

XV.

THERE is in Shakespeare the mingling of laughter and tears, humor and pathos. Humor is the rose, wit the thorn. Wit is a crystallization, humor an efflorescence. Wit comes from the brain, humor from the heart. Wit is the lightning of the soul.

In Shakespeare's nature was the climate of humor. He saw and felt the sunny side even of the saddest things. "You have seen sunshine and rain at once." So Shakespeare's tears fell oft upon his smiles. In moments of peril—on the very darkness of death—there comes a touch of humor that falls like a fleck of sunshine.

Gonzalo, when the ship is about to sink, having seen the boatswain, exclaims :

"I have great comfort from this fellow ;
Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him ;
His complexion is perfect gallows."

Shakespeare is filled with the strange contrasts of grief and laughter. While poor Hero is supposed to be dead—wrapped in the shroud of dishonor—Dogberry and Verges unconsciously put again the wedding wreath upon her pure brow.

The soliloquy of Launcelot—great as Hamlet's—offsets the bitter and burning words of Shylock.

There is only time to speak of Maria in "Twelfth Night," of Autolycus in the "Winter's Tale," of the parallel drawn by Fluellen between Alexander of Macedon and Harry of Monmouth, or of the marvellous humor of Falstaff, who never had the faintest thought of right or wrong—or of Mercutio, that embodiment of wit and humor—or of the gravediggers who lamented that "great folk should have countenance in this world to drown and hang themselves, more than their even Christian," and who reached the generalization that "the gallows does well because it does well to those who do ill."

There is also an example of grim humor—an example without a parallel in literature, so far as I know. Hamlet, having killed Polonius, is asked :

"Where's Polonius ?"
"At supper."
"At supper ! where ?"
"Not where he eats, but where he is eaten."

Above all others, Shakespeare appreciated the pathos of situation. Nothing is more pathetic than the last scene in "Lear." No one has