

banks of the Avon, as it is full of charming country scenes, the song of birds, the ripple of water, the murmur of trees, the beauty and fragrance of flowers, all breathe through it, and all tell the self-same story—the story of deep, passionate love. Abandoning himself wholly to this, one piece follows another in quick succession, all filled with the same thought, telling the same tale—the witching, witching tale of love. Shakspeare seized everything that came to hand and made them serve his purpose, what was thrown aside by others as useless was taken by him and transformed into the rarest jewels. The warm coloring of Italian poetry and love finds its way into his tragedies, and the sterner Anglo-Saxon is varnished by its brilliant portrayal on the stage. Thus he proceeds until the amorous sentiment gives place to the patriotic. Then follow his historic plays, which so interest and thrill us that it seems impossible to believe that Shakspeare is not a standard authority on facts of history, his vivid imagery comes so quickly before our minds at the mention of a familiar name that, in spite of ourselves, we accept Shakspeare's version of the story.

On his arrival in London, he seems to have fallen in with Marlowe and Greene, and to have followed them into all scenes of riotous amusement. In spite of this dissipation, or partly through it, he numbered amongst his friends many of the noblest in the land, was patronized by the queen, made much of everywhere, and in time came to be considered wealthy. At this time he seems to have rescued his father from poverty and purchased an estate on the Avon, to which, in his later years, he retired. None of Shakspeare's plays bear the impress of work, they are more like the irrepressible, uncontrollable bubbling over of an inexhaustible spring, whose waters are ever clear and pure, untainted by the source whence they rise. One metaphor follows another in quick succession. We are led higher and higher until, giddy, we would descend, but the poet is far above us, and if we would stand where he does, there is nothing left for us but to follow the difficult path which he with such ease has traced. Nothing daunts him; where others would leave out this because it detracts from dignity, and the other because it savors too much of going into details, he leaves nothing, but takes mankind just as he

finds it. Kings and queens in his hands are not kings and queens only, they are men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers; they are not always clothed in the robe of state, but sometimes don the dressing-gown and slippers to utter commonplaces with the rest of men. In comedy, he leads us by the fairest paths, by a way that seems almost interminable until, catching something of his own spirit and intoxicated with delight, we care not for the end, but wish our journey might still continue. "Much Ado About Nothing" is a brilliant dialogue, followed by "As You Like It," where "time fleets carelessly," and we see the artist past his first love passion touch its lighter phases with a playful hand. Some have thought to have recognized the older and sadder poet in the sorrowful *Jacques*, and more especially in the sonnets that succeeded. It is, however, exceedingly hard to put our fingers on any character and say "here we see Shakspeare; into this person he has infused his own thoughts and aspirations. On the contrary, such versatility of talent is beyond our comprehension, there is no one key running through the piece by which the author may be understood. His poetry is not like that of Byron's, where we see the same sad, weary face looking at us from every page; but the picture is ever changing. Amid the innumerable portraits who will determine Shakspeare? His genius never left him. His later tragedies have all the fire of the first, and differ only in their greater grasp of thought and wider knowledge of human nature. "Julius Cæsar," "Macbeth," and "King Lear," and the rest written about the same time depict the darker sins of men in their deepest hue. Revenge, hatred, jealousy and treachery are seen here as never before, while the pangs of conscience furnish a retribution equal to the crime. Soon after the completion of these, his last tragedies, we find the now landed proprietor quietly settled at his home on the Avon, where he lived three peaceful years, then passed from earth leaving immortal works and an undying fame.

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A DULL old lady being told that a certain lawyer was lying at the point of death, exclaimed, "My gracious! won't even death stop that man's lying?"