

ON THE  
SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE.

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ON THE

**SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE**

IDENTIFYING THE PERSON  
 TO WHOM THEY ARE ADDRESSED ;  
 AND ELUCIDATING SEVERAL POINTS  
 IN THE POET'S HISTORY.

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1787

ON THE  
SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE.

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TO WHAT PERSON THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE  
WERE ACTUALLY ADDRESSED.

THE Sonnets of Shakespeare were first printed in the year 1609, by Thomas Thorpe, the poet himself being then living, and never disavowing the publication, as he did on at least one other occasion.\* They make a thin quarto, neither carelessly nor inelegantly set forth, and are inscribed by the publisher, under initials, to the person addressed by the poet. It will be proper to bring this dedication immediately forward, because, *prima facie*, no one can be a competitor for the eternity pro-

\* Some of Heywood's translations, attributed to him erroneously in 1612.

mised in the verses, whose name does not display the initials given to us as a clue by the dedicator.

The inscription is arranged monumentally, in short lines, with full points after every word.

To . The . onlie . begetter . of .

These . insuing . Sonnets .

Mr . W . H . all . Happinesse .

And . that . eternitie .

Promised .

By .

Our . ever-living . Poet .

Wisheth .

The . well-wishing .

Adventurer . in .

Setting .

Forth .

T . T .

That the words "only begetter" mean the person addressed by the poet, cannot, I should think, be reasonably questioned—they imply him who, as a *cause*, excited these verses as effects in the grateful mind of Shakespeare. Indeed, for a long time, it seemed to be the only notion that was entertained; and accordingly WILLIAM HART, the poet's relation, was mentioned,\* without examining whether his age was suitable, or himself, either in person or fortunes, corresponding with

\* William Hart, the son of our poet's sister Joan, was not born till the year 1600, so he was clearly *not* the person shadowed under the initials W. H.

what is stated in the sonnets. A moment's reflection would have rendered it *certain*, that the child of very humble parents was not the *lofty patrician* commemorated in these compositions :

“Thou, that art now the world's fresh ornament,  
And only herald to the gaudy spring.”

Plainly imitating the sonnet of Spenser to the great courtier Sir Walter Raleigh, published in 1590, with the first three books of the *Faerie Queene* :

“To thee that art the Sommer's nightingale,  
Thy souveraine Goddesses most deare delight.”

Indeed the parallel is strikingly made out in the course of the poet's addresses to this beloved patron, whom he places in a station of such dignity and gravity, that he might not be able from prudential motives to honour him with kindness in *public*, unless by suffering in the general estimation for his familiarity with a player :

“Against that time, if ever that time come,  
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,  
Whenas thy love hath cast his utmost sum,  
Call'd to that audit by *advis'd respects* ;  
Against that time, when thou shalt strangely pass,  
And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye ;  
When love converted from the thing it was,  
Shall reasons find of *settled gravity*.”

We may therefore dismiss Mr. William Hart, notwithstanding his initial pretensions, and pass a *conge d'elire* for some other candidate.

The initials W. H. do not appear to have formerly suggested one suitable ascription; and at length it was thought advisable to review the obnoxious Dedication, and try whether the language might not *bend* a little to the necessity of the case. If the "only begetter," for instance, could be interpreted to signify *procuring* a copy of the sonnets for the Publisher, the field of conjecture as to the Patron was expanded ad libitum. W. H. then got his "promised eternity" for merely bringing out the papers; and the person addressed might be any great amiable patron of poetry, who was a male—and even a *female* in the fantastical conception of one great Shakespearean. The reasoning was formal—whoever begets, they said, *obtains* something:—whoever obtains these papers, therefore, is their *sole begetter*. Mr. W. H. therefore embarrasses no longer; and the late Mr. George Chalmers settled that the person addressed by Shakespeare was, and could be, no other human being than Queen Elizabeth. Common sense stood aghast, as it had frequently done, at the monstrous absurdity of the critic's speculation; and respectfully enquired how he could reconcile it to the everlasting allusions to the *male sex*, which are found throughout these poems?

Shakespeare calls him every where the *Lord* of his love.

One instance however shall here suffice :

“ Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage  
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit.”

Sonnet 26.

And in the 3d Sonnet, when he incites him to marry, and leave an image behind him of his own perfections, he thus pointedly marks the sex of the person addressed :

“ For where is she so fair, whose un-ear'd womb  
Disdains the *tillage* of thy *husbandry* ?”

But not to burthen the argument with unnecessary quotations, I shall *collectively* show the matchless absurdity of such an hypothesis, as that Shakespeare could have addressed them to Queen Elizabeth. The Sonnets being mentioned by Meres in 1598, in company with the Poet's Venus and Adonis, Tarquin and Lucrece, &c. we may suppose them written in 1596 and 1597, at least a great part of them. Mr. Chalmers then asserted that in the 64th year of her age, the “ Renowned Empress Queen of England” is addressed by William Shakespeare, a player, as “ His sweet *Boy*”—“ A *man* of a hue surpassing that of other men.”—He invites HIM ( that is Q. Elizabeth) to marry, that he might leave a son *like himself*. He speaks of the said *boy* (the Queen) as “ calling familiarly at his door—and of his *watching the*



*clock* till the expected visitor arrive." Although a little jealous of him, he yet would not put him "into circumscription and confine for the sea's worth"—though he does venture to *chide* his *sweet boy* (the Queen) for some *youthful irregularities* (at SIXTY FOUR); and when HE (still Elizabeth) has committed a treason against friendship, won by the wiles of the poet's *own mistress*, he excuses him, because "when the woman wooes," what woman's *son* (clearly the Queen) can be expected "to resist her?"

The reader will be apt to exclaim here, with the Comte de Breteuil to Yorick, "*Mais vous plaisantez !*" I confess the *pleasantry*, but he may himself verify the *facts*, for the passages alluded to are here literally given.

"What's in the brain that ink may character,  
Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit?  
What's new to speak, what new to minister,  
That may express my love, or thy dear merit?  
Nothing, SWEET BOY." SONNET CVIII.

"A MAN, in *hue* all hues in his controlling."  
SONNET XX.

"So thou, thyself out-going in thy noon,  
Unlooked on diest, unless thou *get* a SON."  
SONNET VII.

"You had a *father*; let *your* son say so."  
SONNET XIII.

"Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
Upon the hours and times of your desire?"

I have no precious time at all to spend,  
 Nor services to do, till you require.  
 Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,  
 While I, my sovereign, *watch the clock* for you."

## SONNET LVII.

"Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,  
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd ;  
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son  
 Will sourly leave her till she have prevail'd.  
 Ah me ! but yet thou might'st my seat forbear,—  
 And *hide* thy beauty and thy *straying youth*,  
 Who *lead thee in their riot even there*  
 Where thou art forc'd to break a two-fold truth,  
*Hers*, by thy beauty tempting *her to thee*,  
*Thine*, by thy beauty being false to me."

## SONNET XLI.

"That thou *hast HER*, it is not all my grief.  
 And yet it may be said I loved her dearly ;  
 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye :—  
*Thou* dost love her, because thou know'st *I love her* ;  
 And for my sake even so doth *she abuse me*,  
 Suffering my friend *for my sake* to approve her."

## SONNET XLII.

These passages are, in my opinion, amply destructive of Mr. Chalmers' hypothesis. One of these Sonnets, however, containing a note of *time*, always of importance in fixing any assertion, let us examine the inference drawn from it. "Three years have elapsed," says the poet, "since he first saw his young friend"—the Queen, if Mr. Chalmers wills it so. This, then, as he thinks the Sonnet written in 1597, gives 1594 for the year when

our great bard first beheld the person of Queen Elizabeth. Now, does any man, woman, or child believe that the mind of Shakespeare could have remained eight years in the capital of her kingdom, and never professionally, or even at distance in a crowd, lead him to behold the object of all wonder and praise—the scourge of Spain—the idol of her proud and happy people?

But where is the improbability that Shakespeare in his youth should have ventured under the wing of Green, his townsman, even to Kenilworth itself? It was but fourteen miles distant from Stratford. Nay, that he should at eleven years of age have personally witnessed the reception of the great Queen by the mighty favourite, and perhaps have even discharged some youthful part in the pageant written by Mr. Ferrers, sometime lord of misrule in the Court? Was there nothing about the spectacle likely to linger in one of “imagination all compact,” a youth of singular precocity, with a strong devotion to the Muses, and little inclined, as we know, to “drive on the affair of wool at home with his father?” Nay, is there no part of his immortal works which bears *evidence* upon the question of his youthful visit? We should expect to find such graphic record in a composition peculiarly devoted to *Fancy*, and there, if I do not greatly err, we undoubtedly find it.

In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon, before he

despatches his aery attendant, Puck, for a flower of powerful agency, dilates with peculiar fondness upon an important station that he had himself once occupied, and the wonders which his peculiar nature enabled him to perceive, impervious to grosser optics. The whole passage shall be given; and it will poetically well repay the critical attention which the reader is now, for the first time, called upon to give it, as a *record* of the "Princely pleasures of Kenilworth." It is in the first scene of the second act of the play; and, abounding as the previous colloquies do in descriptive beauties of surpassing splendor, pursues the subject with unabated spirit and affluence.

The speakers are Oberon and Puck.

*Obe.* My gentle Puck, come hither; thou remember'st  
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
 And heard a *mermaid on a dolphin's back*  
*Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,*  
*That the rude sea grew civil at her song;*  
*And certain stars shot madly from their spheres*  
 To hear the *sea-maid's musick.*

*Puck.* I remember.

*Obe.* That very time I saw, but thou could'st not,  
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
 Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took  
*At a fair Vestal, throned by the west,*  
 And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;  
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft

Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,  
 And the imperial Votress passed on,  
 In maiden meditation, fancy free.  
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell ;  
 It fell upon a little western flower,  
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound ;  
 And maidens call it Love in Idleness.  
 Fetch me that flow'r ; the herb I shew'd thee once ;  
 The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,  
 Will make or man or woman, madly doat  
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
 Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again  
 Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

*Puck.* I'll put a girdle round about the earth  
 In forty minutes.

In this play we see Theseus, fresh from the war with the Amazons, and full of his recollections of his friend Hercules, is attended by Fairy Oberon, his Queen, and their airy court at Athens, and with his usual contempt of anachronism the poet flies off to eulogize *a fair vestal throned by the west*, who can be no other sovereign than his virgin mistress Elizabeth, as I am about to prove, paying one of her costly visits to the most powerful of her favourites, the Earl of Leicester : and here he seats Oberon upon a promontory listening to a *mermaid on a dolphin's back*, uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath that the rude sea grew civil at her song. Now, as the vestal could not but be Elizabeth, to a bold critic

the *mermaid on a dolphin's back* could be no other person than her rival Mary, who had married the Dauphin of France, and whom Bishop Warburton insists upon it "Shakespeare called a *mermaid* to denote her beauty and *intemperate lust*."

" Ut turpiter atrum  
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne."

"which," says the great detector, Edwards, "those who do not understand Latin will perhaps think is a proof of what our critic asserts, or at least something to his purpose."\*

Mr. Steevens, though he cannot dissemble his doubts of Warburton's inference, rashly pronounces that "every reader may be induced to wish that the foregoing allusion pointed out by so acute a critic as Dr. Warburton should remain uncontroverted."

O, no, Mr. Steevens, indeed and indeed, no man, with the feelings of one, can be induced to wish any thing like this. Another of the Bishop's dreams made Virgil guilty of sacrilege. This imputes a more dastardly crime to the generous Shakespeare. But as Gibbon replaced the veil upon the Eleusinian mysteries; so Ritson, if he did not show what our poet really pointed to, for

\* See *Canons of Criticism*, edit. 1765, p. 220.

ever devoted to contempt the cruel and unmanly interpretation which had been so unblushingly given of a delicate though obscure allusion. I shall therefore, I hope with more success (I am sure with better taste), attempt to show the objects painted from our Poet's actual remembrance. The words "I remember," in answer to Oberon's inquiry, spoke for ONE more personage than Puck, at least.

A reader of the present day is in truth inexcusable, if, with the MIGHTY SPIRIT'S romance in his hand, he does not recal to his imagination the splendid pageantries of Kenilworth. Have we forgotten the immense lake on which floated a mermaid and a dolphin, in whose centre was the promontory on which Oberon figured himself to be sitting when the events occurred which he commemorates.

But we are not bound to the mere text of Shakespeare, which is a loose recollection only of a very orderly and extensive celebration; we have, fortunately, Gascoigne's *Princelie Pleasures at Kenilworth*, and Laneham's Letter, and the reader will see what corroboration they supply to our interpretation of the text of Shakespeare.

*A mermaid on a dolphin's back.*—"When," says Gascoigne, "her Majestie was entred the gate, and come into the base court, there came unto her a LADIE attended with two nimphes, who came all over the poole,

being so conveyed that it seemed she had gone upon the water, who spake to her Highnesse as followeth." I shall omit the seven stanzas of six lines each, which we may be sure were thought *dulcet and harmonious breath*, for they told the antiquity and the fortunes of the castle.

*The rude sea grew civil*—refers, I conceive, to the delivery of the Lady of the Lake; but we must hear this from Gascoigne. "Triton in the likenesse of a MERMAID came towarde the Queene's Majestie as she passed over the bridge, and spake thus:—

" You windes returne into your caves,  
And silent there remaine;  
You waters wilde suppress your waves,  
And keepe you calme and plaine."

"Then Protheus appeared *sitting on a dolphin's back*," (the identical words of Oberon,) "and the dolphin was conveyed upon a boate, so that the oars seemed to be his fynnes. Within the which dolphyn a consort of musicke was secretly placed." So the reader sees that we are not compelled into any undue compliment to the lord of misrule, Mr. Ferrers's verses—here was "*dulcet and harmonious breath*" in abundance.

*And certain stars shot madly from their spheres—*



alludes to "The fireworkes shewed upon the water, the which were both strange and well executed: as sometimes passing under the water a long space; when all men thought they had been quenched, they would rise and mount out of the water againe, and burne very furiously untill they were utterlie consumed." \*

Laneham describing the same fireworks, still more for our parallel, calls them a blaze of burning darts *flying to and fro*—beams of STARS *corruscant*.

Shakespeare's impression of the scene was strong and general; he does not write as if the tracts of Gascoigne and Laneham lay upon his table. His description is exactly such as, after seventeen years had elapsed, a reminiscence would suggest to a mind highly poetical.

Well might he then add that his eye could discern what that of a coarser spirit could not—

" Flying between the cold moon and the earth  
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took  
At a fair Vestal throned by the west,  
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
As it might pierce a hundred thousand hearts."

Then or never did the magnificent Leicester expect to carry his romantic prize—the fair vestal throned by the

\* *Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth.*

west. We are, however, told with infinite grace, and with the happiest of all compliments to her virgin obduracy :—

“ But I might see young Cupid’s fiery shaft  
 Quench’d in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon,  
 And the imperial Votress passed on,  
 In maiden meditation, fancy free.”

But the splendid captivations of Leicester were not disdained by all female minds, and the bolt of Cupid is seldom discharged in vain. Shakespeare has told us where it fell :—

“ It fell upon a little western flower,  
 Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wound,  
 And maidens call it *Love in Idleness*.”

Why, alas ! can we not ask the kindred spirit, Sir Walter Scott, whether he can conceive his own Amy Robsart more beautifully and touchingly figured than she appears to be in this exquisite metaphor ?

The princely pleasures here commemorated were the *barbarous* entertainments of the VIRGIN REIGN. They required *only* invention, poetry, mythological knowledge, powers of representation ! We look at our theatres royal, and may well triumph in our superiority !

Mr. Chalmers has been too long quitted for higher

matter; I return to his hypothesis, which some may think has been sufficiently refuted already. But I feel here tempted to notice a singular artifice in contest, which the writer alluded to invariably practised. His opponent unexpectedly finds himself involved with GREAT NAMES, about some undisputed and indeed indisputable position. While he ("good easy man") combats only an absurd hypothesis, advanced by Mr. Chalmers, "that the Sonnets were addressed to Queen Elizabeth," he starts to see himself described as one of those who do not agree with Bishop Butler, Chief Baron Gilbert, and Mr. Locke, that PROBABILITY IS THE GUIDE OF LIFE! It may be matter of curiosity to consider what Butler, Gilbert, and Locke would say to the collected *probabilities* that the reader has now before him. They might be of opinion, that the reference to them and their axiom, was but a flight of occasional spleen against persons who in more than one instance had demonstrated the *probable* of Mr. Chalmers not merely improbable but *impossible*.

On the present occasion he was led into his absurdity by another equally great, namely, that SPENSER addressed his *Amoretti*, a collection of Sonnets, to the great Queen; and that Shakespeare, from a feeling of *jealousy*, would needs pay the same compliment to her

beauties. This inference was drawn from an expression in his 80th Sonnet.

“ O how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a BETTER SPIRIT doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame !”

I shall show, in the sequel, who the *better spirit* really was, and his connection with the *subject* of Shakespeare's Sonnets. But could our Poet here have really referred to Spenser, no *Sonnets* would have crossed his mind, and alarmed his jealousy. Shakespeare had too deep a feeling of poetry, and too much modesty, not to know and declare, that the *Faery Queene* did more to illustrate Elizabeth, than could all the Sonnets in the universe, whoever were the writers.

Yet as this, however honourable to Shakespeare's taste, is still only my opinion, I shall give “a living reason” that Spenser did *not* address the Amoretti to the Queen. The 74th Sonnet points distinctly to the *real object*.

“ Most happy letters I fram'd by skilful trade,  
With which that happy name was first desynd,  
The which THREE TIMES thrise happy hath me made,  
With gifts of body, fortune, and of mind.  
The FIRST my being to me gave by kind,  
From mother's womb deriv'd by dew descent ;  
The SECOND is my Sovereigne Queene most kind,

That honour and large richesse to me lent :  
 The **THIRD**, my love, my live's last ornament,  
 By whom my spirit out of dust was rayseed ;  
 To speake her prayse and glory excellent,  
 Of all alive most worthy to be prayseed.  
 Ye **THREE** Elizabeths ! for ever live,  
 That three such graces did unto me give."

If there be meaning in language, here are three distinct persons indicated. Some of the Sonnets are addressed to the Lady previous to her consenting to be his, and some, as the preceeding, subsequent ; the 66th marks the exact point at which the fair Elizabeth of the sister kingdom yielded to his delightful suit :

" And with obsequious majesty approv'd  
 His pleaded reason." P. L.

But, in one of the Sonnets, his fate was in a state of troublesome jeopardy ; and on the supposition (that is too weak a word), the positive assertion of Mr. Chalmers, that they were all addressed to one female, Queen Elizabeth must have been mightily astonished, when she read the following :

Great wrong I do, I can it not deny,  
 To that most sacred Empresse, my dear dred,  
 Not finishing her *Queene of Faery*,  
 That mote enlarge her living prayses, dead :  
 But, **LODWICK**, this of grace to me aread ;  
 Do ye not think th' accomplishment of it  
 Sufficient worke for one man's simple head,

All were it, as the rest, but rudely writ ?  
 How then should I, without another wit,  
 Think ever to endure so tedious toyle !  
 Sith that this one is tost with *troublous fit*  
 Of a *proud Love*, that doth my spirite spoyle.  
 Cease then, till she vouchsafe to grawnt me rest ;  
 Or lend YOU me another living brest."

## SONNET XXXIII.

But the reader may wish to know something of this Lodwick, and I am entirely at his service.

Lodowick Bryskett, was a particular friend of Spenser's, who, at his cottage near Dublin, frequently enjoyed the society of the great poet, in common with many of the greatest men in the sister kingdom. He has left us, in his *Discourse of Civill Life*, a most interesting conversation, in which Spenser is made to bear a part. Lodowick addresses the Poet in language of high but merited encomium, as a man *perfect* in the *Greek tongue*, and *very well read* in *Philosophie*, both *morall and naturall*; and entreats him to open to them the great *benefits*, which men obtain by the knowledge of moral philosophy. Spenser, as may be anticipated, modestly excuses himself; and one reason he assigns is, that he is already advanced in a work upon this subject in heroical verse, under the title of a *Faerie Queene*, and he therefore trusts that the expectation of that work may free him from the task of speaking unadvisedly and unpremeditatedly upon the present occasion.

When Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton was Lord Deputy of Ireland, he nominated Lodowick Secretary of State. It is to this friend, who no doubt personally knew the lady, that he speaks of his PROUD LOVE, and to whom he ingenuously declares the difficulty he finds in proceeding with his immortal labour, in consequence of the repulses of his suit, and the torments he endures from her caprice. The lady knew the full value of his verse, and would not, by hasty compliance, abridge her toilet of its daily Sonnet. The whole collection is beautifully bound together by an epithalamion on their marriage. In the 80th Sonnet he discriminates this lady from the Queen in a way not to be mistaken.

“ After so long a race as I have run  
 Through faery land, which those six books compile,  
 Give leave to rest me being half foredone,  
 And gather to myself new breath awhile,  
 Then as a steed, refreshed after toil,  
 Out of my prison I will break anew,  
 And stoutly will that second work assoyle,  
 With strong endeavour and attention due :  
 Till then give leave to me in pleasant mew,  
 To sport my Muse, and sing my Love’s sweet praise ;  
 The contemplation of whose heavenly hue  
 My spirit to an higher pitch will raise.

But let her praises yet be low and mean,  
 Fit for the *handmaid* of the FAERY QUEENE.”

In the Faery Queene, he has himself told us, he

shadows merely the perfections of his *Sovereign*. His mistress, however *fair* and *proud*, is yet rated infinitely below the towering CYNTHIA, and her praises suited only to the *Handmaid* of the *matchless* Elizabeth. Not to admit this inference is to be insensible to the constant import of language: it is, in other words, to live in an ideal world, and imagine that human words convey anything but human meaning.

Enough has now been said, I conceive, to prove that neither Shakespeare nor Spenser addressed their Sonnets to the Virgin Queen.

## NOT ADDRESSED TO LORD SOUTHAMPTON.

It may be proper to concede to Dr. Drake, that he has shown the absolute certainty that 126 of the Sonnets in question were addressed to a *male* friend and patron of Shakespeare; and he thinks that friend was Lord Southampton. The reasons must be strong indeed that overturn so natural an ascription.

The *first* which I shall adduce, in my opinion, has force sufficient to set his Lordship aside. It is the Dedication of Thorpe the publisher, which is printed at the outset of this essay, who wishes Mr. W. H., as the only begetter of the Sonnets, "*all happiness*, and that *Eternity promised* by our ever-living Poet." Now it is



proper to look at this promised eternity in the Poet's own language, that we may be quite sure of its application to the person addressed by him, and to no other; because it will then follow that no friend or patron can be he, whose name is not figured truly by those initials. Thus he writes in the 81st Sonnet:

“ Your name from hence immortal life shall have,  
 Though I once gone to all the world must die;  
 The earth can yield me but a common grave,  
 When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.  
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
 Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read;  
 And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,  
 When all the breathers of the world are dead;  
 You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen,)  
 Where breath most breathes—even in the mouths of men.”

Now the initials do not apply to Lord Southampton, who was named Henry Wriothesly; and who, ten years before Shakespeare became known to him, was Earl of Southampton and Baron of Tichfield. I state this firmly, because in 1593, when the Poet dedicated his *Venus and Adonis*, it was at a distance that implied no acquaintance; for the very dedication was *without permission*, and he says, “ I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship.” Tarquin and Lucrece, in 1594, shows that his former offering had been well received. If we suppose him

therefore to have begun these Sonnets as soon as his latter poem had done its work, how did the relative *ages* stand of the Poet and the Patron? In 1594 Lord Southampton was 21, being born in 1573; and Shakespeare exactly 30, being born in 1564. The disparity is nothing; yet, in the poems, one of the parties is stated to be in the *spring* of life, and the other in the *autumn*.—One “the *sweet boy*,” “the world’s fresh ornament,” the other “crush’d and o’erworn by the injurious hand of Time.” See the 63d Sonnet, and many others. Southampton therefore could not be the object addressed in the Sonnets. Take the very *last* of them, and we find him still saluted “O thou, my lovely boy.” Dr. Drake thinks the uniformity of the affection borne may justify the iteration of the term at any part of the intimacy. I think, as to Southampton, it was unjustifiable in *any one* year of it.

But out of respect to an hypothesis advocated by Dr. Drake, let us wave this decorous objection. Yet surely we may reasonably ask, why the Sonnets were restricted to the *personal beauty* of Southampton, (which he does not seem to have had, if his portrait resembled him), and a *devoted attachment* on the Poet’s side, which never seemed to sympathize with the actual circumstances of that nobleman’s *life*? Did his achievements in 1596 and 1597, as a great Captain, at Cadiz and in the Azores,

yield nothing? In 1598 he went with his friend Essex to Ireland. On his marriage in 1596 with Miss Vernon being known, he was thrown into prison; had Shakespeare alone been indifferent to these occurrences—the latter amatorial, and quite in his line of compliment, his success with the fair? How did the Poet feel upon his rash daring with Essex? had he no soothing balm to shed upon the agonies of his trial, sentence, and imprisonment? and finally, when James had restored him to his liberty and his honours, could his eulogist find no call upon him for *secure* congratulation? but, amid combats by sea and land, secret attachment and marriage, irritation of his Royal Mistress, rebellion against her authority, sentence to an ignominious death, release from a captivity bitter as death,—could, I say, this most loving and fertile of all poets “set down in the tables,” which his friend had given to him (as the Sonnets inform us), nothing but one cuckoo note upon a theme which that friend, unless he never matured, must have long dismissed from his attention, I mean his personal beauty? I answer, I cannot conceive it. If these Sonnets were *periodically* sent to a man so circumstanced as we find Lord Southampton to have been; he must have nauseated their uniformity. If they were *not* so dispatched to him, the Poet would chuse his topics out of the passing events, and reserve the series for a time when they

might be transmitted without danger. But we should expect a Shakespeare to tell him in a masterly tone—that calamity was the nurse of great spirits ;—that his afflictions had been the sources of his best fame ;—that mankind never could have known the resources of his mighty mind, if he had not been summoned to endure disgrace, and to gaze undaunted upon the menacing preparations of death itself. Nothing of this kind is hinted at, and therefore the Sonnets *cannot* apply to Lord Southampton.

This, it may be said, is hypothetical reasoning, and, however plausible, might not have been true. Lord Southampton, admitting the facts, might not find poetry the echo of propriety. Was he by any other poet so addressed? The answer to this question will leave my inference indisputable. He was addressed precisely in the style which I have above described, and by Daniel, the poet of Wilton House. See the following remarkable extract from his verses to that nobleman :—

“ He who hath never warr’d with miserie,  
Nor ever tugg’d with fortune and distresse,  
Hath had n’ occasion nor no field to trie  
The strength and forces of his worthinesse :  
Those partes of judgment which felicitie  
Keepes as concealed, affliction must expresse ;  
And only men shew their abilities,  
And what they are, in their extremities.

" The world had never taken so full note  
 Of what thou arte, hadst thou not been undone,  
 And onely thy affliction hath begot  
 More fame than thy best fortunes could have done.  
 For ever by adversitie are wrought  
 The greatest workes of admiration,  
 And all the faire examples of renowne  
 Out of distresse and miserie are growne.

" Not to be unhappy is unhappinesse,  
 And miserie not to have knowne miserie :  
 For the best way unto discretion is  
 The way that leads us by adversitie :  
 And men are better shew'd what is amisse  
 By th' expert finger of calamitie,  
 Than they can be with all that Fortune brings,  
 Who never shewes them the true face of things.

" How could we know that thou could'st have indur'd  
 With a reposed cheere wrong and disgrace ;  
 And, with a heart and countenance assur'd,  
 Have lookt sterne Death and Horror in the face ?  
 How should we know thy soule had been secur'd  
 In honest counsels and in wayes unbase ?  
 Hadst thou not stood, to shew us what thou wert,  
 By thy affliction, that descryde thy heart.

" He that indures for what his conscience knowes  
 Not to be ill, doth from a patience high  
 Looke onely on the cause whereto he owes  
 Those sufferings, not on his miserie :  
 The more he indures the more his glory growes,  
 Which never growes from imbecilitie ;  
 Onely the best compos'd and worthiest hearts  
 God sets to act the hard'st and constant'st parts."

Such topics we may be assured saluted the gracious Earl from the pen also of Shakespeare on the occasions here commemorated, probably too in some degree exposing the writer from the ardour of his gratitude; and therefore, when once committed to the noble sufferer's memory, consigned to the flames, that the Poet at least might run no risk. We may be sure that Shakespeare who owed so much to the friend of Essex, was in agony during the rash enterprises of that unfortunate favourite. But his reflections are for ever lost in the manner here stated, and it is with pleasure we have above shewn that his *feeling* has been at least preserved in the perhaps weaker verse of Daniel.

The difficulty is, to select a person who, from his youth and station, called for no other topics than the Sonnets afford; who was beautiful enough to be considered "the world's fresh ornament;" interesting enough that the Poet should wish his *straying youth* removed from temptation; great enough to be courted, as willing and able to patronize a condition that could not exist without it, and who actually became the patron of Shakespeare; one moreover whom, as the Sonnets tell us, rival poets were courting, with all the arts, and more than the *charms* of verse. Such a person I shall proceed to point out.

I had proceeded thus far in my disquisition in the

original publication, when in the magazine for October appeared the two following letters on the subject addressed to Mr. Urban.

*“ Bath, Oct. 20.*

*“ Mr. URBAN,*

*“ You will confer a favour on a constant reader and occasional correspondent, by allowing a place to the letter which I now inclose. It is quite unnecessary for me to add one word in corroboration of what Mr Bright has stated in it. Most true it is that many years ago he did me the favour to admit me an acquaintance with this long-concealed and most curious truth ; and that I have from time to time taken the liberty of suggesting to him that it was due to his own literary reputation, and due to other inquirers in this department of literary history, not to withhold the public communication of the fact, and of the curious and most recondite researches by which he had first established and then illustrated it. I may add that not only the fact itself, but the evidence was submitted to me, and the many important conclusions also which follow on the establishment of the connexion between Lord Pembroke and the Poet: the whole disquisition being an admirable specimen of inductive reasoning, from the comparison of facts which could be found only by deep research, equally*

creditable to the diligence and the power of combination of its author.

“JOSEPH HUNTER.”

“ (Copy.)

“ MY DEAR SIR,—The communication of J. B. respecting the person to whom Shakespeare addressed his Sonnets, which occurs in the Gentleman’s Magazine of this month, and to which you have so kindly directed my attention, occasions, I am half ashamed to confess, some selfish regrets.

“ It is now more than thirteen years ago, in 1819, I think, since I detailed to you the progress of the discovery I had then made, that William Herbert the third Earl of Pembroke was undoubtedly the person to whom Shakespeare addressed the first 126 Sonnets. Another friend, Dr. Holme of Manchester, had been informed of my secret a year earlier; and from both, as ever since from time to time I have spoken or corresponded on the subject, I have received warnings, that by delaying to give the result of my researches to the public, I was putting to hazard an honourable opportunity of securing to myself some literary reputation. The truth is, I have in the long interval been much and actively engaged in matters more immediately important. I have been occupied too in following out my discovery to its wide and various consequences. I have felt desirous to explore



deeply, rather than solicitous to appropriate early; and latterly, my materials have so overwhelmed me, that I have become fastidious and irresolute, as to mode, composition, and arrangement.

“ Under these circumstances, and before J. B. actually announces his discovery, I thus put in my claim. I readily acknowledge that he who unnecessarily hoards information of any kind, rightly loses the privilege of first communicating it; and I anticipate with my best philosophy the interesting conclusion of J. B.’s very excellent and original paper.

“ When I can again apply myself to the subject, I will come before the public as a fellow-labourer, and it shall be in the spirit of one who, whilst he feels—for human nature—somewhat jealously of his own long-treasured discovery, recollects that the claim he is now preferring may be the cause of similar feelings in another, who has much more justly appreciated what is due to himself, and what the interests of literature demand from all its worshippers.

“ I am, my dear Sir, your obliged friend,

“ B. HEYWOOD BRIGHT.

“ *Stone-buildings, Lincoln’s Inn,*

Oct. 16, 1832.

“ *Rev. Joseph Hunter.*”

My essay followed them, of course without reference to what I could not then know to be in existence; what notice I took of the writers will be seen at the conclusion, when I put my name to the enquiry.

I. It is obvious that the Patron of Shakespeare was a person of rank superior to himself: that he was in the may-morn of life: that his personal beauty was remarkable: that he was much addicted to pleasure, courted by the women, and guilty of some breaches of friendship in consequence: that his counsellor and poet, fully aware of his tendency to dissipation, exhorted him to marry, and bequeath to the world a copy of himself. It is also clear that, during the time of writing these compositions, their object had not coveted public business, he was something more than the mere 'child of state,' and by shunning its perilous honours, might be said, almost alone, to be 'hugely politic.'

He is announced in the first Sonnet in the tone of Spenser's address to Raleigh, as I have before observed,

"Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,  
And only herauld to the gaudy spring."

This is unquestionably said of a youth of distinction, who had just then offered himself to the public gaze and towards whom every eye was turned, from the circumstances of his descent, and the graces with which he seemed personally accomplished.

If we were told that the nephew of Sir Philip Sydney, soon after he quitted Oxford in 1594, had been allowed by his father the Earl of Pembroke, to come to London, in his *fifteenth* year;—that with the *beauty* of his mother the Countess, and the taste for *poetry* of her and Sir Philip, he had addicted himself to the stage, and among the professors of dramatic art had distinguished Shakespeare, and entertained an ardent *affection* for so great a master; we should receive such an anecdote as one at all events highly probable. If we were subsequently to learn that persons who well knew the poet and his connections, had left their intimacy upon record, it would excite, it is true, no surprise, though it might lead us to expect that the poet himself had also publicly expressed his sense of so honourable a distinction.

Now Messieurs Heminges and Condell, when publishing the folio edition of Shakespeare's Plays in the year 1623, in their dedication to William then Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Earl of Montgomery his brother, testify to this friendly connexion, and, as it appears certain that Ben Jonson held the pen for them, the facts stated acquire *his* full knowledge, in corroboration of the assertion made by the actual dedicators. Jonson himself knew these noblemen well. Thus he writes for the dedicators, as to the plays now collected :

“ But since your Lordshippes have beene pleas'd to

thinke these trifles some-thing heereto-fore ; and have prosecuted both them, *and their authour living, with so much favour* : we hope that (they out-living him, and he not having the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings,) you will use the like indulgence towards them, *you have done unto their parent.* \*

“ It hath been the height of our care, who are the presenters, to make the present worthy of your H. H. by the perfection. But there we must also crave our abilities to be considered, my lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach fourth milke, creame, fruites, or what they have : and many nations (we have heard) that had not gummes and incense, obtained their requests with a leavened cake. It was no fault to approach their gods by what means they could : and the most, though meanest of things are made precious, when they are dedicated to temples. In that name, therefore, we most humbly *consecrate* to your H. H. these remaines of your *servant* SHAKESPEARE ;

\* It will no doubt appear remarkable to those who have never heard but of Shakespeare's *first* patron, Lord Southampton, that he should not even be alluded to on this occasion. Whether he disputed this homage, or was offended by its alienation from him, cannot now be known. He probably sent for the book on its publication, and re-perused the plays. In the following year, 1624, he accepted a command in the Low Countries, and died of a fever at Bergen-op-Zoom, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, aged 52.

that what *delight is in them, may be ever your L. L.* the reputation his, and the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the living and the dead, as is your Lordshippes most bounden,

JOHN HEMINGE,

HENRY CONDELL.”

It is my opinion, then, that Shakespeare addressed 126 of these Sonnets to Mr. WILLIAM HERBERT, subsequently third Earl of Pembroke, and that a variety of circumstances alluded to in these Sonnets, as well as the initials, apply fully, personally, and unequivocally to the said young nobleman; and that the other Sonnets, though not addressed, were sent to him, as alluding to matters mentioned in the 126; and that it is probable the Earl sanctioned their publication in 1609 under his untitled initials. There will appear an obvious propriety in thus restricting Thorpe to his designation when they were written, if we consider that the Earl in 1609 had become a statesman, and, as his poet had predicted, attentive to his own dignity and importance at court. To justify me in the hypothesis just laid down, every circumstance in the 126 Sonnets addressed to one person, should apply to an intercourse between Shakespeare and Mr. William Herbert, and apply moreover easily. There should be no straining of words, no wringing of a poor phrase to torture it into a lame sup-

porter of an hypothesis. As I have already proved that, without such torture, these productions cannot be applied to other candidates, so I shall now in detail proceed to show, that they do strictly, fairly, and undeniably apply to the young nobleman I have named.

II. It will, therefore, in the outset, be necessary to look at his life and character, as they have been delineated by the Oxford historian, A. á Wood, and the great Lord Clarendon. And first for the Athenæ Oxonienses.

“William Herbert, son and heir of Henry Earl of Pembroke, was born at Wilton, in Wilts, the 8th of April, 1580, became a nobleman of New College, Oxford, in Lent term 1592, aged 13, continued there about two years, succeeded his father in his honours 1601, made Knight of the Garter 1st of James I. and Governor of Portsmouth six years after. In 1626 he was unanimously elected Chancellor of this University, being a great patron of learning, and about that time was made Lord Chamberlain of the King's Household. He was not only a great favourer of learned and ingenious men, but was himself learned, and endowed to admiration with a poetical genie, as by those *amorous* and not inelegant Aires and Poems of his composition doth evidently appear; some of which had musical notes set to them by Henry Lawes. . . . .

He died suddenly in his house called Baynard's Castle, in London, on the 10th of April in 1630, according to the calculation of his nativity, made several years before by Mr. Tho. Allen of Gloucester Hall; whereupon his body was buried in the Cathedral Church at Salisbury, near to that of his father."

And also in the *Fasti*, where he thus speaks of him :

"William Herbert Earl of Pembroke, the very picture and *viva effigies* of nobility, a person truly generous, a singular lover of learning and the professors thereof, and therefore by the academicians elected their Chancellor some years after this. [30th of August, 1605, when he was created M. A. the King being then at Oxford.]

"His person was rather majestic than elegant, and his presence, whether quiet or in motion, was full of stately gravity. His mind was purely heroic, often stout, but never disloyal; and so vehement an opposer of the Spaniard, that when that match fell under consideration in the latter end of the reign of K. Jam. I. he would sometimes rouse, to the trepidation of that King yet kept in favour still; for his Majesty knew plain dealing, as a jewel in all men, so in a Privy Counsellor an ornamental duty; and the same true-heartedness commended him to K. Ch. I."

My Lord CLARENDON's character is much fuller, but

so exact and eloquent, so fine a model of sincere historical painting, that I will not mutilate it, to hurry on the argument founded upon it.

“ William Earl of Pembroke was the most universally beloved and esteemed of any man of that age ; and, having a great office in the court, he made the court itself better esteemed, and more revered in the country. And as he had a great number of friends of the best men, so no man had ever the confidence to avow himself to be his enemy. He was a man very well bred, and of excellent parts, and a graceful speaker upon any subject, having a good proportion of learning, and a ready wit to apply to it, and enlarge upon it ; of a pleasant and facetious humour, and a disposition affable, generous, and magnificent. He was master of a large fortune from his ancestors, and had a great addition by his wife, a daughter and heir of the Earl of Shrewsbury, which he enjoyed during his life, she out-living him ; but all served not his expence, which was only limited by his great mind, and occasions to use it nobly.

“ He lived many years about the court before in it— and never *by* it ; being rather regarded and esteemed by King James, than loved and favoured. After the foul fall of the Earl of Somerset, he was made Lord Chamberlain of the King’s house, more for the court’s sake than his own ; and the court appeared with the more



lustre, because he had the government of that province. As he spent and lived upon his own fortune, so he stood upon his own feet, without any other support than of his proper virtue and merit; and lived towards the favourites with that decency, as would not suffer them to censure or reproach his master's judgment and election, but as with men of his own rank. He was exceedingly beloved in the court, because he never desired to get that for himself which others laboured for, but was still ready to promote the pretences of worthy men. And he was equally celebrated in the country, for having received no obligations from the court which might corrupt or sway his affections and judgement: so that all who were displeased and unsatisfied in the court, or with the court, were always inclined to put themselves under his banner, if he would have admitted them; and yet he did not so reject them as to make them espouse another shelter; but so far suffered them to depend on him, that he could restrain them from breaking out beyond private resentments and murmurs.

“He was a great lover of his country, and of the religion and justice which he believed could only support it; and his friendships were only with men of those principles. And as his conversation was most with men of the *most pregnant parts and understanding*, so towards any such, who needed support or encourage-

ment, though unknown, if fairly recommended to him, *he was very liberal*. Sure never man was planted in a court that was fitter for that soil, or brought better qualities with him to purify that air.

“ Yet his MEMORY must not be *flattered* that his virtues and good inclinations may be believed; he was not without some *alloy of vice*, nor without being clouded with *great infirmities*, which he had in too exorbitant a proportion. *He indulged to himself the pleasures of all kinds, almost in all excesses*. To WOMEN, whether out of his natural constitution, or for want of his domestic content and delight, (in which he was most unhappy, for he paid much too dear for his wife’s fortune, by taking her person into the bargain) *he was immoderately given up*. But therein he likewise retained such a power and jurisdiction over his very appetite, that he was not so much transported with beauty and outward allurements, as with those advantages of the mind as manifested extraordinary *wit* and *spirit* and *knowledge*, and administered pleasure in the conversation. To these he sacrificed *himself*, his *precious time*, and much of his *fortune*. And some who were nearest his trust and friendship, were not without apprehension, that his natural *vivacity* and *vigour of mind* began to lessen and decline by those *excessive indulgences*.

“ About the time of the death of King James, or pre-

sently after, he was made Lord Steward of his Majesty's house, that the staff of Chamberlain might be put into the hands of his brother the Earl of Montgomery, upon a new contract of friendship with the Duke of Buckingham; after whose death he had likewise such offices of his as he most affected, of honour and command; none of *profit*, which he cared not for; and within two years after, he died himself of an apoplexy, after a full and cheerful supper.

“A short story may not be unfitly inserted, it being very frequently mentioned by a person of known integrity, who at that time being on his way to London, met at Maidenhead some persons of quality, of relation or dependence upon the Earl of Pembroke. (Sir Charles Morgan, commonly called General Morgan, who had commanded an army in Germany and defended Stoad; Dr. Field, then Bishop of St. David's; and Dr. Chafin, the Earl's then chaplain in his house, and much in his favour.) At supper one of them drank a health to the Lord Steward; upon which another of them said, ‘that he believed his Lord was at that time very merry, for he had now *outlived* the day, which his tutor Sandford\* had *prognosticated* upon his *nativity*

\* Sandford may be a mistake of Lord Carendon for Allen of Gloucester Hall; if not, it will follow that two astrologers calculated Herbert's nativity, and that they concurred in their interpretation of his horoscope.

he would not outlive ; but he had done it now, for that was his birth-day, which had completed his age to fifty years.' The next morning, by the time they came to Colebrook, they met with the news of his death.

"He died exceedingly lamented by men of all qualities, and left many of his servants and dependants good estates, raised out of his employments and bounty. Nor had his heir cause to complain ; for though his expences had been very magnificent (and it may be the less considered, and his improvidence the less, because he had no child to inherit,) insomuch as he left a great debt charged upon the estate ; yet considering the wealth he left in jewels, plate, and furniture, and the estate his brother enjoyed in right of his wife (who was not fit to manage it herself) during her long life, he may be justly said to have inherited as good an estate from *him*, as HE had from his father, which was one of the best in England."

Although the above admirable character conducts the Earl to the close of his life, and I am chiefly concerned in the early part of it, yet, besides the ornamental effect of so complete a production, the anecdote which refers to *judicial astrology* is necessary, to make out some points of parallel in the Sonnets themselves.

Greatly to the honour of Clarendon, the above character has one feature, which biographers of the

present day are careful to omit. It speaks fearlessly of the "exorbitant proportion of his infirmities," and yet shows him to have been one of the most amiable of the race of men. One of these infirmities is pointed at in the Sonnets, and the great poet himself seems implicated with him. Dr. Drake wishes that 22 of the Sonnets had never been published—"because if we dismiss these confessional Sonnets, not the slightest moral stain can rest on the character of Shakespeare." But why should he be so anxious, in the case of Shakespeare, to exhibit "a faultless monster which the world ne'er saw?"—a being transcending us so immeasurably in the powers of the mind, and not evincing his kindred by the slightest error in his personal conduct! Surely, as *repented* error excites no imitation, it is better to keep down our arrogance, by showing the *greatest* of us not entirely spotless. It is not for the purpose of common-place morality, that we hear authoritatively from the reading desk—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

I at length proceed with the investigation, having established much relative matter on unquestionable authority. It will be now readily admitted that when Mr. William Herbert came up to town from college, he was in the vernal blossom of existence; and all that the Sonnets express as to the beauty of his person may be

credited upon a sight of Vandyke's picture of him in his maturity. The poet seems to be merely transposed by the biographer in the account of his attentions to the *sex*, which previous quotations have placed before the reader. Even the particular temper of our youth, who was addicted, says Rowland Whyte, to *melancholy*, is marked by Shakespeare in the 8th Sonnet.

“ Musick to hear, why hear'st thou musick *sadly*?  
Why lov'st thou that, which thou receiv'st not gladly?”

III. There are many passages in these Sonnets, which, as they infer the superior condition of his young friend, express also the fear that reasons of *rank* and *state* might separate them: that an intimacy with the Player might sully the future Peer, and that it would be incumbent on the latter to “hold his honour at a wary distance.” This reflection induces the poet to lament his degraded condition, which made him “*a motley* to the view” of an unworthy crowd. A few such complaints shall follow.

“ Let me confess, that we two must be twain.  
In our two loves there is but one respect,  
Though in our lives a separable spight.  
I may not evermore acknowledge thee,  
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame;  
Nor thou with *publick kindness* honour me,  
Unless thou take that honour from thy name.”

SONNET XXXVI.

“ Against that time, if ever that time come,  
 When I shall see thee frown on my defects,  
 When as thy love hath cast his utmost sum,  
 Call'd to that audit by *advis'd respects* ?  
 Against that time, when thou shalt strangely pass,  
 And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye ;  
 When love, converted from the thing it was,  
 Shall reasons find of *settled gravity*.”

I reasoned upon the latter passage in the opening, without pointing to the particular person addressed ; it is here repeated to establish my hypothesis. Even the sage and moral Spenser apologizes for presenting the *Faery Queene* to the grave Lord Treasurer of England ; and only hopes acceptance from its *deeper sense*, which such an eye as Lord Burleigh's might rest upon with approbation.

“ To you, right noble Lord, whose carefull brest  
 To menage of most grave affaires is bent,  
 Unfitly I these idle rimes present,  
 The labour of lost time, and wit unstaide :  
 Yet, if their deeper sense be inly waide,  
 And the dim veile, with which from common view  
 Their fairer parts are hid, aside be laid,  
 Perhaps not vaine they may appear to you.”

Spenser's follower, Chapman, thought *heavenly* poetry the true aliment of great minds ; and proudly, but not vainly, said so. See the Sonnets with his Homer.

Burleigh however, it is well known, frowned upon such levities, and considered

“ That poesie was a removed thing  
From grave administry of publike weales.”

How Shakespeare conceived himself *degraded* by the profession to which he owes his immortality, it is worth while to show fully.

“ Alas ! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,  
And made myself a *motley* to the view.”

SONNET CX.

“ O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,  
That did not better for my life provide  
Than *publick means*, which publick manners breeds.  
Thence comes it that my NAME receives a *brand* ;  
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd  
To what it *works in*, like the dyer's hand.”

SONNET CXI.

One more struggle of the Poet to bear himself above the reach of illiberal obloquy, by the shield which his Patron's favour threw before him.

“ Your love and pity doth the impression *fill*,  
Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow ;  
For what care I who calls me well or ill,  
So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow ?  
You are my *all-the-world*, and I must strive  
To know my *shames* and *praises* from your tongue.  
In so profound abysm I throw all care  
Of others' voices, that my adder's sense  
To *critick* and to *flatterer* stoped are.”



That Shakespeare's sensibility would be shocked by the usual treatment of his profession, may be obvious from the language even of King James's licence to his own company acting at the Globe. That monarch wills and commands all Justices, Mayors, Sheriffs, Constables, Headboroughs, and other officers, to allow them to act throughout his dominions, "without any letts, hindrances, or molestations: and not only so, but to be aiding or assisting to them, if any *wrong* be to them offered; and to allow them such former *courtesies* as hath been given to men of *their* place and quality."

As Lord Pembroke received the garter in the first year of the new reign, there is every reason for thinking that his friendship for our Poet procured the above licence from King James.

IV. The 80th, 82nd, 85th, and 86th Sonnets contain references to the *better spirit*, who studiously celebrated the same object with Shakespeare, and whom I promised to make distinctly known to the reader.

"O, how I faint when I of YOU do write,  
Knowing a *better spirit* doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!"

SONNET LXXX.

The modern reader would be apt to think that Shakespeare could only regard Spenser as his superior—but

this is to be unacquainted with the estimates of poetry in the age of Elizabeth. Acknowledged learning greatly predominated over genius. The modern stage had not drawn aside the veneration for the classic drama, and the *scholar* still indulged his followers with plays upon the ancient model. He thought the best of modern plays but *gross* and *barbarous*; and, in imitation of Sir Philip Sidney, called upon scholars like himself, to resist the barbarian of the north, who threatened with oblivion their more classical productions. Notwithstanding "the divinity that stirr'd within him," I have no doubt that Shakespeare actually veiled his bonnet, not only to Spenser, but to Daniel and Chapman, to Harrington, and to Fairefax. We see *them* invariably "pass him by," not deigning to consider him of their fraternity; and a modern worshipper of our Poet, after toiling through names with which he is little acquainted, wonders by what strange blindness that Jupiter was *ever* unobserved, to whom the rest have become merely satellites, invisible to the common eye, and only known to exist from the telescopic discoveries of the antiquary.

But that Spenser was not so absolute a sovereign in the period to which I have referred, is proved by Ben Jonson, who points out *that poet's rival* and *his own*, in his delightful comedy of *Epicœne, or the Silent Woman*. It is one of the topics chosen by Truewit, to

deter Morose from marriage; whose lady, he tells him, will not care how his acres melt, "so as she may bee a stateswoman, know all the news, what was done at *Salisbury*, what at the *Bath*, what at Court, what in *Progresse*; or, so she may censure *Poets*, and authors, and stiles, and compare them, DANIEL with SPENSER, Jonson with the *tother youth*, and so fourth."

This leads me easily to my decision, that Daniel was the *better spirit* alluded to. He was in fact brought up at Wilton, the seat of the Pembrokes, and in 1601, inscribed his *Defence of Ryme* to William Herbert. In this dedication, he tells him,

"I was first encourag'd or fram'd thereunto by your most worthy and honourable *mother*; receiving the first notion for the formall ordering of those compositions at *Wilton*, which I must ever acknowledge to have beene my *best schoole*, and thereof always am to hold a feeling and gratefull memory. Afterward, drawne farther on by the well-liking and approbation of my worthy Lord [your father,] the fosterer of me and my muse."

Therefore, when Shakespeare wrote the 82nd Sonnet, he hints at the actual ground of his jealousy—Daniel had *dedicated* to William Herbert.

"I grant thou wert not married to my muse,  
And therefore may'st without attaint o'erlook  
The *dedicated words*, which writers use  
Of their fair subject, blessing every book."

Spenser, let me add, did not live to *dedicate* to William Herbert, though it is admitted he eulogized his parents. This establishes Daniel firmly.

That Shakespeare had chosen Samuel Daniel, the favourite poet of the Countess of Pembroke, for his model in these Sonnets, addressed according to the present hypothesis to her elder son, is pointed out by Mr. Malone with his usual accuracy. But the imitation of that poet had an earlier commencement. When he had determined upon the "graver labour" which was to follow his *Venus and Adonis*, published in 1593, he cast the *Rape of Lucrece* in the Stanza of Daniel's *Rosamond*, consisting of seven lines; whereas his first production was limited to six. Shakespeare appears also in his second work, to have been during a considerable portion of it, infected by the almost prosaic plainness of Daniel. The *Fair Rosamond*, in enjoining her poet \* his task, invests herself with the prescience, (or shall I call it historical knowledge?) of times subsequent to her own; and talks as familiarly of Jane Shore, as if the

\* Perhaps this term for Daniel may be questionable, for Michael Drayton, (not an ordinary Poet, as Warburton styled him, but) an admirable writer with a purer taste than Daniel, has composed a legend of fair Rosamond; and in his *heroical Epistles* has also honoured the pleasant Mistress Shore and her Royal lover, by framing two letters for them, which it may be no profanation to say exceed infinitely the amatorial effusions of the fifteenth century.

E

heroines had changed masters, or Edward the 4th had reigned before the second Henry. A few stanzas may not much offend, as a sample of Shakespeare's rival.

“ Out from the horror of infernall deepes,  
 My poore afflicted ghost comes heere to plain it,  
 Attended with my shame that never sleepes,  
 The spot where-with my kinde and youth did staine it.  
 My body found a grave where to containe it.  
 A sheete could hide my face, but not my sin,  
 For Fame findes never tombe t'inclose it in.

And which is worse, my soule is now denied  
 Her transport to the sweet Elysian rest,  
 The joyfull blisse for ghosts repurified,  
 The ever-springing gardens of the blest ;  
*Caron* denies me waftage with the rest,  
 And saies, my soule can never passe the river,  
 Till lovers' sighes on earth shall it deliver.

No muse suggests the pity of my case,  
 Each pen doth overpasse my just complaint,  
 Whilst others are preferd, though far more base ;  
*Shore's* wife is grac'd, and passes for a saint ;  
 Her legend \* justifies her foule attain.

\* “ *Her legend.*”—This unquestionably refers to the “ Legend of *Shore's* wife,” written by Churchyard. See the *Mirror for Magistrates*, a work greatly admired and imitated in its day by Drayton and others, though now little more of it is read than the *Induction* by Sackville ; which Capel selected for a principal decoration to his “ *Prolusions*,” one of the purest volumes of our ancient poetry, most carefully edited, the hopeful precursor to his Shakespeare.

Her wel-told tale did such compassion find,  
That she is pass'd, and I am left behind."

The Poet is of course too gallant and generous, to leave the delight of Woodstock to the merciless rigour of Charon ; among those who

Centum errant annos, volitantque hæc littora circum ;  
Tum demum admissi stagna oxiptata revisitunt.

VIRG. Æneid vi. v. 329—30.

A hundred years they wander on the shore ;  
At length, their penance done are wafted o'er.

Dryden B. vi. v. 451—2.

Rosamond is lavish enough in the eulogy of her own charms, but her royal lover being "cleane past his youth," is exposed to the derision of his youthful mistress.

"Whom Fortune made my king, Love made my subject,  
Who did commaund the land, most humbly pray'd me,  
HENRIE the second that so highly weigh'd me,  
Found well (by prooffe) the priviledge of beutie,  
That it had power to countermaunde all dutie.  
No armour might be found that could defend,  
Transpearcing raies of cristal-pointed eyes :  
No stratagem, no reason could amend,  
No not his age, (yet olde men should be wise) \*  
But shewes deceive ; outward appearance lies.  
Let none for seeming so, thinke saints of others,  
For all are men, and all have *suckt their mothers*."

\* The very exclamation, by the way, of Goneril to another King—(Lear): "You, as you are old and reverend, should be wise."

Her *candour*, in unfolding "the cause of this defect," is at all events striking. The close of this poem is the return of Rosamond to attend again the Stygian flood; armed now in the panoply of her poet's muse, of which she thus gratefully and elegantly speaks :

" And were it not thy favourable lines  
 Re-edified the wracke of my decayes,  
 And that thy accents willingly *assignes*, \*  
 Some farther date and *give* me longer dayes,  
 Few in this age had knowne my Beautyes praise.  
 But thus renew'd, my fame redeemes some time,  
 Till other ages shall neglect thy rime.  
 Then when Confusion in her course shall bring,  
 Sad desolation on the times to come :  
 When mirthless Thames shall have no Swanne to sing  
 All musicke silent, and the Muses dombe.  
 And yet, even then it must be knowne to some,  
 That once they flourisht, though not cherisht so,  
 And Thames had Swannes as well as ever Po."

As Daniel lived among astrologers, and we shall soon have to say more of Dee, and Allen, and their associates, one is tempted to think that some political Seer had opened to his view the ruffian scenes of the following century, during which all music was really silent, and the muses dumb; and the sweet swan of

\* *Assignes, give.*—This anomalous construction, from a scholar like Daniel, shews that, in his time, nothing was more common, than to make grammar yield to the necessities of rhyme.

Avon, and the Thames, *himself*, proscribed as profane, immoral and licentious.    •

Having thus introduced to the reader some satisfactory specimens of Daniel, whom Shakespeare imitated palpably in the stanza of his Rape of Lucrece, we come naturally to the Sonnets which were equally founded upon those of Daniel to his Delia. But I am very far from thinking that the collection published by Thorpe in 1609, were any of them alluded to by Meres in his *Wits' Treasury*, 1598—for thus that observer expresses himself: “As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey tongued Shakespeare. Witness his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred SONNETS among his private friends, &c.” that is, he addressed to his private friends a number of these sugred compositions, which they were proud of receiving from the new poet, and imparted pretty generally, so that Meres had seen many of them. Indeed it could scarce be otherwise: a vein so abundant would throw itself out in the received modes of composition, anxious to prove that, neither Spenser, nor Daniel, solely had strength enough, to bar his way, in whatever walk his muse chose to expatiate. But, as to the collection of Sonnets addressed to W. H., I confess I doubt whether they were ever seen by any eye but *his*, to whom 126 of them



were addressed ; they are entirely *personal*, and never intended for the public view, and such as the peculiar connexion between the parties could alone prevent from being even *ludicrous*. Nay, when at length they are ‘*set forth*,’ the person addressed by the writer is obscured, rather than revealed by the Initials affixed:— he himself would recognise the ascription, but few others would attain very decisive information.

But, as Daniel himself in the prose Dedication to William Herbert, mentions his mother, Sidney’s sister, “the subject of all verse;” the reader might justly complain, were we entirely to sink that beautiful writer’s verses, addressed to *herself*. They were prefixed to his tragedie of Cleopatra, and this play written upon the classic model, he was enjoined to compose by the Countess, because she had herself dramatised Antony :

“ Who all alone ; having remained long,  
Required his Cleopatra’s company.”

Daniel in his address to the Countess, thus commemorates her own poetry. She had versified the Psalms of David, and achieved an immortality for her illustrious name.

“ Those Hymns which thou dost consecrate to heaven,  
Which Israel’s singer to his God did frame,  
Unto thy voice Eternitie hath given,

And makes thee dear to him from whence they came,  
 In them must rest thy venerable name,  
 So long as Sion's God remaineth honoured ;  
 And till confusion hath all zeale bereaven,  
 And murdered Faith and Temples ruined.

By this (great ladie) thou must then be knowne,  
 When *Wilton* lies low, levell'd with the ground ;  
 And this is that which thou maist call thine owne,  
 Which sacrilegious Time cannot confound ;  
 Heere thou surviv'st thy selfe, heere thou art found  
 Of late succeeding ages, fresh in fame :  
 This monument cannot be overthrowne,  
 Where, in eternall brasse remains thy name."

Every reader of feeling and taste would complain, if to the above eulogy, we neglected to add the consummation of all human praise, the epitaph upon her remains in Salisbury Cathedral :

" Underneath this marble hearse  
 Lies the subject of all verse,  
 Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother :  
 Death, ere thou hast slain another,  
 Wise, and fair, and good as she,  
 Time shall throw a dart at thee."

V. But the Sonnets not only allude distinctly to Daniel, but very critically point out some other retainers of the Pembroke family. The poet hardly preserves his temper when describing the combination against him :

"Was it *his* spirit, by *spirits* taught to write  
 Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?  
 No, neither *he*, nor his compeers, by night  
 Giving him aid, my verse astonished.  
 He, nor that affable *familiar ghost*,  
 Which *nightly* gulls him with intelligence,  
 As victors, of my silence cannot boast."

"Alluding perhaps," says Mr. Steevens, "to the celebrated Dr. Dee's pretended intercourse with an angel, and other familiar spirits." There can be no doubt about it—the fact is upon record. Queen ELIZABETH and the PEMBROKE family were Dee's chief patrons. Their exalted minds and various accomplishments did not exempt them from the mania of their times—though the sounder philosophy of Shakespeare led him thus to denounce the Charlatans, who then infested the great, and upon fantastical science grounded predictions, which hung like a mildew upon a long existence.

The reader will refer back to Antony á Wood's memoir, where he will find that THOMAS ALLEN, of Gloucester Hall, calculated Pembroke's nativity. He was deemed in those days the father of all learning, and an unfeigned lover of all good arts and sciences. This mathematician was closely associated with JOHN DEE, Tho. Harriot, Walt. Warner, Nath. Torporley, and many others, and Dee pretended to an intercourse with *familiar spirits*. I have shown that Daniel was domi-

ciliated at Wilton, within the very lime-twigs of the Necromancer's spells. Who shall say that "he came off safe?" The amiable Countess, however learned and virtuous, was herself, alas! unprovided of

"That MOLY  
Which Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave."

Allen lived to verify his prediction of William Herbert's death: the subject of his calculation, perhaps its victim, died in 1630; and Allen himself followed, two years after, at the great age of 90. What he knew of astronomy, mathematics, and natural philosophy, may be estimated from the praises of Selden and Camden. But judicial astrology was his "favourite and first pursuit," and he left a manuscript commentary upon the 2nd and 3rd books of Ptolemy *de astrorum judiciis*, which fell into the hands of William Lilly.

Thus, by a most extraordinary concurrence indeed, the Sonnets seem to have only graced with *verse* the biographical sketches of á Wood and Clarendon; and the character of Lord Pembroke in *prose* only establishes him to have been the hitherto concealed friend and patron of Shakespeare's muse.

I have been unwilling to multiply quotations, by which my essay would have been merely dilated; for when a point is clearly established, enough has been done. The enquiry, now brought to its close, will I think be found to have proved:—

1. That in the bookseller's dedication of the Sonnets to Mr. W. H., the *object* of them, and not their *bringer forth*, is certainly intended.
2. That the person to whom the initials were first applied, could *not* be the object of them, either as to age or rank.
3. That it is *impossible* Queen Elizabeth could ever have been the object of Shakespeare's Sonnets, even though Spenser *had* addressed his Amoretti to her.
4. But that Spenser never did so: but to the lady whom he married; whose name was also Elizabeth.
5. That Shakespeare's Sonnets do not at all apply to Lord Southampton—either as to his age, character, or the bustle and activity of a life distinguished by distant and hazardous services—to some of which they must have alluded, had *he* been their object.
6. That they were really addressed to Mr. William Herbert, in his youth, to whom the initials *do* apply; and that he *was* a patron and friend of Shakespeare.
7. That the two biographers of Mr. William Herbert, afterwards Lord Pembroke, establish his right to the Sonnets, by *echoing* the contents of them. That they display the same *merits*, and the same *faults* in the person, and thus prove the *identity* in the most remarkable manner.
8. That the poet Daniel, and not Spenser, was the *better spirit*, of whom Shakespeare expresses his *jealousy* in the Sonnets. That Daniel *also* dedicated

to William Herbert, and that Shakespeare literally *alludes to such dedication* in the Sonnets themselves.

9. That even the astrologers DEE and others, whom Shakespeare mentions in those Sonnets, were, like Daniel, retainers of the Pembroke family; and that Allen, who calculated Herbert's nativity, as his biographer informs us, was one of that set of impostors.

So that it is conceived, from these united proofs, the question to whom Shakespeare's Sonnets were addressed, is now decided, and that in future, W. H. as William Herbert, subsequently Earl of Pembroke, will be deemed, as Mr. Thorpe says, fully entitled to

“THE ETERNITY PROMISED BY OUR EVER-LIVING  
POET.”

“Nov. 1, 1832.

“MR. URBAN,

“I THANK you for the accurate manner in which you have given my Essay on the Sonnets of Shakespeare to the public.

“For my hypothesis I am willing to answer by *name*, though you have kept to the initials with which I subscribed my inquiry. You, who know me, will not suspect that, at *seventy*, I should be conceiving *theories* as to the object of addresses, by a poet even so venerated as Shakespeare. The truth is, that it was more than

twenty years ago, in the life-time of our friend Malone, that the *Apology* of G. Chalmers, for the *believers* in Mr. IRELAND, drew me to examine his very wild conceit, that our poet's Sonnets were addressed to Queen Elizabeth. I wrote my Essay, and selected *my hero* while I was enamoured of the subject; and the same volume contains other enquiries (I was going to say discoveries), which I may copy out, if the public attention can be recovered to matters of so slight moment.

“It would be a bad compliment, in a case like the present, to suppose that my hypothesis occurred only to *myself*. It is a great presumption of its truth, that other minds have, by similar evidence, come to the same result; and it was, therefore, without surprise that I read the letter of Mr. B. Heywood Bright, in your last Magazine. But I can safely assure him, that I never *heard* of his concurrence with me, as to William Herbert's having been the object of the Sonnets. From the Rev. Joseph Hunter, and Dr. Holme of Manchester, I could never have heard what he had confided to their *secrecy*; for, indeed, I have not the honour (such I should esteem it) to be known to them; and having done something for Shakespeare in my day, I should have seen without any regret the precedence of Mr. Bright in publication; and have rejoiced that a gentleman, so modest and liberal, had secured to himself, even by *my* subject, an opportunity of literary distinction.

“How far we have trodden the same ground, I shall still be glad to know, and hope that he will not think himself precluded, by my enquiry, from the communication of his own. Unlike the coxcomb ephemera of the press, the Gentleman’s Magazine still advocates the interests and the pleasures of sound literature; the arena afforded is sufficiently ample; and, though we do not meet as combatants, we may equally arrive at the same end, our own exercise, and perhaps the public information and amusement.

“Yours, &c.

#### CONCLUSION.

A recommendation much too flattering for neglect, obtained my consent to the re-appearance of this essay in its present form; which was adopted as being that chosen by Mr. J. Payne Collier, for the publication of his interesting *New Facts* respecting Shakespeare.

I have done my utmost to render it not only stronger as to the general hypothesis, but more entertaining, by collateral illustrations relative to either the poet or his friends.

The Sonnets of Shakespeare have been minutely scrutinized of late for occurrences in his life, and treated as a sort of auto-biography. Perhaps the imaginations of the writers have overleaped the bounds of just inference,



and the love of the mighty Bard has not slightly trespassed upon the respect due to the great moral duties. Whoever be the defaulter, the irregular passion of no husband should be defended; nor should a decided wanton and jilt, however accomplished, be treated with admiration and indulgence; because accident, and absence from his home, led the greatest genius in the world to become a dupe to her fascinations.

Having expressed my obligation to Mr. Collier for suggesting to me the form of my publication, I must be indebted still further to him, by addressing it, as he has done, to some equally ardent admirer of Shakespeare, whose intimacy he has the happiness to enjoy. I therefore beg Sir GEORGE ROSE to accept this mark of my long cherished respect for his family and himself; seated as he is upon the bench, such subjects as I treat cannot be deemed absolutely unsuitable to his attention, when it is remembered, that a most acute series of commentaries upon our Poet, under the signature —E,\* proceeded from the pen of that illustrious lawyer, Mr. Justice Blackstone.

JAMES BOADEN.

LONDON, Nov. 1836.

\* By this he indicated that it was the *last* letter of his name, and not the *first*, which would have been guessed, *e. g.* (Blackstone)—E, and so Malone accordingly printed it —E.











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