

Oxford," nor have been so ripe and good a scholar as their princely founder, Cardinal Wolsey.

At all events he was stored with good vigorous and idiomatic English. From his writings there was unquestionably one book with which he was familiar, the great Bible of Tyndale's, revised by Coverdale, which doubtless his mother, the gentle Mary Arden, often read to him. He would thus, as a boy, get impressed with the story of Joseph sold into slavery and advanced to honor; and how the Lord was with the child Samuel; and that God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths that they should not hurt his servant Daniel; and also sent his angel to preserve the three children in the fiery furnace. He would learn how Elijah was fed at the brook Cherith by ravens; and of that Herod who murdered the innocents; and of Christ blessing little children, and teaching the people that the poor in spirit, the meek, the just, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, were the happy and beloved of God.

One thing may be fairly assumed, that Shakspeare had wise and good masters at Stratford's Grammar School of the Holy Guild. "These Grammar Schools," as Charles Knight observes, "were wise institutions. They opened the road to usefulness and honor to the humblest in the land; they bestowed upon the son of the peasant the same advantages as the son of the noble could receive from the most accomplished teacher in his father's halls." In other words, Shakspeare, the son of the yeoman, had as good a chance to be educated as Henry Wriothesley the accomplished Earl of Southampton. Who shall say he did not profitably use his advantage? Whatever his education was, he evidently had read much, and was very well accomplished in the most useful parts of human learning.

Hugh Miller has upon this subject a few sensible and pertinent remarks:—

"There has been much written on the learning of Shakspeare, but not much to the purpose: one of our old Scotch proverbs is worth all the dissertations on the subject I have yet seen, '*God's bairns are couth to larn*,' i. e., easily instructed. Shakspeare must, I suppose, have read many more books than Homer (we may be sure every good book that came in his way, and some bad ones), and yet Homer is held to have known a thing or two. The more ancient poet was unquestionably as ignorant of English as the more modern one of Greek; and as one produced the *Iliad* without any acquaintance with Hamlet, I do not see why the other may not have produced Hamlet without any acquaintance with the *Iliad*. Johnson was quite in the right in holding that, though the writings of Shakspeare exhibit much knowledge, it is often such knowledge as books did not supply. He might have added further, that the knowledge they display, which books *did* supply, is of a kind which might be all found in English books at the time,—fully one half of it, indeed, in the romances of the period. Every great writer, in the department in which he achieves his great-

ness, whether he be a learned Milton or an unlearned Burns, is self-taught."

From Milton's classical education, it is not at all to be wondered that there should be found in his writings so many imitations of Homer, Virgil, Horace and Ovid, and you can see from whence they are derived. Had not Shakspeare enough Latin to abstract all he required from Virgil, Horace and Ovid? Had he not also for ready use translations of Terence, Seneca, Livy, and Tacitus; and of Homer, Herodotus, Plutarch, Epictetus, Hippocrates and Galen? Shakspeare presents numerous instances of undesigned resemblance to the ancients; passages purely original in him may be paralleled with corresponding passages of writers with whom he may have had but a slight acquaintance. Nathaniel Holmes, not having proved by external evidence that Bacon is the author of Shakspeare's plays—at least not to my mind—I maintain my perfect right to prove by internal evidence that Shakspeare was a tolerably good classical scholar; that he had practical wisdom together with a wonderfully varied knowledge of the different arts and pursuits of life; of military science, witness his King John, Richard II. and III., Henry IV., V., and VI., with their war pictures—this military knowledge he could not have obtained from Bacon; of horticultural and rural life—these he might have got from his native county, Warwick; of the sea, and whatever belongs to nautical matters; of woodcraft, field sports, falconry and hunting; these were not the forte of the reader of Gray's Inn, and the Attorney-General to King James; though it is true that in the eighth decade of the nineteenth century we find a reverend and grey-bearded octogenarian in the diocese of Lincoln a breeder of race horses.

Concerning the difficulties in which the subject is involved, our author says:

Before dismissing the subject I have to say a few words more in acknowledgment of the difficulty in refuting the arguments of such men as Nathaniel Holmes, because their conjectures and improbabilities have to be met with an almost utter absence of external information relative to Shakspeare's dramatic history. Were it my cue to descant upon the writings of our great poet, "whose works were to charm unborn ages, to sweeten our sympathies, to beguile our solitude, to enlarge our hearts, and to laugh away our spleen"—"the field would be almost as boundless as the sea, yet as full of beauty and variety as the land." I should be oppressed, as it were, by abundance, and filled with matter and material for a volume—*inopem me copia fecit*. But as it is, the "Genius of Biography" has neglected Shakspeare, withheld his personal history, told us nothing of the development of his wondrous mind. The channels of his onward career are dried up; the sources from which he obtained his noble and unrivalled characteristics are undiscovered—all mere tradition—nothing absolute and definite—amazement fills up the