

published. Inspiring the formality and narrow limits which imitators of classic drama had laid down, he raised a new standard. He disregarded all rules and trusting to his genius and the judgment which a passionate love of the work, gave him, succeeded in bringing the romantic drama to a perfection it is not likely to surpass.

Another direction in which his influence is just as strongly, although not as directly felt, is the novel. There is no department of modern literature that has had more positive influence in moral and social questions. A skillfully written novel is a power for good or evil, and English novelists owe their first and best lessons in the truthful and dramatic portrayal of human experience, to Shakespeare. He was the first to show the romance which exists in every life, both high and low. It is not impossible that much of the dramatic power and portrayal of human nature which through every page of Adam Bede or David Copperfield could be traced back to Shakespeare. Thought travels from age to age. It is the story of the arrow and the oak.

Philosophers find in Shakespeare's works a rich storehouse which has never yet been exhausted. He was so far beyond his time that theories advanced by him and ignored by his own generation, have been studied by modern writers who deemed the task worthy of their best thought. His skill in reading character and in divining the motives of men's actions, has been of inestimable value in the researches of modern times.

Shakespeare's influence has been like the ripples, which, starting from one point, gradually widen until they wash a hundred shores. It is felt in every department of literature.

Since Shakespeare's true position has been recognized by his countrymen, the writings devoted to criticism and analysis of his various works form, in themselves, an extensive part of English literature. If the poet and his plays had never existed what a large and valuable literary

collection we should have missed! How many critical essays and works of different kinds have been devoted to Hamlet, alone! Pope, Theobald, Sir Thomas Hanmer, Warburton, Capell, Stevens, Malone and Dr. Johnson, with many others of recent times, have written upon Shakespeare, his character, style and works.

But Shakespeare's greatest influence is in the addition made to English literature by the works themselves. They stand in pure, strong, simple English, in depth of thought, sweetness of expression only second to the Bible. They are textbooks from which humanity may learn. Where else do we find the love of nature and of man so shown? He speaks of the flowers as if he loved them; his ear was alike tuned to hear the sounds of nature and the laugh or sob of his fellow-man and finally permeating the whole is a reverence for nature's God and the Creator of man. There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will.

Although Shakespeare has faults as a writer and we know so little of him as a man that we dare not exalt him as such, we can still think of him with love and thankfulness for the wonderful legacy he has left us. In his works we see reflected all the different phases of human nature and his characters are the traits of humanity personified. Hamlet with his melancholy philosophy, Portia with her wit and wisdom, noble, true-hearted Brutus, are all characters to be studied and which cannot fail to have an effect upon the mind and life of the reader.

Finally, Shakespeare gave to English literature a standard. Excellence is always comparative. Men measure their achievements by some model, either real or ideal. One man succeeds in climbing high above his fellows, another strives to equal or excel him, others emulate his example and soar on, thus is the level of the whole raised. This is progress and its first element is a high standard, which was Shakespeare's gift to English literature.