

nothing, so far as we can see, calculated to sow the seeds of the subtlest and sublimest thought.

So there is nothing connected with his education, or his lack of education, that in any way accounts for what he did. It is supposed that he attended school in his native town—but of this we are not certain. Many have tried to show that he was, after all, of gentle blood, but the fact seems to be the other way. Some of his biographers have sought to do him honor by showing that he was patronized by Queen Elizabeth, but of this there is not the slightest proof.

As a matter of fact, there never sat on any throne, a king, queen, or emperor who could have honored William Shakespeare.

Ignorant people are apt to overrate the value of what is called education. The sons of the poor, having suffered the privations of poverty, think of wealth as the mother of joy. On the other hand, the children of the rich, finding that gold does not produce happiness, are apt to underrate the value of wealth. So the children of the educated often care but little for books, and hold all culture in contempt. The children of great authors do not, as a rule, become writers.

Nature is filled with tendencies and obstructions. Extremes beget limitations, even as a river by its own swiftness creates obstructions for itself. Possibly, many generations of culture breed a desire for the rude joys of savagery, and possibly generations of ignorance breed such a longing for knowledge, that of this desire, of this hunger of the brain, Genius is born. It may be that the mind, by lying fallow, by remaining idle for generations, gathers strength.

Shakespeare's father seems to have been an ordinary man of his time and class. About the only thing we know of him is, that he was officially reported for not coming monthly to church. This is good as far as it goes. We can hardly blame him, because at that time Richard Bifield was the minister at Stratford, and an extreme Puritan,—one who read the Psalter by Sternhold and Hopkins.

The Church was at one time Catholic, but in John Shakespeare's day it was Puritan, and in 1564, the year of Shakespeare's birth, they had the images defaced. It is greatly to the honor of John Shakespeare that he refused to listen to the "tidings of great joy" as delivered by the Puritan Bifield.

Nothing is known of his mother except her beautiful name—Mary Arden. In those days, but little attention was given to the biographies of women. They were born, married, had children, and died. No matter