

## On Closing the Book

comparative value of alternative suggestions. It is impossible to deny that this practice often opens up to us charms and treasures un hoped for and unexpected. Unfortunately in such leisurely and detailed examination of a play we too often lose sight of the grandeur of its general theme and scheme; and the author's primary object—to give a living expression to his work by having it acted on the stage—is obliterated.

What I would urge, then, is a study of the text of our great dramatist supplemented, whenever possible, by a visit to the theatre where the play under consideration is being performed. Whether Shakespeare, in writing to supply the demands of the contemporary stage, intended a philosophy deeper than can be given forth and received at one presentation, matters little—the message of his work will reach us at the first hearing of an intelligent rendering. And this should content us. We know that Shakespeare's plays were primarily, if not exclusively, meant for the stage; divorced from it, no full appreciation of the dramatist's genius is obtainable.

When reading the dramas we really only concentrate our attention on the words before us, and give but a passing thought to how those words may be vitalised by the assistance of the actor's art, and of the resources at the command of the scene-painter, the property-master, and the stage-