

how insignificant is the particular portion of it in which he lives, and how seriously the boundaries of that particular portion have intercepted, distorted and minimized his views concerning the whole. He will see, too, that the southward tendency of Ontario and the Maritime Provinces will, if his argument be a good one, ultimately tend to the disruption of the federation to the south of us, and that, as applied to other states, his reasoning will necessitate his explaining away the national existence of Austria, Switzerland, Germany and, in fact, almost all of the European and Asiatic countries. This is the argument that is considered strong enough to dash the hopes of patriotic Canadians, to induce the stewards of half a continent to cease their labours towards national development, and to justify the provinces in forsaking existing connections and rushing pell-mell, each for itself, into any union with the United States which that country may graciously be pleased to permit.

But, say the anti-federationists, the geographical argument must not be dissociated from the question of race. The fact that we are shielding ourselves from the embraces of brethren must not be forgotten. The people with whom we spurn amalgamation are as enlightened, as moral, as well governed as ourselves. Canadians are being blinded to their best interests by mere sentiment—the weapon of political agitators. “No reason worth a moment’s consideration,” says a writer, “can be given for the erection of commercial barriers upon the mere artificial and imaginary boundary lines which separate the two countries.”

If memory and history were the possessions merely of those who held theories of government, and if, in presenting a scheme to a country for its acceptance, those possessions could be kept from public inspection, the world might one day find itself one vast federation. But, neither here nor elsewhere is there any river of forgetfulness from the waters of which citizens may obtain an obliterating shower-bath. And so, when the writer referred to proposes that commercial union with the United States be adopted by Canadians, he asks that human nature forswear itself.

I should be sorry to say one word which would rekindle or even call to remembrance the fires of hate and vengeance which burned widely enough not many years ago, but that those flames did blaze and that they were not wholly causeless are facts which must be taken into consideration when a theory respecting the people affected by them is advanced. Canada’s ultimate destiny may be bound up with that of our brethren to the south of us who forsook the Mother land, but as long as there is a hope of maintaining our connection with her and as long as that connection is of any service to her I trust that we shall maintain it. Commercial union under a protective tariff means annexation and nothing else. It includes among its necessities an alliance with the United States and a discriminatory tariff against the land which has been our past help and which is our present protection. Low, indeed, will the flame of Canadian honour have sunk when for the sake of advantageous business relations we repudiate our obligations to the Mother land and by adopting commercial union seek prosperity with disgrace. It may be that some day the old wounds will have healed completely and that the strong British Confederation to the north will unite with the strong British Confederation to the south; but, when that day comes, I hope that room may be found in the alliance for a third partner—the mother of them both—the strong British Confederation over the sea.

There is not, I contend, one argument for commercial union which the introduction of a reciprocity treaty would not successfully meet. Whether all the benefits, for which its advocates look, would accrue is a debatable question, but such benefits as commercial union would bring can be obtained by the establishment of reciprocal trade relations. The probabilities are that the treaty abrogated in 1866, and to which is ascribed the “brightest page in the history of the Maritime Provinces,” will soon be re-enacted. We are apt to forget, perhaps, that the American War furnished much of the commercial brightness of that period, and that we might not now find a great demand for any of our products except those which it were wiser, on our part, to retain. However, reciprocity would rectify the numerous absurd mistakes of the present fiscal system and its introduction would prevent the party press from using its absence as an excuse for the perpetual detraction of the country’s prospects.

I have not space now to deal fully with the argument based upon prospective French nationality in Quebec. This I can say, however. He who uses this argument as a reason for despairing of the success of Confederation merely begs the question. Does the presence of the French prevent British immigration? Certainly not. What is the admitted remedy for French domination and the admitted preventive for French nationality? British immigration. Then in the name of common sense let Canadians cease wrangling, doubting and despairing and go to work. Cease the detraction of their country and begin expressing their belief in it. Cease preparing to fall to pieces and unite more closely. What Canada wants to day more than tariff changes or new connections is silence on the part of every man who fears for her future and manly outspokenness on the part of those who have the courage to hope, the bravery to dare, and the self-sacrifice to wait.

Let us Canadians, then, putting our localism, our sectionalism and our partyism second, place Canada first. Let us unite to build up our country and neither doubt it

nor decry it. Let us not remain a powerless weak-jointed collection of provinces, but let us prepare for our destiny—be it what it may—by vigorous effort, by close union, by national aspirations.

Is Confederation a success? I answer, Confederation is but formed—it will be the success we make it.

CYRIL.

### SHAKESPEARE AS A PLAYWRIGHT.

“WHEN I see one of Shakespeare’s plays, it stays with me, and I feel that I want to see it again.”

Such were the artless words wherein some humble follower of the master, my chance neighbour at the theatre, once summed up to me the result of a probably unfamiliar process of introspection. I venture to repeat them here as supplying an ultimate test for every exercise of the dramatic art. To the possible objection that the proposed test is too narrow may be opposed the famous instruction to the players in Hamlet, which distinctly indicates the object of the drama to be the imaging of human character, leaving its improvement to the spontaneous influence of the incidents of the play upon the mind and heart of the spectator. Should it be further objected that to relieve the drama of its oft-asserted function of moral teaching would be to make the future of the stage more barren of good, if not more conducive to evil, than many now believe it to be, it may be answered that the conclusion does not follow *a priori*, and that, before we can deduce it from experience, we must witness a reasonable number of demoralizing plays, constructed on the lines prescribed by Shakespeare. But as this answer involves the question as to what and where are the lines prescribed by Shakespeare, we are under the necessity of taking the master at his own estimate of the scope of the drama, and interpreting the professed motive by the aid of the simple commentary hereinbefore quoted.

Exigencies of space and plainness of exposition will be best served by restricting the proposed analysis to a single play, and, for the sake of those readers who may wish to maintain a running comparison with some modern drama that holds the stage, it will be better not to select a *magnum opus* like the “Merchant of Venice,” or one of the greater tragedies.

The comedy of the “Two Gentlemen of Verona” has some claim to be ranked as the earliest of Shakespeare’s plays. Unfair as it may be to take it as a measure of its author’s powers, we may presume to use it with an after purpose toward those later and lesser playwrights, whose capacity for sound work is a matter of immediate concern to us, their public.

Taking up the comedy named and turning it about, we soon make note of the author’s skill in the laying of his scene, whereby he scores the double point of a quickened interest in the life of a strange and distant people, and a greater freedom in directing the action of the play than if the characters were “native and to the manner born.” The plot of the “Two Gentlemen” may be thus outlined: Proteus, a young patrician, suitably betrothed to Julia, yields to a sudden passion for Silvia, whom he knows to be secretly affianced to his bosom friend, Valentine. In her pursuit, he entangles himself in mesh after mesh of deceit and treachery in nearly every quarter where fidelity and truth are due. Suddenly unmasked, his penitence is as swift as was his fall. Forgiven by all, he returns contentedly to his first love, with welcome no whit lessened by her knowledge of his late baseness and ignominy.

The subject wounds our sensibilities on every side. We like not the infidelity, nor the craven abandonment of the newer love in stress of danger and disgrace, nor the “instantaneous process” of regeneration, nor the servile return to the first allegiance, nor the want of spirit in the injured maiden, nor the general rush to kill the fatted calf. Still in this world of ours, is not Proteus forever wooing the coy Julia, to desert her at sight of the statelier Silvia? Is he not forever stifling honour and conscience in pursuit of the overmastering passion? Does he not occasionally experience remorse when brought by disaster to see himself as others see him? Do not the best of us stand in need of plentiful forgiveness? Are the luckless utter strangers to it? Is not the worst of us capable of generosity if the right key of an overlaid humanity be struck? Do not these considerations warrant us in receiving such a plot as that described, so long as our instinctive disrelish be not converted to sullen disgust by a weak or coarse handling of it?

Of the leading parts, Valentine has a strong, clear intellect that perceives the limits as well as the capacities of human nature; he is frank, considerate and unselfish; he loves with an *abandon* that scorns to measure advantage with disadvantage; throughout, he is the true type and figure of a gentleman—possibly Shakespeare’s youthful and stirring ideal of what he yearned for in himself. Proteus has a somewhat shallow wit, a halting spirit, a feeble will; his morals are much upon his sleeve; he loves tamely, and with calculation; he is servile, vain and avaricious. Julia is Valentine in a farthingale, less differences of sex and training; modest, gentle, confiding, generous—without, shrewd and resolute. Silvia is proud, coquettish, timid, self-regarding; her view of love is high; she is true to Valentine in his disgrace, but it is persecution rather than yearning that sends her in quest of him; less worthy than Julia of Valentine, she falls to him by the rule of contraries.

The condition suggested for the acceptance of the plot requires a spirited and delicate treatment of its incidents

and details, and it will be convenient to our purpose to separate spirit and delicacy so far as practicable. In the first act, Julia’s scene with her maid, followed by the episode of the torn letter, wherein her archness invests the figure of Proteus with a high and romantic interest. In the second act, the dialogue of Valentine and his servant, concerning his lately-born love for Silvia; followed by the scene of the love-letter that Silvia has caused him to write for her to himself. In the third act, the dialogue of the two clowns, by which Launce’s well-battered affection for a milk-maid is made to throw into relief the earthly features of the grand passions above stairs. In the fourth act, the by-play of Julia at the serenade, revealing her feelings to the audience in words that conceal them from her immediate auditor, the Host; also her trick of the two letters to make Silvia suspect Proteus of a double infidelity; again, the scene of Launce and his ill-mannered dog. In the fifth act, Julia’s side-commentary upon the dialogue of Proteus and Thurio; Valentine’s expressed doubt that love can survive forever in absence; lastly, the finest touch of the master’s hand, Valentine’s defiance to Thurio:—

Here she stands :  
Take but possession of her with a touch.  
I dare thee but to breathe upon my love !

Some of the foregoing examples are as obviously illustrative of delicacy as spirit, but apart from them there is an abundance of material for citation, as the following may witness. Valentine’s reference, in the first act, to the controlling influence of love over the conduct of men helps Proteus with us later on, and the tender scene of the destroyed letter permits us to sympathise with Julia’s devotion to Proteus in the after time when he seems so weak and worthless. In the second act, Valentine paints Proteus so glowingly that we doubt the justice of our later estimate of him, and the former so presses the charms of Silvia and his own supremacy as her lover upon his friend, that we wonder the less at the latter’s infatuation. The discourtesy of Thurio in leaving the room upon the arrival of Proteus at Milan is remembered by us when the latter is hoodwinking Thurio as to the purpose of his attention to Silvia. The rude speech of Valentine to Thurio in presence of Silvia reminds us that love is stronger even than nobility of character. Julia’s passionate solicitude to be again with Proteus exalts the latter with us. He is further aided, in the third act, by comparison with that whole-souled fellow, the Duke, who, upon less provocation than his, unblushingly conspires against the freedom and happiness of his daughter. Julia, in the fourth act, partially shields Proteus from our rage by putting the responsibility for his ill-conduct upon an inherent blindness and contrariness of love; her hearty sympathy with him somewhat stirs our compassion, and we find him rising in our esteem as we witness her distress lest Silvia should love him in spite of his treachery and the fealty due to Valentine. Silvia further smooths the character of Proteus by herself descending to coquet with him; wishing him “good rest” after crying out upon his double faithlessness, and granting him a “shadow” of herself, to be carried to his apartment to feed his misplaced passion upon. Proteus, tearfully and despairingly, tells us how base, ignoble and hopeless his position is, but declares that there is no help for it, and we ask ourselves if all laws and usages do not fail in presence of the blind god. Valentine, in the fifth act, forgives Proteus because he believes him sincerely, if swiftly, repentant; he emphasizes the reconciliation by an extravagant tender to his friend of his claims to Silvia; he affects mirthfulness to relieve the strain of a painful situation. Proteus accounts for his conversion by the shame that Valentine’s exhortation has brought home to him; he disarms us by a homily on man’s native inconstancy; he sends us to cover by asking: “In love, who respects friend?” If we have thought Julia a little unmaidenly in her following of Proteus, we do not urge it as we note how cleverly she wins him back to her side. We believe again in the inherent soundness of human nature as we see the Duke handsomely bestowing his daughter upon Valentine, and behaving like a true prince all round.

Enough has been said to vindicate both the character of the plot and its treatment by the dramatist, but there are other merits and some defects proper to be noticed. In every skilful play, dialogue or soliloquy must bear an important part in developing plot and forwarding action. In the “Two Gentlemen,” the few and simple words of the opening line inform us at once of the length and strength of the friendship of Valentine and Proteus, and the lines that follow, to the entry of Speed, sketch broadly for us the characters of the two young men. The discourse of Proteus and his father, in the same act, carries us over a considerable and necessary interval of time, as witness the allusions therein to the progress of Valentine at Milan and to the ripened state of affairs between Julia and her lover. Variety and lightsomeness are indispensable adjuncts to such a play as that before us. We find them in the exuberant punning of the author, and more tastefully and effectively in the use made of the two clowns, who never obstruct the action, but sometimes (*vide* Act I., Scene 1, and Act II., Scene 1) help it along.

Though nothing spoils the enjoyment of a good story more than anticipation of a moral lying in wait behind it, there can be no objection to the moral that walks in shadow beside it and needs to be wooed in order to be won. Such morals are to be found here, as where Proteus, yielding to the first promptings of his love for