows: (1) The Sonnets are poems of an imaginary friendship and love (held by Dyce, Delius, H. Morley, etc.). (2) They are partly imaginary and partly autobiographical (held by C. Knight, H. von Friesen, R. Simpson, etc.). (3) They form a general allegory (held by Barnstorff, Heraud, Karl Karpf, and, I may add, Gen. Hitchcock, and E. J. Dunning). (4) They are exclusively autobiographic (held by Bright, Boaden, A. Brown, and H. Brown). (5) They are partly addressed to the Earl of Southampton, and partly written in his name to Elizabeth Vernon (held by Mrs. Jameson and Gerald Massey), and (6) They were partly written for the Earl of Pembroke, to be sent by him to the dark woman, Lady Rich.

altogether, but for the fact that two or three of them are so diametrically opposed to what I consider the true view that they compel a moment's consideration.

(1) The first of these regards the Sonnets as merely miscellaneous and discursive exercises of fancy, having no connection one with another and no collective significance. It was first suggested, I think, by Halliwell-Phillipps, but it has since been more elaborately argued by the German Professor Delius. If it be the right view, it vacates our inquiry from the outset, and renders useless, as Dowden says, any attempt "to shape a story, reconcile discrepancies, ascertain a chronology, or identify persons." But assuredly no one can read the Sonnets, even in a cursory way, without perceiving that they form many connected groups, —groups of twos, as Nos. 33, 34, Nos. 64, 65, and Nos. 78, 79; groups also of threes, as Nos. 40-42, Nos. 97-99, and Nos. 23-25; groups, again, of fours, as Nos. 71-74 and Nos. 100-103; then, once more, a group of sixes, as Nos. 88-93; one group of sevens, as Nos. 80-86; and finally a group of seventeen, in what are called the marriage sonnets (1-17). Now as each of these groups has something to say for itself, some story to tell, it seems

impossible to treat the sonnets as merely separate and individual ejaculations.

Akin to this view is Mr. Sidney Lee's in his recent *Life of Shakespeare*, which contends that the Sonnets, with the exception of thirty addressed to the Earl of Southampton, are no more "than literary meditations on the infirmities incident to human nature," undertaken after the cue had been given by other sonneteers. In other words, the poet had no personal convictions or feelings to express, but wrote imitatively in the manner of the times, a little better than others now and then, yet on the whole as a follower if not a plagiarist.¹ But on this hypothesis what are we to make of the fact that of the 154 sonnets at least 130 are written in the personal tense?—"I," "me," and "mine" are of constant recurrence; in some cases they recur five or six times, and generally animated by great fervor and vehemence

¹ *A Life of William Shakespeare*, by Sidney Lee. New York, the Macmillan Co., 1898. This book has a good deal of pleasant narrative in it, the result of careful research, but is no less marked by wild speculation, arrogant dogmatism, and, in what relates to the punning sonnets, repulsive coarseness. Its general effect is to degrade Shakespeare very much in the estimation of the reader, as he is made to appear not only an unscrupulous plagiarist, but a sordid hanger-on of the great, and a gross-minded sensualist. Mr. Lee also pronounces some of the sonnets as positively "inane," an opinion that may be taken as a measure of his critical capacity.

of sentiment. Professor Dowden has said of the plays, that there is hardly anywhere a passage to be found which is hard, cold-blooded, and indifferent, and the same may be said of the poems. They vibrate with human emotion, and reveal the man quite as much as they do the poet. That they are in manner and tone like other sonnets of the times, may be true, but they are also, in many respects, wholly unlike. Henry Brown and Professor Minto were so strongly impressed by the difference, as to argue that they were written on purpose to ridicule the prevailing modes. In Sonnets No. 130 and No. 21, for instance, Shakespeare says expressly that his Muse is not like the Muse of other poets, who are moved to write by artificial inspiration: he writes what he feels, and not for mere show or pretence. He also says elsewhere that in order to meet the rivalry of other poets, and especially of one "better spirit" (Nos. 78-86), he avoided all decoration or false painting, trusting solely to the instincts of his genius.

Mr. Lee apparently does not see that the poets of the time, Italian, French, and English, were children of the later Renaissance, who breathed the air of that reaction against the superstitions of the Middle Ages. That many

of them resembled others was inevitable. What we are to look for in determining their respective merits is their originality in handling a common theme. "It is not the finding of new things," as Lowell finely observes, "but the making of something out of them after they are found," that produces literature of consequence. "Wherever Geoffrey Chaucer found anything directed to Geoffrey Chaucer, he took it and made the most of it. It was not the subject treated, but himself that was the new thing. *Cela m' appartient de droit*, Molière is reported to have said when accused of plagiarism. Chaucer pays also that usurious interest, remarks Coleridge, which Genius always pays in borrowing." So with Shakespeare: he found the sonnet, but he filled it with the young Shakespeare. You read sonnets of others, and you say, "How pretty! how like Petrarch, or the fine French singers!" but you read his, and while you gather the sweetness you breathe short with expectation.

(2) A second theory of the Sonnets maintains that they are allegories, which conceal under common, every-day expressions a profound æsthetical or spiritual philosophy. It has had its advocates in Germany, but its most labored defender was the late General Hitchcock of

this country.¹ He is ingenious and earnest, but does not carry his readers with him. One questions all along how a series of poems which do not even recognize the existence of a Supreme Being should yet be a storehouse of dogmas about the Holy Three in One, the divine Logos, and the Wonderful Rock. Hitchcock admits that he is mystical, and hard to be understood, and as far as you do understand him you do not see any difference between his religious tenets and those universally accepted by other teachers.

A more pretentious attempt at allegorizing the Sonnets is called the *Genesis of Shakespeare's Art*.² It assumes that the Sonnets comprise but a single subject, the development of Shakespeare's genius from its earliest croppings-out to its final mastery, but the effort is to me not at all satisfactory: while the author is compelled to resort to a great many subtle *tours de force* to connect sonnet with sonnet, he lands you, in the end, in a veritable maze. You read, and read, and read, and when you finish you have no clearer

¹ *Remarks on the Sonnets of Shakespeare*, showing that they belong to the Hermetic class of writings, and explaining their actual meaning and purpose. Isaac Miller, New York, 1867.

² *The Genesis of Shakespeare's Art: A Study of his Sonnets and Poems*, by Edwin James Dunning. Boston, 1897.

notion of the genesis of Shakespeare's art than you had at the beginning.

In fact, all the efforts that I have seen to detect a profound religious or æsthetic philosophy under what is else quite simple end in texts more obscure than the original text, and reading it is like walking out of a room partly lighted into a cellar completely dark. Even in poems professedly allegorical, like the *Faerie Queene*, we soon lose sight of the story to attend to the verse. The allegory, at best, is a spurious sort of literature. It replaces the genuine pleasure of poetry, which is "simple, sensuous, and passionate," by the kind of pleasure one finds in a game of chess, that of ingenuity, not of imagination. In the age of the *Faerie Queene* there was a prevailing fondness for it, and Shakespeare tried his hand upon it briefly in the vision of *Cymbeline*, in the feast and dance of *The Tempest*, and perhaps he verged towards it in what are called the marriage sonnets, but his genius was essentially dramatic: he looked at life and its issues in their reality, and even his fairy world adheres to the substantial and human. If his thought is often so very deep that you have to dig far down to get at its roots, or if he sometimes pursues a figure through the air until there is nothing

left but the figure, he commonly strikes in the open, and he strikes so hard at times that his blow gives back a ring of mystic bells, or a mutter of distant thunder. He plays the magician, no doubt; like Prospero, he deals with charms and enchantments, he controls the elements, he calls up the mutinous winds, and sets roaring war between the green sea and the azured vault; but none the less his "fury" is always the "minister" of his "reason"; fantastic as his scene may be, you know it is fantastic; and when the work is done, he deliberately takes off his robes, and tells you "the revels now are ended, and these actors, as I foretold you, are melted into thin air."

(3) The theory of the Sonnets, however, which seems to me the most misleading and pernicious, is the most recent and widely received,—that which treats them as an expression of the poet's unbounded love and admiration for a young friend. For many years after they were published, as Brandes remarks,¹ all the commentators regarded them as addressed to a woman; a plausible inference because so much of the sonnet-writing of the time was taken up with amatory sentiment. As

¹ *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, by George Brandes, vol. i., p. 314. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1897.

Warton says: "In Italy the sonnet treated of the anxieties of love with pathos and propriety, and in England," he adds, "they rather tortured the passion with their comparisons." Spenser, Sidney, Constable, Daniel, Drayton, Barnes, Barnfield, and others were full of devotion to the sex: and it seemed, therefore, altogether likely that Shakespeare, who in his plays became so fertile a creator of female types, should follow in the same path. It was not till 1780, a century and a half after his death, that Malone and his friends began to assert that more than a hundred of them were addressed to a man. Even then the assertion did not command universal acquiescence. As late as 1797 George Chalmers strenuously argued that they were written to, or meant for, Queen Elizabeth; and not until about the beginning of the present century did a decided change of opinion take place. It was then generally conceded that at least 126 of the Sonnets had a masculine friend of the poet's as their object. But who was he? In 1817 it was suggested by Drake,¹ on the strength of the poet's friendship for the Earl of Southampton, to whom the *Venus and Adonis*

¹ *Shakespeare and his Times*, by Nathan Drake, M.D. London, 1817.

and the *Lucrece* were dedicated, that he was the chief if not sole inspirer of the poet. This hypothesis was sustained by Gervinus and Kreysig with more or less zeal. In 1832, however, Boaden, biographer of Kemble and Siddons, advanced strong objections to it, and put forth the Earl of Pembroke as the man in the mask¹; he was approved by Mr. James Heywood Bright, who claimed to have discovered the error as early as 1819.² Since then a furious controversy has raged between the adherents of the respective earls. It is a controversy, as it has turned out, very like the battle of the Kilkenny cats, in which the contestants swallowed each other. Each party has demolished its adversary, while it has done nothing for its own

¹ See *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1832.

² Mr. Samuel Butler, on the strength of the line in Sonnet 20, "A man in hew, all *Hews* in his controlling," has another candidate in one Mr. Hughes, or Hews, or Hewes, and runs a wild-goose chase in search of him. After saying that dozens of William Hugheses had existed in England from time to time, one of them even a Bishop, he cannot discover this particular W. H., but describes him thus: "He was more boy than man, good looking, of plausible, attractive manners, and generally popular. It is also plain that his character developed badly, and that, boy as he was, before the end of the year, he had got himself a bad name. He was vain, heartless, and I cannot think cared two straws for Shakespeare, who no doubt bored him: But he dearly loved flattery, and it flattered him to bring Shakespeare to heel [*sic*]: Moreover, he had just sense enough to know that Shakespeare laid the paint on thicker and more delectably than any one else did, therefore he would not let him go." Butler, as writer and critic, is certainly without a peer.

cause. Both are wrong, and both are right,—wrong as to its own position, but right as to that of its opponent.

In the *Fortnightly Review* for December, 1897, Mr. William Archer demonstrated that the Sonnets were not addressed to the Earl of Southampton, but most likely to the Earl of Pembroke; but in the same review for February, 1898, Mr. Sidney Lee demonstrates that they were not addressed to the Earl of Pembroke, but that many of them were addressed to the Earl of Southampton. Had the combatants paid any attention to the requirements of chronology, they would have seen that they were both barking up the wrong tree; for if we suppose the Sonnets to have been written during the period I have fixed,—*i. e.*, between 1582 and 1592,—as Southampton was born in 1573, and Pembroke in 1580, they were neither of them of an age to attract the notice of the poet. Towards the close of it, Southampton, who was a sort of general patron of literature, may have befriended the young playwright and won his gratitude, but nothing more. Certainly that gratitude would never have taken the peculiar form it assumes in the Sonnets,—that of celebrating his amours. Southampton was among the richest noblemen of the day. He owned

estates in various parts of the kingdom, dressed with great magnificence, fared sumptuously, took part in public affairs and expeditions, and was ever surrounded by a retinue of ladies and gentlemen devoted to games and gayeties. If Shakespeare had undertaken to paint him in verse, something of all this splendor would have appeared, but it is all overlooked in the Sonnets, and the place supplied by coarse flips and familiarities.

As to Pembroke, born in 1580, he was either a child in arms, or running about in short clothes. Even if we suppose the Sonnets were written at any time before the mention of them by Meres (1598), he was yet a lad at college, and not likely to have attracted the attention, much less the unbounded admiration, of a busy actor in London. On the other hand, if we suppose that they were not composed until about the time of their publication (1609), Shakespeare was then at the height of his activity as a playwright, producing such masterpieces as *Much Ado*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*, and not at all likely, when his mind was heaving like an ocean with these great conceptions, to turn aside to dabble in little dirty pools like those implied in both the Southampton and Pembroke theories.

The best confutation of the view that the Sonnets are tributes of friendship to any young fellow of the time is a *résumé* given of them by both Professor Dowden and Mr. Furnivall,¹ which is so diverting that I am sure the reader will forgive me for reproducing one at some length. Each of them assumes throughout, "for convenience' sake," that the person addressed may always be called *Will*, an enormous assumption in itself, but let that pass.¹

"Shakespeare begins," says Mr. Dowden, "by urging Will to get married," but as I shall consider this marriage theory hereafter I shall dismiss it for the present. "This Will is the pattern and exemplar of all human beauty (Son. 19)²; he unites in himself the perfection of man and woman (20). Although this is extravagant praise, it is the simple truth (21): he has exchanged love with the poet (22), who must needs be silent in the excess of his passion (23), and who yet cherishes in his heart the image of his friend's beauty (24), and holds still more dear the love from which no unkind fortune shall ever separate him (25). Here affairs of his own compel Shakespeare to a journey which removes him from Will (26, 27). Sleepless by night, and toiling by day, he thinks only of the absent one (28); grieving over his own poor estate (29)³ and the death of friends, but finding in the one

¹ See introduction to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, by E. J. Rolfe. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1892.

² The numbers quoted are those of the Quarto.

³ Which he does not, but rather rejoices in it.

beloved amends for all (30, 31); and so Shakespeare commends to his friend his poor verses as a token of his affection, which may survive if he himself should die (32). At this point the mood changes, for in his absence his friend has been false to friendship (33).¹ Indeed, if Will would let the sunshine of his favor beam out again, that would not cure the disgrace. Tears and penitence are fitter (34); and for the sake of such tears Will shall be forgiven (35); but henceforth their lives must run apart (36); Shakespeare, separated from Will, can look on and rejoice in his friend's happiness and honor (37), singing his praise in verse (38), which he could not do if they were so united that to praise his friend were self-praise (39); separated they must be, and even their loves be no longer one. Shakespeare can now give his lady, even her he loved, to the gentle thief; for, wronged though he is, he will still hold Will dear (40); what is he but a boy whom a woman has beguiled (41)? and for both, for friend and mistress, in the midst of his pain, he will try to feign excuses (42).²

“Here there seems to be a gap of time. The Sonnets begin again in absence, and some students have called this, perhaps rightly, the Second Absence (43). His friend continues as dear as ever, but confidence is shaken, and a deep distrust arises (48) (jumping, at a bound, from 43 to 48). What right has a poor player to claim constancy and love (49)?³ He is on a journey which removes him from Will (50, 51). His friend perhaps professes an unshaken loyalty, for Shakespeare now takes

¹ For which the false friend was not disdained at all.

² There is no feigning of excuses here, only a bit of humorous badinage.

³ Although, according to Mr. Dowden's dates, this poor player was the author of the best plays that had ever yet been written.

heart and praises Will's truth (53, 54),¹ believing that his own verse will keep forever that truth in mind. He will endure the pain of absence, and have no jealous thoughts (57, 58),² striving to honor his friend in song, better than ever man was honored before (59), in song that shall outlast the revolutions of time (60). Still he cannot quite get rid of jealous fears (61), and yet, what right has one so worn by years and care to claim all a young man's love (62)?³ Will, too, must fade, but his beauty will survive in verse (63). Alas, to think that death will take away the beloved one (64). Nothing but verse can defeat time and decay (65).⁴ For his own part, Shakespeare would willingly die, were it not that dying he would leave his friend in an evil world (66).⁵

"Why should one so beautiful live to grace this ill world (67) except as a survival of the genuine beauty of the good old times (68); yet beautiful as he is, he is blamed for careless living (69); surely this must be slander (70).⁶ Shakespeare here returns to the thought

¹ Overlooking 52, in which Will is described as a most precious jewel, and whether bad or not bad, a perfect blessing which, being had, gives scope to triumph, and, being lacked, to hope.

² Skipping 55, 56, which say that Will's praises shall outlive "marble and the gilded monuments of princes," and "find a place in the eyes of all posterity."

³ Where nothing is said of either years or care, but simply that he is weakened artistically, and maimed by his inveterate selfishness.

⁴ Does that mean that verse will keep the poor darling alive?

⁵ The poor dear,—being one of the richest and most popular noblemen of the day, what a sad fate it was for him to be left alone in a bad world!

⁶ Mr. Dowden passes over the fact that this friend who is here said to present "a pure, unstained prime," having passed through the various ambushes laid for the young, either unassailed, or, if assailed, triumphant over all, is the same friend whose conduct in

of his own death: 'when I leave this vile world,' he says, 'let me be forgotten' (71, 72); 'and my death is not very far off' (73); 'but when I die my spirit still lives in my verse' (74).¹ A new group seems to begin with 75. Shakespeare loves his friend as a miser loves his gold, fearing it may be stolen (fearing a rival poet?). His verse is monotonous and old-fashioned (not like the rival's verse?) (76); so he sends Will his manuscript book unfilled, which Will may fill, if he please, with verse of his own; Shakespeare chooses to sing no more of Beauty and of Time; Will's glass and dial may inform him henceforth on these topics (77). The rival poet has now won the first place in Will's esteem (78-86).² Shakespeare must bid his friend farewell (87). If Will should scorn him, Shakespeare will side against himself (88, 89); but if his friend is ever to hate him, let it be at

previous sonnets is pronounced a "trespass," a "sin," a "sensual fault," a "twofold violation of honor" (Son. 35, 41).

¹ Giving as a reason for his depression the unworthiness and failure of his writings, although he had just said (55, 56) that his verse would give life to any one till the day of judgment.

² Mr. Dowden jumps here from 78 to 86, simply saying that the rival poet had "won the first place in Will's esteem," but he does not say what place Will had won in the poet's esteem, giving way to an outbreak of the most fulsome adulation that was ever uttered. Shakespeare tells Will (if we keep to Mr. Dowden's theory) that he is the poet's one source of inspiration, which lifts his ignorance as high as the highest learning (78); that other poets had discovered his secret and were reducing him to silence (79); that Will's excellence is as wide as the ocean on which every bark may ride (80); that it is past all praise (82); that he needs no decoration or painting (83); and that simply to say to Will, "You are you alone," will win for his style a universal and endless admiration (84), in fact, that Will's praise is beyond all expression, so that in listening to it one can only exclaim helplessly, "'T is so, 't is true."

once, that the bitterness of death may soon be past (90); he has dared to say farewell, but his friend's love is all the world to him, and the fear of losing him is misery (91); indeed, he cannot lose his friend, for death would come quickly to save him from such grief; and yet, Will may be false and Shakespeare never know it (92),¹ so his friend, fair in seeming, false within, would be like Eve's apple (93).² Yet, it is to such self-contained, passionless persons that nature entrusts the rarest gifts of grace and beauty, but vicious indulgence will spoil the fairest human soul (94); so let Will beware of his youthful vices, already whispered by the lips of men (95). True, Will makes graces out of faults, but this should be kept within bounds (95).³ Here again, perhaps, is a gap of time. Sonnets 97-99 are written in absence, which some students perhaps rightly call the Third Absence. These three sonnets are full of tender affection, but at the close of 99 allusion is made to Will's vices, the canker in the rose. After this followed a period of silence; in 100 love begins to renew itself, and song awakes. Shakespeare excuses his silence (101): his love has grown while he was silent (102). His friend's loveliness is better than all song (103). Three years have passed since their first acquaintance; Will looks as young as ever, though time must be insensibly altering his beauty (104), Shakespeare sings with a monotony of love (105). All former singers, praising knights and ladies, only prophesied concerning Will (106). Grief and fear are past: the two friends are

¹ Though he had described it in the loudest terms several times.

² *I. e.*, a source of all evil.

³ Will's very shame is sweet and lovely; naming his name blesses an ill report.

reconciled again,¹ and both live forever united in Shakespeare's verse (107). Love has conquered Time and age, which destroy mere beauty of face (108). Shakespeare confesses his errors, but now he has returned to his home of love (109); he will never wander again (110); his past faults were partly caused by his temptations as a player (111); and he cares for no praise or blame except that of his friend (112).²

"Once more he is absent from his friend, but full of loving thought of him (113, 114). Love has grown and will grow yet more (115). Love is unconquerable by Time (116). Shakespeare confesses again his wanderings from his friend; they were tests of Will's constancy (117); and they quickened his own appetite for genuine love (118). Ruined love rebuilt is stronger than at first (119); there were wrongs on both sides and must now be mutual forgiveness (120). Shakespeare is not to be judged by the report of malicious censors (121); he has given away his friend's present of a table-book because he needed no remembrancer (122); records and registers of time are false; only a lover's memory is to be wholly trusted, recognizing old things in what seem new (123); Shakespeare's love is not based on self-interest, and therefore is uninfluenced by fortune (124); nor is it founded on external beauty of form or face, but is simple love for love's sake (125)³ Will is still young and fair, yet he must remember that the end must come at last (126)."

¹ The third or fourth time.

² This rendering is so inadequate that it is almost a perversion. He says that his friend, and nobody else, shall ever be his only standard of right and wrong.

³ Yet he had extolled it in the most extravagant phrases.

Professor Dowden does not follow Will through the black depths of the Dark-Lady intrigue, as Mr. Furnivall does to his utter horror: and surely we have had enough of this farrago of nonsense, contradiction, sycophancy, and degradation. Our only wonder is, that a writer of such insight and accomplishment as Professor Dowden should allow it to go forth as the sum and substance of these Sonnets, and an outline of Shakespeare's life.

It must have been, doubtless, from some foul source of this kind that Hippolyte Taine drew,¹ when he pronounced Shakespeare

“one of the losels of his time, associating with licentious young nobles, and addicted to the sweet abandonment of love without restraint, having many mistresses, and, among them, one at least like Marion Delorme, from whose meretricious delusions he could not and did not care to escape. He was not only the willing, but delighted slave of his passions all his life, with now and then a prick of remorse, which gave him pain, but brought no reformation.”

What is most offensive in these caricatures and most to be deprecated is, that they present the poet in an aspect so different from that we get from his plays, where, great as he was in imaginative fancy, discernment of character,

¹*History of English Literature*, vol. ii., chap. 4. Paris, Hachette & Co., 1866.

and wit, he was still greater, as Coleridge contends, in clear-sighted, solid, and imperturbable judgment. In his management of his plots, in his discernment of the minutest shades of character, in adaptation of words to persons and situations, his good sense appears supreme. He falls into serious faults at times, he makes mistakes, and he exaggerates, but these are exceptions to his proverbial excellences which it surprises us to encounter. Even in the moral sphere, amid the impurities that pervade social life, he never confounds vice with virtue, nor asks us, indulgent as he may be to human weakness, to sympathize with the ignoble, the degraded, or the false. Why, then, seek to interpret the Sonnets in a sense which the greater works avoid?

PART FIRST:
A NEW STUDY OF THE SONNETS.

PART FIRST:

A NEW STUDY OF THE SONNETS.

PUTTING aside these attempts at interpretation which are more or less abortive, let us see if we cannot reach better results by a simpler and more scientific method. That such results are desirable I assume in spite of the high authority of Mr. Swinburne, who warns all intruders off the premises with a magisterial solemnity of manner that would be awful if it were not a little ludicrous. After speaking in a bumptious way "of the preposterous pyramid of presumptuous commentary, that has long since been reared, by Cimmerian speculation and Beotian brain-sweat of sciolists and scholiasts," he takes a gulp of breath (much needed under such a burden of words), and then adds that "no modest man will hope and no wise man will desire, to add to the structure, or to subtract from it, one single brick of proof or disproof,—of theorem or theory,"¹—meaning, if he means anything,

¹*A Study of Shakespeare*, by Algernon Charles Swinburne, p. 62. New York, Worthington, 1886.

that the old mud-heaps of nonsense are for some reason or other sacred, and must be allowed to remain undisturbed.

Nevertheless, despite the frowns of so eminent a judge, I venture to suggest that much is to be said and much ought to be said on the subject, if for no other reason than to rescue the greatest of poets from the mass of misinterpretation and obloquy which has been shovelled upon him by silly and conceited scribes. Every man who uses the English language, which he inherits from his ancestors and hopes to transmit to his descendants, is naturally eager to vindicate, or to see vindicated, the greatest of its representatives.

Let me say at the outset, that in proceeding to a new study of the Sonnets I began with the text itself, — as it is, — and not with any theory, outside of the text, which it was hoped the text would confirm. With pen in hand I wrote out a prose paraphrase of each sonnet as it came, marking in the margin (1st) the person or thing to which it seemed to relate, either real or imaginary; (2d) the various emotions expressed, whether of love or hate, of hope or despair; and (3d) the predominant thought which generally comes as a climax in the closing couplet. Of course, in

making these paraphrases, I varied the language when clearness of meaning appeared to render it necessary, but in no case substituted a wholly new text except by confessed conjecture. Of course, too, as my aim was exegetical and not æsthetical, I was often compelled to a painful sacrifice of the poetry of a passage to its apparent sense. This is justified by the rules of scriptural and classical exegesis.

I had not proceeded far in this way when two things forced themselves upon my attention,—the first was that some few of the sonnets had no discernible connection with any of the others, and might be put aside as solitaires or independents; and the second was that those which had an evident connection arranged themselves, of themselves, into groups, of which the affinities almost leaped to the eyes. I say that they arranged themselves of themselves, meaning that they came together without any preconceived theory or purpose of my own. I had nothing in my mind beforehand which I wished to prove, beyond a desire to discover if anything could be proved by an honest and self-consistent compilation. In recognizing this spontaneity of adjustment I met with but one difficulty,—the fact that, as the sonnets are addressed sometimes to ab-

stract and sometimes to concrete persons or things, it was not always easy at a glance to say to which of these categories this or that particular sonnet belonged. Thus there was a possibility that in making a choice between the two my judgment might be at fault; but of that the reader, having the whole case before him, will decide for himself.

The divisions that formed themselves in this spontaneous way may be arranged as follows :

- I. A central or explanatory sonnet.
- II. A few sonnets which cannot be gathered into a fold with any of the others, and stand out as so many Independents : nine in all.
- III. A group forming a somewhat continuous poem, which is commonly said to be a persuasion to a young man of genius and promise to get married, but which has, as I take it, an entirely different object.
- IV. A series of Love Poems, descriptive (*a*) of an early and ardent attachment, (*b*) of a separation from the beloved, (*c*) of the pains and pleasures of absence, and (*d*) of a young poet's first impressions, under these circumstances, of the great world.
- V. Another group of Love Poems, but of another kind, depicting the origin, progress, and end of an irregular amatory relation, and

which may be called "The Episode of the Dark Lady."

VI. And, finally, a group relating to the poet's communion with a Higher or Tenth Muse as he calls it, meaning the personified Spirit or Genius of Poetry in its highest conception. This group reveals (*a*) the youthful aspirations of the poet, (*b*) his efforts to realize them, (*c*) the obstacles he encounters, and (*d*) his ultimate success and triumph over all difficulties.

I shall treat of these divisions in turn, but I think that any intelligent and unprejudiced reader will see at once that they are natural, and not artificial or forced, and that they involve only incidents which might occur in the career of any writer of distinction. They are derived directly and exclusively from the Sonnets themselves without reference to any outside history save a few general facts of the poet's life which all writers concede to be well known and well verified, as, for instance, that he was born in the country, that he was married there at a very early age, that he removed to London and became an actor and writer of famous poems and plays—simple data which everybody has a right to take for granted in his studies of the poet's works.

I.—A CENTRAL AND EXPLANATORY SONNET.

Among the sonnets which I had put aside as Independents there was one that impressed me very much as peculiar in its sentiment and position. The versions commonly given of it seemed to me extremely puerile ; and yet there was a version of it that came to me, which, without changing a line or syllable in it, and by simply changing the point of view, rendered it singularly luminous. It seemed to me to declare directly the purposes of the author in writing, or, in other words, to tell why he wrote at all. Thus it presented itself to me as a sort of guide in the interpretation of the Sonnets generally ; but what impressed me still more was that this sonnet, either by design or accident, was the central sonnet of the series as a whole. Dividing 154 by 2 we get 77, which is, strange to say, the number of this sonnet. By whom the original numbering was done we do not know, but it is certainly not an extravagance to suppose that the writer himself may have purposely affixed this 77 to a sonnet which he considered in some degree explanatory. That sonnet reads as follows :

Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste ;

The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,
 And of this book this learning mayst thou taste.
 The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show
 Of mouthed graves will give thee memory ;
 Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know
 Time's thievish progress to eternity.¹

Look, what thy memory cannot contain²
 Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
 Those children nursed, deliver'd from thy brain,
 To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.³

These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,
 Shall profit thee and much enrich thy book.

What, I asked myself, do these words mean?
 "Probably," wrote Mr. Steevens many years ago, "that sonnet was designed to accompany the present of a book of blank paper" (to one of the poet's patrons, either the Earl of Southampton, or the Earl of Pembroke, or somebody else). "This conjecture," solemnly echoed Mr. Malone, "this conjecture is exceedingly probable"; and the commentators who came after them have repeated the sagacious guess as if nothing more could be said. Mr. Furnivall, however, was a little more specific, and added that "the present consisted of a little book, a dial, and a pocket looking-glass,

¹ Rolfe refers here to "thievish minutes" of *All's Well*, ii., 1, 169.

² Shakespeare, I think, often uses the ejaculation "look" in the sense of the French *voilà*.

³ "To take a new acquaintance" is equivalent to take new note or knowledge of anything.

combined in one ;” by what curious mechanism they were combined the learned expositor did not say ; only he was sure that they “ were combined in one.” This rare instrument it seems was to be sent to one of the poet’s patrons, some nobleman of the day, with a request in so many words that he should write in the blank book, in order to ascertain and so to show the world what sort of notions were passing in his noddle. In our day an impertinence of this kind would procure the perpetrator of it a sound box of the ears, or a lusty kick on the seat of his trousers, and I do not doubt that the culprit in the more violent times of Queen Elizabeth would have received a more impetuous repulse.

Dowden elaborately expounds the poem thus : “ Beauty, Time and Verse formed the theme of many of Shakespeare’s sonnets ; but now that he will write no more, he commends his friend to the *glass*, where he may discover the truth about his *beauty* ; to the *dial*, that he may learn the progress of *time* ; and to this *book*, which he himself (not Shakespeare) must fill ” ; a rather unseemly hint on the part of a poet who in the next poem celebrates his friend as his highest source of inspiration and of that art, “ born of thee,” which has lifted

his rude ignorance into the loftiest regions of knowledge.

Was ever a more *outré* construction given to the plainest language, than in all this? The poet speaks throughout the sonnet of "*thy* glass," "*thy* dial," which could scarcely refer to a glass or dial which he was going to send to another person as a present: the "*thy*," therefore, must have had some other meaning, which becomes obvious if we suppose that the poet is sitting in his own room, communing with himself, his writing materials before him, and about to put down his thoughts of the moment. Imaginative as he was, he yet took his suggestions from what was immediately around him, and he said to himself: "That mirror yonder, hanging on the wall, informs thee how thy good looks are wearing away; that Dutch clock ticking on the mantelpiece shows thee the rapid passage of time" (both important lessons); "but these vacant leaves destined to receive the imprint of thy mind, will form a book and give thee a taste of a different kind of learning." What was that? The poet thoughtfully replied: "Thy glass, revealing thy wrinkles as they come, will remind thee of the 'mouthed graves' that open on all sides of human life; thy dial will mark the stealthy

steps with which time measures out its thievish progress to eternity; but these waste leaves, when thou shalt commit to them the thoughts that memory cannot retain, will deliver the children nursed in thy brain into actual life and thereby furnish thee with a new acquaintance with thy mind. Moreover this service, as often as it shall be repeated, will add to thy proficiency as a writer and greatly improve thy future productions." In fewer words, what the poet declares is, that his Sonnets were written as records of his passing meditations, and also as studies to be used in future labors. And could anything be more simple and natural than that? Every literary man, I suppose, has done the same thing, with the same purpose. In my own small way, I know that I have a hundred times leaped out of bed at night to make a note of some thought or image that seemed to me to be worth the preserving.

Mr. Irving's editor (A. Wilson Verity), in a note to this sonnet,¹ came near discerning its real purport when he said that it advised "three things: (1) Look into your glass and you will see how your beauty fades; (2) look to your dial and you will realize how time flies; and (3) write your thoughts from time to time

¹ Irving's *Shakespeare*, vol. viii., p. 444.

on the vacant leaves," or "waste blanks" of this volume, and then, reading over what you have written, you will realize what has gone on in your own nature, and appreciate the double change, "outward and inward." But unfortunately Mr. Verity did not see that Shakespeare was talking to himself and not intruding his advice upon anybody else, and so he missed the solution.

The keeping of note-books was a common practice of the times, as we may learn from Bacon's *Promus* and other authorities. Shakespeare's addiction to it appears not only in this sonnet, but from several allusions to it in the plays. Hamlet, for instance, in a moment of singular absorption, called for his tablets that he might write down the ghostly communications of his father. That Shakespeare also held such records as hints or germs of future labors, we may infer from the great number of coincidences in word, image, or situation,—between the sonnets and their author's poems and plays, some of which I shall hereafter cite.¹

What is strongly confirmatory of this view

¹ I have counted more than two hundred of these similarities, as pointed out by the critics,—some of them nearly identical, others involving words of peculiar meaning, not common at the time.

as to the exclusive personal bearing of the Sonnets, is the entire absence from them of any reference to contemporary public events. Living at an epoch of intense and widespread agitation,—one of the most stirring known to history,—when the circumnavigation of the globe and vast maritime discoveries had imparted a new aspect to the earth; when the destruction of the Spanish Armada was the greatest naval catastrophe that had ever occurred; when the incessant religious wars of the continent deluged nearly all Europe in blood; when the brutal execution of Mary Queen of Scots, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew, aroused fiery and universal animosities, and when the movement of religious opinion had separated large masses of human thought forever from the creeds of the Middle Ages,—the poet never so much as hints at any of these moral and social convulsions; he confines his lines to incidents and situations that immediately concerned his own individual feelings and the narrow circle in which they moved; and while his plays are a many-colored mirror of the intense, active, bustling, and tumultuous throes of human life, involving kings and dynasties and the rise and fall of nations, and of vast societies in all their magnificence

and import, showing his deep interest in such events, the Sonnets run on in their simple way, undisturbed and scarcely rippled by a breath of the surrounding commotions.

II.—THE INDEPENDENTS OR SOLITARIES.

These are only nine in number, and of no great interest. Two of them (145 and 126) are not sonnets at all, as sonnets were then understood, but octosyllabic verses in consecutive rhymes. The first (145) plays upon a poor jest in a rather doggerel style, and the second (126) is so confused that nobody as yet has been able to give it an intelligible explanation. Some critics think it refers in some way to Cupid, but do not tell us in what way, and others to some mystic personification of the relations of Nature and Art, but go no farther than that.

Two others of these Independents are different but similar versions of an old Greek fable about Cupid and the Nymphs. It was for a long time unknown where Shakespeare had found the original, but in 1878, a learned German, Herr Hertzberg, discovered it in the Byzantine Marianus, an epigrammatist of the fifth century after Christ. From him it was

turned into Latin several times during the sixteenth century, and so made its way into England, where it was put to use by Surrey and Shenstone as well as by Shakespeare.

The rest of the Independents (19, 26, 63, 81, 122) are obviously addresses to particular friends, extolling their virtues and promising them immortality, in the manner of the times. One of these (26) is so like in its tone, and even expression, to the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* and of the *Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton, that he has been supposed to be its object. The resemblance is not, however, so clear as to place the point beyond doubt. But if we assume that it was so addressed, it is the only instance in which we are able to identify any of the sonnets with a then living and distinguished personage. Another of these Independents (81) may, perhaps, bear upon that belief of some of the Humanists which identified all life with the earthly life. Shakespeare says to his friend: / "Whether you or I survive the other here, your name will never be lost to memory, while I shall be dead to all the world and forgotten. The earth will furnish me no more than a grave, but you shall be entombed in the eyes of men. Your monument will be my verse, which will be read when

all who now breathe are dead." Thus death seems to be represented as final doom, from which the fame given by the poet will be the only escape. This kind of prediction, however, was so common in those days that a single instance of it can hardly be cited as positive evidence in the case.

III.—A PLEA FOR POETIC OR CREATIVE ART.

It is generally held by commentators that the first seventeen sonnets of the Quarto were addressed to a young friend of the poet, in order to persuade him to get married. Not one of them, so far as I can discover,—saving the allegorists,—seems to have considered it possible to arrive at any other construction. Some, indeed, have carried this view so far as to name the very persons and dates involved. They say that the young friend concerned was the Earl of Pembroke, whose mother and other relatives became exceedingly anxious, when he was about seventeen years of age, to ally him to a granddaughter of the famous Lord Burleigh, though she was still younger than he.¹ Not succeeding in their efforts (doubtless owing to the reluctance of the gay

¹ See the whole story in Mr. Tyler's Introduction to his *fac-simile* edition of the Quarto.

bachelor to be captured), they applied to the poet—who is alleged to have been an intimate acquaintance—to make use of his abilities as a mentor; which he did, not, however, by way of personal intercession, but by writing him poems. The attempt was a failure; for it appears from other sonnets, which are regarded as having been addressed to the same person, that the mentor himself got entangled in one of the youth's intrigues and did not come out of it with credit.

(1) *The Worth of this Version.*

As to this marital theory, we are not strongly impressed in its favor when we find that the word "marriage" does not occur in any of the poems said to have been written to commend this relation. "Married," as an adjective, appears once, where it is used as a figure for the "concord of well-ordered sounds" (Son. 8, ll. 5, 6).¹ Neither do those essential components of the married state, husband and wife, come upon the stage at all: we read of a "husband," but then it is of a note in a song, which is called "the husband" of another note, and we read of a "wife," but she is already a

¹ It is here used as in *Troilus and Cressida*, when "the married unity and calm of States" is spoken of.

“makeless wife,”¹ that is, a widow; but together or as connected one with another they are not seen. Stranger still, the prospective bride and blessing of the lad is not so much as hinted at in any way. On the contrary, she is shuffled out of sight by a bevy of other maidens who have no right to be there. One would naturally suppose in a case of this kind that a poet, and that poet Shakespeare, would have lavished some of his finest metaphors on the elected lass, but the father of Juliet, Perdita, Imogen, and Beatrice had nothing to say in the premises. At the same time he had a great deal to say about those other damsels, represented not only as charming, but as eager, shame to them, to reciprocate the lad’s advances. He tells of many maiden gardens which would like to bear him living flowers (Son. 16, ll. 5-9). It is only for him to choose, and he is apparently urged to choose without discrimination. He is urged, too, with such persistency that the poet stands forth more as an advocate for free love than as the champion of an exclusive and sacred institution. Indeed many critics, forgetful of their theory, adduce lines 162-174 of *Venus and Adonis* as parallels

¹ “Makeless wife” in the Quarto means here a mateless wife, or wife without a mate.

to this reading of the Sonnets.¹ Bosworth and Boaden call them "expansions," and Dowden's first note, followed by Irving's editor, says that they are treatments of the same theme. For myself, I had always fancied that the relations of Venus and Adonis were precisely opposite to those of marriage: but we must live and learn, when writers have theories to defend.

It is true that we encounter such words and phrases as "issue," "breed," "getting a son," "producing one's semblance," "this fair child of thine," and others of the sort, which imply marriage, but not necessarily so or always so, because they may imply also irregular sex relations. A man may be a father, and so have "issue," and "produce his semblance," etc., without having consulted the authorities of Church or State for sanction.

¹ "Torches are made to light, jewels to wear,
Dainties to taste, fresh beauty for the use,
Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to bear:
Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse:
Seeds spring from seeds and beauty breedeth beauty;
Thou wast begot; to get it is thy duty.

"Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
By law of nature thou art bound to breed,
That thine may live when thou thyself art dead:
And so, in spite of death, thou dost survive,
In that thy likeness still is left alive."

Then, in the second place, the arguments addressed to the young fellow by his poetical mentor are not on the whole very effective. Six or seven of the poems are so irrelevant that a stranger to the literature of the subject might read them attentively without the slightest suspicion that they related to marriage. Under the circumstances alleged we should expect the poet to advise the boy that, being at the head of a rich and powerful family, having wide social connections and serious political responsibilities, it was to the last degree important that he should form a desirable matrimonial alliance, in order to keep up its dignity and power, and to do so while in the vigor of his years. But these considerations are not touched upon at all, and the learned attorney in verse goes wandering about in a way not calculated to impress a youngster more full of passion than philosophy. An acute lawyer or a politician would have told him more to the purpose in seventeen minutes than the poet has told him in seventeen labored and somewhat complicated poetical productions. It is no wonder then that he threw them to the dogs, while he proceeded to amuse himself with the poet's own perplexities. Certainly it was a most anomalous effort,

which, designed expressly to commend a certain condition, does not call it by name, nor refer to any of its characteristic features. Shakespeare was a good logician as well as a master of rhetoric, and his shortcomings here are a pretty strong proof that the critics have been following a wrong trail.

(2) *A More Probable Solution.*

What, then, are we to make of these poems which have been so almost universally construed as didactics addressed to an individual to persuade him to a special act? My answer is, that they are a work of the imagination of a far more general aim than is implied in this theory. They are figurative, not literal, and, while they nominally advise a young man of beauty and accomplishments to multiply and perpetuate himself by the natural process of procreation, they really mean that he shall multiply and perpetuate himself by the spiritual process of creation, or by the exercise of his faculties in verse-writing or poetry. Let us see.

By the use of "thee," "thou," and "thine" many times in thirteen sonnets, and of "you" or "yours" nearly as many times in four sonnets, we are left in no doubt that a person is meant to be addressed; but as that person is without

name, place, or vocation — in the air — as it were, — we have a right to infer that he is rather abstract and imaginary than real. We are told that he is “young,” “rich in youth,” or “in his golden prime,” *i. e.*, new on the scene; we are told that he is beautiful, the word beauty or some equivalent being applied to him more than twenty times; and we are told that he is endowed with the richest “graces,” ample enough to enable him, if he likes, to furnish others from his treasury. But we are also told that he is utterly indifferent to these bounteous bestowments; that he leads a life of solitary self-indulgence, looking no farther than his bright eyes can see, and having traffic or intercourse only with himself. He is severely reproached with this abstention, as a cruel wrong done to himself, and a reckless disappointment of the hopes of mankind. He must change his course, and change it at once, lest he should fall into utter decay and oblivion.

Our poet opens his theme by referring to a few instances of change which had directed his attention to the subject and to the youth involved.

Son. 12. When I remark the passage of the hours upon the clock, and see the bright day sink into dismal

night ; when I behold the violet past its prime, with its sable color silvered over with white¹ ; when I see the foliage of the forest, which lately sheltered the herds from heat, now fallen and scattered ; when I see all the green growths of summer gathered up in sheaves and borne away on a bier in their white and gristly beards—I am led to ponder upon thy Beauty, and to think how it, too, must go into the wastes of time, like all things sweet and fair, which lose their qualities and die as fast as other things appear and grow : while there is no defence against Time's ravages save “breed,” or the production of that which will withstand him when he has carried thee away.

It is plain that the word “breed” in the couplet here is not used in the usual sense of the engendered, but in a more derivative sense, inasmuch as the instances adduced are taken from the vegetal world, where it has the significance given it when we say that “use breeds habit,” that “money breeds interest,” that “public means do public manners breed,” or even that “nuns breed scarcity.” It is because the critics have not marked this distinction that they have been somewhat misled in their interpretations.

Then the poet accuses his youth of a

¹The Quarto reads, “and sable curls all silvered o'er with white,” which I think would read better thus : “its sable color silvered o'er with white.” Hamlet (i., 2, 242) speaks of a “sable silvered.”

negligence, which is both a cruel wrong to himself and others.

Son. 1. We desire increase from the fairest Creatures in order that, thereby, the Rose of Beauty, or Beauty in its highest expression, may never cease ; but as the riper shows of it disappear, some tender successor may keep it alive at least in memory. But thou, contracting thy vision to the narrow range of thine own bright eyes, dost feed thy flame of light by a self-substantial fuel (or a fuel of the same substance as itself), and thereby create a famine at the very source of abundance. In that thou art thine own foe, for thou art now a fresh ornament of the world, an early herald¹ of the spring, and yet dost bury thy bud in its own contents, which is a saving that makes a waste.² Pity the world by meeting its expectations, or else be a kind of glutton, who consumes what is due to mankind whilst he is alive, and will be due even after he is in his grave.³

Pushing his charges still further, the poet protests that his friend is even destitute of common affections.

Son. 10. For shame ! and confess thou hast no love for any when thou art so improvident for thyself ! Even if we should grant that thou art beloved by many,

¹ The Quarto has, "the only herald to the spring," which is an obvious misprint for "an early herald."

² This recalls a passage in *Romeo and Juliet* (i., 1, 210) which says, "and in that sparing makes huge waste."

³ The Quarto has, "to eat the world's due, by the grave and thee," which would be clearer if read, "by thy grave as thee," *i. e.*, in death as in life.

it is very evident that thou dost not return that love. Thou art possessed, instead of it, by a "murderous hate," which does not hesitate to conspire against thyself, and to ruin that beautiful habitation which it should be thy principal aim to keep in the best repair. Oh, change thy course in this that I may change my opinion of thee! Shall hate be more fairly lodged than gentle love? Be as gracious and kindly in thine acts as thou art in thy presence, or, at least, be generous to thyself (for my sake if not thine own), that thy beauty may still live in thy productions, as it does in thy person.

Unless he does so the poet condemns the youth as ungrateful to nature, to himself, and wholly without excuse.

Son. 4. Unthrifty Loveliness, why dost thou expend upon thyself that legacy of beauty bequeathed to thee by nature? Nature does not give at all, but lends, and she lends freely because she hopes for an equal liberality of return.¹ O beautiful Niggard, why dost thou abuse the largess given thee only to give back again? Unprofitable Usurer, why dost thou revel in such wealth and be yet unable to subsist upon the proceeds? Having traffic with thyself alone, thou dost defraud thyself of real benefit, and when nature shall take thee away, what

¹ A similar thought is expressed in *Measure for Measure* (i., 1, 36):

" Nature never lends
The smallest scruple of her excellence
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use."

One would scarcely call this recommendation of liberality a motive to marriage.

acceptable account canst thou leave of thine administration? Thy beauty unused (that is, unexpressed), will be entombed with thee, whereas, if it had been expressed, it would survive to be thine executor, or representative.

And now is the time to begin the change, the poet adds.

Son. 3. Look into thy glass,¹ and tell the face reflected there that now is the time to reproduce that face, which, if not done, thou dost beguile the world, and withhold a blessing from some mother.² There is no subject, as yet untouched, that would disdain thy husbandry: or who is there so foolish in his self-love that he will allow himself to be entombed without caring for a successor? As the glass above referred to was thy mirror, so shouldst thou be a mirror of nature, who recallevh in thee the lovely April of her own springtime, as thou (by a proper care of it) shalt be able, through the windows of thine age, and in spite of wrinkles, to see thy golden years again. But if thou list (or desirest) not to be remembered, die in thy solitariness (or without the intercourse with nature commended here) and thine image will perish with thee.

¹ This sonnet plays upon the word "glass," I think, using it first for the mirror which reflects the young man's face, and then for the young man himself, as a mirror of nature. A use of it similar to the latter occurs in the *Rape of Lucrece* (l. 1758):

"Poor broken glass, I often did behold
In thy sweet semblance my old age renewed."

² The locution here is curious: "Unbless some mother," *i. e.*, withhold from some aspect of nature and life the cultivation that might be given to it by thy genius.

Then the poet tells his friend why he is to act immediately and without delay.

Son. 5. That lapse of the hours which has gently framed thy form, on which all men gaze in admiration, will soon turn tyrant to it, and reduce to ugliness the beauty which is now so superlative. Time never rests, as we see it leading summer on to hideous winter where it is destroyed. The flow of sap is checked by frost, the lively leaves wither, the fair landscape is snowed under, and bareness reigns everywhere. If, then, there has been no distillation of the growths of summer,—“A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,”—beauty will be bereft of its effects, and neither it nor any remembrance of it remain.¹ But flowers, when they are distilled, although they should encounter the severities of winter, lose only their appearance, while they survive in substance.

In this sonnet and the following the process of distillation, by which the dead matter of flowers, etc., is converted into fine odors and essences, is used as a figure or symbol of the manner in which art lifts any object or aspect of nature into a higher form. It is also used in several of the plays, as in *As You Like It* (iii., 2, 134), where it is said that all the graces of nature—Helen’s cheek, Cleopatra’s majesty, Atalanta’s better part, and Lucretia’s modesty

¹ The Quarto has, “But if thou live, remembered not to be,” which seems to be contradictory, and “live” is probably a misprint for “list.” Sonnet 58 has, “Be where you list.”

—have been “distilled” into the one body of Rosalind. So in *Troilus and Cressida* (i., 3, 350), Nestor remarks that the man who is to go forth and meet Hector must be a man “distilled from all our virtues”; again in *Henry V.* (iv., 1, 5), where Henry observes that “there is a soul of goodness in things evil, would men observingly distil it out,” and Jonson used the same figure in *The Poetaster* of Shakespeare’s own writings, as “distilled” from his judgment. There is fitness, if not felicity, in the image when applied to the creative faculty which turns the rudest material into forms of beauty; but when it is pushed a little farther, as in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (i., 1, 76), and procreation itself is characterized by the term, it seems to me, though remotely pertinent, to be carried to an extreme.

The poet continues:

Son. 6. Do not then allow the rugged hand of winter¹ to invade thy summer before its products shall have been distilled or made the most of. Make sweet some recipient, enrich some theme with the treasure of thy beauty, before that beauty shall be self-killed. It is not a forbidden usury which prospers those who are willing to accept the loan. Create another self, or, ten times better, create ten in the place of one. Ten reproductions of thyself would be ten times more desirable than

¹ The Quarto has “ragged” hand, meaning “rugged.”

thyself alone, if the ten refigured thee ; for in that event what could death itself do, if thou shouldst depart and leave thyself living in such a progeny? Do not be obstinate, therefore, as thou art altogether too fair to become a conquest of the grave and make the worms thine only heirs.

Son. 2. When forty such winters shall besiege thy brow, and dig deep trenches in that field of beauty, the proud livery of youth, which is looked upon with so much rapture now, will be a tattered garment, held in no esteem.¹ Then, if thou shouldst be asked what has become of thy beauty, and where the rich accomplishments of former days are gone, to reply that they are to be found within thy deep-sunken eyes would be a blasting shame and a self-praise utterly meaningless. How much higher praise would the proper use of thy beauty deserve if thou couldst answer, "This fair child of mine, proving his beauty as my successor, discharges my debt, and is a complete defence." Moreover, in this wise, thou wouldst be new made when thou art old, and see thy blood warmly flowing even after it had grown cold.

By "child of mine" the author means the offspring of the mind, not an infrequent figure with him. In Sonnet No. 77 he describes his writings as "children nursed in his brain" and brought into life by his pen. Jonson,

¹ It will be seen in this sonnet that Shakespeare, as others in his time, considered a man old when he was but forty years of age : his brow strongly "wrinkled," his eyes "deep-sunken," his blood "cold," and his general appearance that of a worn-out garment, of no further worth.

referring to Shakespeare himself, in the famous preface to the Folio of 1623, uses the same figures :

Look, how the father's face
Lives in his issue ! Even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manner brightly shines
In his well-turned and true filed lines.

Jonson, in *The Poetaster*, also makes "every syllable Shakespeare writ, the issue of his self."

Son. 13. Oh, that you were master of yourself and knew that you are your own only so long as this present life continues.¹ Therefore it is I conjure you to prepare for the coming end, by the reproduction of your semblance in some worthy form. In that way, the Beauty you hold as a lease will never come to an end, but, after your decease, you will live again in one that bears the impress of your genius. Who but a fool would allow so fair a house as that in which you dwell to fall into decay, when a little honorable husbandry might preserve it against the strongest gusts of winter, and even against the eternal cold of death? None, none, but a reckless spendthrift. Ah, my dear friend, as you had a father (or predecessor) let your son (or successor) say the same.¹

¹ Irving's edition (vol. viii., p. 435) construes this as : "Oh, that you were Absolute,—Independent of time, Free from the conditions that fetter men," which seems to me just the reverse of what the poet wishes, *i. e.*, that his friend should know his dependence upon his conditions.

Next the poet asks his friend if it be from fear of failure in his attempts to marry his genius to Mother Nature, that he persists in his "single life" or isolated inactivity. If so, it is foolish, for the cases are not analogous.

Son. 9. Is it the fear of wetting a widow's eye, as in an ordinary marriage, that thou dost persist in thy fruitless isolation? ¹ Ah! that would be foolish, indeed, and a mistake of the position; for, if thou shouldst happen to depart without issue, it is the world and not a mate that would wail thy loss. The whole world is thy widow, and will ever weep that thou hast left no form of thee behind, when every private widow may see her husband's shape in her children. Mark, what a do-nothing spends in the world merely changes its place, and the world continues to enjoy it: but the waste of beauty is final. If not expressed, it is destroyed. There is, therefore, no love in that bosom which commits such a shameful murder on itself as that which thou dost commit.

Son. 11. As fast as thou shalt wane in thine own person, just so fast shalt thou grow in one of thy productions, and grow away, too, from the narrow point of

¹ "Single life" is used commonly as the antithesis of married life, but it is also often used for "one," "individual," or "alone," as when we speak of a single combat, a single effort, a single kiss, a single verse, or a single sorrow. "All single and alone," says Timon, "yet an arch-villain, keeps him company" (v., 1, 110). "Thy single and peculiar life is bound," etc. (*Hamlet*, iii., 3, 11). "Now, Clifford, I have singled thee alone" (III. *Hy. VI.*, ii., 4, 1). "So hath my lord dared him to single fight" (*Ant. and Cleo.*, iii., 7, 31).

departure. The fresh vigor that thou hast expended shall still be thine when thou shalt have passed beyond thy youth. In this direction lie beauty, wisdom, and increase,—while in the opposite are folly, old age, and annihilation. If all men were so minded as not to care for the future, the times that are would cease, and, in a few years, civilization itself come to an end. Let those then whom Nature has not destined to a grand fruition (harsh, featureless, and rude as they are) perish in their barrenness; but thou hast been more richly endowed than even the best, and thou shouldst acknowledge the bounteous gift with a corresponding bounty. Nature, indeed, has carved thee out as one of her models, with the intention that thou shouldst multiply and diffuse copies of thee before the original be lost.

Even the great sun itself loses its worshippers after it has passed its meridian glory:

Son. 7. Lo! when the Sun lifts his resplendent head in the east, how every eye below doth homage to his ascending majesty; when he has climbed the steep-up heavenly hill, like a strong youth in middle age, adoring looks still follow his golden pilgrimage: but when, having attained his highest pitch, his weary car reels downwards (like feeble age that totters to its fall), the eyes that were before faithful turn aside, and look elsewhere for another day. So thou, when thou hast got

¹ Dowden quotes *Romeo and Juliet* (ii., 3, 3), “and flecked darkness, like a drunkard, reels forth from day’s path,” which is a natural image; but to suppose that the sun itself,—the cause of day,—should reel from the day, is absurd. There has been an interchange of the last words of lines 10 and 12—*day* and *way*—which, rectified, restores the sense.

beyond thy noon, wilt die unnoticed unless thou art followed by another sun.¹

Finally, there is one consideration of paramount importance, — the necessity of harmonizing the mental powers among themselves, and in reference to the environment.

Son. 8. Musical as thou art, when thy speech is heard, why should thou listen to other music with apparent sadness? Sweet does not war with sweet, and joy delights in joy; then how canst thou love that which thou receivest not gladly, or how receive with pleasure that which in reality is an annoyance? If the concord of well-attuned sounds — sounds married one to the other by a proper adjustment — offends thine ear, it must be because it is a rebuke to thee for wasting, in single indifference, the endowments which would enable thee to bear a part in the general harmony. Mark how one strain,² the sweet support and furtherance of another, melts into the whole, resembling a happy family of sire, mother, and child, who sing their pleasing notes in unison! Their song, though without words, shows that while in reality they are several, in

¹ It can scarcely be doubted that Shakespeare, in the last line here, has been guilty of the bad taste of punning on the word son: as he tells his friend that as the sun begets another sun, he ought also to beget a son. Yet what he means is clear, — that as the sun loses its worshippers when it sets, so he will lose his admirers unless he be succeeded, after death, by a son, that is, some product of his genius.

² The Quarto has "string," but, as the music is supposed to be vocal, I regard it as a misprint for "strain."

effect they are but one. This should remind thee that acting by thyself alone thou art of no effect, and in truth a nobody.

Up to this point, or to the close of the thirteenth sonnet, the poet has pointed at many illustrations of the decay and renovation which pervade both external and human nature. But he has expressed little of the kind of renovation which is produced in the realm of art or poetry. In the four following sonnets, therefore (or in Nos. 15, 16, 17, and 14), he becomes more explicit, and, after recapitulating what he had said in Sonnet 12, (but with special reference to man,) declares openly that our future life is constituted and preserved by Verse. We live only in our works or in our fame.¹

¹I am disposed to think that Shakespeare, like many of the advanced minds of the later Renaissance, accepted the belief that our future life was here on earth, and not in another world. It was an inheritance from the Hebrew Scriptures, which taught nothing of a life beyond the grave, and from the Greek poets, who, like Moschus, held that death was an eternal slumber. Partly, also, it was a reaction against the dogmas of the Church which turned life on earth, despite its sunshine and its smiles, into a Sahara of sighs, and sobs, and tears. Compare *Skepticism of the Italian Renaissance*, by John Owen; New York, The Macmillan Co., 1893; and *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, by Jacob Burckhardt; Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1892.

A similar belief has been celebrated in quite recent times in a poem

Son. 15. When I consider that every growing thing maintains its perfection but for a minute, that this huge stage of the world exhibits nothing but shows (phenomena, we now call them), on which the remote and silent stars may have some influence ; when I perceive that Men themselves flourish only as the plants do, cheered on or checked by the self-same skyey influences, who flaunt in their youthful day, yet decreasing after a while, and then finally wear their bravest states even out of memory : then the conception of this inconstancy of stay reminds me of your wealth of youth, and how wasteful Time, in earnest rivalry with decay, itself, labors to reduce its fresh and brilliant day into the depths of the sullied night. But, being in love with you, and at war with this odious enemy, I strive to repair this damage by my pen, and, as he takes from you, to engraft you anew, or to restore the attributes which have been destroyed.¹

But the poet goes on to ask his friend, who

which resolves our future life into an identity with that of "The Choir Invisible," or

"With those immortal dead who live again
 In minds made better by their presence—live
 In pulses stirred to generosity,
 In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
 For miserable aims that end with self,
 In thoughts sublime, that pierce the night like stars,
 And in their mild persistence urge man's search
 To vaster issues."*

¹I do not find that any of the critics who hold to the marriage theory of these sonnets has been able to work this sonnet into his scheme. Dowden is wisely silent, Rolfe, of course, the same, and Irving's able editor runs away. None the less the assertion of the Poet is positive and clear : Whatever Time may do, he says to his friend, my Verse shall defeat, and so repair every damage.

* *The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems*, by George Eliot, 1874.

is so abundantly able to defend himself, why he does not make use of his own faculties in the battle. He writes :

Son. 16. Wherefore do not you yourself make war upon this destructive tyrant, Time in a more effective way than I can, and fortify yourself, even in the midst of your decay, by means more fruitful than my barren rhymes? At this moment you stand on the top of happy hours, or in the forefront of favorable opportunities, when many a maiden subject as yet untouched, which would willingly bear you imperishable flowers, —flowers more like yourself than any painted picture or external description could ever be. No existing pencil,¹ nor my pupil pen, can cause you to live in the eyes of mankind, either as to your outward beauty or your inward graces, as you are, and it is only by your own effort that you will yourself again really live [give away yourself, that is, incorporating your spirit in some work of art], and you will preserve yourself in it, drawn by your own sweet skill.²

Son. 17. What, indeed, will future ages care about my verse, even if it were filled with descriptions of your high deserts (and not be a tomb in which they are hidden or only half shown). If I could really describe the beauty of your looks, or tell in adequate numbers of all your graces, the age to come would simply say this poet lies ; such heavenly characteristics are seldom seen in earthly persons. My papers, yellowed with age, would be scorned, like the chatter of an old man, more

¹ The Quarto has, " This, Time's pencil," which I can only translate as above.

² How inapplicable this word *skill* is to the accepted theory !

garrulous than truthful, and your real, rightful worth be regarded as "the overstrained metre of an antique song." But if some child of your own brain should exist at that time you should have a twofold immortality—in it, as in my rhyme.¹

Son. 14. But why do I dwell on all this? Certainly not because I pluck my judgment from the stars. Although I have a smattering of astronomy, it is not sufficient to enable me to foretell great public events, either for good or evil, like plagues or deaths, or the qualities of the seasons. I cannot appropriate to each person his share of what is about to befall, nor inform princes how it is going with them by aught that I may find predicted in the sky. No; I derive what I say from the observation of those constant stars,—thine eyes (those telltales of the soul), and I read in them this truth: "That if thou turnest thyself from thy mere self in order to add to nature's store, thy truth and beauty will thrive together, otherwise (*i. e.*, if thou dost persist in thy solitary course) I may safely prognosticate that both thy truth and thy beauty will meet their date and doom. They will perish alike and thou shalt be heard of no more."

This is all I have to say of these sonnets, which, whether my construction of them be right or wrong, stand by themselves, and do not affect the others. I will add, however,

¹ There would seem to be a contradiction between the first part of this sonnet, where the poet depreciates his poetic power, and the last, where he boasts of it; but it should be remarked that in the first part he merely deplures the inadequacy of his pen to the particular subject, but not its general power as a means of conferring immortal fame.

that when I read them first in the literal sense the critics accept, and then in the figurative sense I have tried to explain, they leave upon me widely diverse impressions. In the former sense they seem trivial and without interest; and, though they are Shakespeare's, scarcely worth a second perusal. The marriage of an unknown young man, three hundred years ago, does not stir the blood to any pitch of excitement, but when I read them in the latter sense, they are lifted into a generality of meaning in which they become at least edifying and instructive. What the poet enforces has the same value now that it had then, and a value which will continue so long as he continues to be the poet *par excellence*.

IV.—A YOUNG LOVE-TIME.

No intelligent scholar who should happen to fall upon a sonnet like that I am about to cite, without knowing the authorship of it, would hesitate for a moment as to its personal meaning, supposing it to have a personal meaning. The sonnet says :

Son. 25. Let those who live under favorable stars boast of their public honors and their proud titles, if they like, but I, whom fortune deprives of such distinctions, leaving me wholly unknown, none the less rejoice in

that which I honor at the same time. The favorites of great princes, who spread their fair leaves like the marigold only in the sunshine, can have no respect for themselves, when at the mere whim of another they must perish in the midst of their glory. So painstaking warriors, made famous by their military prowess, if once defeated after their many victories, drop from the rolls of fame and their great achievements are forgotten. How happy then should I be, who love and am beloved, with an affection that on neither side will ever decay.

Two things are at once manifest in reading this poem : the first is that the author of it was a person of lowly and obscure condition ; and the second, that he enjoyed a reciprocated love which was an ample solace for his other deprivations. His ode was not a complaint against adverse fortune, as Professor Dowden strangely remarks, but just the reverse, a self-congratulation on a "low estate," which exempted him from the vicissitudes that are apt to fall upon those more highly favored, while it enabled him to delight in an immutable affection. He does not, he says, hold his happiness like the recipients of court favor at the caprice of another, nor does it depend like the fame of a warrior upon an accident ; it is assured and permanent.

It is rendered antecedently probable, by what I have said before as to how much of the sonnet

writing of that day related to women, that this "beloved" object was a woman. Other objects, the virtues of patrons and the high qualities of personal friends, or abstract conceptions of religion and philosophy, had their devotees; but women as the inspirers of real or fictitious passion far outnumbered all others.¹ Shakespeare was, more than any poet of his age, and we may say of any age, susceptible to the female charm; his poems and plays alike overflow with the love sentiment; and therefore I assume that the love of this sonnet was the love of a woman. Or take another one nearby, No. 21, as an example.

Son. 21. It is not with my Muse as it is with that of others who are moved to make verses by an artificial beauty and who consequently ransack the very heavens for epithets to raise their "fair one" to a level with all other "fairs." They bring together a "couplement" or mass of ambitious comparisons with the sun or moon, with the earth, with the rich gems of the sea,—with the first-born flowers of April, and, in fact, with everything rare that is hemmed in by the huge rondure of the skies;—but I do not do so: I love truly and therefore I write truly,—

¹ Main, in his *Treasury of English Sonnets* (p. 283), refers to collections by Spenser, Sidney, Constable, Daniel, Barnes, and many others, of which the several titles, *Astrophel and Stella*, *Delia*, *Diana*, *Phyllis*, *Cælia*, *Licia*, *Diella*, *Fidessa*, *Chloris*, etc., proclaim their characters. They were all of them more or less taken up with women either real or ideal.

or without resorting to fantastic exaggerations ; and you that read me may honestly believe that the object of my love, though not as brilliant, perhaps, as the golden candlesticks of the heaven, is yet as fair as any mother's child. Let those whose likings are founded upon common repute say more, if they will, but I am not a chapman in the market who extols his wares for mere effect. I am writing honestly of what I know, and not from what I choose to invent.

Can we doubt that the poet was here writing of a woman ? No poet then or since, writing of men, ever indulged in the extravagance of diction which Shakespeare disclaims. They never made suns, or moons, or gems, or flowers, of the masculine gender ; they only praised their nobler and general qualities in sober if exalted terms ; but when they sang of women they lavished upon the darlings all the bright and beautiful images they could bring together, extending their adoration to every part of the person : to eyes, lips, ears, hair, teeth, and cheeks, and they would have included even the little toes, if those sacred appendages had ever been exposed by any mischance to profane masculine vision.¹

¹ Constable furnishes a good specimen of this sort of rapture in his *Diana*, where he says :

“ My lady's presence made the roses red,
Because to see her lips they blushed for shame,
The lily-leaves for envy pale became,
And her white hands this envy in them bred ;

Further on the poet continues his disclaimers. He says :

Son. 130. The eyes of my mistress are not like the sun, nor are her lips as red as coral ; if snow be white, her breasts are dun, and if hairs may be called wires, such wires grow on her head.¹ I have seen roses, red, white, and damask, but no such roses bloom on her cheeks ; and in some perfumes there is a more delightful fragrance than in her breath. I love to hear her speak, yet I know that there are strains of music sweeter than the sounds she makes ; and though I have never seen a goddess walk, I have no doubt there are goddesses who could tread the ground with more grace ; and yet, by heaven ! I swear she is just as handsome as any other ; she who is belied by the false comparisons in vogue.

A sonnet like this could not have been addressed to a lady of rank, or in high society, because such ladies were accustomed to a very different style, and would have been offended

The marigold its leaves about doth spread,
Because the Sun's and her power is the same,
The violet of purple color came,
Dyed in the blood she made my heart to shed,
In brief, all flowers from her their virtue take,
From her sweet breath their sweet smells do proceed."

¹ The practice of Elizabethan poets, in comparing women's hair to wire, owing perhaps to something peculiar in the coiffure, is inconceivable to us, but it was quite common. Mr. Irving's editor, who, by the way, detects the connection between the 130th and the 26th sonnets, cites examples of this figure from Spenser, from Daniel, from Peele's *Praise of Chastity* in the English Helicon, from Hero and Leander, and from other sources.

by its qualified and negative praise. It might, however, very well have been addressed to a person in the poet's own condition, to whom he pays the greater honor by disclaiming for her those artificial compliments which seem to have been needed by the others. "You, my darling," he says, "are altogether more lovely than any of those whose charms require to be painted or bolstered up by such ridiculous inflations."

Interpreting these three sonnets as addressed by a rustic lover to his rustic sweetheart, may we not conclude from the little we know of the poet's real life, and not from guesses in the void, that if they related to any person in particular it must have been to Anne Hathaway, then or soon to become his wife? Unless the poet was already a gay Lothario of the fields we have no right to connect them with any other woman; while, connecting them with her, we open the way to a series of real love poems which are among the most tender and touching to be found in our literature.

Poor Anne has suffered badly at the hands of the critics, and especially those of our countryman, Mr. Richard Grant White, who pursues her with an almost personal spite; and yet he has no better reason for it, that I can see,

than Shakespeare's disparagement in some of his plays, of alliances, "misgrafted in respect of years." Because the Duke, in *Twelfth Night*, says, "Let still the woman take an elder than herself; so wears she to him, so sways she level on her husband's heart," it is inferred that Shakespeare thought the same, deriving his opinion, not from a general observation of life, but from his own individual experience. It is, however, an extremely hazardous method of getting at a dramatist's conviction, to impute to him as his own what he puts in the mouths of particular persons in particular situations. As well say that Shakespeare held and approved of all the queer sallies of Falstaff, or Sir Toby, or Parolles, as that he coincided with the Duke in his utterances about the importance of equality of age in married couples. Even if he did, it did not prevent him afterwards from approving the marriage of his daughter to one about as much younger than herself as he was younger than Anne.

Because Anne was the daughter of a yeoman, and not of one of the gentry; because she was some six or seven years older than her swain,—because their marriage was secret and hurried; and because after two or three years

of cohabitation the husband went off to London to live there for a long time, it has been taken for granted that Anne was some coarse country wench who inveigled him into a premature marriage, of which he soon repented, and then left her for life. // There is not a particle of historic evidence for this conclusion : On the other hand, there is some evidence that he visited her, once a year at least, which was as often, doubtless, as the state of travel rendered practicable then ; while he may have had other opportunities for seeing her in the occasional tours of his theatrical company through the provinces. Be that as it may, we know that in London he lived frugally and worked hard,—that his first earnings were devoted to buying for Anne and the children the best house in the best street of his native village ; and that when he had gotten together a competency, he returned to Stratford to live with them for the rest of his days ; and he did so when there were the strongest reasons why he should remain in London and not return to Stratford. He was highly esteemed and prosperous in London, surrounded by friends, many of them of great distinction ; his plays were the leading entertainment in Court circles ; in one month, May, 1613, at the wedding of the

Princess Elizabeth, no less than seven of them were given at Whitehall: *Henry IV.*, *Merry Wives*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Othello*, *Much Ado*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*,— the latter a fresh production.¹

On the other hand, a great change of opinion had taken place at Stratford, in the interval of his absences. In his youth, when his father was the principal magistrate of the town, theatrical entertainments were frequent and in good repute; but twenty years afterwards, at the time of his return the more fanatical Puritans had got possession of the place and forbidden them under heavy penalties. Warwickshire had become the centre of the anti-theatrical crusade; and two of its most powerful preachers thundered away from their pulpits against the stage and all its upholders. Yet in the face of this obloquy the poet returned thither to sojourn with his family. It was then and there, too, we have every reason to believe, that he wrote those tender romances, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*, which are all so suffused with a gentle sunset glow of serene and kindly affection.

As I view it, the historic probabilities, so far

¹ Halliwell-Phillipps, ii., 87.

from confirming the inferences of Mr. White and others, would rather show that the woman of Shakespeare's first love was worthy of his affection. At that time the influence of the Renaissance or revival of learning had not yet spent its force. Men, we know, in their eagerness for knowledge would sell the coats off their backs and go without food to get a glimpse of a printed book or of a rare manuscript. Ladies in high station prosecuted learning with an irrepressible zeal; Queen Elizabeth spoke and read the ancient as well as the modern languages, and when she went down to the universities could answer the addresses of the learned dons in Greek or Latin as she pleased. Her rival, Mary, Queen of Scots, surrounded herself by learned men, was familiar with French literature and herself wrote French poems; and Lady Jane Grey was not only the favorite but the foremost pupil of Roger Ascham, the greatest teacher of his time. Among ladies of the middle classes, as we read in private Memoirs, the pursuit of knowledge was indefatigable, while the same avidity marked to some extent the inferior social classes. I read the other day an account of a young Italian woman, of the middle ranks, who at that time made herself so complete a

mistress of the Greek that she was able to lecture on Greek Literature in the Greek language at various universities.¹ Anne Hathaway was not, perhaps, of this select sort; she was a simple rustic maiden, but as such not necessarily ignorant or unread; nor wholly indifferent to the accomplishments of her boyish lover. We should offend no actual history or authentic tradition if we should suppose her to have been the "beloved" of the earlier sonnets. If she was not the model of Perdita, "the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the greensward," she might easily have been the original "sweet Anne Page," simple, modest, amiable, and of charm enough, aside from her father's fortune, to attract three or four suitors at once, and of spirit enough to run away with one of them without getting her parents' consent. Then, again, as she was older than her boy husband, she might, instead of repelling him, ultimately have exercised over his eager and impetuous impulses a salutary control, as quiet and gentle as that of a summer's day. Does he not intimate as much when he writes :

Son. 18. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate [that is,
more equal]: rough winds do shake the darling buds of

¹ This was in *Littell's Living Age*, but I have mislaid the reference.

May, and summer's lease hath all too short a date. Sometimes the eye of heaven is too hot, while at others its gold complexion is dimmed, and every fair thing often loses its fairness. But thy summer is the summer of love, which is perennial and does not fade. Besides, and here the enthusiastic and self-confident poet breaks out : Death shall never be able to boast that thou wanderest in his shade, because I have put thee in my verses, destined to endure as long as men can breathe, or age can see, and thou shalt live in them !

As the lad repeated these lines to the girl, either at Shottery, her home, or in his father's house, she, if she was the woman I take her to have been, threw her arms about him and gave him some hearty kisses, exclaiming, " Oh, Willie, boy ! if ever there was a poet you are one ; but, alas, you make too much of my good looks, for remember that I am older than you are, and beauty is a thing that soon decays."

" Does it ?" he reflected, as he went away thoughtfully,—and the next time they were alone he gave her his version of that question.

Son. 104. Dear friend, to me you never can be old, because your beauty is the same as it was when first I looked into your eyes.¹ The cold of three winters [they had been intimate, perhaps married, for three years, it would seem] has shaken the leaves from the forests ; three beauteous springs have turned to yellow autumn in

¹ The Quarto reads, " When first your eye I eyed."

the process of the seasons ; and I have seen the perfume of three Aprils burned away by three hot Junes since first I saw thee fresh who art still the same. No doubt that what you said is true ; beauty, like the hand on a dial, may steal unperceived from figure to figure, and your sweet form, which methinks unchanged, may have motion in it, and my eyes be deceived ; in fear of which, hear this : Though age is rude, was the summer of love dead ere you were born ?

The poet then averred that he himself would share in this happy exemption of love.

Son. 22. Nor shall my own glass ever persuade me that I am old, so long as youth and thou, as we have just seen, are of one date. But when I shall behold the furrows of time in thy face, I shall hope that death may put an end to my days, because the beauty with which thou art endowed is but the seemingly raiment of my own heart, which lives in thy breast, as thy heart lives in mine. How can I ever be older than thou art ? And, therefore, love, be wary for thyself as I will be, not for myself, but for thee, bearing thy heart as tenderly as a nurse does her baby ; nor presume upon thy affections, when mine are gone, as thou gavest me thyself never to give back again.

Of course, when that was read the osculatory processes were resumed, but the time for such dalliances was soon to end. Shakespeare was living with his father, a yeoman and a merchant as well, in whose business he assisted,

giving an hour also, as he could, to the study of law.¹ But that business, it is generally admitted by the commentators, had fallen off of late, and was no longer adequate to the needs of a double family. Accordingly, he determined to go away to try his fortunes in the great world. A tradition, heard of a hundred years later, gives out that he was driven away by threats of prosecution for deer-stealing, to which the more sportive youths even of the colleges and law schools were addicted. One wishes the story were true, if for no other reason than to justify Landor's fine bit of writing in the "Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare."² It was, however, more likely, if Shakespeare was driven from home by external conditions, and not by his own nascent desire to mingle in the crowds of the metropolis, that he was influenced by the growing religious troubles of the time. His father, a staunch Puritan,³ had passed into non-conformity, which, under the severe laws of the Church, exposed him to danger. This was not wholly approved of by his son, who, as a

¹ A mere conjecture, however.

² Landor's *Works*, vol. ii., pp. 455-557.

³ See *Shakespeare, Puritan and Recusant*, by Rev. T. Carter, London, 1897.

child of the Renaissance, cared for none of the creeds.¹

How could he help turning his face toward the great city, which was the seat of government and the centre of literature and the arts? Most of the aspiring young men of the time went thither for employment or a career, but it was only natural that he should be very much depressed by the necessity of leaving his dear ones, amid the doubts that hung over his future in a new untried sphere. He even seems to have feared whether he should ever return, and in this dark mood he wrote a sort of farewell to his wife, apparently more solicitous about the life of his poetry than his own life.

Son. 32. If thou survive the day, with which I am still contented, when cruel Death shall cover my bones with dust and, by some good hap, read again the poor rude lines of thy lover who is gone, compare them with the better efforts of the time, and, finding that they are surpassed by every pen, cherish them for my love's sake, and not for their rhymes, which fail to attain the heights of more felicitous writers,—oh, then be kind enough to add this loving thought, “If my friend's muse had grown with the advancing age, he would have given me a finer tribute, one capable of taking its place among the foremost productions,—but since he has died, and

¹ I am quite convinced that Shakespeare was neither Catholic nor Protestant, but Humanist, though the question cannot be discussed here.

superior poets have arisen, I will read their lays for their style, but his for their sweet affection."

(2)—*The Departure from the Beloved.*

In the state of travel, as it existed at that time, the young adventurer had to set off on horseback. Macaulay, writing of the roads as they were a hundred years afterwards, 1668 instead of 1568, describes them as almost impassable by any vehicle. It took six horses to drag a cart or a carriage through the mud, and a journey from Oxford to London was a matter of three or four days.¹ From Stratford to London it was still longer, and that it was wearisome and slow the poet has told us in a sonnet which he no doubt sent from his first stopping-place, either by post, or by some returning merchant. He writes :

Son. 50. How heavily I get on, when the very repose I seek as a rest from toilsome travel reminds me that I am measuring the miles away from thee! Even the dull beast that I bestride plods slowly along, as if he discerned by some instinct that his rider, carrying a burden of woe, did not care for speed ; the bloody spur impatiently thrust into his side provokes only a heavy groan which is the more sharp as it is so responsive to my own mood,—recalling that grief lies before me and my joy behind.

¹ *History of England*, vol. i., chap. 13.

The poet continues :

Son. 51. Yes, my love excuses this offence of slowness, because I am hasting away from its object. Why should I hurry, when it puts more distance between us? What need of posting until my return, but in that case, what excuse could my poor drudge find, as the extremest swiftness would then be slow ! Ah, if I were then mounted on the wind, I should ply the spur, and find no motion in the speed of wings. Then no horse could keep pace with my desire,—for, being composed entirely of love, it would require the assistance of no dull flesh in its fiery race. As the beast in going from thee went slow, according to my will, in going towards thee I 'll run, and he may walk¹ if he likes.

At length the traveller, arriving at his destination, and having wandered about to find a lodging, is exceedingly tired, and goes to bed in search of rest. But that, as he informs his distant lady, is not to be found.

Son. 27. Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed to find the rest that is due to my limbs, tired with travel, but I have no sooner laid my head upon my pillow than a journey begins which works my mind as the travel had worked my limbs. My thoughts from this far place undertake a pilgrimage back to thee, and keep my drooping eyes open though the darkness is like the darkness of the blind. None the less, the imaginary flight of my soul presents thine image to my sightless orbs, like a jewel set in the ghastliness of night, making her blackness beautiful and her old, worn-out face as new. Thus

¹ The Quarto reads "Go," which meant "walk."

my body finds no quiet by day and my mind none by night, intensely absorbed as I am in what concerns us both.

Son. 28. Alas ! if this goes on, how shall I ever be able to return ? Debarred the benefit of any real rest by the double oppression of night and day, when, though each is the enemy of the other, they willingly combine to torment me, the one by the toil it demands and the other by its complaints that I am ever toiling farther off from thee. In vain I tell the day, to please him, that thou art a grace to him by thy brightness even when clouds blot the sky, and in vain I flatter the swarthy-hued night by telling him that when the sparkling stars do not twinkle thou dost still gild the heavens, for the days only lengthen my grief and the night makes its strength the stronger.

The poet comforts himself by recurring to a not unusual fancy. He says :

Son. 44. If the solid substance of my flesh were thought, no insolent distance should stop my way ; for then, in spite of space, I could be brought in a wink from the remotest limits to where thou dost dwell. Even if my foot should stand upon the utmost verge of the earth, my nimble thought would jump both sea and land to be with thee. Alas ! the thought kills me that I am not thought and able to leap huge lengths of miles to be where thou art ; but so much of earth and water mingle with the air and fire of my human constitution that I must await the leisure of time with my moans, receiving naught from elements so slow but tears, which are the signs of our mutual woe.

Son. 45. Two of these elements, light air and purifying fire, are always with thee, wherever I may be ; the

first representing my thought and the other my desire ; they glide about with such swiftness of motion that they may be said to be always both present and absent. But when the quicker elements are gone on a tender embassage to thee, my life under the pressure of the other two sinks down to death or the oppression of melancholy,—as our natures cannot be remade. Yet when these swift messengers come back to me, assuring me of thy fair health, I joy in the recital, only to be made sad again by their departure.¹

It was some solace to the exile that he possessed a picture of the absent one, for which his eyes and his head were both so eager that each one set up an exclusive claim.

Son. 46. Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war as to which I owe that great conquest—the sight of thee! Mine eye would bar the heart a look at that picture, and the heart deny the eye any freedom of right thereto. My heart pleads that thou dost lie in him as in a chest never pierced by human eye; but the defendant denies that plea and asserts that thou owest him thy fair appearance. To decide the case a jury of thoughts, which are also tenants of the head, is summoned, and it was determined by their verdict that the eye's share should be the outward part, and the heart's the inward affection.²

By the possession of this picture the poet goes on to say :

¹The notion of the Four Elements is referred to in so many of the plays that it is unnecessary to cite them.

²This contest between the heart and the eyes is an old one, and,

Son. 52. I am like a rich man, who holds the key to a sweet locked-up treasure. But he does not use it every day, lest the frequency of the enjoyment should blunt its edge. Feasts are so exceptional in the pleasure they give, so deeply interesting, because they come so seldom in the course of the year, or, like precious stones, or the chief jewels in a coronet, are thinly placed. So Time keeps you in my chest, as the wardrobe in which my robe is hidden, in order to render some special moment especially blest by unfolding the imprisoned treasure.¹ Thus blessed are you whose excellence gives scope ; being had, to triumph, being lacked, to hope.

Our young poet, — he was at most but twenty-two years of age, — on his arrival in London, though playful at first, soon found himself lonely and desolate. Anyone who has had the experience of such a transfer from the country to a great city, in which he is friendless and without means, may judge of the depth of that desolation. It is like being set down in a wilderness, with no help at hand, and no way of exit from its terrors. In his loneliness and long before Shakespeare, Mapes had written a poem called *Disputatio inter Cor et Oculum*, which was said to be very humorous (Warton, vol. i., p. 162). These sonnets have the tone of youthfulness about them which must strike every reader. It is perhaps worthy of note, too, that one of them is almost wholly expressed in the terms of a trial at law.

¹ An illustration, which is repeated by Bolingbroke (*J. Henry IV.*, iii., 2, 56) : when boasting how he keeps his person fresh and new, he says : " My presence like a robe pontifical, ne'er seen but wondered at : and so my state, Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast, And wan by rareness such solemnity."

anxiety our poet yearned for his old home, he thinks of old friends, and he laments the time he has wasted with a sort of despair.

Son. 30. When to the sessions of sweet silent thought I summon up remembrance of things past, I sigh over the want of many a thing I once sought, and wailing for the waste of opportunities, mine eye, unused to flow, is drenched in tears by the memory of precious friends now hidden in death's dateless night; I weep afresh the sorrows long since cancelled, and the loss of many a vanished sight,—and recall painful grievances foregone. As I heavily tell over the sad account of former trials, I repeat the old moans, and yet when I think of thee, dear love, all losses seem to be compensated, and my sorrows come to an end.¹

In this intense devotion to a single love, the poet arrives at an exquisite expression of its fulness and concentration. He says :

Son. 31. Thy bosom becomes the more dear to me as it seems to contain all the hearts that, by wanting, I have supposed dead. Love reigns there, and all love's tender affinities, together with all the friends I may have thought buried. How many a holy and funeral tear has been stolen from my eyes, as the due of the dead, who were only removed for a space and now lie in thee as in a sepulchre hung with their trophies. They live again,

¹ Main refers, in connection with this tender sonnet, to Tennyson's

“ Oh for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

and whatever interest they once excited in me is transferred to thee ; the due of many now is thine alone ; all those I loved I behold once more in thee ; and thou, including all of them, art my all in all.

It was in a brighter mood, — perhaps the clouds had broken away a little, — that he rallied his beloved on the fact, that while he had been so careful, on leaving home, to secure his smaller treasure, the greatest treasure of all had been overlooked.

Son. 48. How careful was I, ere I left home, to bar up my merest trifles, that they might remain mine, and safe from all false hands. But thou, to whom the finest jewels are as nothing, my dearest comfort and yet my most anxious care, the best of all dear things, I left an open prey for the vulgarest thief to snatch. I had not locked thee up in a chest, save the gentle closure of my heart,¹ where thou art not, though I know thou art, and mayst depart at any time or even be stolen ; for, in the presence of such a tempter, even Truth itself might prove a thief.

Bethinking himself of what he had said, the poet subjoins that the fears he had intimated were rather unworthy of him.

Son. 116. Do not let me suggest any obstacles to the marriage of true minds.² That is not true love which

¹ *Venus and Adonis*, 782, has "the quiet closure of my breast," also in line 724, we have "Rich preys make true men thieves."

² "The marriage of true minds" is peculiarly felicitous if, as we suppose, the sonnet was addressed to the poet's wife.

alters when it finds alteration in the object of it, or tends to fade away with the decline of it in others. No, it is an ever-fixed beacon, which looks on tempests and cannot be shaken¹; or, rather, it is like that star which serves as a guide to every wandering bark, and whose deeper influences, although its altitude may have been measured, are unknown. Love is not a mere sport of Time; and noses, lips, and cheeks may fall within the reach of his bending scythe; but love is not a subject of brief hours and weeks: it goes forward even to the edge of doom.

Then a new thought comes to the poet and he writes:

Son. 115. The lines I have written to you before, even those which said I could not love you more dearly, because love is unchangeable, are, in one respect, false, for love does change,—it grows. When they were written, my judgment could see no reason why my flame, which seemed already at the full, should afterwards burn clearer. But, taking into consideration the influence of Time, which, in a million ways, creeps in between our vows and their fulfilment, which alters the decrees of kings, which dims the sacreddest beauty, which arrests the most fixed resolves and subjects the strongest minds to the changing currents of events,—alas, though fearing these tyrannies of time, why might I not say, “Now I love you best,” when I was certain, beyond all uncertainty, the present was assured and all the rest in doubt? Love is an infant, to whom we may at any time say, “Now

¹ Coriolanus (v., 3, 74) says, “Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw.”

you are at the best," and yet give full growth to that which never ceases to grow.¹

(3) Hard Struggles and Despondencies.

Shakespeare, on his arrival in London, had his attention drawn to the stage; his dramatic instincts had been awakened, no doubt, by the visits of strolling players to his native village, to say nothing of the taste for theatrical entertainments which had arisen within a few years, in spite of the opposition of the Puritans. It had particularly affected the Court, which lent its favors to the new companies of child-players lately set up, and the universities, where many of the ancient classic dramas had been revived in modern form; but that a large number of the middle classes were also ready for them we may infer from the fact that within the decade preceding Shakespeare's advent, six or seven new theatres had been constructed

¹ This sonnet is, in some way slightly defective in expression; and yet the version of it I present seems to convey, without any considerable change of the words, the meaning of the poet. Professor Henry Reed (Lectures, ii., 253) says that it would be difficult to cite a finer passage of moral poetry than these descriptions of the master passion. "How true and how ennobling to our nature! We at once recognize in the abstract the conceptions which have found a dwelling-place and a name in the familiar forms of Desdemona, Juliet, Imogen, and Cordelia, those inimitable creations of female character, that have been loved as if they were living beings by thousands."

in the suburbs of the city, thirty or forty writers of plays had taken the field, hundreds of new plays, such as they were, had supplanted the former "mysteries" "moralities" and "interludes." Much of the best literary talent of the day aspired to success in the new line. Shakespeare's necessities, if not his tastes, would have led him to the boards. It was, however, difficult to achieve an entrance there. One had to show some real aptitude for the calling, and then serve through a protracted apprenticeship. A tradition reports that Shakespeare began by holding the horses of the gentry who attended the performances, which, though not well supported, is not wholly improbable. He was without money or friends, and had to do something for a living. Our first authentic report of him is, that he was employed in an inferior capacity, or as a "supe," we now say,—either call-boy or messenger, or soldier, one of the mob, or, perhaps, as prompter to the actors. Sooner or later he took to revising old plays, which brought him in contact with the regular writers, when, evincing no little superiority in the task, they got to consulting him as to their own efforts. He even went so far once as to try his hand on an old play, which he made his own, or

largely his own, named *Titus Andronicus*. It was conceived in the worst manner of the times, and like the life of Aaron, a principal character, was full of

“ . . . murders, rapes, and massacres,
 Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
 Complots of mischief, treason, villanies,
 Ruthful to hear, yet piteously perform'd.”¹

Strange to say, the play was popular, and encouraged the lad to go on in a bad style. How long he continued to write, or to help others to write, in this false vein we do not know. The successes he had achieved in it doubtless gave him a transient predilection for it, but his good sense and real dramatic instinct sooner or later broke the trammels, and he ventured forth in a better line.

I find some evidence of his struggle to release himself in Sonnet No. 137, in which he writes :

Son. 137. Thou blindfold love (liking or predilection), what dost thou to mine eyes that they should look, yet see not what they see? They know what beauty is,

¹ That this play was mainly Shakespeare's we have the positive attestation, first, of Meres, who mentions it by name, and, second, of Heminge and Condell, fellow-actors of his for many years, who included it in the first Folio; and yet many critics express strong doubts as to its authorship, on no other grounds than its general inferiority to his other works. But Verplanck and White have, in my opinion, left no room for any further disputation on the subject.

and where it is to be found, and none the less take the worst to be the best. If corrupted by their own partialities for the mere superficial aspect of things, they are attracted to that which pleases everybody ("anchored in the bay where all men ride"). How is it that their falsehood forges hooks for the captivation of the better judgment (that of the heart)? Why should I regard that as a peculiar or exclusive possession of my own which I know is a common property of the whole world? Or why do mine eyes, seeing what beauty is, affirm that to be true which is not so, in order to put a fair semblance on an ugly face? The fact is, that both mine eyes and my heart have wandered and are now transferred to this mischievous error.¹

Son. 54. Oh, how much more beautiful does beauty seem when it is supported and justified by truth! The rose looks fair, but we deem it the fairer because of other qualities which it contains. The canker-blooms of the hedges have just as deep a color as the fragrant cincture of real roses²; they hang on the same thorns, and play as wantonly with the summer breezes which unmask their pretty buds; but inasmuch as their appearance is their only attraction,—they live and die without admirers. They die even to themselves, which real roses do not,

¹ This sonnet I was disposed at first to put in the Dark Lady series, where it seems on the surface to belong, but as there is one sonnet there already, (No. 148), which is very like in sentiment and expression, I doubted whether the poet would *so* repeat himself in the same connection. Besides, as No. 148 imputes to the lady in question a far greater latitude of behavior than was the ground of his complaint in this sonnet, it occurred to me that the blind fool-love he rebukes was not a sexual but an æsthetic fondness.

² "The perfumed tincture of the roses," may perhaps be a misprint for "cincture."

because their death becomes a source of sweet odors. And so, when your fair and lovely youth departs, let it live in the truth of your verse.

Mr. Hallam has inferred from the tone of certain of Shakespeare's plays that there was a time in his life of extreme depression, "when his heart was ill at ease, or ill content with the world or his own consciousness, the memory of hours misspent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited,—the experience of man's worsenature, which intercourse with ill-chosen associates particularly teaches,—as they sank down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of law and honor, but that of one primary character—the censor of mankind."¹ He cites in justification of this opinion such plays as *Measure for Measure* and *Timon of Athens*, which look upon the darker side of life alone. But as these plays are only partly Shakespeare's they can hardly be taken as evidence, even if we admit that the real convictions or feelings of an author may be derived from his ideal creations.

I have doubted this, in referring to the question of his marriage, and I further doubt whether his intense depression came upon him

¹ *History of the Literature of Europe*, vol. ii., pp. 293-299.

at any time after his early struggles at the outset of his career. Certainly four of the sonnets (Nos. 71-74) express a deep dissatisfaction with himself,—but in my view they bear upon his literary rather than his moral experiences. The latter, of which we shall give an account in the next section,¹ may have deepened this shadow, but not have been its source. They read as follows :

Son. 73. In my condition, thou mayst discover a likeness to that season of the year when yellow leaves, or few or none, do hang upon boughs that shiver in the cold,—mere ruined choirs now where lately the sweet birds sang ; in it thou mayst see the twilight of a day, fast fading in the west, when black night, death's second self, which shuts up all in rest, will soon swallow it ; thou mayst see in it the afterglow of a fire, which lies upon its ashes as on a bed of death, where it will soon go out, consumed by that which should have been its nourishment ; but, perceiving this, thy love is all the more precious because it clings to that which must soon be lost.

Son. 71. Yet mourn for me no longer than you shall hear the surly sullen bell give warning that I am gone from this vain world to dwell among the worms. Then, if you should happen to read this line, do not remember the hand that wrote it, because I love you so that I desire to be forgotten, if thinking of me could cause you any sorrow. Yes, I repeat it, if you should look upon this verse, when I am mingled with the dust, do not so

¹ See Episode of the Dark Lady, *post.*

much as recall my poor name, but let your love cease with my life,—lest the worldly wise should inquire into the cause of your grief and hold it in mockery.

Son. 72. For if the world should ask you to tell what merit there was in me, worthy of such love after my decease, you could offer nothing in justification, except by some well-intended falsehood, attaching to my name a higher praise than it deserves, or more than strict truth could approve. It would be better for my name to be buried with my body, than for you to be betrayed by your love into speaking well of that which is surely a shame, and I am ashamed of that which I produce, as you should be, in loving what is worth nothing.

None the less, be contented :

Son. 74. For when that fell seizure, which is without bail, shall carry me away, this shall remain with thee as a memorial of me. In re-reading it, remember that thou dost renew the part of me that was entirely consecrated to thee. The earth may take the body, which is its due, but the spirit, the highest quality of our nature, is thine. Thou lovest but the dregs of life, when the body dies,—to become the prey of worms,—the conquest of a wretched strife too base to be recalled [of that struggle between his higher and lower nature of which we may read something in Sonnet 146].¹

¹ Dowden asks, "Does Shakespeare merely speak of the liability of the body to untimely or violent mischance? Or does he meditate suicide? or think of Marlowe's death and anticipate such a fate as possibly his own? Or has he, like Marlowe been wounded? Or does he refer to the dissection of dead bodies? Or is it 'confounding age's cruel knife' of Son. 63:14?" Rolfe adds: "If not a merely figurative

The young poet, however, was not wholly discouraged, and under some better inspiration tried his hand again, and as I conjecture, on "a pleasant conceited comedy" called *Love's Labor's Lost*. It was published in Quarto as early as 1598, and then as newly corrected and augmented. It was mentioned the same year not only by Meres, as we have seen, but in a poem entitled *Alba*, by "R. T., Gentleman," so that it must have been written some time before. Several critics date it as early as 1591, and White in 1588-89.

Mr. Irving's editor pronounces this the worst of all Shakespeare's plays, which it can hardly be if he wrote *Titus Andronicus*; nor is it by any means, as he avers, "tedious and uninteresting." Both as a psychological and a historical study, it is full of interest and significance, despite its faults,—its occasional doggerel,—its puns, its conceits, and its commonplace allusions. It is largely original in plot and character, overflows with real wit,—“Snip, snap, quick and home,” as Armado

expression, like this last, the key to it is probably in the first question above; this life which is at the mercy of any base assassin's knife. The latter seems to be the preferable explanation. Palgrave says the expression must allude to anatomical dissection then recently revived in Europe by Vesalius, Fallopius, Paré, and others." "O Lord, sir!" as the clown says, in *All's Well that Ends Well*.

says,— and the blank verse here and there is the best that had been written up to its time. It excited more than usual attention, on the part of Shakespeare's fellow-playwrights, and we can easily imagine one of them, say Peele, straying into a taphouse, for a morning dram, and encountering Mr. Greene, who had been there all night, with the salutation, "Well Bob, were you at the theatre yesterday?" "No, but what's up?" "A new piece written by that stripling busybody from Stratford." "Well, how did it go?" "Bad enough; it abounds in sonnets, or new rhymes of some sort; and yet the people laughed, and now and then there was a burst of this new-fangled blank verse, which is likely to make Marlowe tremble for his laurels." "That lad," muttered Greene, "must be looked to," and he was looked to, with a vengeance.

The playwrights of the time were a far more dissolute set than the actors,—given to full and riotous living; good scholars, most of them, college bred; "university wits," as they were called, but thorough-going roysterers. They rather looked down upon our poor lad without academic education, and with, perhaps, rustic manners, and those gentle and genial ways, on which all reports agree. On the other

hand, he rather despised them in his country-bred innocence, for their reckless dissipations. The two were not of a kind, and kept more or less aloof, one from the other. In the end Greene, on his death-bed, abused Shakespeare roundly as a Johannes Factotum, or Jack of all work, and an upstart who strutted about in borrowed feathers¹; Nash ridiculed him more than once as a Noverint or lawyer's clerk, who made pretensions to literature, though if he were going to be hanged he could not muster Latin enough to form a necktie. Shakespeare felt the disdain and detraction as a sensitive youth should do, and recorded his feelings in several of his tablets. He was unwilling to ascribe their abuse to his own want of merit and thought it their envy. He said to himself:

Son. 70. That thou art blamed, is not on account of thy defects, but because of the readiness with which slander hits at merit. It has come to be so now that suspicion,² like a crow that flies in heaven's purest air, is rather an ornament than a detraction. If thou art really meritorious such slander proves thy worth the

¹ See Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance*.

² The word used is "suspect," meaning suspicion. It is so used by Shakespeare no less than ten times, but eight of them in his very earliest works, like *Henry VI.* and the *Comedy of Errors*.

greater, and particularly when it is invited by or instigated by thy youth.¹ The canker vice selects the earliest buds and thou presentest a pure unsullied prime. Thou hast passed through the snares that are set for the inexperienced, either not assailed, or if assailed victorious over them ; and yet this is not a merit that exempts thee from all malice, which seems to be ever more and more active. If some calumny were not attached to thy efforts, thou wouldst be an exception among writers, and reign alone over the world of human admiration.

Son. 69. Those qualities of thine, which everybody appreciates, need nothing, which a more earnest or heart-felt study might impart. All tongues when they speak their better sentiments give thee that due, but they utter the sheer truth in the tone of an enemy when he is obliged to commend. They praise thy external accomplishments in a sort of external way, but when they come to speak of thy higher qualities they annul what they have conceded, by the use of other accents. They try to look into thy inner capacities, which they do by guess or inference from thy performances, and then the churls lend to thy fair flowers the rank smell of weeds ; yet it is not strange that thy fragrance does not equal thy show because thou hast allowed thyself to fall into the commonplaces of the day.

The poet then asks himself : But why should I care for these misrepresentations, or why allow myself to be influenced by them for the worse ?

¹ " Being wooed by time," is the phrase here, which may mean " solicited by the influence of the times," but the lines that follow immediately induce me to adopt the sense given above.

Son. 121. It is better to be vile in your own way (that is, by following out your own impulses honestly, though that way may be wrong)—than to accept the reproaches of others as true, when they are not, and thereby lose the just pleasure of doing what is not deemed a reproach, by your own feelings, but by those of others.¹ Why should the false and sophisticated opinions of others be permitted to arouse or encourage your wilder propensities or to stimulate passions already sufficiently quickened? They who spy out my frailties are more frail than I am, and they wilfully count that as bad which I think is good. No! I am just what I am, neither more nor less; and they who level their shots at my supposed abuses only reckon up their own. I may be straight while they themselves are crooked, and my conduct shall not be estimated by their corrupt standards, unless, indeed, we are prepared to maintain the generality of evil and to hold all men equally bad, and thriving only by means of their badness.

This self-restraint and self-poise he insists is the best, even though it may not be free from failure.

Son. 94 They that have the power to do harm and yet do no harm, who do not do what they are most capable of doing, who, moving others, are themselves unmoved, and are cold and slow to temptation, inherit one of the best graces of heaven and save nature's endowments from a wasteful expenditure. They are the lords and owners of their self-expression, while others are but the stewards

¹ The poet is here so concise that he becomes not a little obscure, and the reader must get the meaning as he best can.

of the powers they possess. The summer's flower is to the summer sweet, although it only lives and dies to itself; yet if that flower meets with infection, the basest weed may outshine it in dignity. Thus, the sweetest things turn the sourest in their perversion, as "lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."¹

Take care, then, O poet,—is the inference,—lest the churls entice thee out of the right path.

(4) *An Outlook upon the Great World.*

While the poet was thus brooding over his own disappointments and wrongs, his lustrous eyes were looking out also upon the busy world, not only of London, but of all Christendom. Tired of all of it, he exclaims "I could cry for restful death."

Son. 66. When I behold the highest desert born a beggar; when I behold a crafty nobody trimmed in all the trappings of jollity; when I see the purest faith most wickedly betrayed; the gilded ornaments of honor most shamefully misplaced; maiden virtue brutally strumpeted; the perfection of right disgracefully prostituted to the basest wrong; real strength of character disabled by limping sway; art (his own art especially) silenced by the interposition of incompetent authority; folly, with the air of a learned doctor, controlling skill; the simple,

¹ This line is to be found in the play of *Edward III.* (ii., 1), and in a part which has by some critics been attributed to the pen of Shakespeare.

obvious truth denounced as foolishness ; and good everywhere subjected to presumptuous ill,—most willingly would I take myself out of this hideous coil, save that by dying I should abandon my darling to its wickedness.¹

One cannot read this summary of social and political life without being reminded of the famous soliloquy of Hamlet, “To be or not to be.” Indeed, the whole play of *Hamlet* turns upon these discords in the order of the world,—that heavy burden of wrong which society imposes, that terrible injustice which grows out of crime, and the self-destruction which the sonnet hints at.

I cannot but think that while the young poet was meditating upon these distractions and diseases of society, it came to him to ask of what service a true poet could be in such a medium.

Son. 67. Oh, wherefore should he live in the midst of infection, and by his presence lend a grace to its impieties, thereby enabling sin to achieve its triumph and even embellish itself by the association? Why should false painting, or meretricious methods of representation imitate his style, and steal a dead semblance of life from his living form? Why should poor beauty herself ignorantly seek for roses, which are but shadows of roses,

¹This would apply more truly to the far-off dependent Anne, than to a member of a wealthy family, surrounded by powerful friends.

when his rose is true? Why should he live at all, now that nature is exhausted by these pretenders who lay their hands upon her every aspect and relation, until she has no longer blood enough left to blush for shame at the outrages they commit! She has no resources to draw upon now but those of the true poet, in whose advances, though proud of many excellences, she really lives. Oh, him, oh, him, she endows to show what wealth she had in former days, before the arrival of these evil times.

In these last lines, the poet seems to me to hint at the relations of Nature to Art, which he afterwards dwells upon more fully in a fine passage of *The Winter's Tale*, where Perdita, having refused to have anything to do with artificial flowers, because they were a sort of bastard production, says :

“ There is an art, which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.”

And Polixenes replies :

“ Say there be ;
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean : so, over that art
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race : this is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature.”

“These,” says Brandes (vol. ii., p. 354), and I agree with him, “these are the most profound and subtle words that could well be spoken on the subject of the relations between Nature and Culture.”

The poet continues in the same vein :

Son. 68. Thus it is, that what the true poet presents us is a map¹ of those days outworn, when beauty came and went, as the flowers do now (*i. e.*, spontaneously, or without labor, as we see in early legends and folk-songs and ballads). That was before these bastard signs of beauty made their appearance, or dared to ascribe their paternity to some living brain. That was before “the golden tresses of the dead,”² the right of the sepulchre,” the (exquisite touches of classic authors), were stolen away, and made to flourish for a second time on a second head, and the dead fleece of beauty was paraded gaily as real beauty. But in him, the true poet,

¹ The Quarto says, “His cheek is the map of days outworn,” meaning by cheek what is exposed to view, as in *Richard III.* (iii., 3, 57), “The cloudy cheek of heaven,” or in *The Tempest* (i., 2, 4), “The welkin’s cheek,” or in *Troilus and Cressida* (v., 3, 15), “The wide cheek of the air.”

Map is often used for “outline,” “picture,” “pattern,” etc. *Richard II.* (v. i., 12) has “Thou map of honor”; *2 Henry VI.* (iii., 1), “In thy face I see the map of honor, truth, and loyalty”; *Titus Andronicus* (iii., 2, 12), “Thou map of woe”; *Lucrece* (i., 1350), “This pattern of the wornout age.” That sapient critic, Mr. S. Butler, says this sonnet is addressed to Mr. W. H., who has been keeping company of which Shakespeare did not approve. Yea, verily.

² “The golden tresses of the dead.” See *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (iv., 3, 254-9); *Merchant of Venice* (iii., 2, 92), and *Timon* (iv., 3, 144).

we see those holy antique hours, which affected no spurious adornments; the poet was himself and true to himself, not making a summer out of the green growths of others, nor robbing the past to dress out his beauty as if it were new. No, nature enriches him as a model for later times, in order to show false art what beauty was of yore.

It is pleasant to think that during this period of desolation and in the midst of his increasing activities of business, the absent poet did not forget his annual poetic tribute to the mother in the country. On one of these occasions he wrote :

Son. 98. I have been away from you in the spring, when richly apparelled April imparts the spirit of youth to everything, and even the heavy Saturn laughs and leaps with joy, and yet neither the color nor the fragrance of its many different flowers could inspire me to any jovial effort,¹ not even to pluck them from their stalks. Nor do I praise the white of the lily, or the vermilion of the rose, for they were sweet and delightful only as drawn after thee, the pattern of all lovely things. It is always winter, when you are away, and I could play with them only as your shadows.

On another occasion he continues :

Son. 99. I could only chide them (the flowers) for their thieveries and I said to the violet, sweet thief, whence hast thou thy sweetest spells, but from my

¹ "A sad tale 's best for winter," says *The Winter's Tale*.

love's breast.¹ Their purple complexion was derived from thy veins ; the whiteness of the lily I condemned when compared to thy hands, and the buds of marjoram had been stolen from thy hair. Even the roses stood anxiously among their thorns, one blushing for shame, another white from fear,—a third not white nor red, but both, because they had robbed their colors from thee, and annexed thy breath. The last, indeed, was eaten up by a canker in the midst of his proud show. Many other flowers I noted, but they had all purloined their scent or their color from thee.

Then at another time the poet repeats the thought almost in the same words but with increasing emphasis.

Son. 97. How like a winter has my absence been ; what freezing have I felt, what dark days seen ; the barrenness of old December everywhere, and yet the time elapsed has been the summer time. Even teeming autumn (bearing the rich burdens of the season, like widowed wombs after their lord's decease), despite its abundant issue, brought but a barren and unfruitful hope.² Summer and the pleasures of summer wait on thee, and when thou art away the very birds are mute, or if they sing at all, it is in a cheerless strain, while the leaves grow pale in fear of the coming gloom.

I have reserved to the last, as covering the whole of this period of struggle, dejection, and

¹ The Quarto has " my love's breath," which is the same thought we have in a few lines below and certainly a misprint.

² The words of the Quarto are, " but hope of orphans."

effort, a sonnet, which is not only remarkable for its merit, but which carries with it a singular pathos of suggestion.

Son. 29. When in disfavor with fortune, and the opinions of men, I weep over my condition, in utter solitude, and trouble the irresponsive heaven with my useless cries,—wishing that I were more rich in hope, featured like this one, or befriended like that,—desiring this man's art or that man's range, and the least of all satisfied with what I most enjoy (his own efforts, doubtless), and yet despising myself for these very thoughts, for in the midst of them I haply think of thee, with heart elate, like to the lark which at break of day springs from the sullen earth and sings its hymns at the very gates of heaven, for, thy sweet love remembered brings such wealth of happiness, that I would not change my state for that of any king.

What is so pathetic here is, that this youth looking about him in this forlorn way, had, in less than ten years, placed himself at the head of the dramatic art of England, and, in less than twenty, at the head of the dramatic art of all time.

V.—THE EPISODE OF THE DARK LADY.

It is not known precisely when a “syren wound her coils of grace” about our poet, but it must have been, in all likelihood, after he

had attained some distinction on the stage. Women we know have a soft spot in their hearts for handsome young actors, and, in this case, to the charms of the actor were, perhaps, added those of the budding playwright. According to the Sonnets themselves this woman was already married, young, and accomplished as a musician, and though not a famous beauty in the popular sense, yet of impressive appearance. Her dark complexion and her brilliant black eyes attracted attention. She was not a simple Anne Page, nor a poetic Perdita, but rather a cunning Cressida, who knew how to advance or retreat as the exigencies of her game might require. That she was of good social position we gather from the slow and respectful manner in which the poet made his approaches. Indeed, a traditional report says that she was a lady in waiting on Queen Elizabeth, who was afterwards dismissed because of her indiscretions. One writer, Mr. Tyler, has gone so far as to assert positively that she was a Mistress Mary Fitton, and he builds an elaborate and complex story upon the assumption.¹ It has, however, since been shown, that Mistress Mary Fitton was a blonde, of brownish hair, and gray eyes, and not other-

¹ Introduction to the *fac-simile* edition of the Sonnets.

wise answerable to the descriptions of the Sonnets.¹

When and where the poet encountered this lady does not appear; but it may have been either at some of the performances given by his company before the Court at Whitehall or Richmond, or at the public theatre, where persons of quality often sat upon the stage. Be that as it may, a social gulf opened between the poor player and the lady of society which had to be bridged in some way before they could be intimate. It would have been a gross breach of etiquette for him to address her directly, and she could not have approached him very well, except in the way of "judicious œillades" and occasional half-smothered smiles. They began in that spirit of gallantry which, according to Mrs. Jameson, prevailed to such an extent in the age of Elizabeth, and was marked by expressions of extravagant courtesy and devotion, without much real feeling at the bottom. "The pretended lover described his mistress," as Warton says,² "not in terms of intelligible yet artful panegyric, nor in the real colors and with the genuine accomplishments

¹ *Gossip from a Muniment Room*. By Lady Newdegate, London, 1897.

² *History of English Poetry*, vol. iv., p. 322.

of nature, but as an eccentric ideal being of another sphere and inspiring sentiments equally unmeaning, hyperbolical, and unnatural."

(1) *The Gradual Approaches of the Poet.*

In this preliminary difficulty the player began in the style of his suitors, in *Love's Labor's Lost*, i.e., by dropping a poem in her path, or it may have been into her lap as he passed in or out among the audience. Taking his cue from his profession, he wrote in this wise :

Son. 23. Like an imperfect actor on the stage whose fears put him out of his part,¹ or like some wild thing² in an excess of passion, whose abundant strength is a source of his weakness,—I dare not trust myself to speak, lest I should forget the phrases which are proper in the first rites of love. Overburdened by my feelings, their fulness may prove an impediment to their suitable expression, and therefore I beg that my book (or the tablet on which he wrote) may be accepted as the dumb but eloquent precursor of my speech. It pleads for my love and for some return to that love, more ardently than any tongue that could say more in more effective words.³

¹ As Coriolanus says (v. iii., 40-42).

"Like a dull actor now

I have forgot my part, and I am dumb."

² The Quarto has "fierce thing," meaning "wild thing," as in *Cymbeline* (v., 5, 382), or in *Hamlet* (i., 1, 21). Johnson says, it was employed as "vehement, rapid," and Schmidt as "irregular," "disordered." It refers here likely to the poet's country training.

³ How exceedingly ludicrous this hesitation and timidity appear on the supposition that the poet is addressing (not a woman still a stranger to him) but a young man greatly his inferior in years!

As it belongs to the finer cunning of love to hear with the eyes, oh, be pleased to read in this what silent love hath writ!

What seems to have impressed the poet most strongly was the lady's dark complexion, which (rare in northern climates,) is common enough among Orientals and Italians, in this country among creoles. By a singular use of words, dark was then called black. Othello, who was merely a Moor, speaks of himself as black. Cleopatra says that she was blackened by the "amorous pinches of the sun," and Rosaline, in *Love's Labor's Lost*, is compared to ebony.¹ It was not, however, a complexion that had formerly been admired, and it seems an adroit move on the part of the poet, to open his appeal with an ingenious defence of its attractiveness. He wrote:

Son. 127. In the olden time, black was not regarded as beautiful, or if it was, it was not so named;² but in these modern times, when ladies undertake to darken

¹ So in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (v. ii., 10) Thurio says, "My face is black," and quotes the adage, "Black men are pearls in beauteous ladies' eyes."

² Grant White says, "that during the chivalric ages, brunettes were not acknowledged as beauties anywhere in Christendom. In all the old *contes*, *fabliaux*, and romances, the heroines are blondes, and even the possession of dark eyes and hair, and the complexion that accompanies them, is referred to by the troubadours as a misfortune."—*Shakespeare's Works*, vol. ii., p. 236.

their faces artificially, hiding their real beauty under a mask, it has become an heir of beauty by right of succession. With many who are not born fair, this change is a trick, which profanes real beauty,—but my mistress' eyes are raven black by nature, her brows the same, and they are so, that they may mourn over those who slander creation by putting upon it a false esteem¹; they mourn so becomingly that every tongue is beginning to say now that all beauty should be black.

The sentiment of this sonnet is expanded into nearly a scene in *Love's Labor's Lost* (iv., 3, 247) where the King rallies Biron on the color of his lady's face.

King : “By Heaven, thy love is black as ebony.”

Biron : “Is ebony like her? O wood divine!

A wife of such wood were felicity.

No face is fair that is not full so black.”

King : “O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
The hue of dungeons and the shroud of night.”

Biron : “Oh, if in black my lady's brow be deck'd,
It mourns that painting and usurping hair
Should ravish doters with a false aspect,
And therefore is she born to make black fair.

¹ Burckhardt (*The Renaissance in Italy*, p. 371 *et seq.*) treats at considerable length of the efforts of Italian women to alter their appearance, not only by toilettes, but by cosmetics,—which tended to the formation of a conventional type, by the most transparent deceptions. In these new modes of ornamentation the hair was an especial favorite. It was not only dyed, but often replaced by wigs of silk. The practice was followed to some extent in England, where many mixtures for beautifying the face—waters, plasters, and paints—were in vogue, and for sale even in the shops.

Her favour turns the fashion of the day,
 Her native blood is counted painting now ;
 And therefore red, that would avoid dispraise,
 Paints itself black, to imitate her brow.”¹

Still the lady was seemingly obdurate, and the poet, piqued a little by her apparent haughtiness, talks out plainly.

Son. 131. Thou art as tyrannical, black as thou art, as those whose pride in their acknowledged beauty renders them cruel. Thou knowest that to my dotting heart thou art fair and precious, although it must in good faith be confessed that others do not behold in thee qualities which excite the deepest sentiments of admiration. Nor am I so bold as to say that they err, excepting to myself, when I swear they do, and a thousand groans come huddling one upon the other to prove their falsehood and my truth. Thou art “black” in nothing save thy deeds, (*i. e.*, thy modes of treating me,)—which have given rise, no doubt, to the depreciating speeches that have got abroad.

These compliments ought to have conciliated the dame, but it seems they did not, and she continued her ostensible haughtiness ; yet the poet was equal to the occasion and he turned from her face to her eyes, writing :

¹ As the poet is not likely to have taken his private sonnet from his public play, we have some evidence here as to the date of these Sonnets, which must have been before 1588-9, when the play was published.

Son. 132. I love thine eyes particularly, because, knowing the disdain of thy heart, they mourn in sympathy with my distress.

And truly not the morning sun of Heaven
Better becomes the gray cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even
Doth half that glory to the sober west
As those two mourning eyes become thy face.

Then, since this mourning lends thee so much grace, let it beseem thy heart as well, and thy pity show itself the same in every part. In which event I shall be prepared to swear that all true beauty is black and that those who lack thy complexion, are really ugly.

The poet then goes on to another point: "Thine eyes do me the favor of pleading for me, and so mine reciprocate the service, by portraying thee on my heart."

Son. 24. Mine eye has turned painter and represented thy form of beauty on the tablets of my soul. My body is the frame wherein the picture is held, in a perspective or at a point of view, which shows it at the best. It is through the skill of the artist that thou wilt find thy real perfections. The picture hangs in my bosom as in a showcase, glassed by mine eyes, and so it is that our eyes have done a good turn for each other. Thine eyes have favored me (*Son. 132*) and mine have drawn thee, in such a way, that the sun delights to peep through the windows (my eyes) that he may see thee in thy completeness. Yet the eyes depict what they see and lack that cunning which is able to show the whole heart.

Let me, however, be frank, and tell the whole truth.

Son. 141. I do not love thee with mine eyes alone, which might, perhaps, by scrutinizing too closely, discover a few defects. Mine ears are not enraptured by thy tones ; nor do any of my senses, (smell, taste, nor a tenderer but baser feeling) care to be invited to any mere sensual entertainment. It is my heart that dotes in spite of these, and neither my five wits, nor my five senses, can dissuade it from its devotion. They leave me unswayed — the mere likeness of a man, thy wretched vassal and slave, only my trouble is also a gain, inasmuch as she who makes me offend awards the punishment.

In the disappointment the poet pretends to feel, because of her continued disdain, he advises her to be as wise as she is cruel, and not push his silent patience to an extreme. He says :

Son. 140. Be wise as thou art cruel and do not drive me to despair, lest in that despair I should resort to the use of pitiless words. If I might teach thee a bit of prudence, it would be to tell thee it were better if thou dost not love me to say that thou dost ; for I am like a sick man, in the prospect of death, who desires to hear from his physician no language but that of encouragement — or an assurance that he is doing very well. Ah, if I should be pushed to desperation, I should go mad, and, in that madness, give utterance to slander, which the carping world would be too ready to believe, and

therefore, lest I should be so misled, and thou belied in consequence, keep thine eyes in the right direction, even if thy heart has gone astray.

But the language of the eyes is not enough, and the poet wants, besides, her honest word from the tongue. She is unkind, and he cannot endure it. He beseeches :

Son. 139. Do not ask me to approve the wrong which thy unkindness inflicts upon my heart ; do not wound me with thine eyes, but with thy tongue ; and tell me frankly that thou lovest elsewhere. Use thy power directly, and do not kill me by cunning. Do not in my presence cast thy glances aside. What need is there of resorting to this insidious means, when thy might is more than my overpressed defences can endure ? And yet there may be an excuse for the deadly use of thine eyes ! My love knows that her pretty looks have been my enemies, and now turns them upon my rivals, that she may injure them as she has injured me ; yet do not do it, dear, for as I am nearly slain, kill me at once, and end my misery.

How long the poet was kept dangling in this uncertain way we cannot say, but sooner or later he was admitted to a closer intimacy, which did not turn out precisely as he had expected. Instead of that simple, fresh, and honest intercourse, to which he had been used in his early love at Stratford, he encountered

the conventionalities of a highly artificial circle, which professed sincerity, but had none. He describes it thus :

Son. 138. When my mistress swears that she is entirely truthful, I feign to believe her, though I know all the while that she is fibbing, and I do so, that she may regard me as a raw, unsophisticated youth, wholly unfamiliar with the subtleties that are the fashion. Thus, pretending to think that she thinks me young, although she knows that I am past my prime (or that I have reached middle age, which then came earlier than it does now), I smilingly credit her falsities. Thus, on both sides, we suppress the real facts, and I lie to her, while she lies to me, and so by reciprocal falsehoods, we flatter each other's vanities.

It was a game of gallantry, not worthy of being reproduced here but for the light it throws upon the playful nature of an experience which in the end became very serious.

(2) *Progress of the Flirtation.*

Aware of the pride that performers upon instruments take in their accomplishment, the poet complimented the lady upon her skill with the virginal, the great, great grandmother of our modern *piano forte*, and he infused into his praises a good deal of apparent admiration.

Son. 128. When thou, my music (or, my source of delight and harmony), dost touch the blessed wood with thy fingers, I envy the nimble jacks (or keys) that leap to kiss "the tender inward of thy hand"¹; and my poor lips, which should gather that delicious harvest, blush at their boldness. They would, indeed, like to change places with the dancing chips; but, since the little fellows are so happy in their vocation — why — why — give them thy fingers, but me thy lips to kiss.

That was an audacious suggestion, no doubt, for a country fellow, and an actor at that, to make, and the lady took it, or pretended to take, in dudgeon; so the poet was compelled to apologize, which he did by punning in a strange way upon his name. He wrote thus:

Son. 136. If thy soul chide thee that I come so near, (as to invoke a kiss), let thy blind soul remember that I am Will (Will—I—am), and that will is admitted to be one of the qualities of the soul! To that extent, then, sweet, fulfil my love-suit — *i. e.*, allow me to be a part of thy soul. Will will complete thy treasure of love, by filling it full of affections; yea, although his affection is but one, that is, none in one sense, number, it is many in another sense. In things of mere account, it is easily proved, that one is reckoned none, and so as a mere number let me pass untold.² And yet I must be

¹ "The tender inward of thy hand" is an expression that shows that the person addressed was at least not used to work.

² See *Hero and Leander*. Sect. i., l. 339: "For one no number is"; also *Romeo and Juliet* (i., 232-3): One "may stand in number, though in reckoning none."

regarded in estimating thy store of affection. Hold me as nothing, even — if it please thee to hold that nothing — me, as something sweet to thee. Make but the word Will (which means desire affection), an object of thy love, and continue to love it—and then, thou lovest me, because my name is Will.¹

But why should these be more than one, the poet asks, putting his question in the same punning guise. Strange and frivolous as the practice of punning seems to us now, it was in great vogue in the age of Elizabeth, as an evidence of the dexterity of the poet and of the ingenuity of the reader. Shakespeare, himself, in his early plays, resorts to it, in the solemnest moments, such as the prospect and near advent of death. In this sonnet the word *will* occurs no less than thirteen times, and several times with a slightly modified significance, which the reader is left to discover if he can; my own exposition of this sonnet is this:

Son. 135. Whoever has her wish, thou hast thy Will (Shakespeare), and thou hast Will, or his desire, besides, which is having Will in superfluity. Am not I

¹ This sonnet, owing to the constant play upon words, is not a little obscure; and yet one can get a meaning out of it. The last lines amount to this — “In counting the number of those who hold thee dear, do not count me as a number,— for as a mere number one is none,— but in estimating the worth of what you possess (your store), I am to be regarded in the account.

alone more than enough to vex thy gentle disposition by making appeals to it in this wise? "Wilt thou, whose likings are broad and spacious, not vouchsafe to hide my desire in thine, or to identify our affections; shall the desire of others for thy regards appear agreeable while my liking is met with a scant show of acceptance? As the ocean, though it is all water, continues to receive the raindrops, and so add to its abundance,¹ so mayst thy affection, rich as it is already, receive this little contribution of mine, to render it the larger.

Of this use of Will, in the sense of liking or affection, we have an instance in *King John* (ii., 1, 510), where Blanch playfully says:

"Mine uncle's will (choice or desire) in this respect
is mine:

If he sees aught in you that makes him like,
That anything he sees, which moves his liking,
I can with ease translate it to my will (choice),
Or, if you will, to speak more properly,
I will enforce it easily to my love (affection)."²

¹ How exquisitely this image of the sea is used by Juliet when she exclaims,

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have,— for both are infinite."

— *Romeo and Juliet*.

² Mr. Sidney Lee's interpretation of this sonnet, giving to the word Will, the sense of lust, is so grossly offensive that it is a disgrace to literature. Shakespeare, "the gentle Willy," or "the sweet Will," of his contemporaries, was not a blackguard, and could never, under any circumstances, have written to or of any woman whose acquaintance he had sought, that her sensuality was as insatiable as the sea. All these sonnets were meant to be complimentary, not vituperative or insulting, and they can be so construed without doing any violence to the text.

What occasion is there for the attitude you assume, in regard to my offence (the wish to kiss her.)

Son. 142. Love in me is a sin, it seems, while thou dost hold thy hate of it as a signal virtue? Compare thine own state with mine, and thou wilt see that mine needs no especial reproach,—or, if it does,—not from those lips of thine which have “profaned their scarlet ornaments,”¹ and sealed false bonds of love, as oft as mine have robbed their best revenues (*i. e.*, of the lips) of their proper rents.¹ Let it be as lawful for me to kiss thee, as it is for thee to love those whom thine eyes woo as mine woo thee. Plant compassion in thy heart, that when it grows it may deserve to be reciprocated. If thou dost seek to have what thou dost chide in others thou mayst be denied by thine own example.

The gibes of the sonnet must have stung the lady to a retort, in which she probably demanded with some impatience his right to question her goings on, or to impute actions to her which were none of his business. The poet was quick to reply :

Son. 58. That god who made me first your slave²

¹ The text in line 8, besides being ungrammatical, is so gross that it must be corrupt. The lady is told that her lips have played false as oft as mine (*i. e.*, my lips) have “rob’d others’ beds, revenues of their rents,” which has no sense. What the poet meant to say, I think, was, that she had no right to reproach him on the subject of kissing, because her lips had doubtless offended, as often as his lips had robbed the best revenues of the lips of their proper dues.

² Which must have been Cupid, as there never was a god of

forbid that I should ever attempt to control your times of pleasure. Being merely your vassal, I have nothing to do but to wait upon your leisure, and suffer during the enforced absence your liberty imposes upon me, without the least desire to accuse you of any intentional injury. Be where you may, your charter of freedom is so strong that you are privileged to do as you like, and ask pardon of nobody but yourself. My duty is simply to wait and, though that waiting be a sort of hell, not to question your conduct, whether it be good or ill.

The poet is particularly adroit in his assault when he asks the coy dame whether in her various wanderings she purposely haunted him, by visiting his slumbers.

Son. 61. Is it thy wish, that thine image should keep my eyes open during the whole of the heavy night? Dost thou really desire to break my slumbers by mocking shadows of thyself! Dost thou send thy spirit away from home, to pry into my doings, and discover how I may happen to be employed in my idle hours? Is that the scope and tenor of thy jealousy? Ah, no, I cannot think so; for, although thou mayst have some regard for me, thy love is not capable of that; it is my own earnest love that keeps my eyes on the alert and defeats every attempt at repose, causing me to play the watchman for thy sake, and particularly when thou art away, — too far from me, and all too near to others.

“There it goes again,” we can almost hear the detected coquette exclaim, “always spying into

friendship. This line alone ought to have instructed the critics that these Sonnets concerned a woman and not a man.

my affairs! If I choose to be agreeable to others, it concerns me alone; and your insinuations are impertinent." But, rejoins the poet,

Son. 57. As I am your admitted slave, what should I do but look a little into your ways? I have no time to waste, nor services to render, but such as you require. Nor dare I, my sovereign, chide the tedious hours whilst I am watching the clock for you. When you have once bid your servant adieu, he does not dwell upon the bitterness of the absence; he has no jealous thought, as to where you may be, or conjecture as to how you are occupied. I think of nothing save the happiness of those fortunate enough to be where you are! Love is such a fool that it thinks no ill of anything that you like to do.

It was now time for the lady to have her say, and, as we may suppose, she tells him that it was all very well for him to write in his effusive way; he was a poet, and poets liked to scribble, even if it were about their delusions. She doubted very much, in spite of his rhapsodies, whether he cared a fig for her (which was the coquettish way of drawing him further on). He rejoins:

Son. 149. O cruel, how canst thou say that I do not love thee when I give so many evidences to the contrary! Do I not take thy part against myself; do I not think of thee, when in my absorption I forget myself? Who dislikes thee that I call friend, or whom do I favor that receives thy frown? Nay, if thou lowerest upon

me do I not moan? Or what merit is there in me that I should esteem it — if it were too proud to do thee a service? All that is best in me worships even thy defects, commanded by the glances of thine eyes. But, love, now I know thou lovest those that can see, while in my passion I am blind.

It is perhaps worthy of remark that in this protestation, the poet uses many of the same thoughts that he afterwards put into the mouth of Queen Katharine, in her defence against Henry VIII.

At some time or another in the course of his gallant attentions, the poet had reason to suspect, or he pretended to suspect, that his lady was casting her eyes with a little too much earnestness in another direction, and he began to query with himself whether his likings were altogether well founded. Others were less favorably impressed by his *inamorata* than he was himself; and he writes:

Son. 148. Ah, me, what eyes hath love put in my head, to regard that as attractive which the world says is not so? But if it be not so, what has become of my judgment? Love's eye (aye) is not so true as all men's no; but how can it be true, when it is perturbed by watching and tears? Even the sun on high cannot see clearly until the heavens be free of clouds. No wonder, then, if I should be mistaken! Ah, cunning love, thou keepest me blind, lest my eyes, by seeing better, should discover some of thy ugly faults.

This rival, unknown as yet, the poet chose to consider a forerunner of Diomed;¹ who could seemingly draw off in order to draw on, and he charges the lady with taking the lead in the chase. He writes :

Son. 143. Lo ! like a careful housekeeper, who runs to catch one of her feathered pets that has broken away, and sets down her baby, to make more haste, and get at the thing she would have, shamefully regardless of her infant's cries of discontent, thou dost run after that which flies from thee, and the poor child is left far behind ! Well, if thou shouldst succeed in catching thy hope, turn back to me, and be a true mother,— kiss and be kind once more ; and then I shall pray that thou mayst have thy Will, and still my loud sobs.

It was not long, however, before the poet discovered that this rival in devotion to the fair one was a particular and dear friend, whom he seems to have commended to the lady's acquaintance and favor. Supposing the love of the new admirer to be of the same nature with his own, he playfully rallied them both. To the lady he said :

(3) *A Remonstrance to the Lady.*

Son. 133. The mischief take that heart which compels mine to suffer because of the wound it gives, both to my friend and myself. Was it not enough to

¹*Troilus and Cressida*, (v., 2. 30-60).

torture me alone by thy caprices and disdains, but that thou must now subject my friend to thy cruel slavery? Thine eye has torn me from myself; it has taken away my next self,—and I am bereft of him, of myself, and of thee, by which I am thrice crossed and made to endure a threefold torment.¹ Emprison my heart in thy steel bosom, if thou art inclined, but let it be as a bail for my friend's heart; thou wilt not then use rigor against him as I shall be his guard. Yet I fear thou wilt, for I being pent in thee, I and all that is in me are thine perforce (*i. e.*, to be used at thy pleasure).

In this same tone of half banter and half remonstrance, the poet goes on to say:

Son. 132. Now that I have confessed the winning of my friend from me, even while I am still mortgaged to thy love, let me add, that I will forfeit myself wholly, if thou wilt restore him to me, to be my comfort again. But that I am persuaded thou wilt not do; for thou art covetous of admiration, and he is amiable: and the result will be that as he entered into the affair as a surety for my truth and the certainty of my attachment, thou wilt have both in thy bonds,—and remorseless usurer as thou art, thou wilt exact the full penalty of the double obligation thy beauty has imposed. Thou wilt keep the friend who came only as a debtor for my sake, and I shall lose him because I have been most unkindly deceived. I have lost him, but thou hast still both him and me; and though he has paid the whole debt, yet I am not released.

¹ The line in the Quarto reads: "A torment thrice threefold, thus to be crossed," which is bad rhythm, but may be easily corrected, if we say, "A threefold torment, thus to be thrice crossed."

(4) A Friendly Remonstrance with the Friend.

Towards his young rival the poet was no less lenient, and simply rallied him upon his success, not yet knowing how far the *liaison* had advanced. He writes :

Son. 41. The pretty wrongs'—pretty, not serious, it will be seen—thy liberty commits, are not unsuited to thy beauty and youth, which are both a temptation to the sex. Since thou art handsome, thou art likely to be pursued, and since thou art young, likely to be won. What woman's son will leave a woman until she have prevailed? Ah, me, and yet thou mightest have forborne to invade the place I occupy,² and even rebuked a seduction which is leading thee into a riot in which thou art forced to break a double truth ; first, hers, by tempting her to thee, and second, thine own, in being false to me.

Son. 42. It is not the whole of my grief that thou hast won her affections, although I loved her very much ; my chief complaint is that she has won thine, a loss that touches me most nearly ; yet, loving offenders, I see how it is ; I will find an excuse for both : thou lovest her because thou knowest I love her, and she deceives me and suffers my friend to approve her for my sake. If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain, and if I lose her, my

¹ Palgrave uses the word "petty," in the sense of small or inconsiderable.

² The Quarto here has "my seat," which some critics construe in the gross and offensive sense given to the words in *Othello* (i., 2, 304) but—as the offence in the first line is called "pretty" or "petty," that can hardly be what is intended. Steevens suggests "my sweet," but my own opinion is that "seat" here is used simply for the place that is already occupied.

friend profits by my loss. Both of you find each other, and I lose both ; and both for my sake lay on me a double cross ; and yet the great joy of it all is, that my friend and I are one, and so, sweet flattery, she loves but me alone.¹

There seems to have been no end to the poet's kindness, and he adds :

Son. 40. Take all my loves, my dear friend, yes, take them all, and thou wouldst have no more love than thou hast had before. All my heart was thine without this addition. If it be from love to me that thou receivest this new love, thou art not to be blamed ; yet thou wouldst deserve to be blamed if thou wilfully seek love which thou dost not appreciate. I forgive thy robbery, gentle thief, although thou stealest from my poverty, and thou must know that a wrong done to love is worse than an injury.

(5) *Crossing the Barriers, or a Change of Tone.*

There is no reason to believe, from anything to be found in the Sonnets themselves, that the relations of the parties concerned were, up to a certain time, other than those of fashionable gallantry. But to our surprise we come upon a sonnet which compels us to the conclu-

¹ The play in the couplet upon the reciprocity or single-double ownership of love is the same as Portia's when she says to Bassanio :

“ One half of me is yours, th' other half yours—
Mine own, I would say,—but, if mine, then yours,
And so all yours.”—*Merchant of Venice* (iii., 216).

sion that a great change has taken place. It shows that the poet was far more deeply interested than he had supposed, and when convinced of the insincerity of his mistress, had himself thrown off all restraint and pushed his suit beyond the bounds. Chided then by the lady, after the manner of such, for having violated his honor and taken advantage of his privileges, he defends his course in this somewhat equivocal way :

Son. 151. Love, or Passion, is too young, impetuous, and reckless, to care about conscience, or right and wrong, although we know that conscience is born of the love of truth and justice. But, gentle gamester, do not push thy accusations too far, lest it should turn out in the end that thou wert thyself the instigator of the offence. Thou having betrayed me, I betray myself, and give the reins to impulse rather than to reason. The soul informs the body that he may now triumph, and flesh wishes no other sanction than opportunity. Excited by thy name, it has selected thee as the prize of its triumph ; and it is so proud of its success that it is willing hereafter to become thy drudge. I will share thy fortunes, whatever the result,—rise with thee or fall with thee, as it may happen,—but do not call it a want of conscience that I am willing to carry my devotion to this extreme.

But the poet is a little surprised at his own readiness to surrender all, and does not find it easy to account for what proved an infatuation.

Son. 150. Oh, from what source hast thou the wonderful power which subdues me even by thy insufficiencies causing me to give the lie to what I see plainly, and to swear that even the brightness of the day is no grace? Whence hast thou this art of burnishing bad things so, that in the worst of thy deeds I find such strength and assurance of skill? Who taught thee how to make me love thee the more I discover just cause for hate! Yet, though I love what others abhor, I do not partake of their abhorrence; for if thy unworthiness has moved my love, the more worthy am I to be beloved.

The poet is now fully alive to the fact that while he was playing the gallant, he was getting more and more absorbed in the object of his attentions, so that when he had discovered positive grounds for breaking the connection altogether, he found himself the more enthralled.

Son. 147. My love is like a fever, longing for that which may nourish the disease, and so preserving it by what it feeds on,—the uncertain and sickly appetite to please one who is not worth pleasing. My reason, the physician of my love, angry because his prescriptions are not observed, has left me, and I desperately cherish a desire, which, by rejecting its proper physic, is death. Past cure I am, since reason is past care, and almost frantic with an ever-increasing unrest. My thought and my discourse, like those of a madman, are roving at random from the truth, to which I endeavor in vain to give utterance. In proof of this, have I not sworn that thou art fair, when thou art as ugly as sin, and have I not thought thee bright, when thou art as black as night?

How distracted the poet was we see in the uncertainties of conviction betrayed by the next poem. He writes :

Son. 144. I have two objects of attachment, alternately of comfort and despair, which solicit me like two attending spirits ; the better one is a man of rare fascination, and the worse a woman of dark complexion (intimating that it expressed her character, too). To lure me the sooner into her hell, the female evil tempts my better angel from my side, for her pride is capable of corrupting a saint into a devil, but whether he who was once my angel has already been changed into a fiend I do not yet know ; I only suspect it without being able to say it outright ; nor, as they are both away from me, and close friends one to another, shall I probably ever get beyond a guess, until the bad one, by the ardor of her passion, has fired the good one out or completely driven him away.

(6) *A Return to Sanity.*

At length the poet becomes fully aware of his delusion and sees clearly whither it is leading him, and he says to the soul which had whispered its treason to the senses, that, "better for the body to pine and perish than for the soul to suffer. Death can claim the body only as its price, and in subduing the body the soul triumphs over death."

Son. 146. Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,¹

¹ This sonnet has in the second line "my sinful earth these rebel powers that thee array," evidently a misprint, in which the end of the

assailed by rebel powers, why dost thou starve within and suffer dearth while adorning thy outward walls with such costly gayety? Why lavish so much feeling and care upon a mansion which is of short lease, and soon must decay? Shall worms, the inheritors of this excess eat up the burden thou hast brought upon thee? Is this the end of the body,—then, O soul, live upon thy servant's loss, and let that starve, to increase thy store. Buy a divine term by selling an hour of dross; be fed within, and without be rich no more, and thereby feed on death itself (natural death) which once ended there can be no spiritual death.¹

(7) *A Second Recourse to the Friend.*

The poet, having discovered the entire complicity of his friend in the offence of the lady, is naturally indignant, but remembering the youth and attractions of the young man, and the subtle seductions of the woman, is not disposed to be severe in his rebukes of the former.

first line has run over upon the second. Many substitutes, such as "famished by," "besieged," "pressed," "hemmed in," etc., have been proposed, but none is needed if we leave out the words "that thee," and read

"My sinful earth, that rebel powers array,"—

using array in the sense, which it often bears, of assail.

¹The Quarto has "pine within," meaning waste, as in *Richard II.* (v., 1, 2). "Where shivering cold and sickness pine the clime," and sometimes, meaning *starve* (*Venus and Adonis*, 602).

"Even as poor birds, deceiv'd by painted grapes,
Do surfeit by the eye and pine the maw."

Son. 95. How sweet and lovely dost thou render even the shame which, like a canker in a fragrant rose, spots the beauty of thy budding nature ! Oh, in what sweetness dost thou enclose thy offences ! The tongue that shall tell the story of thy sport with lascivious comments, shall find its dispraise in a kind of praise, and that the mere use of thy name will give a sort of blessing to an ill report. Oh, what a mansion do these vices possess, which have chosen thee for their habitation, where the veil of beauty covers every blot, and all things the eye looks upon turn to fairness. But take heed, dear heart, of the large privilege thus given to thee, lest thy better sense should be blunted by the idle use of thy charms, as the best tempered knife will lose its edge when abused.

The poet continues in his forgiving mood and writes :

Son. 96. Some persons ascribe thy faults to thy youth, and some to sheer wantonness, but the sad fact is, that thy faults themselves put on the aspect of graces, in the estimates of many, both high and low, who make no distinction between the two. As the basest jewel on the finger of an enthroned queen is well esteemed, so are thy errors translated into truths. But how many lambs might the fierce wolf betray if he could only make himself look like a lamb, and how many gazers couldst thou lead astray if thou didst but use thy whole strength !

Finding, in the course of time, that his reproofs, gentle as they were, had become a source of great dejection to the young man, the poet further relents and begs him not to

grieve too much over the wrong that he had committed.

Son. 35. Roses have thorns, clouds and eclipses stain both sun and moon, and the most loathsome cankers seek out the loveliest buds. All men have their faults,—and even I, in finding comparisons for thy trespass, as I am now doing, corrupt myself in trying to salve it over. Excusing thy sin even beyond what is necessary, whereby thine adverse party, good sense, becomes a sort of advocate of thy sensuality, I begin a plea against myself, and make myself an accessory to the sweet thief by whom I have been robbed.

But this estrangement, for which the poet took too much blame, perhaps, to himself, weighed upon the friend's mind until he endeavored to bring about a reconciliation. The poet responds, most generously :

Son. 120. That you were once unkind befriends me in this exigency, and the sorrow which I then felt because of it must needs incline me, since my nerves are not made of brass or hammered steel, to admit my later transgression. If you are now shaken by my protracted unkindness, as I formerly was by yours, I know that you have passed a time of intense mental torment,—whilst I have behaved like a tyrant in giving no sign of what I had suffered by your conduct. Oh ! that our common night of woe had reminded us both, in the deepest sense, how hard the blows inflicted by true sorrow fall, so that I to you, and you to me, had tendered that humble salve of forgiveness which best befits a wounded bosom. Your trespass,

then, was a fee paid for the ransom of mine, as mine is a fee paid for the ransom of yours : we have done an injury one to the other, let the one offset the other, — and for the future may forgiveness and reconciliation prevail.

(8) *Farewell to the Woman.*

To the woman the poet, while fully recognizing her offences, was no less generous, taking the greater share of blame to himself :

Son. 152. Thou knowest that in loving thee I as a married man am forsworn ; but thou art twice forsworn, — once, by breaking thy marital vows, and again by thy infidelity to me. Yet how can I reproach thee for the violation of two oaths, when I am guilty of the breach of twenty ? Of the two of us I am the more perjured, for, since all honest faith in thee was lost, my oaths have been so many deceptions. I have sworn to thy kindness, to thy truth, and to thy constancy, and have given eyes even to blindness in order to place thee in a brighter light, and yet in every case I have sworn against a better knowledge.¹

But the time had come for a final separation, and the poet wrote thus :

Son. 87. Farewell ! thou art too dear for my possessing,² (*i. e.*, thou hast cost me too much in anxiety and

¹ We can scarcely believe that Prof. Dowden had read this sonnet, when he says of it that it makes the woman “ as guilty or even more guilty,” than the poet, — since the single object of the poet is to put the chief blame upon himself ; she had violated two oaths, but he had violated twenty.

² It is not a common locution to speak of possessing a man.

sorrow for the continuance of our relations;) and it is probable that thou art conscious of the estimation in which thou art held. Thy youth is a privilege that entitles thee to release,¹ whilst my claim upon thee is limited. How do I hold thee at all, except by thine own concession, which is gratuitous, and nothing in me justifies such a gift. Thou gavest me thyself,² not knowing thine own value, or else mistaking me on whom the wealth was conferred. Founded on a misconception, thy favor is now, on a better judgment, going back to its source. I have had thee simply as a king has a flattering dream in his sleep, which, on awaking, proves to be nothing at all, — or nothing more than a dream.³

Shakespeare's readiness to forgive rather than punish wrongs, of which we have instances in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well*, *Cymbeline*, the *Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, has been imputed to him by some critics as a weakness of moral judgment: his sympathy for the criminal, they allege, overcomes his detestation of the crime. It should be remembered, however, that Shakespeare had a deeper insight into life, as "a web of mingled yarn,—of good and ill

¹ The Quarto reads "the charter of thy worth," meaning, I think, "of thy youth." The word "charter" came to mean a privilege. See Sonnet 61, where it is so used.

² "Thou gavest me thyself" may be said of a woman but not of a man.

³ How ineffably absurd all this would seem, if we supposed it addressed to a young man, while, addressed to a young woman, it is full of a large-hearted tenderness.

together," than others, and was able to distribute his approval or disapproval between the parties to an action with a more perfect impartiality. Like Prospero, he could say :

"Though with their high wrongs, I am struck to the
 quick,
 Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part : the rarer action is
 In virtue than in vengeance."

—*Tempest* (v., i, 25).

That he was not indifferent to the character of the offence in the present case is shown by that terrible denunciation of it, in which a volume of meaning is condensed into fourteen lines.

Son. 129. Lust in action is the plunging of the better part of one's nature in a pool of filth. Even in contemplation it is false, malignant, destructive, and loathsome. Yea, it is savage, reckless, brutal, and repulsive. It is no sooner enjoyed than it is despised. Past reason hunted and past reason hated, it is a madness in pursuit and a madness in possession. As past, present, and to come alike an extreme ; a joy in prospect, a woe in retrospect. All men know this well, and yet they do not shun it, but seek a seeming heaven which only leads to actual hell.

(9) *A Glance towards Home.*

Meanwhile, what has become of the sweet Anne, of whose charms we read such tender

records a few pages back? She was far off in the country, caring for the children, and unconscious of what was going on in the great city. But was she kept in ignorance of the affair? I think not. The poet, though self-indulgent and misled by his passions, was an honest fellow, after all, and sooner or later confessed his offence with all proper promises of repentance and amendment. Not a few tears were doubtless shed by the wife, but she knew the worth of the man, and in due time forgave him, as women will forgive. In this condition of things, the poet wrote this appeal :

Son. 109. Oh! never say that I was false at heart, whatever my aberrations may have been ; I might as easily depart from my own inmost self, as from my soul, which is enclosed in thy bosom. That is the real home of my love, and if I have wandered, like one who travels abroad, I have returned again, bringing the waters of true repentance to wash away my stain. Oh! do not believe, though in my nature reigned all kinds of frailties, that I could be so preposterously wrenched as to leave for nothing the sum of all good ; for there is nothing in the wide universe but thee, my Rose, and thou art to me (as I wrote of old, see *Son. 31*), the all in all.

Nor was this a mere plea in abatement to the injured one, for in a general summing-up of the affair, made to himself, he uses even stronger language. He says :

Son. 119. What potions have I drunk of siren tears, distilled from limbecks foul as hell within, alternating fears with hopes and hopes with fears, and losing all in the very moment of victory! What wretched errors has my heart entertained, even when it thought itself most happy? How have my eyes been wrenched from their sockets in the fits of a delirious fever! And yet there is some benefit even in evil, for I find that the better can be made still better by it, and that love which has been ruined, when it is builded anew, grows fairer, and stronger, and broader than it was at first. Therefore if I return rebuked to the one source of my contentment, I have gained by means of the evil more than I have lost.

Shakespeare did not mean by this philosophy, which is very profound, I think, that we should deliberately do wrong in order to reap the benefits of a recovery. But he saw that while the existence of evil is a great mystery, it is a still greater mystery that out of the struggle against it should come a higher good than that which the evil destroyed. The effort to overcome a fall in morals produces qualities we should not have had without the necessity for the effort. Indeed, may we not infer in Shakespeare's own case that his temporary lapses in the sad experiences of the episode had helped to open his mind to a discernment of what is true, lovely, and divine in female character, which he would not have otherwise

had? In his earlier plays, the princesses of *Love's Labor's Lost*, the Julia and Sylvia in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the Adriana, etc., of the *Comedy of Errors*, though not commonplace women, are simply pleasing and nothing more. But soon we meet in his books with Juliet, Portia, Viola, Rosalind, Beatrice, Desdemona, — the second Portia, — the old Countess of Roussillon, Cordelia, Perdita, Hermione, Miranda, Imogen, — in short, with twenty or more female types that outnumber and excel all that Grecian, Italian, or Spanish genius had given us before. Even modern fiction, filled as it is with female loveliness, from Fielding and Richardson to de Balzac, Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot, has not attained the height or fulness of Shakespeare.¹

I have treated these sonnets as if they were transcripts of reality, because there is an earnestness and depth of feeling in most of them which it seems to me could only have come from experience. By this I do not mean,

¹ None the less, George Brandes, in his recent volumes on the poet, has the temerity to contend that there was a time when Shakespeare was a complete misogynist; although there is scarcely a play of his, written after his first period, in which some woman does not shine forth, even in the murkiest of atmospheres as an angel direct from heaven.

however, that the sonnets, as we have them now, were actually sent by the poet to the persons they concern. Affairs of the kind are not commonly handled in that way. What I do mean is that the various situations disclosed were not wholly imaginary, — pure inventions of the writer, — but real events, which the poet, according to his plan, revealed in Sonnet 77, turned into verse afterwards, as a memorial of a most important and instructive part of his life. Poets, in all ages, from Anacreon and Horace, to Goethe, Burns, and Byron, have been particularly susceptible to the tender passion, but have not always been careful as to its metes and bounds.

We have, perhaps, a gleam of historical evidence as to a real experience lying back of these sonnets in a book called *Willobie's Avis*, published in 1594, a few months later than Shakespeare's "Rape of Lucrece," where he is mentioned as the author of that volume.¹

¹ Only a few copies of this book were printed in 1880, under the editorship of Dr. Grosart. For a sight of one of these (No. 97) I am indebted to the kindness of my accomplished friend, Horace Howard Furness, the editor of the fine new Variorum. The original title-page reads: "Willobie, his Avis, a true picture of a modest maid, and of a chaste and constant wife. . . Imprinted at London, by John Windet, 1594." In addition to the main poem, this later volume has three others, an "Atrologie," 1596; "The Victory of English Chastity," 1596; and "Penelope's Complaint," 1596.

In some prefatory verses by Abel Emel, or Heremelon, it says :

“ Yet Tarquyne pluckt his glistening grape
And Shakespeare paints poor Lucrece's 'rape.' ”

This was the first time Shakespeare's name had appeared in print, outside of his own works.

What deserves note in *Avisa*, is a prose introduction to Canto XLIV., which contains this singular passage: “ H. W. [Henry Willobie] being sodenly affected with the contagion of a fantastical fit, at the first sight of A[visa] pyneth a while in secret grieffe,—at length not able any longer to endure the burning heate of so feruent a humour, bewrayeth the secrecy of his disease unto a familiar frend. W. S. [supposed to be William Shakespeare] who not long before had tryed the curtesy of the like passion, and was now newly recovered of the infection; yet finding his frend let bloud in the same vaine, he took pleasure for a tyme to see him bleed & in stead of stopping the issue he inlargeth the wound, with the sharp razor of a willing conceit, perswading him that he thought it a matter very easy to be compassed, & no doubt with payne, diligence, & in some cost of tyme to be obtayned. Thus, this miserable comforter,—

comforting his friend with an impossibility, either for that he now would secretly laugh at his friend's folly that had given not long before unto others to laugh at his own, or because he would see whether another could play his part better than himself. & in viewing a far off the course of the loving Comedy,—determined to see whether it would sort to a happier end for this new actor than it did for the old player, &c.”

Dr. Grosart is of opinion that the W. S. here means Shakespeare for several reasons: among them the familiar and friendly tone of the allusion in the commendatory verse; the obvious implications of the Introduction; a certain correspondence between the advice he gives and the sentiment of some of his sonnets, and the fact that, by his *Venus and Adonis* he had become a sort of poetical authority in affairs of the heart. These are perhaps slender grounds for the inference, but the discussion has an interest of curiosity, which justifies a passing attention.

VI. — THE POET'S COMMUNION WITH THE HIGHER MUSE.

In all ages of the world the human mind has been disposed to refer its states of unusual

exaltation to an influence or agency, superior to itself and yet a part of itself. Not only poets and artists but orators and religious enthusiasts credit their moments of inspiration, as they are called, to this mysterious source. Among the ancients the Greeks created a whole new realm of gods and goddesses, "the golden brood of great Apollo's wit," who presided over every interest of humanity. They had their Muses of poetry, of history, of the drama, of the dance, and of domestic life, etc. And a good deal of this mythology has, in spite of revolutions of thought and manners in other respects, survived up to the present time. Every poetaster still has a muse, which he invokes with a fervor inversely proportioned to the state of his pocket. In Shakespeare's day the Muses were so far extant that Spenser, in his *Teares of the Muses*, assumes that they are still consulting with each other, and deploring with tears and lamentation the decay of all real learning.

Beyond and above these traditionary genii, certain of the greater poets have had each a genius of his own, to which he could pray for assistance as he might need. Three thousand years ago old Homer began: "Oh, Goddess, sing,—sing the wrath of Peleus's son, the deadly wrath that brought unnumbered wars upon the

Greeks, and swept so many souls to Hades." Virgil, following Homer, cried like him to the celestial deities, and in the Middle Ages, when Virgil had been deified, he was the tutelary guide and inspirer of Dante. In more recent times the austere Milton was not satisfied with anything less than that celestial light which on the top of Horeb and of Sinai shone, asking it to irradiate his soul in all its parts, "that he might see and tell of things invisible to mortal sight." Goethe, too, in a general introduction to his poems, informs us of an angelic form who had given him the choicest gifts of earth, and poured into his burning heart the balm of a heavenly rest.¹ Every modern reader, in this connection, will recall Shelley's magnificent "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," in which he avers that :

"The awful shadow of some unseen power floats, though unseen, among us, visiting this various world with an inconstant wing like summer wind that creeps from flower to flower, most dear, yet dearer for its mystery."

Shelley appeals to this power as :

"The spirit of beauty, that doth consecrate with thine own hues all thou dost shine upon of human thought or form."

¹ The Peace, as we shall see hereafter, that Shakespeare desired.

Wordsworth, poet of nature as he was, yet called upon Urania for guidance, "or a gentler Muse, if such descend to earth, or dwell in highest heaven." This he felt as "a Presence that disturbed him with the joy of elevated thought,"

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the Mind of Man."

Or, better still for our purpose, is a sonnet of Tennyson, published in his edition of 1835, which is also an address to Beauty :

"O Beauty, passing Beauty ! sweetest sweet !
How canst thou let me waste my youth in sighs ?
I only ask to sit beside thy feet,
Thou knowest I dare not look into thine eyes.
Might I but kiss thy hand ! I dare not fold
My arms about thee—scarcely dare I speak.
And nothing seems to me so wild and bold
As with one kiss to touch thy blessed cheek.
Methinks if I should kiss thee, no control
Within the thrilling brain could keep afloat
The subtle spirit. Even while I spoke,
The bare word kiss hath made my inmost soul
To tremble like a lute-string ere the note
Hath melted in the silence that it broke."

You will remark that the poet here has made the quality of Beauty not only an ideal, but an actual living person endowed with

nearly every human attribute. It has a form which he can fold in his arms, eyes to look into, hands to touch, cheeks and lips to kiss, and a soul to which his own inmost soul is akin, but of which in its awful perfection he scarcely ventures to think.

Now, Shakespeare, the prince of poets, was no exception to the generality of poets in either of these respects. He has recognized the ordinary muses more than seventeen times in the Sonnets themselves: once as "all the muses," and the "old nine," once as a muse belonging to another poet, and in other instances as his own. So, in a play he refers to the "Thrice three Muses, dead in poverty"; and in the chorus to *Henry V.* he demands a "Muse of Fire to ascend the highest heaven of invention," or of imagination. It would have been strange, indeed, if the creator of the fairy world, who trod the heights where Hamlet thought and Prospero put forth his weird enchantments, had found no intimate companion in that lofty realm. Yet such he possessed, and it was to him what the goddesses were to Homer and Virgil, or what the celestial and intellectual lights have been to the moderns. If you ask what authority I have for this bold assertion, I answer, the poet's

own words, addressing his ordinary, everyday muse, and revealing a much higher Muse, which scarcely admit of any other interpretation. Let me cite Sonnet 38, as it stands :

How can my Muse want subject to invent,
 While Thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse
 Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse ?
 O, give Thyself the thanks, if aught in me
 Worthy perusal stand against Thy sight ;
 For who 's so dumb that cannot write to Thee,
 When Thou Thyself dost give invention light ?
 Be Thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
 Than those old nine which rimers invoke ;
 And he that calls on Thee, let him bring forth
 Eternal numbers to outlive long date.

If my slight Muse do please these curious days,¹
 The pain be mine, but Thine shall be the praise.

One question here comes to the fore : Who is the 'Thou or Thee to whom the lines are directed ? If we say, with the commentators almost *en masse*, "the young personal friend we find in other sonnets," we run plump against a most unusual and staggering assumption. In all ages in which literature has accepted such beings as muses, they have been regarded as belonging to an ideal sphere,

¹The Quarto has : These curious days," meaning fastidious or critical, as in "*All's Well That Ends Well* (i., 2, 20).

and I think without exception were females. But here, according to Dowden and the others, we encounter for the first time a Muse who wore a beard and went about in top-boots, a stalwart young fellow of flesh and blood and the most unmistakable masculine propensities,—yet, none the less, a supreme source of poetry, said to be ten times superior to any of the “old nine,” in their own line, and capable of inspiring verses that will outlast all time. What a preposterous exaggeration!

In more than fifty of the Sonnets, or one third of the whole set, the writer addresses this imaginary creation as a living person. Its intimacy and favor he implores—its disfavor he deprecates; it is his sweetest love, his dearest friend, and yet a frowning enemy; it is his guide, his critic, and his judge, whose occasional caprices and desertions he chides, though it be at one with beauty, truth, and goodness,—and the idea of it, as he said in one of his plays afterwards, “did sweetly creep into the eye and body of his soul, with every lovely organ apparelled in most precious habits, most moving-delicate, and full of life.”

Shakespeare, when he began to write, was not a scholar, as we have already shown, or, at least, not a classical scholar. He had read,

doubtless, all the popular literature of the time, romances, chronicles, and folk-songs of every kind, but he was not taught in the philosophy of the poetic function. What is now called the Science of Æsthetics was not yet a distinct branch of study, and the subject, so far as it had been treated at all in the vernacular, was handled in a superficial and perfunctory way, as in Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, and Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*. But on his arrival in London, where he ran against the wits of the universities, who were full of scholastic learning and inclined to disputation, he began to think of the nature and functions of that imaginative power of which he was destined to be the most illustrious example.

(1) *The Vision Divine.*

It was doubtless an intuition with him that as all art must have two sides or aspects,—a soul and a body,—the one ideal or imaginative, in which insight, passion, and thought are dominant, and the other practical, or executive, in which language, measure, or rhythm are involved, the subject must be divided as Wordsworth has since divided it in *The Vision and the Faculty Divine*.

Our poet's earliest visions seem to have

come to him as dreams. He writes to the Higher Muse thus :

When most I wink,¹ mine eyes see the best, for, while in the daytime they view things without paying them particular attention, in the dreams of sleep they look on Thee and, though but partially illuminated, are brightly directed through the darkness. O Thou,² whose mere image or shadow lends brightness to the shades of the night, how pleasantly would the original, which casts the shadow, appear in the clear day with its much clearer light ! How blessed would mine eyes be made, I repeat, since in the dark and through heavy slumber Thy beautiful yet imperfect shape doth linger on my sightless orbs, if they could behold Thee in a more living way. Indeed, all days are nights to me until I look on Thee, and all nights are days, when Thou comest to me even in dreams !

Yet not alone in the night but in the day, the vision haunts the poet, and he recognizes it in the idealising tendency which is given to his mind. He says :

Son. 113. Since I have felt your influence,³ mine eye is in my mind and that which governs me in going about, divides its functions, and is partly blind. It seems to see, but really does not see ! For there is no form which

¹ In several places Shakespeare uses "wink" as the synonym for shutting the eyes, or excluding the external world.

² The Quarto has "then thou," which impairs the grammar.

³ The Quarto has, "since I left you," which makes no sense, and "left" is probably the letters of "felt" transposed.

it transmits to the soul, whether bird or flower, or anything else that it may seize,¹ in the shaping of whose aspects the mind has no part: it does not retain its own direct vision, for, be it the most ordinary object of sight, the gentlest look or the rudest structure, the mountain or the sea, the day or night, a crow or a dove, it is instantly invested with Your features. Replete with You, and incapable of more, my most true mind — or my mind which is faithful to your inspirations — renders my eyes untrue.²

“Or,” the poet goes on to argue, “may not this seeming dominance of the mind over the sense be a sort of illusion, or self-imposition.”

Son. 114. Or may it not be that the mind “crown’d,” or raised to a sort of royal consciousness by Your presence drinks in the monarch’s common plague—flattery? Or, shall I not rather say that while the eye sees correctly enough, my love for You teaches it an alchemy which transforms the most monstrous and chaotic sights into angelic shapes, thereby creating the very best out of the very worst? I fear the first¹; I fear the flattery of the sense, and that my kingly mind swallows the bait as the sense knows what is likely to agree with its taste,

¹ The Quarto uses “latch” in the sense of seizing or taking hold of. See *Macbeth* (iv., 3, 195).

² The closing line of the Quarto has been a puzzle to the critics: “My most true mind maketh mine untrue.” Collier suggested, “maketh mine eyne untrue,” which yields the sense as I give it in the paraphrases. The contrast is between the sight of the mind and the sight of the sense, and the poet avers that the former renders the latter uncertain. That this is his meaning is clear from the next sonnet, in which he suggests that his “eye may see true,” and yet his mind be exposed to illusions.

and prepares the cup for the palate. If that cup be mixed with foul ingredients it is a smaller fault in the mind to receive it, when the sense loves it and begins the imposition.

This sonnet is exceedingly subtle, and one suspects some corruption of the text, but as near as I can get at it, the poet anticipated what he afterwards said more clearly as to the double function of the imagination. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (v., 1, 7-16), where he illustrates the differences between its regular and its irregular action, he says :

“ The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact.
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,—
 That is, the madman : the lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt : ”

Whereas, he continues :

“ The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
 heaven,
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.”¹

¹ It is needless to point out how clearly in these last lines the poet recognizes the distinction between the ideal and the practical, the conception and the execution, the eye and the pen, or the Vision and the Faculty, on which we have already remarked.

It is impossible, without falling into gravest absurdities, to construe the sonnet, as Dowden does, as an effort of the poet to tell his "friend" that his (the poet's) mind and sense are alike filled with his perfections. "In Sonnet 112," says the critic, "the poet tells how his ear is stopped to all other voices but one beloved voice" (which decides for him even as to what is right and wrong), "but here the poet tells how that his eyes see things only as related to his friend." He, however, "tells" a great deal more than that, asserting that whatever he sees, be it bird, or flower, or shape of any kind, the rudest or gentlest sight, a sweet look or a huge structure, a mountain or the sea, a crow or a dove—it is at once invested with "your features." One can easily conceive how the objects of external nature can take on ideal forms (as all poetry shows), but it is not easy to conceive the process by which they take on the particular features of an individual.

The poet is deeply perplexed by this wondrous power which changes things into thoughts, and he inquires further :

Son. 53. What is your substance, or whereof are you made, that millions of strange shadows tend upon you, every one of which has its own peculiar *nuance*, while you are one and individual. Describe Adonis

(the classic model of masculine beauty), and the representation will be but a poor counterfeit of You ; set upon Helen's cheek¹ all female perfections and it will only be You again arrayed in Grecian tires. Indeed, speak of the spring and foison of the year [meaning the autumn or harvest of the year], and what is the one but a symbol of Your beauty, and the other of Your bounty? We recognize You in every blessed shape we know ; in every external grace as in every artistic creation You have some part ; but you are like none of them, and none of them is like you, in constancy of character.

How absolutely absurd it is to suppose, as the critics do, that all this could be said of and to an ordinary personal friend ; that he had a million shadows, unlike poor Peter Schlemihl, who had none ; that Adonis was a foil to him ; that Helen was himself, dressed off in Grecian habiliments ; and, more still, that all the beautiful aspects of nature — the bright dawns, the solemn eves, the rippling streams, the far-off shimmer of the hills, and the grand roll of the ocean — were no more than efforts of nature to embody his graces. Yet, in the æsthetic sense, is not the meaning here transparent and exceedingly beautiful ?

I cannot but add of the thought of the last line that, in the endless variety and

¹ That face, as Marlowe wrote, " which launched a thousand ships to burn the topless towers of Ilium " ; imitated by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida* (ii., 2, 82).

changeableness of external beauty, the ideal, which has a part in all, is alone, constant, seems to be an anticipation of a passage in Ruskin, where he says :

“There is no bush on the face of the globe exactly like another bush ; there are no two trees in the forest whose boughs bend into the same network ; nor two leaves on the same tree which could not be told from another ; nor two waves of the same sea exactly alike ; yet out of this mass of various and agreeing beauty, the conception of the constant character, the ideal form hinted at by all, yet assured by none, is fixed upon by the imagination for its standard of truth.”¹

The poet becomes more definite still in his delineation of the Higher Muse, when he proceeds to impute to it all possible human attributes, female as well as male. Our countryman, Mr. E. C. Stedman, in his fine *Essay on the Nature and Elements of Poetry*, says that the artistic temperament is androgynous, or double-sexed,—feminine in its sensitiveness and refinement, and masculine in its strength and energy. He was, doubtless, not aware that Shakespeare had before him gone so far as to represent the personified genius of all art itself as both man and woman.

Son. 20. Thou master-mistress of my devotion [he exclaims], thou hast a woman's face, formed by nature's

¹ *The True and the Beautiful*, p. 59.

own hand¹; thou hast a woman's gentle disposition, but not liable to swift caprices, as some false women are.² Thou hast an eye more bright and constant than any woman's and which lends a glory to every object on which it falls. A man however in form,³ to whose power all forms are subject that win the admiration of men, or incite the wonder of women⁴: and, for a woman wert thou first created (that is, conceived in the brains of the older poets, who made all their Muses and Graces female), till Nature as she wrought Thee in that medium, fell in love with the result, and added those universal qualities which defeated me of all thought of appropriating Thee to myself. But, because Thou art thus marked out for the pleasure of all men,⁵ still give me Thy love, and I will make the use of it a treasure for the world.⁶

¹ As Viola puts it in *Twelfth Night*:

“ 'T is beauty truly blent whose red and white
Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on.”

² The Quarto has “not given to shifting change, as is false woman's fashion.” And Dowden quotes Spenser (*Faerie Queene*, iii., I, 41), which says: “Her wanton eyes, ill signs of womanhood, did roll too lightly.”

³ The Quarto says: “A man in hew, all Hews in his controlling,” where hew means form, as in Sonnets 82 and 104, and in other passages cited by the commentators.

⁴ “All forms in his controlling,” seems to me very significant. Dowden says it means “a man in form and appearance having mastery of all forms, in that of his, which shall,” etc.; and Irving's editor puts it, “a man in form, and all forms are subject to his power (controlling)” — which are strange things to allege of any human form, — in fact unintelligible, but, said of an ideal genius or spirit, quite pertinent and easily understood.

⁵ “All men,” I think it should be, not “all women,” as printed in the Quarto.

⁶ As he did in his subsequent plays.

The last four or five lines of this sonnet are hopelessly

Having referred to the Muses and Graces, as the work of ancient poets and to the brilliant forms of beauty they had left behind them, not forgetting what he had said (Sonnets 67, 68) as to the function of the true poet in keeping up the standards of those antique days when the creation of beauty was as spontaneous as the birth of flowers, our poet still asks if antiquity had exhausted the labor of invention.

Son. 59. If there be nothing new, but that which is has been before, how we delude our brains in laboring by invention to bring forth what must be only "the second burden of a former child"! Oh, that our records of past achievements could by a backward look of only five centuries show me in some antique book, one written when the mind first began to express itself in writing, what conception they had formed of the poetic ideal. What had the old world to say of that wonderful combination of qualities which we find in Your frame? In what respects was it better than ours, or in what respects has it been improved upon? or whether any change that has taken place has been a mere going about, or a revolution without progress. I am quite mixed. To say nothing of such rhymes as "created" and "defeated," or "a-doting" and "nothing," or the immediate repetition of "by addition" and "by adding," there is no sense in them as they stand. Twist the final couplet as you please, the outcome is bathos, if not nonsense. It is impossible to reconstruct the passage, and we can only guess at the probable meaning from the context, and that guess must be one that shall, at least, be consistent with the fine thought of the outset, and not a vulgarity.

sure myself that the wits of former ages gave their admiration to objects worse than those which occupy us in these days.¹

He pursues the same thought in reference to a later time, the days of chivalry.

Son. 106. When I see in the chronicles of time now gone to waste (*i. e.*, in the old rhymed romances) descriptions of the fairest wights, wherein the ideals of beauty make the old rhymes beautiful as they extol dear ladies² and lovely knights, then I recall in the very blazonry of sweet beauty at its best—whether of hand, or foot, or eye, or brow, that those antique writers endeavored to express the beauty that You exhibit now. Their praises therefore are but prophecies of these our times, prefiguring You ;—but inasmuch as they saw not with true discerning eyes, they did not have skill enough to sing your true excellence. Even we of the present day, who see more clearly, have eyes to wonder,³ but lack the tongue adequately to express what we behold.

Satisfied with the glimpses he had attained, the poet exclaims, in a moment of fluctuating joy,

¹Of the question raised by Shakespeare in this sonnet, Mr. Lowell (vol. iii., p. 32,) has since said that "the true poetic imagination is of one quality, whether it be ancient or modern, and equally subject to the laws of grace, of proportion, of design, in whose free service and in that alone it can become Art," but Shakespeare adds that while this quality is supreme and unchangeable our thought of it is ever on the advance, requiring new forms of words for its expression.

²The Quarto has "ladies dead," which would read better as "ladies dear," I think.

³The Quarto has "composite wonder," a phrase easily applied to an ideal but hardly to an actual man.

Son. 75. You are, to my thought, like food to life, or like timely showers to the earth, and to acquire the peace which You can bring, I strive with myself, as a miser does with his gold ; now proud to possess it, and anon doubting whether the filching age will not steal his treasure ; now counting it best to be alone with you (*i. e.*, in silent communice), and then eager that the world may witness my delight. I am sometimes full with feasting on the sight of You, and at others pining for a look ; possessing or pursuing no pleasure but what is had, or must be had, from Your presence. Thus I surfeit or starve from day to day—like a glutton who has all or nothing.¹

In this fluctuation of feeling, the poet calls upon the Muse to renew its force.

Son. 56. Let it not be said that the edge of a fine affection is blunter than that of a coarse appetite, which, satiated to-day, is to-morrow sharpened to its former keenness. So, love, although to-day Thou fillest Thy hungry eyes until they close with fulness, to-morrow look again, and do not kill thy spirit with a perpetual dulness. Let the sad interims between our communions seem like an ocean which parts the shores, where two newly betrothed lovers daily come, and when they see their love returned, are made more blessed by the sight ; or call that interim a winter, which, though full of care and anxiety, renders summer more welcome when it comes, and thrice more wished for because it is rare.

But this thought of the inconstancy of his

¹ The Quarto reads "gluttoning on all," or "all away."

pleasure disturbs him with the fear that it might be taken away from him altogether under the influences of time. He writes :

Son. 64. When I have seen the richest and proudest monuments of an outworn and buried age defaced by the fell hand of Time,—when I have seen lofty towers razed to the ground and eternal brass a slave to its deadly rage ; when I have seen the hungry ocean eating up the land, and the land invading the ocean,—gain following loss and loss following gain,—and this interchange of condition, itself subject to overthrow, the contemplation of such ruin has made me think that Time may even come and take the object of my love away ; the thought of which is death to me, and I cannot choose but weep to possess that which I so much dread to lose.

In the same tone the poet continues :

Son. 65. If brass and stone, if earth and sea succumb to time, how can beauty, whose action is no stronger than that of a flower, hold its place ? How can the honeyed breath of summer withstand the destructive siege of battering days, when impregnable rocks and gates of steel are unable to resist their onslaughts ? Oh, fearful meditation ! Where shall the best jewel that Time produces—Beauty—find an escape from its wallet of oblivion ?¹ What mighty hand can hold his swift foot back, or who can forbid his spoliations ? Oh, none, none, the poet exclaims as if in despair, unless,—the

¹ As to the wallet of Time, see *Troilus and Cressida* (iii., 3, 145) ; also Sonnet 63.

saving thought comes to him,—unless, this miracle may be achieved—that in black ink Beauty may be enshrined forever.

Yes, there we have it! Art, or “the faculty divine,”—the writing of verse,—may be the lasting preservative of the “vision divine.” Art embodies and perpetuates the airy nothings that would otherwise fly like down upon the winds; Art is the miracle of creation renewed; and, touched by its magic wand, the unsubstantial dreams of the night (of which we once heard¹) become the glory of an everlasting day.

How amazing it all is, the poet continues.

Son. 60. The minutes of our lives are hastening to the end, like the waves of the sea, which rush to the shore, each changing place with that which precedes it, and yet ever toiling onward. Our very nature,² once launched into the great ocean of light, wends its way to its maturity, which having reached, it is pursued by malignant eclipses that fight against its glory. Time, which gives all, destroys all:³ it transfixes the bloom of youth, digs trenches in the brow of the fairest, and feeds on the rarest of Nature’s truths; and there is nothing

¹ See Sonnet 43.

² The Quarto has “Nativity once in the main of light.” Nativity means birth, so that the line might read, “launched by birth into the great main of light, we crawl to maturity.”

³ Lucrece says of Time,

“Thou nursest all, and murderest all that are.”

which its scythe does not seem to mow down. Yet,—mark it,—despite of this cruel ravage, my little verse in praise of thy excellency shall remain to all future ages.

(2) *The Faculty Divine.*

But how is the poet to seize the power capable of such an achievement? How is he to work this miracle? How is he to acquire the art, which, as he expressed it at a later day,—“bodies forth the form of things unseen, turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothings a habitation and a name,” or a home in the actual world? At the very outset of his efforts he encounters an almost insurmountable obstacle in his self-love, by which he means not his selfishness in a moral sense, but his strong intellectual predisposition. He writes:

Son. 62. The sin of self-love not only directs my eyes, but pervades my whole being. It is so rooted in my nature that it seems ineradicable, or beyond remedy. Methinks no appearance so gracious as my own, no shape so true, and no truth of such importance. My own superiority, in my own estimation, surpasses all the excellences of all others. But when reflection shows me my real self, degraded and disfigured by the tan of antiquity,¹ I take a contrary view, and find a self-love so

¹ The Quarto has “beated and chopt with tann’d antiquity,” which may mean as I have given it above; or it may mean, as some critics have suggested, “steeped in and mixed up with the stains of antiquity,”—drawing the figure from the process of tanning hides into

intense, not love but iniquity. 'T is Thee, my better self, that I praise as myself and so substitute a devotion to old faults for the love of Thy beauty.¹

One cannot fail to remark in this sonnet Shakespeare's anticipation of an essential principle of all true art,—disinterestedness, or that exemption from prepossession, self-admiration, and prejudice, which enables the artist to work in the full freedom of the ideal. As Mr. Hudson, has well said :² “ If a man goes to admiring his own skill, or airing his own powers, or heeding the breath of conventional applause ; if he yields to any strain of self-complacency, or turns to practising smiles, or to taking pleasure in his self-begotten graces and beauties, and fancies in this giddy and

fine leather. According to Webster's Dictionary, the liquor in which hides are saturated is called the *bate*, and “ chopt ” may refer to the cutting up of the raw material ; but that seems to me far-fetched. It is generally allowed by the critics that “ beated ” in the first line is a misprint for “ bated ” (French *abattre*), lowered, cut down, reduced, degraded. Compare *Merchant of Venice* (iii., 3., 32) : “ These griefs and losses have so bated me.”

¹ The final couplet is very obscure :

“ 'Tis thee (myself) that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.”

Irving's Edition (vol. viii., p. 442) reads it “ 'Tis thee myself *i. e.*, who art myself that for myself (*i. e.*, as if myself) I praise,” and the line “ Painting my age with beauty of thy days ” he compares to *Love's Labor's Lost*. (iv., 3, 244) : “ Beauty doth varnish age as if new born ” all which furnishes very little help.

² *Shakespeare : His Life, Art, and Characters*, vol. i., p. 147.

vestiginous state, he will be sure to fall into intellectual and artistic sin."

Alas! continues the poet:

Son. 103. What poverty my Muse displays, when, with such a field for the exhibition of its powers, the subject in itself is more worthy of attention than after it has received my additional glosses. Oh, blame me not if I shall write no more! Look into your consciousness, as a mirror,¹ and you will see a form that so transcends my clumsy inventions that my lines appear dull and disgraceful to their author. Is it not sinful, then, that in striving to mend, I only mar a subject that is already well?² Although my writing aims at no other end than to set forth thy graces and endowments, yet consider thyself and thou wilt see more, much more, than my verses can contain.

In other words, the poet avers that his ideal of what he ought to write so far surpasses his power of execution that he is almost forced to drop his pen forever.

Son. 37. Yet as a decrepit father takes delight in the youthful performances of a child, so I, as an author, disabled by the keen enmities of fortune,³ find comfort in Thy

¹ The Quarto says, "Your own glass shows you," using the phrase as an equivalent of self-reflection, or your inward mirror.

² *Lear* (i., 4, 309) says, "Striving to better, oft we mar what 's well."

³ The Quarto reads, "So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite," which that rare critic, Mr. S. Butler, accepts as proof that Shakespeare

excellence. Whether Beauty, Birth, Wealth, or Wit, or any of these qualities, or all, or more, bear sway in the world, with a proper title to the parts they play, I simply engraft my affection upon Thy store, and then I am no longer either lame, poor, or despised. Thy mere shadow yields such an abundance that it suffices me, and I live even on a mere reflection of Thy glory. What I wish as the best,¹ I find in Thee, and it makes me ten times more happy than I can utter.

Once more the young poet is restrained and confused by his modesty :

Son. 39. But how can I sing Thy praises with any modesty, when Thou art all the better part of me (or a sublimation of my own genius)? As it is praising myself when I praise Thee, what can my own praise of myself avail me? For which reason let us live as if apart, our dear love no longer appearing as one, in order that by the separation I may give to Thee the due which thou deservest alone. Yet, Absence, what a torment Thou wouldst prove, were it not that sour leisure gives sweet leave to entertain the time with loving thoughts and so beguile both time and thoughts : or, were it not that Thou teachest me how to make one of two, by communing at once with what is both present and yet afar?

(3) *Rivals in the Field.*

The young poet, after his meditations upon himself and his possible capacities, now turns

was "literally lame" — "made lame by some accident,—possibly in a recent scuffle!" O, Lord! sir.

¹ That is, the very highest ideal.

to another subject, the obstacles he is likely to encounter in his literary career.

Son. 76. Why is my verse so destitute of modern vivacity and free from a quick versatility of change? Why do I not, in the fashion of the day, glance aside to some newfangled methods, or to some unusual combinations of thought and expression? Why do I always write the same thing in the same style, dressing my conceptions in such a guise that every word betrays its origin? Oh, know, sweet Love, that I always write of You. You and your affections are my sole themes, so that the best that I can do is to clothe old words anew, and to use over again an energy that has been already used. Like the sun, which is daily new and old, my passion can only extol that which has been extolled before.

Son. 78. I have so often invoked Thy inspiration as my Muse, and found such furtherance in its aid, that other and alien pens have learned my trick and put forth their poetry in Thy name. Thy favorable looks, which in my case have taught the dumb to sing, and heavy ignorance to fly on high, have added feathers to the wings of those who are distinguished for their learning, and imparted to the graces they already possessed a double attraction. No less, Thou shouldst be more proud of that which I compose, because it is solely born of Thee, or due alone to Thy influence. In the works of others Thou dost but improve the style, and grace their graces by an additional grace, but in my writings, as fidelity to Thee is all the art I have, it lifts my rude ignorance to a level with their highest learning.

None the less, the poet is obliged to confess to the Higher Muse that they must seemingly, at least, separate or be twain. His profession, that of actor, brings him into such disrepute with the public that he does not wish to degrade true poetry by connecting his name with it, even by report.

Son. 36. Still, let me confess, that although our lives are in themselves one, we too must be divided, in order that the blots which are attached to me [because of his profession?] may be borne by me alone, and without calling upon Thy assistance. In our affections there is but one end, in spite of the cruel fate which separates us from each other; nor does that separation alter the nature of our lives, though it steals away the sweetest hours from our mutual delights, I may not, perhaps, be able to acknowledge Thee for evermore, lest my guilt which they bewail should bring Thee to shame, nor Thou henceforth do honor to me lest Thou shouldst dishonor Thyself. Yet do not do so, I pray, for Thou being mine, mine also is Thy good repute.¹

“The sense of rivalry, awakened by contact with others, contributed,” as Brandes has well said, “to the formation of Shakespeare’s early manner, both in his narrative poems and

¹ I have in this sonnet, and a few others, capitalized Thee and Thou, and You and Your, when applied to the Higher Muse, in order to emphasize the distinction between the Higher and the Lower Muse, and accustom the reader’s mind to the new meaning of the sonnets. But I have not thought it necessary to follow the practice where this object is not important.

in his plays, and hence arose that straining after subtleties, that addiction to quibbles, that wantonness of word-play, that bandying to-and-fro of shuttlecocks of speech. Hence, too, that state of overheated passion and overstimulated fancy, in which image begets image with a headlong fecundity, like that of the low organisms which pullulate by mere scission." That is true, — but Brandes adds, with no less truth, "The man of all talents had the talent for word-plays and thought-quibbles among the rest; he was too richly endowed to be behind-hand even here. But there was in all this something foreign to his true self. When he reaches the point at which his inmost personality begins to reveal itself in his writings, we are at once made conscious of a far deeper and more emotional nature than that which finds expression in the teeming conceits of the narrative poems and the incessant scintillations of the early comedies."¹

Son. 79. So long as I was alone in calling upon thy aid, my verse alone was distinguished by thy gentle presence; but now that other poets attempt the same thing, my numbers seem to have fallen off, and my discouraged Muse is ready to yield place to that of another. I grant, my Love, that thy loveliness deserves the labor of a worthier pen than mine, and yet what thy poet invents

¹ Brandes's *Critical Study*, (vol. i., p. 75).

he but robs from thee, and then gives back again. He ascribes qualities to thee which he had simply stolen from thee; he lends thee beauty, but that beauty he found already in thy cheek; he can write no appreciation of thee which is not already contained in thy life. Give him, then, no particular credit for what he says, as he gets it all from the simple contemplation of thy nature. No, thank him not for what he utters, as all that he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.

The poet asks no especial favors from the Higher Muse, but simply justice.

Son. 82. I grant Thou wert not married to my Muse, or given to me as a sole and exclusive possession, and mayst therefore lend thine ear to the appropriate words which other writers use in unfolding their several themes, "blessing every book," for Thou art as just in thy estimates as thou art fair in thy form. Conscious of an excellence beyond my reach, Thou mayst be enforced to seek anew some fresher exponents of it in this bettered time. Well, do so, Love, but when they have devised the finest touches of an overstrained rhetoric, remember that what was really characteristic in Thee was truly discerned and verbally well expressed by Thy truth-telling friend,¹ while the gross painting, the coarse decorations to which they resort, would have been better used elsewhere,—where cheeks want blood,—and not applied to Thee, where it is misplaced and superfluous.

His excuse for his seeming delinquency is still a self-justification.

¹ The Quarto has: "Thou truly fair wert truly sympathized," *i. e.*, most feelingly appreciated.

Son. 83. I never saw that You needed painting or the artificial decorations of mere fancy, instead of the more truthful tribute of imagination, and I therefore never applied them in the setting forth Your beauty. I discovered, or thought I had discovered, that You surpassed any heights a poet might reach in the acknowledgment of his debt to you. I have consequently been silent in my report of what I felt in regard to your qualities in order that You yourself, once made visible, might show how far an ordinary quill must fall short in speaking of your worth in its reality ; this self-restraint you have imputed to me as an offence, although it should be regarded as a virtue. By being mute I do not impair the beauty which others, in their endeavor to exhibit, only hide. There is more life in one of Your looks than in all the praises that your poets can produce.

It is better often to be silent than to say too much not to the point.

Son. 84. Who of the poets say most,—they that are silent and think, or they that speak, and yet speak nothing to the purpose? Who can say more than this, the richest praise, that You alone are You, that is, yourself supreme? Within whose limited brain is stored that wealth which is able to exemplify where Your equal grows?¹ That pen must be poverty-stricken, indeed, which cannot lend some glory to its subjects ; but he

¹The Quarto reads : “ In whose confine immured is the store, Which should example where your equal grew,” and critics generally give the lines the go-by. Irving’s editor, however, finds in them some alliance with the sonnets pertaining to marriage (vol. viii., p. 444), which I do not see at all. Shakespeare several times uses “example” as a verb, as in *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (iii., 1, 85), “ I will ex-

that writes of You, who truly shows You as you are, attains the full dignity of verse. Let him but copy what is writ in You, without confusing that which in its nature is most clear, and the exact reproduction will give such fame to his talent that his style will be universally admired. You would, however, add a curse to your beautiful blessing if you were fond of a praise which is in itself derogatory.

Because he is disposed to be silent, the poem claims that he is none the less full of thought :

Son. 85. My speechless Muse maintains her modest silence, while the richest comments in your praise are inscribed in letters framed by a golden quill, and in precious phrases which all the Muses have refined. I merely think good thoughts while others write good words, and, like an unlettered clerk, I cry amen to every hymn accomplished talent may put forth in the finest manner of the adept. Hearing you praised at any time I reply, "That's so, that's true," but to the best of encomiums I add something more in my next : My love to you runs so far ahead of all expression that words must needs come hindmost. Respect others, therefore, for their utterances, but me for my dumb thoughts, which are, after all, a mode of affectionate utterance.

Yet while the poet asserts his claims against the generality of poets, he discovers one to whom he is disposed to bow.

ample it," that is, I will give an example of it. See also *Timon* (iv., 3, 440, "I'll example you with thievery." The lines are interrogative, I think, and simply ask what poet can fully express the ideal.

(4) *A Better Spirit Discerned.*

Son. 80. In writing of you how discouraged I am to find a Better Spirit using your name, and spending all his force in your praise, so that I become tongue-tied! But since your worth is as broad as the ocean, which bears up the humblest as well as the proudest sail, my audacious bark, though far inferior to his, dares to appear upon the main; your smallest aid will keep it afloat, at least, while he goes sweeping over your soundless deeps. Or if the "rack"¹ threatens us, I of worthless build, he a tall structure and of goodly port,— and he thrives while I go down, the worst that can be said of the catastrophe is that my fidelity to you was the cause of my destruction.²

Son. 86. Was it the majestic movement of his great verse, bound for the prize of all, your precious self,³ that buried my best thoughts in my brain, making their

¹The Quarto has here: "or, being wrack't," which most of the modern editors print "or being wrecked," but the phrase refers to the "ugly rack" (*Son. 33, l. 6*), or, the "swift-moving clouds that bring the storm." (See *Antony and Cleopatra*, iv., 14. 2. See also *Hamlet*, i., 2, 470, and *Tempest*, iv., 1, 156.) Both barks could not have been spoken of as "wrecked," when one of them is said to "thrive."

²One cannot but remark again in this sonnet the unpretending modesty of the young poet, to which I have before referred, mingled with a deep consciousness of real power.

³The Quarto has in line 2: "Bound for the prize of (all to precious you)," where the modern critics have dropped the parentheses, and changed *to* into *too*. But may the line not have read originally, "Bound to the prize of all," that is, to the common prize of all writers, or to the highest prize of all, to precious you, or to your precious favor?

womb their tomb¹; was it his peculiar spirit, stimulated to write by other spirits on a more than mortal theme, that paralyzed my powers? No, neither he nor the nightly coadjutors, who lend him aid, astonished me; nor can that affable and familiar ghost,² who gulls him with spurious intelligence, boast of victory over me. I was not intimidated by any fear of them³: but when I saw your countenance shining in every line, my subjects dwindled and my lines grew weak.

Of course we do not know who this "Better Spirit" was: many conjectures have been made in regard to him, but none of them are entirely satisfactory. Daniel has been suggested, but Daniel is more likely to have succeeded than to have preceded Shakespeare. Others, again, have mentioned Greene, though Greene was an enemy of our bard, and presumably detested by him, even if we should suppose him capable of writing anything of any sort to excite Shakespeare's despair. Then Lilly, the Eüphuist, has been lugged in

¹ *Romeo and Juliet* (ii., 3, 9), "The earth that 's Nature's mother is her tomb.

² It has not before been noted, I think, that Thorpe, the first publisher of Shakespeare's Sonnets, in his introduction to Marlowe's translation of the first book of Lucan, speaks of Marlowe both as "a ghost" and "a familiar." It is possible that he got the words from this sonnet, and if he did, it sets at rest the question as to who this "better spirit" was. See Bullen's *Marlowe* (vol. iii., p. 253).

³ The Quarto has "sick of fear," meaning, as in *Troilus and Cressida*, "envious."

to fill the gap, whose eccentricities the younger poet ridiculed. The most fantastic of all conjectures was one by G. A. Leigh, which concludes that Tasso, an Italian, writing in a foreign tongue to a foreign public, was the culprit.¹ It was said that Tasso put forth a fulsome and hypocritical laudation of Queen Elizabeth, which roused the jealousy of the young Englishman, though he cared about as much for that lady as he cared for the Puritan preachers. "Does he not say in Sonnet 85," argues Mr. Leigh, "'Hearing your praise I say 't is so, 't is true,'" meaning Tasso by Tisso, and Q. E. D.

One of the most plausible of these conjectures was by Professor Minto,² who brings George Chapman forward as the probable rival. Chapman was learned, polished, and severe in his taste, and in his dramas, as in his translations of Homer, a master of the grand style, or, as Keats says, "both loud and deep."³ Besides, in his *Tears of Peace* (Induction, p. 21), he claims to have been inspired by the old Greek, while in his dedication to his *Shadow of Night*, he talks of a

¹ *Westminster Review*, 1897.

² *Characteristics of English Poets*, p. 222.

³ See Keats's sonnet on Chapman's *Homer*.

“heavenly familiar,” apparently recognized in Shakespeare’s Sonnet, No. 86. But chronology, I think, knocks this supposition on the head. *The Shadow of Night* was not published till 1594; the first specimen of the *Iliad* not till 1596, and the *Tears of Peace* even as late as 1609, — all of them, as I make out the dates, considerable after the Sonnets were written. Or, ascribing the Sonnets to a later date, it would bring them, as I have already shown, to a time when the poet had reached a point beyond all rivalry.

If we must have a name for this unknown, I am decidedly of the opinion that it should be spelled Kit Marlowe. Marlowe was at the height of his popularity just about the time the Stratford poet was well settled in London. His “Tamburlaine” (1589),¹ and his “Faustus” (1589), by their abandonment of the old-fashioned “jigging vein of rhyming mother-wits,” by their more audacious aims, their sonorousness and stately diction, and by their vigorous projections of character, to say nothing of an evident yearning for Ideal Beauty, had thoroughly changed the aspects of the drama. Shakespeare knew Marlowe, had cooperated with him in *Henry VI.*, and perhaps

¹ See Bullen’s *Marlowe*, vol. i., p. 70.

in *Edward II.* and other pieces, and must have discerned in him at once those qualities which led his friends at the time or in after years to speak of him as the "Muses' darling." His "silver tongue," his "golden lines," his "rare art and wit," and his possession of "those brave, translunary things that the first poets had," had caused some of his couplets to be sung by the boatmen of the Thames as they rowed along the wharves. One writer says: "Men would shun their sleep in still dark nights, to meditate upon his golden lines." Besides, Shakespeare did for him what he has not done for any other contemporary, — that is, directed attention to his productions. Twice he quotes from him entire lines,¹ once a whole stanza,² and it is thought to be proved that he parodied a long passage from Marlowe's *Dido*³ in *Hamlet*.

What Shakespeare says in these sonnets of his occasional silences would seem to confirm the opinion of some critics, that Spenser, in his *Tears of the Muses*, wherein Thalia complains of the barbarism and ignorance that had invaded the stage and driven off the harmless

¹ Sonnet 54, and *As You Like It* (iii., 5, 82.)

² *Merry Wives* (iii., 1, 14.)

³ See *Hamlet* (ii., 2, 430-475,) with the discussion in Furness's *Variorum*, vol. i., p. 184.

sport which had formerly given delight and laughter, referred to our rising young poet.

“ He, the man whom Nature’s self had made
 To mock herself and truth to imitate,
 With kindly counter, under mimic shade,
 Our pleasant Willie, ah, is dead of late.¹

.
 But that same gentle spirit from whose pen
 Large streams of honie and sweet necktar flow
 Scorning the boldness of such base-born men,
 Which dare their follies forth so rashly throw,
 Doth rather choose to sit in idle Cell
 Than so himself to mockery to sell.”

This was published in 1591, and probably had been read in manuscript much before. Shakespeare was then already known as the author of *Love’s Labor’s Lost* and *Love’s Labor Won*, *The Comedy of Errors*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and as a co-laborer in the several parts of *Henry VI.*, in all of which are touches of tenderness and mirth that might easily have attracted the congenial admiration of the elder and more prominent poet.

(4) *The Estrangement of the Higher Muse.*

Our young poet in his first encounter with rivals was more deeply impressed by their ability than there was really any occasion for :

¹ Dead meaning inactive, as the next paragraph shows.

and he not only lost confidence in himself, but began to feel as if the genius which had given him so much hope in the beginning, was about to leave him altogether. In this dependency he wrote a number of remonstrances which expressed with only too much modesty his fears of a final estrangement, or of the withdrawal of those higher inspirations which had ever been his chief delight. He wrote :

Son. 88. If Thou shalt be disposed to hold me in light esteem,¹ and ever look upon such merit as I have with scorn, I shall not demur, but taking sides with Thee fight against myself, to prove that Thou art right although Thou hast not kept Thy early promises to me.² I know my own weaknesses better than anyone else, and I could tell such a story of the hidden faults that taint my nature that Thou wouldst gain immensely by cutting loose from me, or escaping all responsibility for what I write. But then I should be a gainer too, because, bending my intensest thoughts on Thee, the imperfections I find in myself advantage Thee in lifting Thee so much the higher by the comparison, and at the same time they doubly vantage me, by revealing my defects more clearly, while elevating Thee as an ideal.

Supposing this sonnet to be addressed to an actual person, as the critics commonly do, the later lines of it become to me wholly

¹ "Sets it light": See *Richard II.* (i., 3, 293)

² Quarto says, "Thou art forsworn," which means, I think, that the Higher Muse appears to the poet as not having kept its promises.

unintelligible. The poet is made to say to his friend that in losing him (the poet), the friend would gain much glory, *i. e.*, reputation, as if the association were a decidedly disgraceful one: but then it is immediately added that the poet himself would gain a double "vantage" by the separation, because, bending all his loving thoughts on the friend, the injuries he does to himself are in some way an immense acquisition to both of them; he does not say in what way, and the reader is left in the vague. In my version the meaning of the lines, though not obvious, is yet clear: the poet's love for the Ideal Muse is so strong that he is willing to take all faults found in him upon himself in order to show that the ideal is pure and right. He is the guilty one, not in the imaginative, but the executive sphere. His performances fall short of his conceptions, and in releasing the Higher Muse from all responsibility for them he acquits that Muse, preserves it in its exaltation, and yet benefits himself by getting nearer to a true conception of their relative positions.

Son. 89. Say that Thou dost desert me, not as a mere caprice, but for some fault, and I will be prompt in the admission of it: Speak of my general disability, and I will at once limp to show it, making no defence

against any reasonable accusations. Nor canst Thou bring me into greater disfavor, by holding up a model of the changes desirable in me, than my own performances will. Therefore, knowing what Thou desirest of me, I will dissemble our acquaintance,¹ look strange, pretend to no intercourse, and never take Thy name upon my tongue lest I should profane it and perchance betray our former intimacy. For Thy sake I will undertake to denounce myself,² as I must never even seem to love him whom Thou dost hate.

In other words, he must take his faults upon his own shoulders, and not allow them to be imputed to the influence of the Muse he worships.

But if I am to be deserted by Thee, the poet proceeds, let it be at once that I may know the outcome of what is to befall me. He writes :

Son. 90. Hate me if Thou wilt, but now, when the world is bent on crossing my desires, join in with the spite of fortune, and bow me to the ground, but do not drop down like an afterstroke! Ah, when my heart hath just escaped one sorrow (this outward affliction of failure), do not follow in the rear of a woe just overcome like a rainy morning after a windy night, and prolong my overthrow. If Thou must leave me, do not leave me last of all, when other smaller griefs have

¹ The Quarto has, "I will acquaintance strangle," meaning disavow. See *Twelfth Night* (v., 1, 150), and *Ant. and Cleo.* (ii., 6, 130).

² The Quarto has "Against myself I'll vow debate"; debate always meaning, in Shakespeare quarrel or contest. See *Midsummer Night's Dream* (ii., 1, 116). "From our debate, from our dissension."

shown their spite, but come at the outset that I may taste the extreme of fortune's enmity and all other afflictions appear but as nothing in the comparison.

How tremendous that loss would be the poet goes on to disclose by a series of striking contrasts.

Son. 61. Some men glory in their birth, some in their skill, some in their wealth, some in their athletic force, and some in their newfangled gowns, or in their hawks, and hounds, and horses. Every such humor, too, has a distinct delight, in which each one finds a joy above all others. Yet none of their particular enjoyments fill my measure, for I transcend them all in one general best. Thy love, Thy favor, Thy inspiration is to me more than high birth, richer than wealth, and more agreeable than equipage and estate : and, having Thee, I may indulge in a pride which excels the pride of all other men. I am worried alone by one possibility, that Thou mayst take thyself away and leave me utterly wretched.

Extremely exaggerated as all this would seem, if taken as addressed to an actual person, yet in a poetic sense it is natural and impressive and imparts great dignity to the whole subject.

Son. 92. But doing Thy worst to withdraw from me, there is one thing sure : As my life depends upon Thy love, it will continue only as long as that love continues. I have no need, therefore, to fear the worst of wrongs,¹

¹The Quarto reads, "The least of wrongs," which is an obvious misprint, for the poet is dealing with what he considers the greatest evil that can befall him—the last to which he has just referred.

when this last affliction would bring my life to an end. I see that my state is better than if it depended upon Thy caprices. No mere inconstancy of Thine can vex me, when my life would yield to the first evidence of Thy serious revolt. Oh, what a happy condition is mine, happy in the possession of Thy love, and happy to die if I have it not! But what appearance is so blessedly fair that a blot on it is not to be feared? Thou mayst be false,—that is, my ideal may be wrong,—and I the while be wholly unconscious of the error.¹

Let me illustrate the distinction here, simple as it is, by an example. When Shakespeare wrote the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, a subject which was new and untouched as yet, he must have had a conception of it in his mind which was exceedingly pleasant to him. It gave him an opportunity to tell a deeply interesting story, to portray contrasts and originalities of character, to indulge in descriptions of manners and to introduce touches of pathos or humor which were a vast improvement upon everything that had been done before, and he wrote according to his highest conception of what was necessary in a domestic and

¹ Here again the thought is very subtle, and I am not positive that I have rendered the explanation of it clear. The poet is meditating upon the ideal, which he says in itself or in the abstract seems perfect but which may be in each particular mind imperfect or false. It is like light, which is in itself pure, but may be deflected by the objects on which it falls, or take a color from the medium through which it passes.

social drama. In a word, he was delighted with his ideal; the occasional outbursts of lyrical passion or gayety, and the many lines of a sweet musical cadence show him full of interest in his work; but it is clear that before he had got to the end, when he began to see some of its incongruities, how utterly improbable much of it was, how far it fell short of what might have been, he felt the need, if he should ever go to work again, of a much higher aim and elaboration. The ideal which had smiled upon him at the outset was now turning its back upon him with a frown.

Mr. Ruskin remarks upon a similar change in a kindred art when he says that Raphael, in painting his earliest cartoons, painted them according to his ideals of the subjects; if they were, in many respects, high ideals, it yielded him great pleasure to contemplate and to embody them, as they have since given thousands of others great pleasure to see them; but when we study them closely now and discover that they are not according to the highest ideals, we begin to suspect a general want of truth in their representations. We find many fallacies of detail, and, in the end, though there may be grace of line, charm of color, rounded harmony, we carry away a strange feeling

that, after all, there is in them all a strong dash of the spurious. The ideal, though it lifted the artist, as it still lifts spectators, into a higher realm of thought and feeling, was none the less false. Now it was the difference here indicated that Shakespeare discerned and, in his youthful manner, tried to impress upon himself and his readers among his private friends.

Our poet next dwells upon the consequences of this error.

Son. 93. Supposing my ideal to be true, while it is in reality inadequate and so false, I shall be like a deceived husband, having Thy looks with me, though Thy heart is in another place. Yet there can be no expression of hatred in Thine eye, and I could not by that means learn of any estrangement.¹ In the looks of many the history of the false heart is written in strange moods, frowns, and wrinkles, but heaven, by the manner of Thy creation, which is imaginative, has ordained that in Thy face love must ever be expressed. Whatever Thy thoughts and emotions may be, Thy looks must be genial and inviting, and wear a smile of sweetness. How like the apple of Eve Thy beauty would become if its real nature did not in the end conform to its appearance, *i. e.*, a source of widespread and unending evil.

In view of his disappointments, the poet exclaims, almost in the depths of despair :

¹ That is, an ideal always seems to be encouraging and genial.

Son. 33. Full many a glorious morning have I seen, flattering the mountain tops with sovereign eye, kissing the green meadows with its golden lips and gilding the pale streams with its heavenly alchemy¹; anon, it permits the basest clouds to ride with ugly rack on its celestial face, and hide its visage from the forlorn world, as it steals ignobly to the west. Even so my sun one early morning shone, with all triumphant splendor: but, O, alack! it was but one hour mine, and now the region cloud has masked it from my view.² Yet it is not to be disdained for this, because if the great sun of the heavens may be obscured, the suns of the lesser world may also grow dim.

The poet adds, a little petulantly, perhaps:

Son. 34. But why didst Thou promise such a glorious day, luring me forth without a shelter, and then let the base clouds overtake me, while they hide Thy beauty in their rotten smoke? 'T is not enough that through those clouds Thou breakest (giving me a brighter glimpse now and then) to dry the rain on my storm-beaten brow. No man will care for a salve which heals the wound but leaves its mark behind, nor can a change of aspect be a physic to my grief, and even if thou shouldst repent (or become favorable), I still bear the loss. An offender's sorrow lends but slight relief to one who bears the cross of dishonor. Ah! no less Thy tears of repentance would be pearls rich enough to ransom all misdeeds.

¹ In *King John* (iii., 1, 77) it is said,

“ The glorious sun

Stays in his course and plays the alchemist.”

(See also Sonnet 114.)

² The region cloud, *i. e.*, the cloud in the air. *Hamlet* (ii., 2, 509).

Is it pressing a point too far to suppose here that in the foregoing sonnets, which begin with such high aspirations, coupled to a consciousness of secret power, and end in deep discouragement, we have a record of the poet's actual experiences? We have seen before¹ how, in his first effort, *Titus Adronicus*, he threw himself completely into the violent manner of the times, and by mere imitation of what had gone before him, out-heroded Herod. In the pieces that immediately followed, *Love's Labor's Lost*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Comedy of Errors*, and, perhaps, the first sketch of *The Taming of A Shrew*, he discarded his notable faults, and introduced a more gentle and delicate management of both characters and style; yet he could not wholly break away from his fondness for queer puns and conceits, frequent rhymes, doggerel verse, even sonnets in dialogue, pedantic classical allusions, and clowns, who spoke for the diversion of the groundlings and not for the furtherance of the play,—it was the fashion of the age.

But may we not suppose, too, as he so often excuses himself on the ground of his low fortunes, that he was compelled to do

¹ See *ante*, Group 3, p. 114.

work, merely to live, which did not carry with it his real approval. Painters at this day are sometimes required to put forth pictures which they call "pot-boilers," and which are anything but flattering representations of their powers. We know of Shakespeare that, before and after he was dead, plays were ascribed to him that were not at all worthy of his genius, and yet they may have been his.¹ None of them can be regarded as the work of the author of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Lear*, and yet some of them may have been the work of that author in his adolescence, and especially when he was in the hard grip of poverty. Acute modern critics do not scruple to point out passages in these, which, however tawdry the setting, show the touches of a master, but of a master in his salad days. Of his participation in the *Two Noble Kinsmen* there is no longer a doubt: a phrase or a cadence here and there in *Edward III.* makes us think that he helped the author, whoever he was; and an ink-blot, if no more, of him who complained that he had gone "here and there" in familiar intercourse with unknown minds, and trimmed his sails to every wind, is more than discernible in *Arden*

¹ The names of these doubtful or suspicious plays are given in nearly all lives of the poet.

of *Feversham* and *The Yorkshire Tragedy*.¹ But his fine poetic instincts turned him away gradually from these Stygian pools to heavenly air, where no foulness lived, and death itself was dead.

(5) *A Resolve to Amend.*

It was only natural for the young poet, seeing how he had wandered from what his genuine poetic instincts informed him was the right path, to endeavor to get back; and he appealed to his Muse, his ordinary, every-day Muse we may say, to resume allegiance to the Higher Muse, which had been estranged. He calls :

Son. 100. Where art thou, Muse, that thou hast forgotten to call upon that Higher Muse, who gives thee all thy force? Dost thou waste thy enthusiasm on some worthless song,² darkening thy power in order to lend a paltry subject light? Return, forgetful Muse, and redeem the time so idly spent, by gentle numbers! Sing again to the ear that will thy lays esteem, and lend thy pen both subject and style. Awake, torpid Muse,³ and look once more into the face of the true ideal; and if thou

¹ See Swinburne's remarks in *A Study of Shakespeare*, chap. iii., *passim*.

² Thy fury,—poetic enthusiasm, as in *Love's Labor's Lost* (iv., 3, 229): "What fury hath inspired thee now?" Othello also speaks of a "prophetic fury" (iii., 4, 72).

³ "Resty Muse," or, Muse too fond of rest. Dowden says, torpid. In Latin, *piger*, *lentus*.

findest that, in the lapse of time, wrinkles have been engraven there (or that it has suffered degradation), be a satirist¹ to that decay, and cause its spoils to be despised. Give the object of my love a fame that shall grow faster than Time's waste, and hinder the ravages of his malignant weapon.

The distinction between the ordinary Muse and the Higher Muse, is made very prominent in the next sonnet.

Son. 101. Oh, truant Muse, what amend canst thou make for thy neglect of "truth in beauty dyed"? Both Truth and Beauty depend upon the favors of the Higher Muse, as thou thyself dost in order to obtain true dignity.² Wilt thou answer, perchance, O Muse, that Truth needs no color but its own, and Beauty no decoration to show its harmony with Truth; and that the best is the best when unadulterated? But because it (*i. e.*, "Truth in Beauty dyed") needs no praise, wilt thou be silent? Offer no such excuse, as it is within thy power to render the Higher Muse immortal and win the applause of ages yet to be. Then do thy office, Muse, aye, teach me how to present him, in ages far hence, as he appears to me now.²

The poet's passion has revived; but his power of execution still lags.

¹ Quarto has, "be a satire," meaning satirist, as in Jonson's *Poetaster* (v. i.).

² In the Quarto the masculine term *him* is used of the Higher Muse, while in the edition of 1640 the term is feminine, *her*; but as the poet, in Sonnet 20, speaks of the Higher Muse as the master-mistress of his devotion, either term may be proper.

Son. 102. My devotion is stronger than it was, although the outward expressions of it are still weak. The feeling is not less because it makes less show. That love is merchandized¹ or cheapened whose richness the owner parades before the public. When our love was in its freshness I celebrated it in my verse, as the nightingale sings her song in the front of summer,² but stops as the season advances: not that summer is any the less pleasant than it used to be when her mournful hymns "hushed the night," but because every bough is now burdened with wild music; and pleasant things cease to be pleasant when they become common. Like the sweet bird, then, I sometimes hold my tongue that I may not weary You by its monotony.

Confessions of faults, as confession is said to be good for the soul, our poet gives us in plenty; he writes:

Son. 110. Alas, 't is only too true I have wandered away from the right path and made myself a spectacle to the mob, mutilated my best thoughts and turned my new tastes into old offences (by degrading them to the hackneyed commonplaces of the boards): I have looked askance and disdainfully at truth itself, as if it were something to be avoided, and yet, by all above, these blemishes have been of some profit, for even the worst of my essays have proved the best of friends to me. Now, all is over, save that which shall never end—my devotion to Thee—I shall never more attempt to sharpen

¹ See Sonnets 24, 14: and also *Love's Labor's Lost*

² The Quarto has "in Summer's front": See *Winter's Tale* (iv. 3, 3), "peering in April's front."

my appetite by new trials, which only serve to alienate an older companion. An exclusive god of my affection, henceforth give me welcome to Thy pure heart, as, next to Heaven itself, my best of homes.

His faults, however, he repeats, are not entirely his own.

Son. III. Still, if I have gone astray, it was not entirely my own fault, but chide an adverse fortune for the result, which did not provide for me a happier life than this dependence on public support, which generates public manners. Ascribe it to that guilty goddess, if my name has received a brand, and my very nature been subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand. Pity me, then, rather than upbraid me, and help me to a reform. A willing patient, I will drink potions of vinegar to cure my strong infection: I will think no bitterness bitter, no double penalties imposed upon me too severe, if they will only correct what I already deem correction. Pity me, dear friend, and I assure You Your pity alone will work out my reformation.

Son. III2. Yes, indeed, Your sympathy and commiseration will fill up the gaps that vulgar scandal has engraved upon my brow. If You will hide my bad and accept my good, what shall I care for the judgments of others, whether favorable or not? You are my all-the-world now; and my merits and demerits shall only be determined by Your decision. No one else for me, nor I for any one else, shall change my fixed sense of what is right or wrong (that is, poetically, not morally). I shall cast all care for the voices of others into so deep an abyss, that my ear, like that of an adder, shall be

stopped to all sounds alike, come they from carper or flatterer. Mark, too, how I dispense with their opinions.¹ You are so firmly knit into my purposes, that everything else in the world seems dead.

Son. 108. There is nothing in the brain — no conceit or aspiration, which it is possible to put down in writing — in which I have not endeavored to figure something of my true inward feeling toward Thee. What is there new to speak or to write which can be an adequate expression of my love or of Thy excellence? Nothing, dear one, and therefore every day I say over again the same thing, as one repeats his prayers, counting nothing old as long as Thou art mine, and I am Thine. It is an inspiration ever fresh, as fresh as it was in those early days when I first hallowed Thy love in my song. Love is eternal in its essence, and does not feel the injurious weight or dust of age, or acquire any wrinkles from the passage of Time. Antiquity, where the first conceit of it was born, will still prove to be its home,—though all the outward forms of it might seem to show that it was long since dead.

Son. 117. You have a right to complain of my scanting my services to You, to whom I am dearly bound by every tie of duty; of my intimacy with strange minds, to which I have surrendered what belonged of right to You: of my having hoisted sail to every wind that carried me farther from Your sight: book all my wilfulness and error down: accumulate surmises that have any real ground, and then visit me with Your frowns: but

¹The Quarto says, "Mark how with my neglect I do dispense," which means, Mark how I can excuse this neglect of others; and reference may be made to *Lucrece*, l. 1070, or l. 1279, also to *Comedy of Errors* (ii., 1, 123) and *Measure for Measure* (iii., 1, 135).

withhold Your settled hate, because I may make this appeal, that I served to bring out the constancy and force of Your love.

It is worthy of remark that in the sonnets (before given) in which Shakespeare deploras the lapses of the Episode, he speaks of them as moral offences or offences of the heart, "What wretched errors hath my heart committed!" he has wandered from his home of love,—quit the source of all good,—and fallen into a degradation which can only be cured by copious tears of repentance. But he laments his later faults as of an intellectual kind, or as errors of the head; he has looked on truth askance, he has associated with alien minds, trimmed his sail to every wind, resorted to expedients that have branded his name, the result often of his poverty; and they deserve pity rather than blame. But he will submit to any discipline, whereby he may be corrected and restored.

His lapses, the poet continues, were accomplished in this way:

Son. 118. As, in order to render our appetites more keen, we sting the palate with sharp compounds: or, as in purging, make ourselves sick to avoid sickness, even so, while I was full of your never-cloying sweetness, I adapted my taste to unusual sauces, and, weary of being well, found a sort of fitness in getting ill. This policy of

anticipation in art, or of exposing a healthful condition to medicinal treatment, turned the ills that might be into certain faults, but it has also taught me that drugs are a veritable poison to him who rejects your goodness.¹

The poet's resolution is now fixed against all changes.

Son. 107. Neither my own fears, as to my powers or my fidelity, nor "the prophetic soul² of the wide world," brooding over possibilities to come, shall control "the lease of my true love," or my hold of the Higher Muse, as if it had been foredoomed to a merely limited term.³ The "mortal moon"⁴—or the deadly half-light or reflected light—in which I have been groping,—has gone into eclipse, and the glum augurs who predicted my failure, now mock their own predictions. The uncertainties and doubts that hovered over my efforts are turned into assurances, and the peace of mind which I have at length attained proclaims a lease of endless continuance.⁵ The drops of comfort, falling to me in this balmy air, have renewed my force, and Time itself submits to my mastery. For while he may be yet

¹ The figure in this sonnet, though a striking one, is not very savory.

² "Oh, my prophetic Soul," *Hamlet* (i., 5, 40).

³ This is a peculiar use of the word "lease." The critics give it the go-by.

⁴ "The mortal moon" here means the deadly, the fatal, the injurious, as the author elsewhere speaks of a mortal grief, a mortal wound, a mortal engine, a mortal sword, a mortal asp, a mortal field of battle, etc.

⁵ The Quarto reads "olives of endless age," an expression which, as olives were emblems of peace, may be the right one; but I should prefer to consider the word as a misprint for "a lease" of endless date, referring back to the lease mentioned in line 4 as limited.

triumphing over dull and speechless tribes, I shall live in my humble verse, and Thou, too, when tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are withered, shalt find it an everlasting monument.

Many critics have tried to give this sonnet a historical bearing, which, in my opinion, is not justified, and strips it of the exceeding interest it has in its personal interpretation. Among others, Mr. Massey is quoted by Dowden as saying that it is a song of triumph over the death of Queen Elizabeth, and the release of Southampton from the Tower; George Brandes more recently takes the same view; but it is going a great way afoot to find a meaning, when the simple obvious meaning is very touching and beautiful. The poet is writing of himself, of the growth of his poetic faculty, and not at all of external events.

Son. 123. Time, thou shalt not boast of effecting any change in me: thy monuments,¹ restored by modern energy, are nothing astonishing or strange to me, but merely repetitions of what has gone before. Because our days are brief we admire that which thou dost foist upon us as antique, but we rather bring it forth as adapted to our present desire² than as something never before known. Thy registers and thee I disregard, not wondering at the Present or the Past, because what

¹ Pyramids: metaphor for what has been heaped or piled up.
Dowden.

² "Make them born to our desire."

thou hast left and what thou doest are made more or less false by the rapidity of thy movements.¹ This I vow, and will ever uphold, that in spite of thy scythe and thee, or in spite of what thou mayst promise or threaten, I will be true to myself—or to my convictions and ideals.

This sonnet is very instructive, as it seems to disclose the sentiment of the author, himself a great reformer, as to what is due to works of the Past, particularly those of classical antiquity, of which so much was made at his time. "They do not impose upon me," he said; "they have been largely worked over by modern effort: and they are more or less false because of the rapidity of the changes in our conditions. At any rate I will not make them a model but be true to myself and to that lofty ideal which transcends all time."

Son. 124. If my affection was a mere child of circumstances it might be "unfathered," or taken away from me as a bastard of fortune, subjected to the favors or the dislikes of the day,—a weed among weeds or a flower among flowers, as it may happen. But no; it was not built up as an accident, it does not suffer in the smiles of pompous pretension, nor does it fall under the blows of that forced discontent, to which the prevailing fashion invites our methods. It does not even fear that heretic policy, or the "prudence of self-interest," founded

¹ Thy changes are so swift, that we have no time to fix our tastes.

on short-lived calculations : it is in itself so grandly politic, that it cares neither for the heat that helps, nor the showers that destroy. In witness of the possibility of such a transformation, I refer to those exceptional souls,¹ who, having lived for crime, were yet able to die in the cause of goodness.

Son. 125. Of what avail has it been to me that in former times I bore the canopy over the head of a momentary chief, honoring an external success with an external homage? Of what avail was it that I tried to lay great "bases for eternity" on such slender foundations that they have turned into waste and ruin? Had I not seen the worshippers of mere form and favor lose all, or more than all, by paying too much for what they got, or by foregoing simple tastes for compound sweets? Poor strivers, they spent their strength in gazing about, not attaining any end. As for me, I shall be obsequious only in thy heart, O Muse, and please accept the oblation, which, though poor, is free and unmixed with any secondary feeling, — a mutual render or exchange between myself and thee! Away, too, you interested and forsworn defamers,² and know henceforth that a true

¹ In lines 13 and 14 of this sonnet, the Quarto reads: "To this I witness call the soles of time, which die for goodness, who have lived for crime." In nearly all modern editions the word "soles" has been changed into "fools," but I do not see that this change clears the obscurity. The poet, in Sonnets 123-125, is speaking of the great change that has come over his conception as to poetic ideals and methods. In 123 he asserts that it is now so fixed as to be beyond the influences of time, in 124 he repeats that, as it was not a product of accident, it will not again submit to prevailing influences; and then in the next sonnet, 125, he reiterates that, whatever his errors may have been, he now entertains only a free, pure, unadulterated devotion to his "love," the Higher Muse.

² The phrase "thou suborn'd informer" has puzzled the critics

soul, when it is most impeached by your charges, is the least under your control.

(6) *The Ideal in its Fulness.*

At length the poet is able to sum up the whole story, which he does in this grand way :

Son. 105. Let not this strong affection be regarded as idolatry, or a blind and unreasoning fervor, nor the object of it pass as a simple idol, because my songs and praises alike are all "of one, to one, still such and ever so." My verse is constrained to this monotony, expressing but one sentiment, and leaving out all differences, for the reason that the object of my love is good to-day and good to-morrow, or ever constant in its surpassing excellence. "Fair, kind, and true," or, varying the phrase, Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, are now my exclusive theme, on which I expend all my invention. Three themes in one, it affords a boundless scope for the exercise of the poetic faculty. Beauty, Goodness, and Truth each has had its worshippers and adepts (beauty in art, goodness in morals, and truth in science), but never until now have the three been held as one, or until Poetry embodies and celebrates the glorious trinity.

Our young poet has reached his culmination.

somewhat ; but it evidently means the same as in *Venus and Adonis* (655-7), where jealousy is called "this sour informer, this bate-breeding spy, this carry-tale." In *Love's Labor 's Lost* (v., 2, 463), "carry-tale" is also connected with "mumble-news." Our poet is simply here giving his parting fling at those who had once decried his efforts.

Having passed through what, in the terms of the old guilds, was called "apprentice years," and having strayed far away in his "wander years," he has at length reached the "master years," in which he can do for himself. He has now a full view of what is to be done, with a full consciousness of his own capacity to do it. He sees no longer in his personification of poetry simply "beauty," or simply "beauty dyed in truth," but a sublimation of all these qualities in a supreme unit of one in three and three in one.¹

(7) *Conquest and Triumph.*

Then it was that the poet, addressing himself alone, could exclaim, in a tone of more earnest exaltation than usually marked the conventional boasts of his contemporaries :

Son. 55. Not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme ; and you shall

¹His wonderful instinct of genius anticipated here the theory which has become the most satisfactory and universal in modern æsthetics. Any one who has read the æsthetic letters of Schiller or the profound treatises of other followers of Kant can hardly fail, I think, to discover in these few lines of Shakespeare a clear insight into the great realm they have entered and so profoundly explored. Hamlet and Othello and Lear and Perdita and Imogen and Beatrice are not now afar.

shine in its contents brighter than on any unswept stone, besmeared by sluttish Time. When wasteful war shall have overturned the statues, and civil broils uprooted masonry, neither the sword of Mars, nor the flames of battle, shall burn away this living record of your memory. You shall stand forth untouched by the obliterating enmity of death ; and your merits shall attract the looks of all posterity, even to the end of all — yea, even until that final judgment, when you shall arise personally to meet its decisions, you will still live, an object of esteem to every lover of verse.

A trumpet-blast of song ! Poetry shall outlast Time, and Genius be honored after the monuments of kings are buried — and a song, too, worthy of Shakespeare, who celebrates not himself so much as the art which accepts him as its highest impersonation.

Mr. Carlyle has argued that genius is unconscious of its power, but, in doing so, hits beyond his mark. Genius is always a mystery : it does not itself know the depth of its piercing insights, nor the sweep of its comprehensive outlooks ; but it does know that its glances are keener and broader than those of others, and more likely to endure. Shakespeare did not distinctly perceive in himself, especially in his younger days, his potentialities, the profound philosophy, the vigorous thought, the exquisite beauty, which critics have since

picked out of his teeming pages; yet, more than any man of his time, he must have felt the push of a mighty unknown power, and, better than any man of his time, he expressed exultingly what he could not exaggerate.

PART SECOND:
THE ORIGINAL SONNETS AS NEWLY
ARRANGED.

PART SECOND:

THE ORIGINAL SONNETS AS NEWLY ARRANGED.

THE Sonnets that follow are copied from Mr. Samuel Butler's reprint of the *fac-simile* edition by Mr. T. Tyler, after a comparison with that edition, specimens of which are to be found in the libraries of The Players and the Century Clubs, New York. The numbers to the right are those of the Quarto,—and the numbers in the centre are those of the new order. For convenience in reading, the long "s" has not been used in this reprint of the Sonnets.

I.—THE CENTRAL AND EXPLANATORY SONNET.

I.

77.

Thy glasse will shew thee how thy beauties were,
Thy dyall how thy pretious mynuits waste,
The vacant leaues thy mindes imprint will beare.
And of this booke, this learning maist thou taste.
The wrinckles which thy glasse will truly show,
Of mouthed graues will giue thee memorie,
Thou by thy dyals shady stealth maist know,
Times theeuish progresse to eternitie.
Looke what thy memorie cannot containe,
Commit to these waste blacks, and thou shalt finde
Those children nurst, deliuerd from thy braine,
To take a new acquaintance of thy minde.
These offices, so oft as thou wilt looke,
Shall profit thee, and much inrich thy booke.

II.—THE INDEPENDENTS OR SOLITARIES.

2.

145

THose lips that Loues owne hand did make,
 Breath'd forth the sound that said I hate,
 To me that languisht for her sake :
 But when she saw my wofull state,
 Straight in her heart did mercie come,
 Chiding that tongue that euer sweet,
 Was vsde in giuing gentle dome :
 And tought it thus a new to greete :
 I hate she alterd with an end,
 That follow'd it as gentle day,
 Doth follow night who like a fiend
 From heauen to hell is flowne away
 I hate, from hate away she threw,
 And sau'd my life saying not you.

3.

126.

OThou my louely Boy who in thy power,
 Doest hould times fickle glasse, his sickle, hower :
 Who hast by wayning growne, and therein shou'st,
 Thy louers withering, as thy sweet selfe grow'st.
 If Nature (soueraine misteres ouer wrack)
 As thou goest onwards still will plucke thee backe,
 She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill.
 May time disgrace, and wretched mynuit kill.
 Yet feare her O thou minnion of her pleasure,
 She may detaine, but not still keepe her tresure !
 Her *Andite* (though delayd) answer'd must be,
 And her *Quietus* is to render thee.

4.

153.

C*Vpid* laid by his brand and fell a sleepe,
 A maide of *Dyans* this aduantage found,
 And his loue-kindling fire did quickly steepe
 In a could vallie-fountaine of that ground :
 Which borrowd from this holie fire of loue,
 A datelesse liuely heat still to indure,
 And grew a seething bath which yet men proue,
 Against strang malladies a soueraigne cure :
 But at my mistres eie loues brand new fired,
 The boy for triall needes would touch my brest,
 I sick withall the helpe of bath desired,
 And thether hied a sad distempered guest.
 But found no cure, the bath for my helpe lies,
 Where *Cupid* got new fire ; my mistres eye.

5.

154.

THe little Loue-God lying once a sleepe,
 Laid by his side his heart inflaming brand,
 Whilst many Nymphes that vou'd chast life to keep,
 Came tripping by, but in her maiden hand,
 The fayrest votary tooke vp that fire,
 Which many Legions of true hearts had warm'd,
 And so the Generall of hot desire,
 Was sleeping by a Virgin hand disarm'd.
 This brand she quenched in a coole Well by,
 Which from loues fire tooke heat perpetuall,
 Growing a bath and healthfull remedy,
 For men diseasd, but I my Mistrisse thrall,
 Came there for cure and this by that I proue,
 Loues fire heates water, water cooles not loue.

6.

19.

DEuouring time blunt thou the Lyons pawes,
 And make the earth deuoure her owne sweet brood,
 Plucke the keene teeth from the fierce Tygers yawes,
 And burne the long liu'd Phænix in her blood,
 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
 And do what ere thou wilt swift-footed time
 To the wide world and all her fading sweets :
 But I forbid thee one most hainous crime,
 O carue not with thy howers my loues faire brow,
 Nor draw noe lines there with thine antique pen,
 Him in thy course vntainted doe allow,
 For beauties patterne to succeeding men.
 Yet doe thy worst ould Time dispight thy wrong,
 My loue shall in my verse euer liue young.

7.

122.

THy guift, thy tables, are within my braine
 Full characterd with lasting memory,
 Which shall aboue that idle rancke remaine
 Beyond all date euen to eternity.
 Or at the least, so long as braine and heart
 Haue facultie by nature to subsist,
 Til each to raz'd obliuion yeeld his part
 Of thee, thy record neuer can be mist :
 That poore retention could not so much hold,
 Nor need I tallies thy deare loue to skore,
 Therefore to giue them from me was I bold,
 To trust those tables that receaue thee more,
 To keepe an adiunckt to remember thee,
 Were to import forgetfulnesse in mee.

8.

81.

OR I shall liue your Epitaph to make,
 Or you suruiue when I in earth am rotten,
 From hence your memory death cannot take,
 Although in me each part will be forgotten.
 Your name from hence immortall life shall haue,
 Though I (once gone) to all the world must dye,
 The earth can yeeld me but a common graue,
 When you intombd in mens eyes shall lye,
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
 Which eyes not yet created shall ore-read,
 And tongs to be, your beeing shall rehearse,
 When all the breathers of this world are dead,
 You still shall liue (such vertue hath my Pen).
 Where breath most breaths, euen in the mouths of men.

9.

63.

AGAINST my loue shall be as I am now
 With times iniurious hand chrusht and ore-worne,
 When houres haue dreind his blood and fild his brow
 With lines and wrinkles, when his youthfull morne
 Hath trauaild on to Ages steepee night,
 And all those beauties whereof now he's King
 Are vanishing, or vanisht out of sight,
 Stealing away the treasure of his Spring.
 For such a time do I now fortifie
 Against confounding Ages cruell knife,
 That he shall neuer cut from memory
 My sweet loues beauty, though my louers life.
 His beautie shall in these blacke lines be seene,
 And they shall liue, and he in them still greene.

10.

26.

Lord of my loue, to whome in vassalage
 Thy merrit hath my dutie strongly knit ;
 To thee I send this written ambassage
 To wnesse duty, not to shew my wit.
 Duty so great, which wit so poore as mine
 May make seeme bare, in wanting words to shew it ;
 But that I hope some good conceipt of thine
 In thy soules thought (all naked) will bestow it ;
 Til whatsoever star that guides my mouing,
 Points on me graciously with faire aspect,
 And puts apparrell on my tottered louing,
 To show me worthy of their sweet respect,
 Then may I dare to boast how I doe loue thee,
 Til then, not show my head where thou maist proue me.

III.—A PLEA FOR CREATIVE OR POETIC ART.

11.

12.

When I doe count the clock that tels the time,
 And see the braue day sunck in hidious night,
 When I behold the violet past prime,
 And sable curls or siluer'd ore with white :
 When lofty trees I see barren of leaues,
 Which erst from heat did canopie the herd
 And Sommers greene all girded vp in sheaues
 Borne on the beare with white and bristly beard :
 Then of thy beauty do I question make
 That thou among the wastes of time must goe,
 Since sweets and beauties do them-selues forsake,
 And die as fast as they see others grow,
 And nothing gainst Times sieth can make defence
 Saue breed to braue him, when he takes thee hence.

12.

1.

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
 That thereby beauties *Rose* might neuer die,
 But as the riper should by time decease,
 His tender heire might beare his memory :
 But thou contracted to thine owne bright eyes,
 Feed'st thy light's flame with selfe substantiall fewell,
 Making a famine where aboundance lies,
 Thy selfe thy foe, to thy sweet selfe too cruell :
 Thou that art now, the worlds fresh ornament,
 And only herauld to the gaudy spring,
 Within thine owne bud buriest thy content,
 And tender chorle makst wast in niggarding :
 Pitty the world, or else this glutton be,
 To eate the worlds due, by the graue and thee.

13.

4.

VNthrifty louelinesse why dost thou spend,
 Vpon thy selfe thy beauties legacy ?
 Natures bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
 And being franck she lends to those are free :
 Then beautious nigard why doost thou abuse,
 The bountious largesse giuen thee to giue ?
 Profitles vserer why dost thou vse
 So great a summe of summes yet can'st not liue ?
 For hauing traffike with thy selfe alone,
 Thou of thy selfe thy sweet selfe dost deceaue,
 Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,
 What acceptable *Audit* can'st thou leaue ?
 Thy vnus'd beauty must be tomb'd with thee,
 Which vsed liues th' executor to be.

14.

10.

FOr shame deny that thou bear st loue to any
 Who for thy selfe art so vnprouident
 Graunt if thou wilt, thou art belou'd of many,
 But that thou none lou'st is most euident :
 For thou art so possest with murdrous hate,
 That gainst thy selfe thou stickst not to conspire,
 Seeking that beautious roofe to ruinate
 Which to repaire should be thy chiefe desire :
 O change thy thought, that I may change my minde,
 Shall hate be fairer log'd then gentle loue ?
 Be as thy presence is gracious and kind,
 Or to thy selfe at least kind harted proue,
 Make thee an other selfe for loue of me,
 That beauty still may liue in thine or thee.

15.

3.

LOoke in thy glasse and tell the face thou vewest,
 Now is the time that face should forme an other,
 Whose fresh repaire if now thou not renewest,
 Thou doo'st beguile the world, vnblesse some mother.
 For where is she so faire whose vn-eard wombe
 Disdaines the tillage of thy husbandry ?
 Or who is he so fond will be the tombe,
 Of his selfe loue to stop posterity ?
 Thou art thy mothers glasse and she in thee
 Calls backe the louely Aprill of her prime,
 So thou through windowes of thine age shalt see,
 Dispight of wrinkles this thy goulden time.
 But if thou liue remembred not to be,
 Die single and thine Image dies with thee.

16.

5.

THose howers that with gentle worke did frame,
 The louely gaze where euery eye doth dwell
 Will play the tirants to the very same,
 And that vnfaire which fairely doth excell :
 For neuer resting time leads Summer on,
 To hidious winter and confounds him there,
 Sap checkt with frost and lustie leau's quite gon.
 Beauty ore-snow'd and barenes euery where,
 Then were not summers distillation left
 A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glasse,
 Beauties effect with beauty were bereft,
 Nor it nor noe remembrance what it was.

But flowers distil'd though they with winter meete,
 Leese but their show, their substance still liues sweet.

17.

6.

THen let not winters wragged hand deface,
 In thee thy summer ere thou be distil'd :
 Make sweet some viall ; treasure thou some place,
 With beauties treasure ere it be selfe kil'd :
 That vsre is not forbidden vsery,
 Which happies those that pay the willing lone ;
 That's for thy selfe to breed an other thee,
 Or ten times happier be it ten for one,
 Ten times thy selfe were happier then thou art,
 If ten of thine ten times refigur'd thee,
 Then what could death doe if thou should'st depart,
 Leauing thee liuing in posterity ?

Be not selfe-wild for thou art much too faire,
 To be deaths conquest and make wormes thine heire.

18.

2.

When fortie Winters shall beseige thy brow,
 And digge deep trenches in thy beauties field,
 Thy youthes proud liuery so gaz'd on now,
 Wil be a totter'd weed of smal worth held :
 Then being askt, where all thy beautie lies,
 Where all the treasure of thy lusty daies ;
 To say within thine owne deepe sunken eyes,
 Were an all-eating shame, and thriftlesse praise.
 How much more praise deseru'd thy beauties vse,
 If thou couldst answeare this faire child of mine
 Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse
 Proouing his beautie by succession thine.

This were to be new made when thou art ould,
 And see thy blood warme when thou feel'st it could.

19.

11.

AS fast as thou shalt wane so fast thou grow'st
 In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
 And that fresh bloud which yongly thou bestow'st,
 Thou maist call thine, when thou from youth conuertest,
 Herein liues wisdom, beauty, and increase,
 Without this follie, age, and could decay,
 If all were minded so, the times should cease,
 And threescore yeare would make the world away :
 Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
 Harsh, featurelesse, and rude, barrenly perrish,
 Looke whom she best indow'd, she gaue the more ;
 Which bountious guift thou shouldst in bounty cherrish,
 She caru'd thee for her seale, and ment therby,
 Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.

20.

9.

IS it for feare to wet a widdowes eye,
 That thou consum'st thy selfe in single life?
 Ah; if thou issuesse shalt hap to die,
 The world will waile thee like a makelesse wife,
 The world wilbe thy widdow and still weepe,
 That thou no forme of thee hast left behind,
 When euery priuat widdow well may keepe,
 By childrens eyes, her husbands shape in minde:
 Looke what an vnthrif in the world doth spend
 Shifts but his place, for still the world inioyes it
 But beauties waste, hath in the world an end,
 And kept vnvsde the vser so destroyes it:
 No loue toward others in that bosome sits
 That on himselfe such murdrous shame commits.

21.

13.

O That you were your selfe, but loue you are
 No longer yours, then you your selfe here liue,
 Against this cumming end you should prepare,
 And your sweet semblance to some other giue.
 So should that beauty which you hold in lease
 Find no determination, then you were
 You selfe again after your selves decease,
 When your sweet issue your sweet forme should beare.
 Who lets so faire a house fall to decay,
 Which husbandry in honour might vphold,
 Against the stormy gusts of winters day
 And barren rage of deaths eternall cold?
 O none but vnthrif, deare my loue you know,
 You had a Father, let your Son say so.

22.

7.

LOe in the Orient when the gracious light,
 Lifts vp his burning head, each vnder eye
 Doth homage to his new appearing sight,
 Seruing with lookes his sacred maiesty,
 And hauing climb'd the steepe vp heauenly hill,
 Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
 Yet mortall lookes adore his beauty still,
 Attending on his goulden pilgrimage :
 But when from high-most pich with wery car,
 Like feeble age he reeleth from the day,
 The eyes (fore dutious) now conuerted are
 From his low tract and looke an other way :
 So thou, thy selfe out-going in thy noon :
 Vnlok'd on diest vnlesse thou get a sonne.

23.

8.

MVsick to heare, why hear'st thou musick sadly,
 Sweets with sweets warre not, ioy delights in ioy :
 Why lou'st thou that which thou receaust not gladly,
 Or else receau'st with pleasure thine annoy ?
 If the true concord of well tuned sounds,
 By vnions married do offend thine eare,
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
 In singlenesse the parts that thou should'st beare :
 Marke how one string sweet husband to an other,
 Strike each in each by mutuall ordering ;
 Resembling sier, and child, and happy mother,
 Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing :
 Whose spechlesse song being many, seeming one,
 Sings this to thee thou single wilt proue none.

24.

15.

WHen I consider euery thing that growes
 Hold sin perfection but a little moment.
 That this huge stage presenteth nought but showes
 Whereon the Stars in secret influence comment,
 When I perceiue that men as plants increase,
 Cheared and checkt euen by the selfe-same skie :
 Vaunt in their youthfull sap, at height decrease,
 And were their braue state out of memory.
 Then the conceit of this inconstant stay,
 Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
 Where wastfull time debateth with decay
 To change your day of youth to sullied night,
 And all in war with Time for loue of you
 As he takes from you, I ingraft you new.

25.

16.

BVt wherefore do not you a mightier waie
 Make warre vpon this bloudie tirant time ?
 And fortifie your selfe in your decay
 With meanes more blessed then my barren rime ?
 Now stand you on the top of happie houres,
 And many maiden gardens yet vnset,
 With vertuous wish would beare your liuing flowers,
 Much liker then your painted counterfeit :
 So should the lines of life that life repaire
 Which this (Times pensel or my pupill pen)
 Neither in inward worth nor outward faire
 Can make you liue your selfe in eies of men,
 To giue away your selfe, keeps your selfe still,
 And you must liue drawne by your owne sweet skill.

26.

17.

WHo will beleue my verse in time to come
 If it were fild with your most high deserts?
 Though yet heauen knowes it is but as a tombe
 Which hides your life, and shewes not halfe your parts :
 If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
 The age to come would say this Poet lies,
 Such heauenly touches nere toucht earthly faces.
 So should my papers (yellowed with their age)
 Be scorn'd, like old men of lesse truth then tongue,
 And your true rights be termd a Poets rage,
 And stretched miter of an Antique song.
 But were some childe of yours aliuie that time,
 You should liue twise in it, and in my rime.

27.

14

NOt from the stars do I my iudgement plucke,
 And yet me thinkes I haue Astronomy,
 But not to tell of good or euil lucke,
 Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons quallity,
 Nor can I fortune to breefe mynuits tell ;
 Pointing to each his thunder, raine and winde,
 Or say with Princes if it shal go wel
 By oft predict that I in heauen finde.
 But from thine eies my knowledge I deriue,
 And constant stars in them I read such art
 As truth and beautie shall together thriue
 If from thy selfe, to store thou wouldst conuert :
 Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
 Thy end is Truthes and Beauties doome and date.

IV. A YOUNG LOVE-TIME.

28.

25.

LEt those who are in fauor with their stars,
 Of publike honour and proud titles bost,
 Whilst I whome fortune of such tryumph bars
 Vnlookt for ioy in that I honour most ;
 Great Princes fauorites their faire leaues spread
 But as the Marygold at the suns eye,
 And in them-selues their pride lies buried,
 For at a frowne they in their glory die.
 The painefull warriar famosed for worth,
 After a thousand victories once foild,
 Is from the booke of honour rased quite,
 And all the rest forgot for which he toild :
 Then happy I that loue and am beloued
 Where I may not remoue nor be remoued.

29.

21.

SO is it not with me as with that Muse,
 Stird by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who heauen it selfe for ornament doth vse,
 And euery faire with his faire doth reherse,
 Making a coopelment of proud compare
 With Sunne and Moone, with earth and seas rich gems :
 With Aprills first borne flowers and all things rare,
 That heauens ayre in this huge rondure hems,
 O let me true in loue but truly write,
 And then beleue me, my loue is as faire,
 As any mothers childe, though not so bright
 As those gould candells fixt in heauens ayer :
 Let them say more that like of heare-say well,
 I will not prayse that purpose not to sell.

30.

130.

MY Mistres eyes are nothing like the Sunne,
 Currall is farre more red, then her lips red,
 If snow be white, why then her brests are dun :
 If haire be wiers, black wiers grow on her head :
 I haue seene Roses damaskt, red and white,
 But no such Roses see I in her cheekes,
 And in some perfumes is there more delight,
 Then in the breath that from my Mistres reekes.
 I loue to hear her speake, yet well I know,
 That Musicke hath a farre more pleasing sound :
 I graunt I neuer saw a goddesse goe,
 My Mistres when shee walkes treads on the ground,
 And yet by heauen I thinke my loue as rare,
 As any she beli'd with false compare.

31.

18.

SHall I compare thee to a Summers day?
 Thou art more louely and more temperate :
 Rough windes do shake the darling buds of Maie,
 And Sommers lease hath all too short a date :
 Sometime too hot the eye of heauen shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimn'd,
 And euey faire from faire some-time declines,
 By chance, or natures changing course vntrim'd :
 But thy eternall Sommer shall not fade,
 Nor loose possession of that faire thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wandr'st in his shade,
 When in eternall lines to time thou grow'st,
 So long as men can breath or eyes can see,
 So long liues this, and this giues life to thee.

32.

104.

TO me faire friend you neuer can be old,
 For as you were when first your eye I eyde,
 Such seemes your beautie still : Three Winters colde,
 Haue from the forrests shooke three summers pride,
 Three beautious springs to yellow *Autumne* turn'd,
 In processe of the seasons haue I seene,
 Three Aprill perfumes in three hot Iunes burn'd,
 Since first I saw you fresh which yet are greene.
 Ah yet doth beauty like a Dyall hand,
 Steale from his figure, and no pace perceiu'd,
 So your sweete hew, which me thinkes still doth stand
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceaued.
 For feare of which, heare this thou age vnbred,
 Ere you were borne was beauties summer dead.

33.

22.

MY glasse shall not perswade me I am ould,
 So long as youth and thou are of one date,
 But when in thee times forrwes I behould,
 Then look I death my daies should expiate.
 For all that beauty that doth couer thee,
 Is but the seemely rayment of my heart,
 Which in thy brest doth liue, as thine in me,
 How can I then be elder then thou art ?
 O therefore loue be of thy selfe so wary,
 As I not for my selfe, but for thee will,
 Bearing thy heart which I will keepe so chary
 As tender nurse her babe from faring ill,
 Perfume not on thy heart when mine is slaine,
 Thou gau'st me thine not to giue backe againe.

Perfume

34.

32.

IF thou suruiue my well contented daie,
 When that churle death my bones with dust shall couer
 And shalt by fortune once more re-suruay :
 These poore rude lines of thy deceased Louer :
 Compare them with the bett'ring of the time,
 And though they be out-stript by euery pen,
 Reserue them for my loue, not for their rime,
 Exceeded by the hight of happier men.
 Oh then voutsafe me but this louing thought,
 Had my friends Muse growne with this growing age,
 A dearer birth then this his love had brought
 To march in ranckes of better equipage :
 But since he died and Poets better proue,
 Theirs for their stile ile read, his for his loue.

35.

50.

HOW heauie doe I iourney on the way,
 When what I seeke (my wearie trauels end)
 Doth teach that ease and that repose to say
 Thus farre the miles are measurde from thy friend.
 The beast that beares me, tired with my woe,
 Plods duly on, to beare that waight in me,
 As if by some instinct the wretch did know
 His rider lou'd not speed being made from thee :
 The bloody spurre cannot prouoke him on,
 That some-times anger thrusts into his hide,
 Which heauily he answers with a grone,
 More sharpe to me then spurring to his side,
 For that same grone doth put this in my mind,
 My greefe lies onward and my ioy behind.

36.

51.

THUS can my loue excuse the slow offence,
 Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed,
 From where thou art, why should I hast me thence,
 Till I returne of posting is noe need.
 O what excuse will my poore beast then find,
 When swift extremity can seeme but slow,
 Then should I spurre though mounted on the wind,
 In winged speed no motion shall I know,
 Then can no horse with my desire keepe pace,
 Therefore desire (of perfects loue being made)
 Shall naigh noe dull flesh in his fiery race,
 But loue, for loue, thus shall excuse my iade,
 Since from thee going, he went wilfull slow,
 Towards thee ile run, and giue him leaue to goe.

37.

27.

WEary with toyle, I hast me to my bed,
 The deare repose for lims with trauaill tired,
 But then begins a iourney in my head
 To worke my mind, when boddies work's expired.
 For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
 Intend a zelous pilgrimage to thee :
 And keepe my drooping eye-lids open wide,
 Looking on darknes which the blind doe see.
 Saue that my soules imaginary sight
 Presents their shaddoe to my sightles view,
 Which like a iewell (hunge in gastly night)
 Makes blacke night beautious, and her old face new.
 Loe thus by day my lims, by night my mind,
 For thee, and for my selfe, noe quiet finde.

38.

28.

HOW can I then returne in happy plight
 That am debar'd the benefit of rest?
 When daies oppression is not eazd by night,
 But day by night and night by day oprest.
 And each (though enimies to ethers raigne)
 Doe in consent shake hands to torture me,
 The one by toyle, the other to complaine
 How far I toyle, still farther off from thee.
 I tell the Day to please him thou art bright,
 And do'st him grace when clouds doe blot the heauen:
 So flatter I the swart complexion'd night,
 When sparkling stars twire not thou guil'st th' eauen,
 But day doth daily draw my sorrowes longer, [stronger
 And night doth nightly make griefes length seeme

39.

44.

IF the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
 Iniurious distance should not stop my way,
 For then dispight of space I would be brought,
 From limits farre remote, where thou doost stay,
 No matter then although my foote did stand
 Vpon the farthest earth remoou'd from thee,
 For nimble thought can iumpe both sea and land,
 As soone as thinke the place where he would be.
 But ah, thought kills me that I am not thought
 To leape large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
 But that so much of earth and water wrought,
 I must attend, times leasure with my mone.
 Receiuing naughts by elements so sloe,
 But heaue teares, badges of eithers woe.

40.

45.

THe other two, slight ayre, and purging fire,
 Are both with thee, where euer I abide,
 The first my thought, the other my desire,
 These present absent with swift motion slide,
 For when these quicker Elements are gone
 In tender Embassie of loue to thee,
 My life being made of foure, with two alone,
 Sinks downe to death, opprest with melancholie,
 Vntill liues composition be recured,
 By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
 Who euen but now come back againe assured,
 Of their faire health, recounting it to me.
 This told, I ioy, but then no longer glad,
 I send them back againe and straight grow sad.

41.

46.

Mine eye and heart are at a mortall warre,
 How to deuide the conquest of thy sight,
 Mine eye, my heart their pictures sight would barre,
 My heart, mine eye the freedome of that right,
 My heart doth plead that thou in him doost lye,
 (A closet neuer pearst with christall eyes)
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,
 And sayes in him their faire appearance lyes,
 To side this title is impannelled
 A quest of thoughts, all tennants to the heart,
 And by their verdict is determined
 The cleere eyes moyitie, and he deare hearts part.
 As thus, mine eyes due is their outward part,
 And my hearts right, their inward loue of heart.

42.

47.

BEtwixt mine eye and heart a league is tooke,
 And each doth good turnes now vnto the other,
 When that mine eye is famisht for a looke,
 Or heart in loue with sighes himsele doth smother ;
 With my louses picture then my eye doth feast,
 And to the painted banquet bids my heart :
 An other time mine eye is my hearts guest,
 And in his thoughts of loue doth share a part.
 So either by thy picture or my loue,
 Thy seife away, are present still with me.
 For thou nor farther then my thoughts canst moue,
 And I am still with them, and they with thee.
 Or if they sleepe, thy picture in my sight
 Awakes my heart, to hearts and eyes delight.

43.

52.

SO am I as the rich whose blessed key,
 Can bring him to his sweet vp-locked treasure,
 The which he will not eu'ry hower suruay,
 For blunting the fine point of seldome pleasure.
 Therefore are feasts so sollemne and so rare,
 Since sildom comming in the long yeare set,
 Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
 Or captaine Iewells in the carconet.
 So is the time that keepes you as my chest,
 Or as the ward-robe which the robe doth hide,
 To make some speciall instant speciall blest,
 By new vnfoulding his imprison'd pride.
 Blessed are you whose worthinesse giues skope,
 Being had to tryumph, being lackt to hope.

44.

30.

When to the Sessions of sweet silent thought,
 I sommon vp remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lacke of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new waile my deare times waste :
 Then can I drowne an eye (vn-vs'd to flow)
 For precious friends hid in deaths dateles night,
 And weepe a fresh loues long since canceld woe,
 And mone th' expence of many a vannisht sight.
 Then can I greeue at greeuances fore-gon,
 And heauily from woe to woe tell ore
 The sad account of fore-bemomed mone,
 Which I new pay, as if not payd before.
 But if the while I thinke on thee (deare friend)
 All losses are restord, and sorrowes end.

45.

31.

Thy bosome is indeared with all hearts,
 Which I by lacking haue supposed dead,
 And there raignes Loue and all Loues louing parts,
 And all those friends which I thought buried.
 How many a holy and obsequious teare
 Hath deare religious loue stolne from mine eye,
 As interest of the dead, which now appeare,
 But things remou'd that hidden in there lie.
 Thou art the graue where buried loue doth liue,
 Hung with the tropheis of my louers gon,
 Who all their parts of me to thee did giue,
 That due of many, now is thine alone.
 Their images I lou'd, I view in thee,
 And thou (all they) hast all the all of me.

46.

48.

HOw carefull was I when I tooke my way,
 Each trifle vnder truest barres to thrust,
 That to my vse it might vn-vsed stay
 From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust?
 But thou, to whom my iewels trifles are,
 Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grieffe,
 Thou best of deerest, and mine onely care,
 Art left the prey of euery vulgar theefe.
 Thee haue I not lockt vp in any chest,
 Saue where thou art not, though I feele thou art,
 Within the gentle closure of my brest,
 From whence at pleasure thou maist come and part,
 And euen thence thou wilt be stolne I feare,
 For truth prooues theeuish for a prize so deare.

47.

116.

LEt me not to the marriage of true mindes
 Admit impediments, loue is not loue
 Which alters when it alteration findes,
 Or bends with the remouer to remoue.
 O no, it is an euer fixed marke
 That lookes on tempests and is neuer shaken ;
 It is the star to euery wandring barke,
 Whose worths vnknowne, although his high be taken.
 Lou's not Times foole, though rosie lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickles compasse come,
 Loue alters not with his breefe houres and weekes,
 But beares it out euen to the edge of doome :
 If this be error and vpon me proued,
 I neuer writ, nor no man euer loued.

48.

115.

THose lines that I before haue writ doe lie,
 Euen those that said I could not loue you deerer,
 Yet then my iudgement knew no reason why.
 My most full flame should afterwards burne cleerer,
 But reckening time, whose milliond accidents
 Creepe in twixt vowes, and change decrees of Kings,
 Tan sacred beautie, blunt the sharp'st intents,
 Diuert strong mindes to th' course of altring things :
 Alas why fearing of times tiranie,
 Might I not then say now I loue you best,
 When I was certaine ore in-certainty,
 Crowning the present, doubting of the rest :
 Loue is a Babe, then might I not say so
 To giue full growth to that which still doth grow.

49.

137.

THou blinde foole loue, what doost thou to mine eyes,
 That they behold and see not what they see :
 They know what beautie is, see where it lyes,
 Yet what the best is, take the worst to be :
 If eyes corrupt by ouer-partiall lookes,
 Be anchord in the baye where all men ride,
 Why of eyes falsehood hast thou forged hookes,
 Whereto the iudgement of my heart is tide ?
 Why should my heart thinke that a seuerall plot,
 Which my heart knowes the wide worlds common place ?
 Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not
 To put faire truth vpon so foule a face,
 In things right true my heart and eyes haue erred,
 And to this false plague are they now transferred.

50.

54.

OH how much more doth beautie beantious seeme,
 By that sweet ornament which truth doth giue,
 The Rose lookes faire, but fairer we it deeme
 For that sweet odor, which doth in it liue :
 The Canker bloomes haue full as deepe a die,
 As the perfumed tincture of the Roses,
 Hang on such thornes, and play as wantonly
 When sommers breath their masked buds discloses :
 But for their vertue only is their show,
 They liue vnwoo'd, and vnrespected fade,
 Die to themselues. Sweet Roses doe not so,
 Of their sweet deathes, are sweetest odors made :
 And so of you, beautious and louely youth,
 When that shall vade, by verse distils your truth.

51.

69.

THose parts of thee that the worlds eye doth view,
 Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend :
 All tongs (the voice of foules) giue thee that end,
 Vttring bare truth, euen so as foes Commend.
 Their outward thus with outward praise is crownd,
 But those same tongues that giue thee so thine owne,
 In other accents doe this praise confound
 By seeing farther then the eye hath showne.
 They looke into the beauty of thy mind,
 And that in guesse they measure by thy deeds,
 Then churls their thoughts (although their eies were
 kind)
 To thy faire flower ad the rancke smell of weeds,
 But why thy odor matcheth not thy show,
 The solye is this, that thou doest common grow.

52.

70.

THAT thou art blam'd shall not be thy defect,
 For slanders marke was euer yet the faire,
 The ornament of beauty is suspect,
 A Crow that flies in heauens sweetest ayre.
 So thou be good, slander doth but approue,
 Their worth the greater being woo'd of time,
 For Canker vice the sweetest buds doth loue,
 And thou present'st a pure vnstayned prime.
 Thou hast past by the ambush of young daies,
 Either not assayld, or victor beeing charg'd,
 Yet this thy praise cannot be foe thy praise,
 To tye vp enuy, euermore enlarged,
 If some suspect of ill maskt not thy show,
 Then thou alone kingdomes of hearts shouldst owe.

53.

121.

TIS better to be vile then vile esteemed,
 When not to be, receiues reproach of being,
 And the iust pleasure lost, which is so deemed,
 Not by our feeling, but by others seeing.
 For why should others false adulterat eyes
 Giue salutation to my sportiue blood?
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies;
 Which in their wils count bad what I think good?
 Noe, I am that I am, and they that leuell
 At my abuses, reckon vp their owne,
 I may be straight though they them-selues be beuel
 By their rancke thoughtes, my deeds must not be shown
 Vnlesse this generall euill they maintaine,
 All men are bad and in their badnesse raigne.

54.

94.

They that haue powre to hurt, and will doe none,
 That doe not do the thing, they most do showe,
 Who mouing others, are themselues as stone,
 Vnmoued, could, and to temptation slow :
 They rightly do inherit heauens graces,
 And husband natures ritches from expence,
 They are the Lords and owners of their faces,
 Others, but stewards of their excellence :
 The sommers flowre is to the sommer sweet,
 Though to it selfe, it onely liue and die,
 But if that flowre with base infection meete
 The basest weed out-braues his dignity :
 For sweetest things turne sowrest by their deedes,
 Lillies that fester, smell far worse than weeds.

55.

66.

Tyr'd with all these for restfull death I cry,
 As to behold desert a begger borne
 And needie Nothing trimd in iollitie,
 And purest faith vnhappily forsworne,
 And gilded honor shamefully misplast,
 And maiden vertue rudely strumpeted,
 And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
 And strength by limping sway disabled,
 And arte made tung-tide by authoritie,
 And Folly (Doctor-like) controuling skill,
 And simple-Truth miscalde Simplicitie,
 And captiue-good attending Captaine ill.
 Tyr'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
 Saue that to dye, I leaue my loue alone.

56.

67.

AH wherefore with infection should he liue,
 And with his presence grace impietie,
 That sinne by him aduantage should atchiue,
 And lace it selfe with his societie?
 Why should false painting immitate his cheeke,
 And steale dead seeing of his liuing hew?
 Why should poore beautie indirectly seeke
 Roses of shaddow, since his Rose is true?
 Why should he liue, now nature banckrout is,
 Beggerd of blood to blush through liuely vaines,
 For she hath no exchecker now but his,
 And proud of many, liues vpon his gaines?
 O him she stores, to show what welth she had
 In daies long since, before these last so bad.

57.

68.

THus is his cheeke the map of daies out-worne,
 When beauty liu'd and dy'ed as flowers do now,
 Before these bastard signes of faire were borne,
 Or durst inhabit on a liuing brow:
 Before the goulden tresses of the dead,
 The right of sepulchers, were shorne away,
 To liue a scond life on second head,
 Ere beauties dead fleece made another gay:
 In him those holy antique howers are seene,
 Without all ornament, it selfe and true,
 Making no summer of an others greene,
 Robbing no ould to dresse his beauty new,
 And him as for a map doth Nature store,
 To shew faulse Art what beauty was of yore.

58.

73.

THat time of yeeare thou maist in me behold,
 When yellow leaues, or none, or few doe hange
 Vpon those boughes which shake against the could,
 Bare rn'wd quiers, where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou seest the twi-light of such day,
 As after Sun-set fadeth in the West,
 Which by and by blacke night doth take away,
 Deaths second selfe that seals vp all in rest.
 In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lye,
 As the death bed, whereon it must expire,
 Consum'd with that which it was nurrisht by.

This thou perceu'st, which makes thy loue more strong,
 To loue that well, which thou must leaue ere long.

59.

71.

NOe Longer mourne for me when I am dead,
 Then you shall heare the surly sullen bell
 Giue warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world with vildest wormes to dwell :
 Nay if you read this line, remember not,
 The hand that writ it, for I loue you so,
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 O if (I say) you looke vpon this verse,
 When I (perhaps) compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poore name reherse ;
 But let your loue euen with my life decay.

Least the wise world should looke into your mone,
 And moeke you with me after I am gon.

60.

72.

O Least the world should taske you to recite,
 What merit liu'd in me that you should loue
 After my death (deare loue) for get me quite,
 For you in me can nothing worthy proue.
 Vnless you would deuise some vertuous lye,
 To doe more for me then mine owne desert,
 And hang more praise vpon deceased I,
 Then nigard truth would willingly impart :
 O least your true loue may seeme falce in this,
 That you for loue speake well of me vntrue,
 My name be buried where my body is,
 And liue no more to shame nor me, nor you.
 For I am shamd by that which I bring forth,
 And so should you, to loue things nothing worth.

61.

74.

BVt be contented when that fell arest,
 With out all bayle shall carry me away,
 My life hath in this line some interest,
 Which for memoriall still with thee shall stay.
 When thou reuwest this, thou doest reuew,
 The very part was consecrate to thee,
 The earth can haue but earth, which is his due,
 My spirit is thine the better part of me,
 So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
 The pray of wormes, my body being dead,
 The coward conquest of a wretches knife,
 To base of thee to be remembered,
 The worth of that, is that which it containes,
 And that is this, and this with thee remaines.

62.

97.

HOW like a Winter hath my absence beene
 From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting yeare?
 What freezings haue I felt, what darke daies seene?
 What old Decembers barenesse euery where?
 And yet this time remou'd was sommers time,
 The teeming Autumne big with ritch increase,
 Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime,
 Like widdowed wombes after their Lords decease:
 Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me,
 But hope of Orphans, and vn-fathered fruite,
 For Sommer and his pleasures waite on thee,
 And thou away, the very birds are mute.
 Or if they sing, tis with so dull a cheere,
 That leaues looke pale, dreading the Winters neere.

63.

98.

FROM you haue I beene absent in the spring,
 When proud pide Aprill (drest in all his trim)
 Hath put a spirit of youth in euery thing:
 That heaueie *Saturne* laught and leapt with him.
 Yet nor the laies of birds, nor the sweet smell
 Of different flowers in odor and in hew,
 Could make me any summers story tell:
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew
 Nor did I wonder at the Lillies white,
 Nor praise the deepe vermillion in the Rose,
 They weare but sweet, but figures of delight:
 Drawne after you, you patterne of all those.
 Yet seem'd it Winter still, and you away,
 As with your shaddow I with these did play.

64.

99.

THe forward violet thus did I chide,
 Sweet theeft whence didst thou steale thy sweet that
 If not from my loues breath, the purple pride, (smels
 Which on thy soft cheeke for complexion dwells?
 In my loues veines thou hast too grosely died ;
 The Lillie I condemned for thy hand,
 And buds of marierom had stolne thy haire,
 The Roses fearefully on thornes did stand,
 Our blushing shame, an other white dispaire ;
 A third nor red, nor white, had stolne of both,
 And to his robbry had annext thy breath,
 But for his theft in pride of all his growth
 A vengfull canker eate him vp to death.

More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
 But sweet, or culler it had stolne from thee.

65.

29.

When in disgrace with Fortune and mens eyes,
 I all alone beweepe my out-cast state,
 And trouble deafe heauen with my bootlesse cries,
 And looke vpon my self and curse my fate.
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featur'd like him, like him with friends possest,
 Desiring this mans art, and that mans skope,
 With what I most inioy contented least,
 Yet in these thoughts my selfe almost despising,
 Haplye I thinke on thee, and then my state,
 (Like to the Larke at breake of daye arising)
 From sullen earth sings himns at Heauens gate,
 For thy sweet loue remembred such welth brings,
 That then I skorne to change my state with Kings.

V.—THE EPISODE OF THE DARK LADY.

66.

23.

AS an vnperfect actor on the stage,
 Who with his feare is put besides his part,
 Or some fierce thing repleat with too much rage,
 Whose strengths abondance weakens his owne heart ;
 So I for feare of trust, forget to say,
 The perfect ceremony of loues right,
 And in mine owne loues strength seeme to decay,
 Ore-charg'd with burthen of mine owne loues might :
 O let my books be then the eloquence,
 And dumb presagers of my speaking brest,
 Who pleade for love, and looke for recompence,
 More then that tonge that more hath more exprest.
 O learne to read what silent loue hath writ,
 To heare wit eies belongs to loues fine wiht.

67.

127.

IN the ould age blacke was not counted faire,
 Or if it weare it bore not beauties name :
 But now is blacke beauties successiue heire,
 And Beautie slanderd with a bastard shame,
 For since each hand hath put on Natures power,
 Fairing the foule with Arts faulse borrow'd face,
 Sweet beauty hath no name no holy boure,
 But is prophan'd, if not liues in disgrace.
 Therefore my Mistresse eyes are Rauens blacke,
 Her eyes so suted, and they mourners seeme,
 At such who not borne faire no beauty lack,
 Slandring Creation with a false esteeme,
 Yet so they mourne becomming of their woe,
 That euery tounge saies beauty should looke so.

68.

131.

THou art as tiranous, so as thou art,
 As those whose beauties proudly make them cruell ;
 For well thou know'st to my deare doting hart
 Thou art the fairest and most precious Iewell.
 Yet in good faith some say that thee behold,
 Thy face hath not the power to make loue gone ;
 To say they erre, I dare not be so bold,
 Although I sweare it to my selfe alone.
 And to be sure that is not false I sweare
 A thousand grones but thinking on thy face,
 One on anothers necke do wisse beare
 Thy blacke is fairest in my iudgements place.
 In nothing art thou blacke saue in thy deeds,
 And thence this slaunder as I thinke proceeds.

69.

132.

THine eies I loue, and they as pittying me,
 Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain,
 Haue put on black, and louing mourners bee,
 Looking with pretty ruth vpon my paine,
 And truly not the morning Sun of Heauen
 Better becomes the gray cheeks of th' East,
 Nor that full Starre that vsers in the Eauen
 Doth halfe that glory to the sober West
 As those two morning eyes become thy face :
 O let it then as well beseeme thy heart
 To mourne for me since mourning doth thee grace,
 And sute thy pittie like in euery part.
 Then will I sweare beauty her selfe is blacke,
 And all they soule that thy complexion lacke.

70.

24.

Mine eye hath play'd the painter and hath steeld,
 Thy beauties forme in table of my heart,
 My body is the frame wherein ti's held,
 And perspectiue it is best Painters art.
 For through the Painter must you see his skill,
 To finde where your true Image pictur'd lies,
 Which in my bosomes shop is hanging stil,
 That hath his windowes glazed with thine eyes :
 Now see what good-turnes eyes for eies haue done,
 Mine eyes haue drawne thy shape, and thine for me
 Are windowes to my brest, where-through the Sun
 Delights to peepe, to gaze therein on thee
 Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art
 They draw but what they see, know not the hart.

71.

141.

IN faith I doe not loue thee with mine eyes,
 For they in thee a thousand errors note,
 But 'tis my heart that loues what they dispise,
 Who in dispight of view is pleasd to dote.
 Nor are mine eares with thy touns tune delighted,
 Nor tender feeling to base touches prone,
 Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be inuited
 To any sensuall feast with thee alone :
 But my fiae wits, nor my fiae sences can
 Diswade one foolish heart from seruing thee,
 Who leaues vnswai'd the likenesse of a man,
 Thy proud hearts slaue and vassall wretch to be :
 Onely my plague thus farre I count my gaine,
 That she that makes me sinne, awards me paine.

72.

140.

BE wise as thou art cruell, do not presse
 My tounge tide patience with too much disdain :
 Least sorrow lend me words and words expresse,
 The manner of my pittie wanting paine.
 If I might teach thee witte better it weare,
 Though not to loue, yet loue to tell me so,
 As testie sick-men when their deaths be neere,
 No newes but health from their Phisitions know.
 For if I should dispaire I should grow madde,
 And in my madnesse might speake ill of thee,
 Now this ill wresting world is growne so bad,
 Madde slanderers by madde eares beleueed be.
 That I may not be so, nor thou be lyde, (wide.
 Beare thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart goe

73.

149.

CAnst thou O cruell, say I loue thee not,
 When I against my selfe with thee pertake :
 Doe I not thinke on thee when I forgot
 Am of my selfe, all tirant for thy sake ?
 Who hateth thee that I doe call my friend,
 On whom froun'st thou that I doe faune vpon,
 Nay if thou lowrst on me doe I not spend
 Reuenge vpon my selfe with present mone ?
 What merrit do I in my selfe respect,
 That is so proude thy seruice to dispise,
 When all my best doth worship thy defect,
 Commanded by the motion of thine eyes.
 But loue hate on for now I know thy minde,
 Those that can see thou lou'st, and I am blind.

74.

138.

WHen my loue swears that she is made of truth,
 I do beleue her though I know she lyes,
 That she might thinke me some vntuterd youth,
 Vnlearned in the worlds false subilties.
 Thus vainely thinking that she thinkes me young,
 Although she knowes my dayes are past the best,
 Simply I credit her false speaking tongue,
 On both sides thus is simple truth suppress :
 But wherefore saves she not she is vniust ?
 And wherefore say not I that I am old ?
 O loues best habit is in seeming trust,
 And age in loue, loues not t'haue yeares told.
 Therefore I lye with her, and she with me,
 And in our faults by lyes we flattered be.

75.

128.

How oft when thou my musike musike playst,
 Vpon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
 With thy sweet fingers when thou gently swayst,
 The wiry concord that mine eare confounds,
 Do I eniue those Iackes that nimble leape,
 To kisse the tender inward of thy hand,
 Whilst my poore lips which should that haruest reape,
 At the woods bouldnes by thee blushing stand.
 To be so tikled they would change their state,
 And situation with those dancing chips,
 Ore whome their fingers walke with gentle gate,
 Making dead wood more blest then liuing lips,
 Since sausie Iackes so happy are in this,
 Giue them their fingers, me thy lips to kisse.

76.

136.

IF thy soule check thee that I come so neere,
 I Swear to thy blind soule that I was thy *Will*,
 And will thy soule knowes is admitted there,
 Thus farre for loue, my loue-sute sweet fullfill.
Will, will fulfill the treasure of thy loue,
 I fill it full with wils, and my will one,
 In things of great receipt with ease we prooue,
 Among a number one is reckon'd none.
 Then in the number let me passe vntold,
 Though in thy stores account I one must be,
 For nothing hold me so it please thee hold,
 That nothing me, a some-thing sweet to thee.
 Make but my name thy loue, and loue that still,
 And then thou louest me for my name is *Will*.

77.

135.

WHO euer hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
 And *Will* too boote, and *Will* in ouer-plus,
 More then enough am I that vexe thee still,
 To thy sweet will making addition thus.
 Wilt thou whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine,
 Shall will in others seeme right gracious,
 And in my will no faire acceptance shine :
 The sea all water, yet receiues raine still,
 And in abouндance addeth to his store,
 So thou beeing rich in *Will* adde to thy *Will*,
 One will of mine to make thy large *Will* more.
 Let no vnkinde, no faire beseechers kill,
 Thinke all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

78.

142.

LOue is my sinne, and thy deare vertue hate,
 Hate of my sinne, grounded on sinfull louing,
 O but with mine, compare thou thine owne state,
 And thou shalt finde it merrits not reproouing,
 Or if it do, not from those lips of thine,
 That haue prophan'd their scarlet ornaments,
 And seald false bonds of loue as oft as mine,
 Robd others beds reuenues of their rents.
 Be it lawfull I loue thee as thou lou'st those,
 Whome thine eyes wooe as mine importune thee,
 Roote pittie in thy heart that when it growes,
 Thy pittie may deserue to pittied bee.

If thou doost seeke to haue what thou doost hide,
 By selfe example mai'st thou be denide.

79.

139.

OCall not me to iustifie the wrong,
 That thy vnkindnesse layes vpon my heart,
 Wound me not with thine eye but with thy tounge,
 Vse power with power, and slay me not by Art,
 Tell me thou lou'st else-where ; but in my sight,
 Deare heart forbear to glance thine eye aside,
 What needst thou wound with cunning when thy might
 Is more then my ore-prest defence can bide ?
 Let me excuse thee ah my loue well knowes,
 Her prettie lookes haue beene mine enemies,
 And therefore from my face she turnes my foes,
 That they else-where might dart their iniuries :
 Yet do not so, but since I am neere slaine,
 Kill me out-right with lookes, and rid my paine.

80.

61.

IS it thy wil ; thy Image should keepe open
 My heawy eielids to the weary night ?
 Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
 While shadowes like to thee do mocke my sight ?
 Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
 So farre from home into my deeds to pry,
 To find out shames and idle houres in me,
 The skope and tenure of thy Ielousie ?
 O no, thy loue though much, is not so great,
 It is my loue that keepes mine eie awake,
 Mine owne true loue that doth my rest defeat,
 To plaie the watch-man euer for thy sake.
 For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
 From me farre of, with others all to neere.

81.

58.

THat God forbid, that made me first your slaue,
 I should in thought controule your times of pleasure,
 Or at your hand th' account of houres to craue,
 Being your vassail bound to staie your leisure.
 Oh let me suffer (being at your beck)
 Th' imprison'd absence of your libertie,
 And patience tame, to sufferance bide each check,
 Without accusing you of iniury.
 Be where you list, your charter is so strong,
 That you your selfe may priuiledge your time
 To what you will, to you it doth belong,
 Your selfe to pardon of selfe-doing crime.
 I am to waite though waiting so be hell,
 Not blame your pleasure be it ill or well.

82.

143.

LOe as a carefull huswife runnes to catch,
 One of her fethered creatures broake away,
 Sets downe her babe and makes all swift dispatch
 In pursuit of the thing she would haue stay :
 Whilst her neglected child holds her in chace,
 Cries to catch her whose busie care is bent,
 To follow that which flies before her face :
 Not prizing her poore infants discontent,
 So runst thou after that which flies from thee,
 Whilst I thy babe chace thee a farre behind,
 But if thou catch thy hope turne back to me :
 And play the mothers part kisse me, be kind.
 So will I pray that thou maist haue thy *Will*,
 If thou turne back and my loude crying still.

83.

57.

BEing your slaue what should I doe but tend,
 Vpon the houres, and times of your desire?
 I have no precious time at al to spend ;
 Nor seruices to doe til you require.
 Nor dare I chide the world without end houre,
 Whilst I (my soueraine) watch the clock for you,
 Nor thinke the bitterness of absence sowre,
 VVhen you haue bid your seruant once adieue,
 Nor dare I question with my ielialous thought,
 VVhere you may be, or your affaires suppose,
 But like a sad slaue stay and thinke of nought
 Saue where you are, how happy you make those.
 So true a foole is loue, that in your Will,
 (Though you doe any thing) he thinkes no ill.

84.

134.

SO now I haue confest that he is thine,
 And I my selfe am morgag'd to thy will,
 My selfe Ile forfeit, so that other mine,
 Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still :
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
 For thou art couetous, and he is kinde,
 He learnd but suretie-like to write for me,
 Vnder that bond that him as fast doth binde.
 The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
 Thou vsurer that put'st forth all to vse,
 And sue a friend, came debter for my sake,
 So him I loose through my vnkinde abuse.
 Him haue I lost, thou hast both him and me,
 He paies the whole, and yet am I not free.

85.

133.

B Eshrew that heart that makes my heart to groane
 For that deepe wound it giues my friend and me ;
 I'st not ynough to torture me alone,
 But slaue to slauery my sweet'st friend must be.
 Me from my selfe thy cruell eye hath taken,
 And my next selfe thou harder hast ingrossed,
 Of him, my selfe, and thee I am forsaken,
 A torment thrice three-fold thus to be crossed :
 Prison my heart in thy steele bosomes warde,
 But then my friends heart let my poore heart bale,
 Who ere keepes me, let my heart be his garde,
 Thou canst not then vse rigor in my Iaile.
 And yet thou wilt, for I being pent in thee,
 Perforce am thine and all that is in me.

86.

41.

THose pretty wrongs that liberty commits,
 When I am some-time absent from thy heart,
 Thy beautie, and thy yeares full well befits,
 For still temptation followes where thou art.
 Gentle thou art, and therefore to be wonne,
 Beautious thou art, therefore to be assailed.
 And when a woman woes, what womans sonne,
 Will sourely leaue her till he haue preuailed.
 Aye me, but yet thou mightst my seate forbear,
 And chide thy beauty, and thy straying youth,
 Who lead thee in their ryot euen there
 Where thou art forst to breake a two fold truth :
 Hers by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
 Thine by thy beautie beeing false to me.

87.

40.

TAke all my loues, my loue, yea take them all,
 What hast thou then more then thou hadst before ?
 No loue, my loue, that thou maist true loue call,
 All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more :
 Then if for my loue, thou my loue receiuest,
 I cannot blame thee, for my loue thou vset,
 But yet be blam'd, if thou this selfe deceauest
 By wilfull taste of what thy selfe refuseth.
 I doe forgiue thy robb'rie gentle theefe
 Although thou steale thee all my pouerty :
 And yet loue knowes it is a greater grieffe
 To beare loues wrong, then hates knowne iniury.
 Lasciuious grace in whom all il wel showes,
 Kill me with spights yet we must not be foes.

88.

42.

THat thou hast her it is not all my grieffe,
 And yet it may be said I lou'd her deerely,
 That she hath thee is of my wayling cheefe,
 A losse in loue that touches me more neerely.
 Louing offenders thus I will excuse yee,
 Thou doost loue her, because thou knowst I loue her,
 And for my sake euen so doth she abuse me,
 Suffring my friend for my sake to approoue her,
 If I loose thee, my losse is my loues gaine,
 And loosing her, my friend hath found that losse,
 Both finde each other, and I loose both twaine,
 And both for my sake lay on me this crosse,
 But here's the ioy, my friend and I are one,
 Sweete flattery, then she loues but me alone.

89.

35.

NO more bee greeu'd at that which thou hast done,
 Roses haue thornes, and siluer fountaines mud,
 Cloudes and eclipses staine both Moone and Sunne,
 And loathsome canker liues in sweetest bud.
 All men make faults, and euen I in this,
 Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
 My selfe corrupting saluing thy amisse,
 Excusing their sins more then their sins are ;
 For to thy sensuall fault I bring in sence,
 Thy aduerse party is thy Aduocate,
 And gainst my selfe a lawfull plea commence,
 Such ciuill war is in my loue and hate,
 That I an accessary needs must be,
 To that sweet theefe which sourely robs from me.

90.

151.

LOue is too young to know what conscience is,
 Yet who knowes not conscience is borne of loue,
 Then gentle cheater vrge not my amisse,
 Least guilty of my faults thy sweet selfe proue.
 For thou betraying me, I doe betray
 My nobler part to my grose bodies treason,
 My soule doth tell my body that he may,
 Triumph in loue, flesh staies no farther reason,
 But rysing at thy name doth point out thee,
 As his triumphant prize, proud of this pride,
 He is contented thy poore drudge to be
 To stand in thy affaires, fall by thy side.
 No want of conscience hold it that I call,
 Her loue, for whose deare loue I rise and fall.

91.

150.

OH from what powre hast thou this powrefull might,
 VVith insufficiency my heart to sway,
 To make me giue the lie to my true sight,
 And swere that brightnesse doth not grace the day?
 Whence hast thou this becomming of things il,
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds,
 There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
 That in my minde thy worst all best exceeds?
 Who taught thee how to make me loue thee more,
 The more I heare and see iust cause of hate,
 Oh though I loue what others doe abhor,
 VVith others thou shouldst not abhor my state.
 If thy vnworthinesse raisd loue in me,
 More worthy I to be belou'd of thee.

92.

147.

MY loue is as a feauer longing still,
 For that which longer nurseth the disease,
 Feeding on that which doth preserue the ill,
 Th'vncertaine sicklie appetite to please :
 My reason the Phisition to my loue,
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept
 Hath left me, and I desperate now approoue,
 Desire is death, which Phisick did except.
 Past cure I am, now Reason is past care,
 And frantick madde with euer-more vnrest,
 My thoughts and my discourse as mad mens are,
 At randon from the truth vainely exprest.

For I haue sworne thee faire, and thought thee bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as darke as night.

93.

148.

O Me! what eyes hath loue put in my head,
 Which haue no correspondance with true sight,
 Or if they haue, where is my iudgment fled,
 That censures falsely what they see aright?
 If that be faire whereon my false eyes dote,
 What meanes the world to say it is not so?
 If it be not, then loue doth well denote,
 Loues eye is not so true as all mens : no,
 How can it? O how can loues eye be true,
 That is so vext with watching and with teares?
 No maruaile then though I mistake my view,
 The sunne it selfe sees not, till heauen cleeres.

O cunning loue, with teares thou keepst me blinde,
 Least eyes well seeing thy foule faults should finde.

94.

144.

Two loues I haue of comfort and dispaire,
 Which like two spirits do sugiest me still,
 The better angell is a man right faire :
 The worser spirit a woman collour'd il.
 To win me soone to hell my femall euill,
 Tempteth my better angel from my sight,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a diuel :
 Wooing his purity with her fowle pride.
 And whether that my angel be turn'd finde,
 Suspect I may yet not directly tell,
 But being both from me both to each friend,
 I gesse one angel in an others hel.
 Yet this shal I nere know but liue in doubt,
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

95.

146.

POore soule the center of my sinfull earth,
 My sinfull earth these rebbell powres that thee array,
 Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth
 Painting thy outward walls so costlie gay ?
 Why so large cost hauing so short a lease,
 Dost thou vpon thy fading mansion spend ?
 Shall wormes inheritors of this excesse
 Eate vp thy charge ? is this thy bodies end ?
 Then soule liue thou vpon thy seruants losse,
 And let that pine to aggrauat thy store ;
 Buy tearmes diuine in selling houres of drosse :
 Within be fed, without be rich no more,
 So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
 And death once dead, ther's no more dying then.

96.

95.

HOW sweet and louely dost thou make the shame,
 Which like a canker in the fragrant Rose,
 Doth spot the beautie of thy budding name?
 Oh in what sweets doest thou thy sinnes inclose!
 That tongue that tells the story of thy daies,
 (Making lasciuious comments on thy sport)
 Cannot dispraise, but in a kinde of praise,
 Naming thy name, blesses an ill report.
 Oh what a mansion haue those vices got,
 Which for their habitation chose out thee,
 Where beauties vaile doth couer euery blot,
 And all things turnes to faire, that eies can see!
 Take heed (deare heart) of this large priuiledge,
 The hardest knife ill vs'd doth loose his edge.

97.

96.

SOME say thy fault is youth, some wantonesse,
 Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport,
 Both grace and faults are lou'd of more and lesse:
 Thou makst faults graces, that to thee resort:
 As on the finger of a throned Queene,
 The basest Iewell will be well esteem'd:
 So are those errors that in thee are seene,
 To truths translated, and for true things deem'd.
 How many Lambs might the sterne Wolfe betray,
 If like a Lambe he could his lookes translate.
 How many gazers mightst thou lead away,
 If thou wouldst vse the strength of all thy state?
 But doe not so, I loue thee in such sort,
 As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

98.

120.

THat you were once vnkind be-friends mee now,
 And for that sorrow, which I then didde feele,
 Needes must I vnder my transgression bow,
 Vnlesse my Nerues were brasse or hammered steele.
 For if you were by my vnkindnesse shaken
 As I by yours, y'haue past a hell of Time,
 And I a tyrant haue no leasure taken
 To waigh how once I suffered in your crime.
 O that our night of wo might haue remembred
 My deepest sence, how hard true sorrow hits,
 And soone to you, as you to me then tendred
 The humble salue, which wounded bosomes fits !
 But that your trespasse now becomes a fee,
 Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransome mee.

99.

152.

IN louing thee thou know'st I am forsworne,
 But thou art twice forsworne to me loue swearing,
 In act thy bed-vow broake and new faith torne,
 In vowing new hate after new loue bearing :
 But why of two othes breach doe I accuse thee,
 When I breake twenty : I am periur'd most,
 For all my voves are othes but to misuse thee :
 And all my honest faith in thee is lost.
 For I haue sworne deepe othes of thy deepe kindnesse :
 Othes of thy loue, thy truth, thy constancie,
 And to inlighten thee gaue eyes to blindnesse,
 Or made them swere against the thing they see.
 For I haue sworne thee faire : more periurde eye,
 To swere against the truth so foule a lie.

100.

87.

Farewell thou art too deare for my possessing,
 And like enough thou knowst thy estimate,
 The Charter of thy worth giues thee releasing:
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.
 For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
 And for that ritches where is my deseruing?
 The cause of this faire gift in me is wanting,
 And so my pattent back againe is sweruing.
 Thy selfe thou gau'st, thy owne worth then not knowing,
 Or mee to whom thou gau'st it, else mistaking,
 So thy great gift vpon misprision growing,
 Comes home againe, on better iudgement making.
 Thus haue I had thee as a dreame doth flatter,
 In sleepe a King, but waking no such matter.

101.

109.

O Neuer say that I was false of heart,
 Though absence seem'd my flame to quallifie.
 As easie might I from my selfe depart,
 As from my soule which in thy brest doth lye:
 That is my home of loue, if I haue rang'd,
 Like him that trauels I returne againe,
 Iust to the time, not with the time exchang'd,
 So that my selfe bring water for my staine,
 Neuer beleeeue though in my nature raign'd,
 All frailties that besiege all kindes of blood,
 That it could so preposterouslie be stain'd,
 To leaue for nothing all thy summe of good;
 For nothing this wide Vniuerse I call,
 Saue thou my Rose, in it thou art my all.

102.

119.

WHat potions haue I drunke of *Syren* teares
 Distil'd from Lymbecks foule as hell within,
 Applying feares to hopes, and hopes to feares,
 Still loosing when I saw my selfe to win?
 What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
 Whilst it hath thought it selfe so blessed neuer?
 How haue mine eies out of their Spheares bene fitted
 In the distraction of this madding feuer?
 O benefit of ill, now I find true
 That better is, by euil still made better.
 And ruin'd loue when it is built anew
 Growes fairer then at first, more strong, far greater.
 So I returne rebukt to my content,
 And gaine by ills thrise more then I haue spent.

103.

129.

TH' expence of Spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action, and till action, lust
 Is periurd, murdrous, blouddy full of blame,
 Saunge, extreame, rude, cruell, not to trust,
 Inioyd no sooner but dispised straight,
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
 Past reason hated as a swallowed bayt,
 On purpose layd to make the taker mad.
 Made In pursut and in possession so,
 Had, hauing, and in quest, to haue extreame,
 A blisse in prooffe and proud and very wo,
 Before a ioy proposd behind a dreame,
 All this the world well knowes yet none knowes well,
 To shun the heauen that leads men to this hell.

VI.—THE POET'S COMMUNION WITH THE HIGHER
MUSE.

104.

38.

How can my Muse want subiect to inuent
While thou dost breath that poor'st into my verse,
Thine owne sweet argument, to excellent,
For euey vulgar paper to rehearse :
Oh giue thy selfe the thankes if ought in me,
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight,
For who's so dumbe that cannot write to thee,
When thou thy selfe dost giue inuention light ?
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
Then those old nine which rimers inuocate.
And he that call on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to out-liue long date.

If my slight Muse doe please these curious daies,
The paine be mine, but thine shal be the praise.

105.

43.

When most I winke then doe mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things vnrespected,
But when I sleepe, in dreames they looke on thee,
And darkely bright, are bright in darke directed.
Then thou whose shaddow shaddowes doth make bright,
How would thy shadowes forme, forme happy show,
To the cleere day with thy much cleerer light,
When to vn-seeing eyes thy shade shines so ?
How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made,
By looking on thee in the liuing day ?
When in dead night their faire imperfect shade,
Through heauy sleepe on sightlesse eyes doth stay ?
All dayes are nights to see till I see thee,
And nights bright daies when dreams do shew thee me.

106.

113.

Since I left you, mine eye is in my minde,
 And that which gouernes me to goe about,
 Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
 Seemes seeing, but effectually is out :
 For it no forme deliuers to the heart
 Of bird, of flowre, or shape which it doth lack,
 Of his quick obiects hath the minde no part,
 Nor his owne vision houlds what it doth catch :
 For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
 The most sweet-fauor or deformedst creature,
 The mountaine, or the sea, the day, or night :
 The Croe, or Doue, it shapes them to your feature.
 Incapable of more repleat, with you,
 My most true minde thus maketh mine vntrue.

107.

114.

OR whether doth my minde being crown'd with you
 Drinke vp the monarks plague this flattery ?
 Or whether shall I say mine eie saith true,
 And that your loue taught it this *Alcumie* ?
 To make of monsters, and things indigest,
 Such cherubines as your sweet selfe resemble,
 Creating euery bad a perfect best
 As fast as obiects to his beames assemble :
 Oh tis the first, tis flatry in my seeing,
 And my great minde most kingly drinks it vp,
 Mine eie well knowes what with his gust is greeing,
 And to his pallat doth prepare the cup.
 If it be poison'd, tis the lesser sinne,
 That mine eye loues it and doth first beginne.

108.

53.

WHat is your substance, whereof are you made,
 That millions of strange shaddowes on you tend?
 Since euery one, hath euery one, one shade,
 And you but one, can euery shaddow lend:
 Describe *Adonis* and the counterfet,
 Is poorely immitated after you,
 On *Hellens* cheeke all art of beautie set,
 And you in *Grecian* tires are painted new:
 Speake of the spring, and foyzon of the yeare,
 The one doth shaddow of your beautie show,
 The other as your bountie doth appeare,
 And you in euery blessed shape we know.
 In all externall grace you haue some part,
 But you like none, none you for constant heart.

109.

20.

AWomans face with natures owne hand painted,
 Hast thou the Master Mistris of my passion,
 A womans gentle hart but not acquainted
 With shifting change as is false womens fashion,
 An eye more bright then theirs, lesse false in rowling:
 Gilding the obiect where-vpon it gazeth,
 A man in hew all *Hews* in his controwling,
 Which steales mens eyes and womens soules amaseth,
 And for a woman wert thou first created,
 Till nature as she wrought thee fell a dotinge,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
 But since she prickt thee out for womens pleasure,
 Mine be thy loue and thy loues vse their treasure.

110.

106.

When in the Chronicle of wasted time,
 I see discriptions of the fairest wights,
 And beautilie making beautifull old rime,
 In praise of Ladies dead, and louely Knights,
 Then in the blazon of sweet beauties best,
 Of hand, of foote, of lip, of eye, of brow,
 I see their antique Pen would haue exprest
 Euen such a beauty as you maister now.
 So all their praises are but prophesies
 Of this our time, all you prefiguring,
 And for they look'd but with deuining eyes,
 They had not still enough your worth to sing :
 For we which now behold these present dayes,
 Haue eyes to wonder, but lack tongs to praise.

111.

59.

IF their bee nothing new, but that which is,
 Hath beene before, how are our braines beguild,
 Which laboring for inuention beare amisse
 The second burthen of a former child ?
 Oh that record could with a back-ward looke,
 Euen of fife hundreth courses of the Sunne,
 Show me your image in some antique booke,
 Since minde at first in carrecter was done.
 That I might see what the old world could say,
 To this composed wonder of your frame,
 Whether we are mended, or where better they,
 Or whether reuolution be the same.
 Oh sure I am the wits of former daies,
 To subiects worse haue giuen admiring praise.

112.

75.

SO are you to my thoughts as food to life,
 Or as sweet season'd shewers are to the ground ;
 And for the peace of you I hold such strife,
 As twixt a miser and his wealth is found.
 Now proud as an inioyer, and anon
 Doubting the filching age will steale his treasure,
 Now counting best to be with you alone,
 Then betterd that the world may see my pleasure,
 Some-time all ful with feasting on your sight,
 And by and by cleane starued for a looke,
 Possessing or pursuing no delight
 Saue what is had, or must from you be tooke.
 Thus do I pine and surfet day by day,
 Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

113.

64.

WHEN I haue seene by times fell hand defaced
 The rich proud cost of outworne buried age,
 When sometime loftie towers I see downe rased,
 And brasse eternall slaue to mortall rage.
 When I haue seene the hungry Ocean gaine
 Aduantage on the Kingdome of the shoare,
 And the firme soile win of the watry maine,
 Increasing store with losse, and losse with store,
 When I haue seene such interchange of state,
 Or state it selfe confounded, to decay,
 Ruine hath taught me thus to ruminare
 That Time will come and take my loue away.
 This thought is as a death which cannot choose
 But weepe to haue, that which it feares to loose.

114.

65.

SInce brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundlesse sea,
 But sad mortallity ore-swaies their power,
 How with this rage shall beautie hold a plea,
 Whose action is no stronger then a flower?
 O how shall summers hunny breath hold out,
 Against the wrackfull siedge of battring dayes,
 When rocks impregnable are not so stoute,
 Nor gates of steele so strong but time decays?
 O fearefull meditation, where alack,
 Shall times best Iewell from times chest lie hid?
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foote back,
 Or who his spoile or beautie can forbid?
 O none, vnlesse this miracle haue might,
 That in black inck my loue may still shine bright.

115.

60.

LIke as the waues make towards the pibled shore,
 So do our minuites hasten to their end,
 Each changing place with that which goes before,
 In sequent toile all forwards do contend.
 Natiuity once in the maine of light.
 Crawies to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
 Crooked eclipses gaunst his glory fight,
 And time that gaue, doth now his gift confound.
 Time doth transfixe the florish set on youth,
 And delues the paralels in beauties brow,
 Feedes on the rarities of natures truth,
 And nothing stands but for his sieth to mow.
 And yet to times in hope, my verse shall stand
 Praising thy worth, dispight his cruell hand.

116.

62.

Sinne of selfe-loue possesseth al mine eie,
 And all my soule, and al my euery part ;
 And for this sinne there is no remedie,
 It is so grounded inward in my heart.
 Me thinkes no face so gracious is as mine,
 No shape so true, no truth of such account,
 An for my selfe mine owne worth do define,
 As I all other in all worths surmount.
 But when my glasse shewes me my selfe indeed
 Beated and chopt with tand antiquitie,
 Mine owne selfe loue quite contrary I read
 Selfe, so selfe louing were iniquity,
 T'is thee (my selfe) that for my selfe I praise,
 Painting my age with beauty of thy daies.

117.

103.

Lack what pouerty my Muse brings forth,
 That hauing such a skope to show her pride,
 The argument all bare is of more worth
 Then when it hath my added praise beside.
 Oh blame me not if I no more can write !
 Looke in your glasse and there appeares a face,
 That ouer-goes my blunt inuention quite,
 Dulling my lines, and doing me disgrace.
 Were it not sinfull then striuing to mend,
 To marre the subiect that before was well,
 For to no other passe my verses tend,
 Then of your graces and your gifts to tell.
 And more, much more then in my verse can fit,
 Your owne glasse shoues you when you looke in it.

118.

39.

OH how thy worth with manners may I singe,
 When thou art all the better part of me?
 What can mine owne praise to mine owne selfe bring;
 And what is't but mine owne when I praise thee,
 Euen for this, let vs deuided liue,
 And our deare loue loose name of single one
 That by this seperation I may giue:
 That due to thee which thou deseru'st alone:
 Oh absence what a torment wouldst thou proue,
 Were it not thy soure leisure gaue sweet leaue,
 To entertaine the time with thoughts of loue,
 VVhich time and thoughts so sweetly dost deceiue.
 And that thou teachest how to make one twaine,
 By praising him here who doth hence remaine.

119.

37.

AS a decrepit father takes delight,
 To see his actiue childe do deeds of youth,
 So I, made lame by Fortunes dearest spight
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.
 For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
 Or any of these all, or all, or more
 Intituled in their parts, do crowned sit,
 I make my loue ingrafted to this store:
 So then I am not lame, poore, not dispis'd,
 Whilst that this shadow doth such substance giue,
 That I in thy abundance am suffic'd,
 And by a part of all thy glory liue:
 Looke what is best, that best I wish in thee,
 This wish I haue, then ten times happy me.

120.

36.

LEt me confesse that we two must be twaine,
 Although our vndeuided loues are one :
 So shall those blots that do with me remaine,
 Without thy helpe, by me be borne alone.
 In our two loues there is but one respect,
 Though in our liues a seperable spight,
 Which though it alter not loues sole effect,
 Yet doth it steale sweet houres from loues delight,
 I may not euer-more acknowledge thee,
 Least my bewailed guilt should do thee shame,
 Nor thou with publike kindnesse honour me,
 Vnlesse thou take that honour from thy name :
 But doe not so, I loue thee in such sort,
 As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

121.

76.

WHy is my verse so barren of new pride ?
 So far from variation or quicke change ?
 Why with the time do I not glance aside
 To new found methods, and to compounds strange ?
 Why write I still all one, euer the same,
 And keepe inuention in a noted weed,
 That euery word doth almost fel my name,
 Shewing their birth, and where they did proceed ?
 O know sweet loue I alwaies write of you,
 And you and loue are still my argument :
 So all my best is dressing old words new,
 Spending againe what is already spent :
 For as the Sun is daily new and old,
 So is my loue still telling what is told.

122.

78.

SO oft haue I inuok'd thee for my Muse,
 And found such faire assistance in my verse,
 As euery *Alien* pen hath got my vse,
 And vnder thee their poesie disperse.
 Thine eyes, that taught the dumbe on high to sing,
 And heauie ignorance aloft to flie,
 Haue added fethers to the learneds wing,
 And giuen grace a double Maiestie.
 Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
 Whose influence is thine, and borne of thee,
 In others workes thou doost but mend the stile,
 And Arts with thy sweete graces graced be.
 But thou art all my art, and doost aduance
 As high as learning, my rude ignorance.

123.

79.

WHilst I alone did call vpon thy ayde,
 My verse alone had all thy gentle grace,
 But now my gracious numbers are decayde,
 And my sick Muse doth giue an other place.
 I grant (sweet loue) thy louely argument
 Deserues the trauaile of a worthier pen,
 Yet what of thee thy Poet doth inuent,
 He robs thee of, and payes it thee againe,
 He lends thee vertue, and he stole that word,
 From thy behauiour, beautie doth he giue
 And found it in thy cheeke : he can afford
 No praise to thee, but what in thee doth liue.
 Then thanke him not for that which he doth say,
 Since what he owes thee, thou thy selfe doost pay.

124.

82.

I Grant thou wert not married to my Muse,
 And therefore maiest without attaint ore-looke
 The dedicated words which writers vse
 Of their faire subiect, blessing eury booke.
 Thou art as faire in knowledge as in hew,
 Finding thy worth a limmit past my praise,
 And therefore art inforc'd to seeke anew,
 Some fresher stampe of the time bettering dayes,
 And do so loue, yet when they haue deuise,
 What strained touches Rhethorick can lend,
 Thou truly faire, wert truly simpathizde,
 In true plaine words, by thy true telling friend.
 And their grosse painting might be better vs'd,
 Where cheekes need blood, in thee it is abus'd.

125.

83.

I Neuer saw that you did painting need,
 And therefore to your faire no painting set,
 I found (or thought I found) you did exceed,
 The barren tender of a Poets debt :
 And therefore haue I slept in your report,
 That you your selfe being extant well might show,
 How farre a moderne quill doth come to short,
 Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow,
 This silence for my sinne you did impute,
 Which shall be most my glory being dombe,
 For I impaire not beautie being mute,
 When others would giue life, and bring a tombe.
 There liues more life in one of your faire eyes,
 Then both your Poets can in praise deuise.

126.

84.

WHO is it that sayes most, which can say more,
 Then this rich praise, that you alone, are you,
 In whose confine immured is the store,
 Which should example where your equall grew,
 Leane penurie within that Pen doth dwell,
 That to his subiect lends not some small glory,
 But he that writes of you, if he can tell,
 That you are you, so dignifies his story.
 Let him but copy what in you is writ,
 Not making worse what nature made so cleere.
 And such a counter-part shall fame his wit,
 Making his stile admired euery where.

You to your beautious blessings adde a curse,
 Being fond on praise, which makes your praises worse.

127.

85.

MY toung-tide Muse in manners holds her still,
 While comments of your praise richly compil'd
 Reserne their Character with goulden quill,
 And precious phrase by all the Muses fil'd,
 I thinke good thoughts, whilst other write good wordes,
 And like vnlettered clarke still crie Amen,
 To euery Himne that able spirit affords,
 In polisht for ne of well refined pen.
 Hearing you praisd, I say 'tis so, 'tis true,
 And to the most of praise adde some-thing more,
 But that is in my thought, whose loue to you
 (Though words come hind-most) holds his ranke before,
 Then others, for the breath of words respect,
 Me for my dombe thoughts, speaking in effect.

128.

80.

O How I faint when I of you do write,
 Knowing a better spirit doth vse your name,
 And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
 To make me toung-tide speaking of your fame.
 But since your worth (wide as the Ocean is)
 The humble as the proudest saile doth beare,
 My sawsie barke (inferior farre to his)
 On your broad maine doth wilfully appeare.
 Your shallowest helpe will hold me vp a floate,
 Whilst he vpon your soundlesse deepe doth ride,
 Or (being wrackt) I am a worthlesse bote,
 He of tall building, and of goodly pride.
 Then If he thriue and I be cast away,
 The worst was this, my loue was my decay.

129.

86.

VVAs it the proud full saile of his great verse,
 Bound for the prize of (all to precious) you,
 That did my ripe thoughts in my braine inhearce,
 Making their tombe the wombe wherein they grew?
 Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write,
 Aboue a mortall pitch, that struck me dead?
 No, neither he, nor his compiers by night
 Giuing him ayde, my verse astonished.
 He nor that affable familiar ghost
 Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
 As victors of my silence cannot boast,
 I was not sick of any feare from thence,
 But when your countenance fild vp his line,
 Then lackt I matter, that infeebl'd mine.

130.

49.

Against that time (if euer that time come)
 When I shall see thee frowne on my defects,
 When as thy loue hath cast his vtmost summe,
 Cauld to that audite by aduis'd respects,
 Against that time when thou shalt strangely passe,
 And scarcely greeete me with that sunne thine eye,
 When loue conuerted from the thing it was
 Shall reasons finde of setled grautie.
 Against that time do I insconce me here
 Within the knowledge of mine owne desart,
 And this my hand, against my selfe vpreare,
 To guard the lawfull reasons on thy part,
 To leaue poore me, thou hast the strength of lawes,
 Since why to loue, I can alledge no cause.

131.

88.

VWhen thou shalt be dispoode to set me light,
 And place my merrit in the eie of skorne,
 Vpon thy side, against my selfe ile fight,
 And proue thee virtuous, though thou art forsworne :
 With mine owne weakenesse being best acquainted,
 Vpon thy part I can set downe a story
 Of faults conceald, wherein I am attainted :
 That thou in loosing me, shall win much glory :
 And I by this wil be a gainer too,
 For bending all my louing thoughts on thee,
 The injuries that to my selfe I doe,
 Doing thee vantage, duple vantage me,
 Such is my loue, to thee I so belong,
 That for thy right, my selfe will beare all wrong.

132.

89.

SAY that thou didst forsake mee for some falt,
 And I will comment upon that offence,
 Speake of my lamenesse, and I straight will halt :
 Against thy reasons making no defence.
 Thou canst not (loue) disgrace me halfe so ill,
 To set a forme vpon desired change,
 As ile my selfe disgrace, knowing thy wil,
 I will acquaintance strangle and looke strange :
 Be absent from thy walkes and in my tongue,
 Thy sweet beloued name no more shall dwell,
 Least I (too much prophane) should do it wronge :
 And haplie of our old acquaintance tell.
 For thee, against my selfe ile vow debate,
 For I must nere loue him whom thou dost hate.

133.

90.

THEN hate me when thou wilt, if euer, now,
 Now while the world is bent my deeds to crosse,
 Ioyne with the spight of fortune, make me bow.
 And doe not drop in for an after losse :
 Ah doe not, when my heart hath scapte this sorrow,
 Come in the rereward of a conqer'd woe,
 Giue not a windy night a rainie morrow,
 To linger out a purposd ouer-throw.
 If thou wilt leaue, me, do not leaue me last,
 When other pettie griefes haue done their spight,
 But in the onset come, so stall I taste
 At first the very worst of fortunes might.
 And other straines of woe, which now seeme woe,
 Compar'd with losse of thee, will not seeme so.

134.

91.

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their bodies force,
 Some in their garments though new-fangled ill :
 Some in their Hawkes and Hounds, some in their Horse.
 And euery humor hath his adiunct pleasure,
 Wherein it findes a ioy aboute the rest,
 But these perticulers are not my measure,
 All these I better in one generall best.
 Thy loue is bitter then high birth to me,
 Richer then wealth, prouder then garments cost,
 Of more delight then Hawkes or Horses bee :
 And hauing thee, of all mens pride I boast.
 Wretched in this alone, that thou maist take,
 All this away, and me most wretched make.

135.

92.

BVt doe thy worst to steale thy selfe away,
 For tearme of life thou are assured mine,
 And life no longer then thy loue will stay,
 For it depends vpon that loue of thine.
 Then need I not to feare the worst of wrongs,
 When in the least of them my life hath end,
 I see, a better state to me belongs
 Then that, which on thy humor doth depend.
 Thou canst not vex me with inconstant minde,
 Since that my life on thy reuolt doth lie,
 Oh what a happy title do I finde,
 Happy to haue thy loue, happy to die !
 But whats so blessed faire that feares no blot,
 Thou maist be falce, and yet I know it not.

136.

93.

SO shall I liue, supposing thou art true,
 Like a deceiued husband, so loues face,
 May still seeme loue to me, though alter'd new :
 Thy lookes with me, thy heart in other place.
 For their can liue no hatred in thine eye,
 Therefore in that I cannot know thy change,
 In manies lookes, the falce hearts history
 Is writ in moods and frounes and wrinckles strange,
 But heauen in thy creation did decree,
 That in thy face sweet loue should euer dwell,
 What ere thy thoughts, or thy hearts workings be,
 Thy lookes should nothing thence, but sweetnesse tell.
 How like *Eaues* apple doth thy beauty grow,
 If thy sweet vertue answere not thy show.

137.

33.

FVII many a glorious morning haue I seene,
 Flatter the mountaine tops with soueraine eie,
 Kissing with golden face the meddowes greene ;
 Guilding pale streames with heauenly alcumy :
 Anon permit the basest cloudes to ride,
 With ougly rack on his celestiall face,
 And from the for-lorne world his visage hide
 Stealing vnseene to west with this disgrace :
 Euen so my Sunne one early morne did shine,
 With all triumphant splendor on my brow,
 But out alack, he was but one houre mine,
 The region cloude hath mask'd him from me now.
 Yet him for this, my loue no whit disdaineth,
 Suns of the world may staine, whē heauens sun stainteh.

138.

34.

Why didst thou promise such a beautious day,
 And make me trauaile forth without my cloake,
 To let bace cloudes ore-take me in my way,
 Hiding thy brau'ry in their rotten smoke.
 Tis not enough that through the cloude thou breake,
 To dry the raine on my storme-beaten face,
 For no man well of such a salue can speake,
 That heales the wound, and cures not the disgrace :
 Nor can thy shame giue phisicke to my grieffe,
 Though thou repent, yet I haue still the losse,
 Th' offenders sorrow lends but weake reliefe
 To him that beares the strong offenses losse.

Ah but those teares are pearle which thy loue sheeds,
 And they are ritch, and ransome all ill deeds.

139.

56.

Swet loue renew thy force, be it not said
 Thy edge should blunter be then appetite,
 Which but too daie by feeding is alaied,
 To morrow sharpned in his former might.
 So loue be thou, although too daie thou fill
 Thy hungrie eies, euen till they winck with fulnesse,
 Too morrow see againe, and doe not kill
 The spirit of Loue, with a perpetual dulnesse :
 Let this sad *Intrim* like the Ocean be
 Which parts the shore, where two contracted new,
 Come daily to the banckes, that when they see :
 Returne of loue, more blest may be the view.

As cal it Winter, which being ful of care,
 Makes Sōmers welcome, thrice more wish'd, more rare.

140.

100.

WHERE art thou Muse that thou forgetst so long,
 To speake of that which giues thee all thy might?
 Spendst thou thy furie on some worthlesse songe,
 Darkning thy powre to lend base subiects light.
 Returne forgetfull Muse, and straight redeeme,
 In gentle numbers time so idely spent,
 Sing to the eare that doth thy laies esteeme,
 And giues thy pen both skill and argument.
 Rise resty Muse, my loues sweet face suruay,
 If time haue any wrinkle grauen there,
 If any, be a *Satire* to decay,
 And make times spoiles dispised euery where.
 Giue my loue fame faster then time wasts life,
 So thou preuenst his sieth, and crooked knife.

141.

101.

OH truant Muse what shalbe thy amends,
 For thy neglect of truth in beauty di'd?
 Both truth and beauty on my loue depends:
 So dost thou too, and therein dignifi'd:
 Make answer Muse, wilt thou not haply saie,
 Truth needs no collour with his collour fixt,
 Beautie no pensell, beauties truth to lay:
 But best is best, if neuer intermixt.
 Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
 Excuse not silence so, for't lies in thee,
 To make him much out-liue a gilded tombe:
 And to be praisd of ages yet to be.
 Then do thy office Muse, I teach thee how,
 To make him seeme long hence, as he showes now.

142.

107.

MY loue is strengthened though more weake in seeming
 MY loue not lesse, thogh lesse the show appeare,
 That loue is marchandiz'd, whose ritche esteeming,
 The owners tongue doth publish euery where.
 Our loue was new, and then but in the spring,
 When I was wont to greet it with my laies,
 As *Philomell* in summers front doth singe,
 And stops his pipe in growth of riper daies :
 Not that the summer is lesse pleasant now
 Then when her mournfull himns did hush the night,
 But that wild musick burthens euery bow,
 And sweets growne common loose their deare delight.
 Therefore like her, I some-time hold my tongue :
 Because I would not dull you with my songe.

143.

110.

ALas 'tis true, I haue gone here and there,
 And make my selfe a motley to the view,
 Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most deare,
 Made old offences of affections new.
 Most true it is, that I haue lookt on truth
 Asconce and strangely : But by all aboue,
 These blenches gaue my heart an other youth,
 And worse essaies prou'd thee my best of loue,
 Now all is done, haue what shall haue no end,
 Mine appetite I neuermore will grin'de
 On newer prooffe, to trie an older friend,
 A God in loue, to whom I am confin'd.
 Then giue me welcome, next my heauen the best,
 Euen to thy pure and most most louing brest.

144.

111.

O For my sake doe you wish fortune chide,
 The guiltie goddessse of my harmfull deeds,
 That did not better for my life prouide,
 Then publick meanes which publick manners breeds.
 Thence comes it that my name receiues a brand,
 And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
 To what it workes in, like the Dyers hand,
 Pitty me then, and wish I were renu'de,
 Whilst like a willing pacient I will drinke,
 Potions of Eysell gainst my strong infection,
 No bitternesse that I will bitter thinke,
 Nor double pennance to correct correction.
 Pittie me then deare friend, and I assure yee,
 Euen that your pittie is enough to cure mee.

145.

112.

Your loue and pittie doth th' impression fill,
 Which vulgar scandall stampt vpon my brow,
 For what care I who calls me well or ill,
 So you ore-greene my bad, my good alow?
 You are my All the world, and I must striue,
 To know my shames and praises from your tongue,
 None else to me, nor I to none aliue,
 That my steel'd sence or changes right or wrong,
 In so profound *Abisme* I throw all care
 Of others voyces, that my Adders sence,
 To cryttick and to flatterer stopped are:
 Marke how with my neglect I doe dispence.
 You are so strongly in my purpose bred,
 That all the world besides me thinkes y'are dead.

146.

117.

ACcuse me thus, that I haue scanted all,
 Wherein I should your great deserts repay,
 Forgot vpon your dearest loue to call,
 Whereto al bonds do tie me day by day,
 That I haue frequent binne with vnknown mindes,
 And giuen to time your owne dear purchas'd right,
 That I haue hoysted saile to al the windes
 Which should transport me farthest from your sight.
 Booke both my wilfulnesse and errors downe,
 And on iust prooffe surmise, accumulate,
 Bring me within the leuel of your frowne,
 But shoote not at me in your wakened hate :
 Since my appeale saies I did striue to prooue
 The constancy and virtue of your loue.

147.

118.

LIke as to make our appetites more keene
 With eager compounds we our pallat vrge,
 As to preuent our malladies vnseene,
 We sicken to shun sicknesse when we purge.
 Euen so being full of your nere cloying sweetnesse,
 To bitter fawces did I frame my feeding ;
 And sicke of wel-fare found a kind of meetnesse,
 To be diseas'd ere that there was true needing.
 Thus pollicie in loue t'anticipate
 The ills that were, not grew to faults assured,
 And brought to medicine a healthfull state
 Which rancke of goodnesse would by ill be cured.
 But thence I learne and find the lesson true,
 Drugs poyson him that so fell sicke of you.

148.

107.

NOt mine owne feares, nor the prophetick soule,
 Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,
 Can yet the lease of my true loue controule,
 Supposde as forfeit to a confin'd doome.
 The mortall Moone hath her eclipse indur'de,
 And the sad Augurs mock their owne presage,
 Incertenties now crowne them-selues assur'de,
 And peace proclaimes Oliues of endlesse age,
 Now with the drops of this most balmie time,
 My loue lookes fresh, and death to me subscribes,
 Since spight of him Ile liue in this poore rime,
 While he insults ore dull and speachleise tribes.
 And thou in this shalt finde thy monument,
 When tyrants crests and tombs of brasse are spent.

149.

108.

WHat's in the braine that Inck may character,
 Which hath not figur'd to thee my true spirit,
 What's new to speake, what now to register,
 That may expresse my loue, or thy deare merit?
 Nothing sweet boy, but yet like prayers diuine,
 I must each day say ore the very same,
 Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
 Euen as when first I hallowed thy faire name.
 So that eternall loue in loues fresh case,
 Waighes not the dust and iniury of age,
 Nor giues to necessary wrinckles place,
 But makes antiquitie for aye his page,
 Finding the first conceit of loue there bred,
 Where time and outward forme would shew it dead.

150.

123.

NO! Time, thou shalt not bost that I doe change,
 Thy pyramyds buylt vp with newer might
 To me are nothing nouell, nothing strange,
 They are but dressings of a former sight :
 Our dates are breefe, and therefor we admire,
 What thou dost foyst vpon vs that is ould,
 And rather make them borne to our desire,
 Then thinke that we before haue heard them tould :
 Thy registers and thee I both defie,
 Not wondring at the present, nor the past,
 For thy records, and what we see doth lye,
 Made more or les by thy continuall hast :
 This I doe vow and this shall euer be,
 I will be true dispight thy syeth and thee.

151.

124.

YF my deare loue were but the childe of state,
 It might for fortunes basterd be vnfathered,
 As subiect to times loue, or to times hate,
 Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gatherd,
 No it was buylded far from accident,
 It suffers not in smilinge pomp, nor falls
 Vnder the blow of thralld discontent,
 Whereto th'inuiting time our fashion calls :
 It feares not policy that *Heriticke*,
 Which workes on leases of short numbred howers,
 But all alone stands hugely pollitick,
 That it nor growes with heat, nor drownes with showres.
 To this I witnes call the foles of time,
 Which die for goodnes, who haue liu'd for crime.

152.

125.

WEr't ought to me I bore the canopy,
 With my extern the outward honoring,
 Or layd great bases for eternity,
 Which proues more short then wast or ruining?
 Haue I not seene dwellers on forme and fauor
 Lose all, and more by paying too much rent
 For compound sweet ; Forgoing simple sauor,
 Pittifull thriuors in their gazing spent.
 Noe, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
 And take thou my oblacion, poore but free,
 Which is not mixt with seconds, knows no art,
 But mutuall render onely me for thee.

Hence, thou subbornd *Informer*, a trew soule
 When most impeacht, stands least in thy controule.

153.

105.

LEt not my loue be cal'd Idolatrie,
 Nor my beloued as an Idoll show,
 Since all alike my songs and praises be
 To one, of one, still such, and euer so.
 Kinde is my loue to day, to morrow kinde,
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence,
 Therefore my verse to constancie confin'de,
 One thing expressing, leaues out difference.
 Faire, kinde, and true, is all my argument,
 Faire, kinde and true, varrying to other words,
 And in this change is my inuention spent,
 Three theams in one, which wondrous scope affords.

Faire, kinde, and true, haue often liu'd alone.
 Which three till now, neuer kept seate in one.

NOt marble, nor the gilded monument,
Of Princes shall out-lieue this powrefull rime,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Then vnswept stone, besmeer'd with sluttish time.
When wastefull warre shall *Statues* ouer-turne,
And broiles roote out the worke of masonry,
Nor *Mars* his sword, nor warres quick fire shall burne :
The liuing record of your memory.
Gainst death, and all obliuious emnity
Shall you pace forth, praise shall stil finde roome,
Euen in the eyes of all posterity
That weare this world out to the ending doome.
So til the iudgement that your selfe arise,
You lieue in this, and dwell in louers eies.

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~~705~~



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