

The study of our English Bible, Shakespeare, has won for itself a distinct place in literature. Light and darkness are continually pouring in upon it from all sides. Under the latter term we may include Mr. Vining's attempt to penetrate "the Mystery of Hamlet" by the preposterous supposition that he was really a woman brought up as a boy! Such is one of the latest theories propounded in the nation that first gave us the Bacon-Shakespeare hypothesis. From such vagaries, it is instructive to turn to a contribution to the scanty annals of Shakespeare's own life. Where little is known about an interesting subject we may expect to find plenty of conjecture. Accordingly, the travels of Shakespeare are a familiar topic with Shakespearian scholars. Upon this subject a most useful essay will be found in the volume by Karl Elze. He discusses and rejects Charles Knight's theory of Shakespeare's visit to Scotland. A letter has lately been discovered, and contributed by Mr. E. J. L. Scott to the *Athenæum*, which renders it extremely probable that Shakespeare was in Scotland between 1587 and 1591. If so, he may have been in Edinburgh at the time when witches were tried and burned for raising storms that drowned Jane Kennedy, and imperilled the life of James's Queen, Anne.

In recent poetical literature, two volumes demand special attention. Mr. Swinburne's "Mary Stuart" concludes his Trilogy devoted to the history of the unhappy queen. Like most works coming from a writer who has made a name, this volume has been received with a chorus of indulgent criticism. It is, however, undramatic, unreadable, and what is more, in parts unfit to be read. One of the few passages that people will read twice is the character of Mary Stuart herself. But this was written years ago. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Ballads and Sonnets" contains matter new and old, and is better than any thing published since Tennyson's last volume; his unhappy poem on "Despair" is but a monument of talents misspent. The gems of Mr. Rossetti's volume are the three Ballads, the first of which, called "Rose Mary," contains many very beautiful verses. But like most poetry written at the present day the poems, as a whole, are spoiled by over-refinement and striving for artistic effect. The lover of poetry gains little satisfaction from contemporary work. As in other fields, "the old is out of date, the new is not yet born." Just as in the days before Wordsworth arose, a poetical reformer is needed to lead us back to nature.

R. W. B.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE PENSION ACT.

To the Editor of the EDUCATIONAL RECORD.

SIR,—On reading your "note" appended to my communication on the "Teachers' Pension Act" in the January number of the RECORD, I at once recognized its puerility and flimsiness were so apparent "he that ran could read" therefore I filed no exception then. But having noticed the sublime originality and refreshing sweetness of "J's" remarks in the RECORD for