

"What was to be gained by hazardous experiments in prose or verse, when here at hand were methods and forms of tested efficiency and immemorial prestige? It almost seemed as if native effort would be stifled by alien pressure, and that no more honourable portion was reserved for our literature than to become a series of lifeless imitations of imported models. But happily English genius rose insurgent and vindicated its claim to independent life and power. It is the struggle of the spontaneous, national instinct with external forces that forms one of the most striking aspects of Elizabethan literature."

In this chapter on Marlowe Mr. Boas shows great ability as a critic. A more generous, and yet far-sighted, appreciation of the man whose name, Charles Lamb declared, brought a fragrance with it, his most devoted admirer could not desire. The quotations from his plays scattered through the chapters would stir the dullest soul to desire better acquaintance with one of the mightiest of poets. Shakspeare himself has not surpassed, which is equivalent to saying that no other writer has equalled, the famous and wonderful passages in "Tamburlaine" and "Faustus," which ought to be familiar to every student of literature as examples of the force of language which could no further go.

Take this—

"Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend

The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,

Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And ever moving as the restless spheres."

Or this—

"Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed

In one self place, for where we are is hell;

And where hell is there must we ever be.

And to conclude, when all the world dissolves,

And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be hell that is not heaven."

And then Mr. Boas's eulogy will not seem strained.

"Christopher Marlowe is one of the most fascinating figures in our own or, indeed, in any literature. In the temple of fame the highest places are sacred to genius that has mounted securely to its meridian splendour, to Homer, Dante, Shakspeare. But seats only lower than these, and hallowed with, perhaps, richer offerings of human sympathy and love, are granted to genius dead ere its time, cut down in the freshness of its morning radiance. It is here that Marlowe is to be sought side by side with Shelley and Keats."

In drawing a contrast between Marlowe and Shakspeare, Mr. Boas rightly observes that *Hero and Leander* is incomparably superior to *Venus and Adonis*, and that in the uncompleted fragment of the "Dead Shepherd," the Renaissance spirit glows and leaps in every line. It is a matchless utterance of Elizabethan paganism.

Dealing next with the scanty facts and abundant fancies as to Shakspeare's life, Mr. Boas exercises a commendable restraint. He does not weary us with the numerous controversies and errors on the subject. He does but construct with a good deal of shrewdness and understanding a figure of Shakspeare which is not a mere scholarly dummy. Only when he touches the sonnets does he seem to us to neglect the *unum necessarium* and busy himself about all sorts of unnecessary things. He shows too great an anxiety about the identification of "Mr. W. H." with Lord Pembroke, of the "dark lady" with Miss Mary Fitton, and of the