

Professor Raleigh, as is proper in a book of this character, has naturally kept to what is generally accepted about the poet's career and individuality, without discovering some new "fact" which further research might prove only to be some poor kind of fairy-tale. Think of the rubbish which has been tacked on to so-called criticisms of Shakespeare! At the same time, his "superstition," as he calls it, is tempered with sober judgment. He reminds us—what was pointed out in an article in the *Quarterly Review* some twenty years ago—of the surprising fact that Shakespeare was curiously ignorant of details of natural history, and was, indeed, as his writings plainly show, more of a town-man than a country-man. But criticisms of detail may well be left alone, in this place at all events. Shakespeare the writer, according to the over-strict grammarian, and those other persons who make a fetish of precious exactitude, made several small errors. But the greatness of the plays, every one of which, be it written early or late, is full of the evidence of genius, makes such trivial criticism—vigorously enough condemned by Professor Raleigh—unworthy of notice. It is, indeed, the works which matter, and all attempts made elsewhere to photograph the individuality of the man are practically of no importance.

Shakespeare's history was a triumph of painstaking effort. He left Stratford a young man, to take his part in the game of life in Elizabethan London. For years he worked as playwright and actor, until he had managed to secure a small fortune; then he retired to his home in Stratford, to play the part of a simple country gentleman. There was absolute freedom from what is known as self-advertisement in all this. He seemed to be quite content to go through his work for the work's sake, and, we may with safety feel assured, had no idea that he was destined to be numbered amongst the glorious company of our English immortals. But there he is, first and foremost; and men of all the nations are found admiring, studying, gaining inspiration from his plays.