

are but a few among the crowd that anyone will find if he turns over the pages of Ben Jonson. To introduce such characters upon the stage was nothing strange in those days, and their presence was needed, as we find in the case of the play before us and in the conclusion of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, to give solemnity to the marriage or other ceremony which was the occasion of the performance. "Let anti-masques," Bacon writes in his essays, "not be long; they have been commonly of fools, satyrs, baboons, wild men, antiques, beasts, *sprites, witches, Ethiopes, pigmies, turquets, nymphs, rustics, Cupids, statues moving, and the like.*" Here we find *wild men, sprites, and witches* distinctly enumerated, under which would fall the Caliban, Ariel, and Sycorax of our play.

Let us suppose then that, instead of writing a short and uninteresting masque such as we find in Ben Jonson, Shakespeare determined to write a play after the fashion of a masque, short.—the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the *Tempest* are among the shortest of all Shakespeare's dramas—with rapid action, introducing supernatural personages, and culminating in a marriage. What better scene could be chosen to give probability to his supernatural personages, than a wild, uninhabited island, such as one of the many the story of which came to Englishmen over the wide Atlantic, and which had lately been brought home to the minds of all by the account of Sir John Somers' shipwreck in the book entitled "A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Devils." His mind grasps the scene. He pictures therein the spirit Ariel and the monster Caliban—creatures unacknowledged by previous treatment. For suggestions of detail he goes to the voyages of Æneas in the *First and Third books of the Æneid*, and to his never-failing source, the *Metamorphoses of Ovid*—probably in Golling's translation. He has to paint a native in the lowest state of debasement, and he turns to Montaigne's Essay on Cannibals. On the one side he depicts Ariel, the tricky spirit with more than human intellect, but without human affections; on the other, Caliban, with the potentialities of human nature, but without its nobility; with a human shape and a mind sensible to physical and natural beauty, and though smelling like a fish, and with long nails, yet full of scorn for "apes with foreheads villainous low." Between these two extremes he places a series of personages hardly individualised though possessing the qualities of men. Prospero of the highest human intelligence, and therefore inclined to goodness; Antonio, like his brother, ready in resource, but of lower nature and prone to evil. Gonzalo is commonplace goodness, and Alonso and Sebastian are feeble natures, easily led into evil paths. Ferdinand represents the beauty of youthful manhood, Miranda of youthful womanhood. Below these come the debauched Trinculo and Stephano, the former with a turn for wit, the latter like Bottom, the prey of immeasurable self-conceit.

All these personages may not be characters conceived to the life, as their author painted Falstaff, Mercurio, Rosalind, the two Harries, and a score of others; but yet again, they are not mere allegories like the characters of Bunyan. They seem to me like "pius Æneas" and "fidus Achatas," conceived rather upon the classical than the modern type. It is curious, from this point of view, that in a play, where our author is working in the classical manner, he has voluntarily chosen to observe strictly, and without apparent detriment to his work, the classical unities of time and place.

In such a drama as the *Tempest*, suggested by and suggesting the wider scope of life, with which the course of discovery had impregnated the imagination at the beginning of the 17th century, what was more natural than that Shakespeare should glance for a moment at the political theories that were beginning to find their way abroad ever since the Renaissance had set men thinking anew? The changes that have come over our life, politically, socially and morally, have been mainly effected by the mutual influence of two schools of thought, typified in the last century by the great names of Rousseau and Voltaire, with whom we may compare respectively the influence of Montaigne and Bacon upon Shakespeare's age. The former school,

inspired by imagination, looked back to a glorious and happy past from which the present had degenerated; the latter, listening to the teachings of history and science, sees in a future, moulded by intelligence, a worthier substitute for the impossible dream of a revived past. To neither of these schools can Shakespeare personally be said to belong; for Shakespeare was an artist and not a politician. Yet it must have been impossible for a man of his intelligence to be unaffected by the tide of life in which he lived. At times, as in Coriolanus, we fancy that we can detect a protest against the growing power of the people, or again, as in Hamlet, he seems to cast a lingering glance at the martial, heroic type of character which the mercantile life of the long peace was fast obliterating. In the *Tempest* we may, perhaps, read a passing protest against the extravagant laudation of the noble savage, which is the subject of the essay in Montaigne, from which Gonzalo's ideal state is taken. Of the glorious state of barbarism, Montaigne writes that he is sorry that Plato and Lyeurgus had no knowledge of it; that these natives surpass the glories of the Golden Age, and so on. To such ideals as these, to this stream of tendency that culminated two centuries afterwards in the writings of Rousseau, Shakespeare answers by his picture of Caliban—drunken, brutal and ungrateful. "Abhorred slave," says Prospero:—

"Which any print of goodness will not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other; when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known; but thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with!"

We have next a justification of what often seems the harsh treatment of the natives by the white men that settled among them. But Shakespeare also gives the other side of the picture. In the scene in which Stephano and Trinculo are captivated by the gilded trumpery of Prospero's house, which even Caliban pronounces to be "trash," we have perhaps a hint at the colonists' passion for an Eldorado, and for gold-digging when their supplies were failing.

To one more point in the *Tempest*, I would call your attention;—what we may call its subjective element. One of the latest, and by no means the least, interesting developments of Shakespearian criticism, is the attempt to trace in his writings the workings of Shakespeare's own mind. In his earlier plays the sky is unclouded; he seems to write without after-thought. His characters surrender themselves without stint to love and merriment. After a time a strain of melancholy begins to run through his plays, and with Measure for Measure we date the middle period of Shakespeare's mental development, during which life seemed to be robbed of its beauty and joy, the period that culminates with the misanthropy of Timon of Athens. The play before us belongs to his latest period, when the sable cloud which gathered over the sky has "turned forth her silver lining." In his middle period, Shakespeare seems to have realised to the full the misgivings of pessimism. Life constantly presents itself to his imagination under the similitude of a stage. In Macbeth its unreality is uppermost. "Out, out, brief candle!" Macbeth exclaims.

"Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

In the *Tempest*, the sudden disappearance of the spirits, whom Prospero had called up to play before Ferdinand and Miranda, suggests to his mind solemn thoughts about life and its import. The passage in Act IV, beginning with the words, "These our actors, as I foretold you, were all spirits," is too well known to need quotation. But after his outburst, Prospero is almost ashamed of himself. These gloomy thoughts are unfit for minds aglow with youth and love, so he adds apologetically,

"Sir, I am vex'd;
Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled."