

in the obscurity of his life, and phantom-like in the rarity and fitfulness of his historical disclosures. Little did it seem on that memorable anniversary of England's patron Saint—St. George's Day—that there was born England's patron Genius, and with him a power greater than kings and emperors, greater than warrior or statesman—a power which by

“Thoughts whose very sweetness yielded proof
That they were born for immortality,”

was ordained to be a living force, expanding the intellect, stimulating the imagination and moulding the hearts of men down “to the last syllable of recorded time.” Stranger still is it that the world should have been so slow in recognizing this

“Dear son of memory, great heir of fame.”

For two hundred years the place of his birth slumbered above the sacred relics to which it gave shelter before it woke up to its priceless inheritance, permitting, even as late as 1810, the house in which our bard was born to pass into the hands of a butcher; and it is to an American, the celebrated Barnum, who offered a large sum to be allowed to carry off the antiquated cottage, from roof-tree to chimney-corner, that the world is indebted for the preservation and restoration of what has long since become a shrine to which the footsteps of reverent pilgrims have tended and all high thoughts have turned.

Of the living Shakespeare little is known—less, perhaps, than of any other name in our literature. We are left very largely to inference, aided by a fancy which, like his own, can body forth and turn to shape forms of things unknown, and even airy nothings, to fill up from “the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time,” what at most will be mere outline etchings of “gentle Shakespeare.”

The first ray of historical light which falls upon our bard, following the “brief chronicle” of his baptism, is the fact of his marriage. He was then a youth of eighteen,

“In the very May-morn of his youth,
Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises;”

and the glowing ideal of womanly grace and beauty that captivated his ardent nature was “Sweet Anne Hathaway,” a buxom maiden of five-and-twenty. What a vivid sketch of this love-sick swain have we in his own “Young Master Fenton:” “He capers,