

they delineate lunacy in all stages, but they are true to nature in doing so. Other writers have attempted to describe madness, but not with like success. In the Elizabethan drama you see its beginning, you follow it from stage to stage till it reaches its climax. There is nothing unnatural, nothing repulsive, about it. Each phase in its progress is but the fore-runner of what follows. Shakespeare, especially, delights in grappling with and describing this most difficult of all characters. You find it in Lady MacBeth. MacBeth, himself, in the closing scenes, is possessed by something very near akin to a "mind diseased." So in Hamlet, so in Othello, and others. In the Merchant of Venice, it takes the form of melancholy, and Antonio is oppressed with deep sadness, though, in sooth, he knows nor why he is so sad.

The student of this period cannot but be struck with the extraordinary versatility, the many-sidedness of its great writers! We find men distinguished in letters, who also rank among the foremost in the practical affairs of their country; men, who were at once poets, writers of prose, statesmen, politicians, courtiers, sailors, soldiers; great lawyers, who were also profound thinkers and writers on many subjects outside their profession, and who were prominent as courtiers and in state-craft; men who were, at once, great travellers, writers of travels, of history, of poetry and were skilled in arms, in the ways of court and in diplomacy.

Another strange feature is that, in the case of a number of the great dramatists, as Marlowe, Massinger, Heywood, Webster, even Shakespeare himself, so comparatively little, outside their own writings, is known of their personal history.

