

tune's wheel would have in store for this lad who "lends metal" to them all.

The walls of the room—now covered with thousands and thousands of visitors' autographs—were hung with coarse tapestry, the oak floor neatly strewn with rushes, the tables well garnished with "nodding violets, pale primroses, streak'd gillyvors," and such fragrant flowers that bloom in the sweet o' the year.

Then the SCHOOLBOY :—William Shakespeare himself—for "he was a scholar and a ripe and good one"—when a boy "with satchel and shining morning face" wending his way from the old home in Henley Street, past the wooden Market Cross, down the quaint old town, to the Grammar School.

In Shakespeare's youth the school room underwent repair, and for some weeks school was kept in the Church of the Holy Guild adjoining; no doubt the young poet often "conned his task" there, perhaps in *Twelfth Night*, when he described Malvolio "smiling his face into more lines than the new map" and with "yellow stockings most villainously cross-gartered like a pedant that keeps a school o' the church," he was sarcastically alluding to his own old schoolmaster and those few weeks of study in the Guild Chapel.

Then when "school broke up each hurries to his home and sporting place," we can fancy him and his chief companions, young Burbage, Greene, Condell, and Heming, in some neighbouring field playing their favourite game of acting "Gammer Gurton's Needle," a coarse interlude much in vogue at that time, and which, no doubt, they had seen acted many times by Lord Leicester's strolling players, who frequently visited the town.

We can picture the young poet, too, at the home fireside, relating some ancient historical ballad to amuse his little sister Anna, who then "prattled poesie" in her nurse's arms. Or better still, can we imagine him on a summer's day roaming alone under the greenwood tree, in the leafy glades on the outskirts of the forest of Arden, watching the budding wild flowers and the herds of fallow deer feeding, listening to the lark soaring high above the clouds, singing its hymn of praise at heaven's gate, gathering in his daily rambles a far richer store of ideas from God's best book of nature than he could have procured in a whole lifetime's study of worm-eaten volumes. Indeed Shakespeare's ideas are numerous as the stars in the sky and always as bright and sparkling; he has "held the mirror up to nature, showing virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time its form and pressure."

And then the LOVER, "sighing like a furnace": in thought we can easily take our footsteps across the pleasant fields, bright with golden buttercups and starry-eyed daisies, from Stratford to Shottery, a thoroughly rustic, almost Arcadian walk, so familiar to the young poet. There we see, standing by the side of the road, the pretty, thatched cottage of the Hathaways, with its quaint dormer windows, its timber-lath and plaster walls and its wooden-latched doors.

Opposite the deep well, green with mosses and lichens, the accumulation of successive years, is the doorway, under a canopy of trailing woodbine and luscious jessamine, where we can imagine the fair Anne herself seated at her spinning wheel, singing in a sweet, clear voice one of Shakespeare's love verses, her large, soft, dark eyes drooping low over her work, the rich crimson of her cheeks deepening as the wheel goes round and the young poet-lover bends over her "all adoration and observance."

What a lover must not Shakespeare have been! Can we not picture him in his manly, English beauty a very Romeo? And Anne with a love for him as boundless as the sea, for, in spite of the eight years' difference in their ages, we have no real reason to doubt theirs was true love. Does not the poet himself say, "Let not the marriage of true minds admit impediment," and "to me, fair friend, you never can be old, for as you were when first your eye I eyed, such seems your beauty still."

Then a SOLDIER: Shakespeare means at this period of our life we are soldiers, not in the literal sense, but soldiers in the great battle of life, walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent, steeling our hearts against temptation and sin whilst seeking the "bubble reputation" in the world's up-hill fight, as he must often have done during his many years of hardship and suffering in London, when but an obscure player at the Globe Theatre on the Bankside, or before that time, when, driven to the last necessity, he picked up a little money by taking care of the gentlemen's horses who came to see the play. But "as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds" so did his extraordinary genius overcome all obstacles, and although we cannot trace many years of Shakespeare's life in London, yet we know that his position there grew to be one of the highest in his profession.

It is well-known the Virgin Queen delighted in witnessing his plays,

several times commanding him to appear before her. One anecdote we especially remember of the poet's ready wit and more than courtly tact. On one occasion he was taking the character of a king in the presence of Her Majesty, who, in moving across the stage—in those days the honoured seat for the noblest of the audience—dropped her glove as she passed by him; but at first he took no notice of the incident, and then the Queen, desirous of knowing what he would have the courage to do, again moved towards him and let her glove fall. Then Shakespeare stooped to pick it up, saying with courtly grace in the character of the monarch he was personating "and though now bent on this high embassy, yet stoop we to take up our cousin's glove," at the same time retiring from the stage and presenting the glove to the Queen, who was highly pleased at this act.

And then the JUSTICE: we may regard this as the period of prosperous repose.

What a time of exquisite enjoyment it must have been to William Shakespeare, when, become a man of worldly means, he was able to return to Stratford, repair his father's broken fortunes, and to purchase from the Clopton family the largest and best house in the town—the mansion *New Place*—standing in its present grounds, opposite the Church of the Holy Guild, where, continuing to supply the stage with two plays every year, he lived in peace and retirement in his dear native town, with his loved wife and children. I say *loved*: unbelievers who doubt Shakespeare's love for Anne Hathaway, can never have read those three beautiful sonnets, the 104th, 109th, and the 110th.

Alas!—though, this great master of the human heart, who found "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything," lived but seven years this peaceful retired life, *his acts being only five ages*,—although on March 25, 1616, he praised God he was in his perfect health and memory, and did make and ordain his last will and testament, yet just a month afterwards, on his fifty-second birthday, April 23, he breathed his last, with his children's faces around his bed, passing quietly away to the "best of rest."

Now the SIXTH AGE: "His big, manly voice, turning again towards childish treble."

What sweeter character can we take than the good old Adam, in that thoroughly Warwickshire play, *As You Like It*: who was ready to give all his thrifty hire he had saved from his youth to his young master in adversity, and to follow him "to the last grasp with truth and loyalty," firmly believing: "He that doth the ravens feed, yea, providently caters for the sparrow."

Pope tells us, "an honest man is the noblest work of God," then, surely that honest old man is a suitable object for our contemplation and reverence.

There is scarcely one step more from the sixth age, to the last scene of all "second childishness and mere oblivion." Then in seeking death, we find life in "the undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns."

How profound must have been Shakespeare's knowledge of the works of God, to place such sentiments in the hearts of his characters; how deep his religion and belief, as uttered in the words of King Henry the VI: "My God shall be my hope, my stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet": and that most beautiful prayer of the Earl of Richmond, when he retires to rest the night before the battle of Bosworth.

We must always regret that the great poet was taken from "this wide and universal theatre" so soon. Truly, his was "a noble life before a long." "Take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again."

Toronto.

TARIO.

THE LAND PROBLEM IN ENGLAND.

THE history of every nation that has ever emerged from barbarism to the higher life of law, system, and empire has been the history of a process whereby the ownership of landed property has passed from the possession of the many to that of the few. Prophets may denounce their woe as loudly as they please against "them that join house to house and lay field to field till there be no place." Fiery optimists with Utopian dreams may come forward with all sorts of schemes for nationalizing the land and limiting the acreage that any man might own. Literary country gentlemen with a taste for philanthropy may practically deplore that the wide domains of the moneyed men have been the ruin of the country; but the son of Amoz at Jerusalem, and Gracchus five hundred years after him at Rome, and Pliny three hundred years after him simply testified to the fact that eternal laws go on from age to age, working themselves out by the agency of the instincts or the follies, the sins or the aspirations, the greed or the needs of the children of men.

Almost within reach of my hand as I write there are lying the original conveyances of land in a single Norfolk parish, more than six hundred in number, the most modern of which belongs to the end of the fifteenth,