

The definition of "dower" was in Shakespeare's day:
 "The third part of all such freehold lands as her husband
 held at the time of affiancing, and of which he was
 seized in his demesne, is termed a woman's reasonable
 dower." (1) Another authority of the time says:

"Dower was the woman's life interest in the lands of which
 her husband died seized for her and her children's nutri-
 ment and support." (2)

Other authorities (3) of the period give substantially
 the same definition. In many instances Shakespeare used
 the word "dower" where he should have used the word
 "dowry" or "dos," which meant that which was given to
 a female at her marriage usually by her father, but might
 be given her by any one. Shakespeare seems to have had
 no appreciation of the legal distinction between the two
 terms. It is not necessary to quote the whole sixteen
 instances where he has used the word "dower" in the
 wrong legal sense. A few examples should suffice to
 show his lack of appreciation of its legal significance.

"We have this hour a constant will to publish
 "Our daughters' several *dowers*, that future strife
 "May be prevented now." (4)

This was a gift by King Lear of his Kingdom, which he
 divided among his three daughters, and was therefore
 their several *dowries* and not their *dowers* as Shakespeare
 erroneously expresses it.

"Doubt not, but Heaven
 "Hath brought me up to be your daughter's *dower*
 "As it hath fated her to be my motive
 "And helper to a husband." (5)

(1) "Glanville," Book VI., p. 113.

(2) "Littleton," Vol. II., p. 49.

(3) "Bracton,"

(4) "King Lear," Act I., Scene 1.

(5) "All's Well that Ends Well," Act IV., Scene 4.