

the only commentator who has expressed a mean opinion of this play. Yet by all alike it is confessed to contain some of the most powerful passages in Shakespeare and no one can read it without experiencing something of the feeling that thrills through us when we are in contact with the greatest works of the greatest minds, with Job and the epistle to the Romans, with Agamemnon and Oedipus, with Lear and Macbeth,—a feeling of awe for the master mind that conceived it, of reverence as in one treading holy ground and listening to accents of the immortals.

The true verdict with regard to our play is more justly given by the great Hallam, when he says that "Measure for Measure is perhaps, after Hamlet, Lear and Macbeth, the play in which Shakespeare struggles, as it were, most with the over-mastering power of his own mind; the depths and intricacies of being, which he has searched and sounded with intense reflection, perplex and harass him; his personages arrest their course of action to pour forth, in language the most remote from common use, thoughts which few could grasp in the clearest expression; and thus he loses something of dramatic excellence in that of contemplative philosophy." As Shakespeare says in the play before us "the phrase is to the matter;" he cannot express his adumbrations in regard to the mysteries of life and death, of human character in its various idiosyncrasies, its developments and its degeneracy, in the same transparent style with which he tells us of the loves of a Romeo and Juliet, or later of a Ferdinand and Miranda.

Before Shakespeare wrote Measure for Measure, a feeling of melancholy seems to have been slowly gaining the mastery over his mind, showing itself as plainly in the conceits of Jacques, as afterwards in the outbursts of Timon. This strain of melancholy during, which he says "the native hue of resolution is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought," seems not to have been confined to him and his works. There was in those days writes Mr. Moberly "a conscious struggle in men's minds between cheerfulness and melancholy, more real, natural, and widely felt by far than that which we remember in our own days, as showing from the conflict between the poetical principles of Byron and Wordsworth."⁷⁸ An evidence of this prevailing tone we find in the "Anatomy of Melancholy," published by Robert Burton in 1620. Books are but the outcome of their time and attention to the phenomena of melancholy must have been widespread and long continued in England before an author could have written and a public cared to read a book devoted to the subject. By an easy generalisation it is often said that the present and the immediately preceding centuries are the centuries of doubt, while the times of Shakespeare and Dante were ages of faith; and an essay has only lately been read before the New Shakespeare Society of London, contrasting Shakespeare with George Eliot from this point of view. The reader, Peter Bayne, believes that Shakespeare belonged to the age of Faith and not Science, while George Eliot was of the age of Scepticism and Science; that he was a mirror to human nature in stable equilibrium; she, one to it in unstable equilibrium; with George Eliot, man was more a drift-log, swayed hither and thither by the tide of circumstance, than with Shakespeare. There is doubtless a great deal of truth in this generalisation, *taken generally*, but what is true of the human mind as a whole, is subject to exceptions when we come down to the individual. In Shakespeare, at least, we find a period of scepticism and doubt, of opinion drifting under the stress of fresh discoveries in the scientific world, under the impulse of the movements of religious thought in the contemporary life of England. Never indeed, since the age of the Reformation cast off the external warrants for authority in religion and morals, has the thought of Protestants remained in absolute stagnation. We have been taught by Mr. Mallock to believe the present age to be, *par excellence*, an age of unfixeness of belief and of mental hesitation. It is probable however that the vast discoveries of science in the past and specially the speculations of Copernicus and Galileo exercised as great an influence upon the mind of their contemporaries. I should therefore be disposed to attribute the heart burnings of the time as much to this cause as to the "transition then in progress from an active out-door existence to a sedentary student-life," to which Mr. Moberly attributes it. We have at least Shakespeare's warrant for doing so. "I have of late (but, wherefore, I know not)," says Hamlet, lost "all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave or'ehanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours:" he is here contrasting the different physical theories and the dwarfing effect of the new theory upon the human mind. "What a piece of work is man!" he continues: "How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals. And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me, no nor woman neither." And he afterwards describes man—"what should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven! we are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us." This mood of melancholy and distrust we find reflected in the Sonnets, which are doubtless to a great extent formal confessions, and it pervades the Tragedies written between the years 1602 and 1608.

* Introduction to "Hamlet," Rugby Edition.
(To be Continued.)

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT STILL-FISHING.

BY INEZ.

To prevent any misunderstanding as to the scope of these remarks, some slight introduction will, I trust, be permitted me. In the first place, I am painfully conscious that what I do not know about still-fishing would in proper hands, "make a very large book," but this I submit must not prevent a less experienced brother from profiting by my misfortunes. Therefore, ye skilful fishermen who know each lake and stream where fishes most do congregate, each deftly fashioned hook, the proper bait, how long a line, how strong a rod to use, and who can judge the weight of any fish (within ten pounds or so), think not I will presume to write for you. I have been from my earliest childhood a second edition of the father of his country, and ye are hopelessly beyond me. My experience in still-fishing was brief, but most instructive. I have a friend who is really a good fellow at heart, and, as far as I know, he had no cause to treat me as he did. Unfortunately for me, however, he was "passionately fond of fishing." Shall I ever forget the day he suggested that we should go for a couple of days' trout fishing. In Montreal the weather was beautiful. The balmy air of "spring, gentle spring," came floating in at the window where we stood, laden with subtle scents suggestive of a hard winter. A longing to breathe the free air of heaven and do other poetical things of that nature, had the mastery of me, and in a moment of weakness I consented. Browne was of course well equipped with every needful article, and our preparations being quickly made, I bade a fond adieu to those of my friends who were within reach, and we were soon steaming away in a cloudless evening and a railway carriage for the haunts of the "speckled beauties." Browne elated with the prospect of coming conquest and eager for the fray, and I sympathetically jubilant. When we left the comfortable train my troubles commenced, for it was necessary to drive about nine miles to the fishing-ground, or water, and the only procurable conveyance was an antique of great historic interest, popularly termed a back-board. Nine miles is not—on paper—a very alarming distance, but on a back-board, over an uphill road paved with stones the size of cannon balls, with "winter lingering in the lap of spring," and fish-hooks lingering in the bosom of my inexpressibles, the aspect of the case is changed. However, this was but a foretaste of the pleasure in store for me. In about three hours, by dint of unceasing urging of the steed on the part of the Jehu who accompanied us, and ourselves getting down and pushing behind in the steepest places, we arrived at our destination and were cordially welcomed by a "massive" canine, who testified to the true inwardness of his friendship by sampling my left calf on the spot. It being now late we decided to retire immediately, and were accordingly provided with an odorous tallow dip and a room so small that it was almost necessary to go outside to turn round. Of course it was close, and Browne at once opened the window. The mosquitoes that had been waiting on the window panes, attracted by the scent of city blood, stepped briskly in and the fray began. We closed the window and killed as many of them as we could at last. Browne, in despair, suggested that we had better put out the light and go to bed, which we did, consoling ourselves with the thought, that as we could not see them, they might miss us. That night I dreamed of war's alarms. I heard the trumpet call, felt the stinging bullet fly past my face, and sparks fall on my hands. Can any rising psychologist trace the suggestion? I was aroused just as I was being carried away captive, and found Browne shaking me and vowing it was eight o'clock. When I dressed I found that that this was only absent mindedness on his part, and that he had in some way associated the hour with the weight of a fish he had been dreaming of—it was twenty minutes after four.

When I surveyed myself in what was called by courtesy the looking-glass—although it seemed to me to bear a much stronger resemblance to a battered tin pan—I started back in horror. On my forehead was a lump about the size of a door-knob, which had tightened the skin and gave my eyes a decidedly Mongolian appearance, while other parts of my face were in a mangled and sanguinary condition. The only lavatory appliances provided were a pint jug of very soft water and a tin saucer. Arcadian simplicity Browne called it well, perhaps it was. I never thought much of that kind of thing anyway, and when it comes to a question of solid comfort, give me modern civilization every time—as Brother Jonathan would say. However, we were going to the lake and it didn't matter.

The impartial narrator has much pleasure, at this point, in noticing a fact which reflects great credit on Browne. As has been noticed, he was kind and unselfish at heart, which trait of his character had on this occasion developed itself in the shape of a plentiful supply of crackers and cheese, for which I was devoutly thankful. Having partaken of this historic refreshment—(tride the account of the signing of Magna Charta, after which the Barons adjourned to "cragurs and scheeze," as the MS has it)—we were at last (in the words of Browne) "prepared for the realization of our fondest hopes." Browne was jubilant, while I was cold and "uncomfortable," the combined effect of late frost and mosquitoes. On the way to the lake I managed, with my usual good fortune, to entangle not only myself but several trees with my fishing line—and on the last occasion I did so, Browne came to my aid and by a mutual effort we landed the hook in the fleshy part of his thumb, after which he decided that I should be trusted with nothing more dangerous than the bait until I was in a position to "apply the hook to something more useful than himself," at which re-

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