

modest book. For Miss Griswold has no new conclusions to draw, no new theories to exploit, no new facts even to confront the world with. Her book is simply a gathering together of incidents more or less known of the domestic life and relations of some thirty-three men and women, all sufficiently beloved by the people to make such a compilation an acceptable one. The work is done with the utmost good taste and good feeling, and is accompanied by much pleasant, unobtrusive, appreciative comment. The fascination of a mere collection of reminiscences, which begin with Goethe, include Madame De Staël, Lamb, Irving, Emerson, George Sand, Charlotte Bronte, Margaret Fuller, and George Eliott, and end with Ruskin, would naturally be great, and when strung together by so sympathetic a pen as Miss Griswold's, their value is pleasantly deepened. We commend the volume most heartily to the class for whom its author intended it.

Cleave to thine acre, the round year  
Will fetch all fruits and virtues here,

quotes Miss Edith Thomas upon the title page of the volume to which the rugged Emersonian couplet has given its name. Many people talk about nature; to a few people—rare and fortunate people—the world never tires of listening. We all know more people “in sympathy” with Nature than we can count; few of us know anybody, however, with whom nature is in sympathy. Such happy beings possess an inheritance of which the world partakes only in the dole they give when they write about it. With Miss Ingelow's permission,

The earth is given  
To them; they reign by virtue of a sense  
Which lets them in to hear the rhythm of that old verse,  
The ring of that old tune whereto she spins.

Many are our literary beverages. Some of them stimulate, others strengthen us, others exhilarate, with a headache in the morning. But the potation we share with Pan is as pure as the dew his satyr's hoof brushed off the amaranths and holds an elixir that eccentric old divinity may know the name of, but we do not. It is time to say that Miss Edith Thomas is a nymph of his special choosing to pour it out.

Miss Thomas is a poet, *cela va sans dire*—when we have intimated that she sympathises with Nature, and that Nature reciprocates. And beside the imagination which makes her a poet, she has the fancy which makes her a buoyant and a graceful writer of prose. The chapters of “The Round Year” may almost indicate its character. “A Spring Opening,” “Grass—a Remuneration,” “A Summer Holinight,” etc., but here is a bit about February that will prove it, and whet our present anticipations at the same time:

It is still February. You may treat it as Dies Februatus, time of purification and sacrifice; or, as the merry month of Spront Kele, following the faintly-hopeful suggestion of the old Saxon calendar. The long snow has retreated underground, or is fast being carried off by numerous plethoric streams, yellow, seething as torrents of lava lately spilled from some volcanic crater. The earth everywhere looks shrivelled and mummy-like, giving us the impression that the casements have been folded back prematurely, or that the miracle of resurrection lags far behind the hour appointed. Last year's crisp leaves take spasmodic flight, like bits of paper blown about in the electric current. They sail so high, one might fancy they drifted into the folds and creases of the ragged, low-lying clouds that characterise February's sky. In yonder cornfield the pumpkin vines lie scattered about in withered festoons, suggesting that the Lernean snake may have been captured there, despatched, and left to dry away in the sunshine. Some trees in the orchard still bear a remnant of their last year's fruitage: these are your cold, frost-baked apples; these your cider, well mulled and warranted not to intoxicate. Here are black walnuts, fantastically mined out by the squirrels, reminding one of the ingenious knick-knacks carved of bone or other material, by prisoners and idlers. These shells would now do to string for a rustic rosary, on which to bead our prayers to the sylvan diety.” (Toronto, Williamson and Company.)

### THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.\*

THE literary and cultivated class of Toronto society owe a debt of gratitude to the Provost and Faculty of Trinity College for the opportunities of mental improvement afforded them by the course of lectures to which they are invited during the months of January and February. The subjects selected are of great interest, and the exponents of them remarkable for personal ability and scholarly attainments.

The first of the series announced, “The Influence of Shakespeare upon the English Language,” was given in the Convocation Hall of the College, on Friday, 21st inst., by Canon Norman, Chancellor of Bishop's College, Lennoxville, and none of the large audience present, which, with the exception of the students and professors and a few clergymen, consisted entirely of ladies, could fail to be charmed with the venerable divine's address and delivery. Possessed of a fine presence, a clear well-modulated voice, and great felicity of expression, his lecture was a literary treat

which all who attended must have felt privileged to enjoy. The principal points and facts of this discourse were admirably brought out, and vivid impressions left upon the mind by the force of his effective sentences. The title of “A Study of Shakespeare” seems to us more appropriate than that of “The Influence of Shakespeare upon the English Language,” the lecture dealing more extensively with the author than with the influence. It is difficult in a few cursory notes to do justice to Canon Norman's fine language, or to give any but a garbled version of his well-rounded sentences, which must be condensed into a contracted space. “I do not intend,” he said, “to sketch the life of Shakespeare, nor to attempt to settle the question of the authorship of the plays now attributed both to him and to Bacon. The Baconian theory was put forth by a Miss Delia Baker, a Boston lady, who became deranged and died insane. Mr. W. Holmes, likewise an American, had defended this theory, and Mr. Leo Vale had asserted the same and given Lord Palmerston as his authority, besides quoting and marshalling all the evidence in the most orderly manner. Mr. George Wilkes, in his “Shakespeare From an American Point of View,” took the opposite side and refuted Mr. Holmes's arguments. While I admit that Bacon makes no allusion to Shakespeare, he is also silent as to Ben Jonson, Marlowe, and other distinguished contemporaries. I am an anti-Baconian; it seems to me unaccountable that the father of Inductive Philosophy had the leisure for such works, or that Spencer and his other friends have been so deceived. The question of whether the Iliad and the Odyssey were the product of one or many minds has been much discussed.”

Shakespeare wrote as he felt, and the title of poet or creator is aptly applied to him. Study may cultivate, but it cannot generate such works as his; he was, moreover, a cosmopolitan writer, wonderfully so for an age when travelling was virtually an impossibility, and his writings have become cosmopolitan too, though in no country is he so highly esteemed as in Germany. The late Cardinal Wiseman suggested an edition of his works with illustrations by the best local painters of the foreign cities he has immortalised in many of his plots. The expense of such a work would be enormous, but as a national monument it would be invaluable; and, though beyond the reach of the majority, it could be placed in every public library in the civilised world. Shakespeare was a great literary student, and was largely indebted to Plutarch's Lives for some of his subjects, as is especially evident in “Julius Caesar.” Many of his other plays are modelled on those of earlier writers. Merivale, in his “History of the Roman Empire,” refers to Shakespeare's knowledge as displayed in the above-mentioned play. His acquaintance with geographical details was limited and obscure, as many of his references clearly indicate; at the same time, these are trifling details, mere spots upon the sun. That his insight into Italian life and character was marvellous, “Romeo and Juliet,” “Othello,” and the “Merchant of Venice” clearly indicate. In “Macbeth” we see him at home upon Scotia's heathery hills, and in “Hamlet” he draws the sea-girt, iron-bound coast of Denmark with a master hand. He was little admired, however, by some of his contemporaries. Later, Dr. Johnson, among others, complains of his being too English.

How he passed the interval from 1579 to 1586, between which years he left school, is unknown; it is surmised as a schoolmaster, though his dislike to the class is evidenced in his *Holofernes* in “Love's Labour Lost,” and *Pinch* in the “Comedy of Errors.” For some years after 1586 he worked in a law office, and subsequently went on the stage. Shakespeare was often unhappy in the selection of his plots and manipulation of incidents. “Wilkie Collins's” name occurs to me, in this connection, as remarkable for opposite treatment, his plots excellent, his characters mere lay figures. The story of “Macbeth,” however, is admirably conceived, and worked out with great power. The “Merchant of Venice” is also excellent; but “Julius Caesar,” though very fine in the early portions, weakens at the end, and should terminate with the death of Caesar. Shakespeare is often taxed with coarseness and immorality, and certainly cannot be read in the original; but taste has much improved since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and he cannot be blamed for using the language of his day. His moral teachings are all of a high order, and no single passage has a vicious tendency. If he is coarse, Dryden is coarser, and Beaumont and Fletcher coarsest, not to mention Swinburne and Walt Whitman in our own day. Milton, in “Paradise Lost,” has, I think, invested Satan with so much dignity and grandeur as to render the spirit of evil a most attractive, not repellent, creature. Shakespeare, on the contrary, makes his *Iago* the personification of wicked passions, the worst character ever evolved from the human mind. His villainy is revolting; it is motiveless malignity, as Coleridge justly puts it. Every Shakespearian student will admit he makes us love good and hate evil. One great feature in his plays, especially remarkable for his time, is his strong belief in woman. No other writer of that age shows a similar tendency. He has but one solitary romantic hero, *Henry V.*, but all his female characters are noble. Professors Wilson and Sewell, eminent Shakespearian scholars, advise the study of Shakespeare beyond all other books; his wisdom is only second to that of the Scriptures. The advice of *Polonius* to *Laertes* is far superior to that of Lord Chesterfield to his son. Walpole speaks of the popular songs of a people as their national heritage. The same may be said of Shakespeare's works; his writings have become proverbial, even to the names of some plays, as “All's Well that Ends Well,” and “Much Ado About Nothing.” The Bard was himself a great lover of proverbs; indeed these trite sayings are often admirable in thought and expression. What more touching than the Spanish proverb, “Every cross hath its own inscription,” or more apt than the Oriental, “Alms are the salt of riches.” “Love's Labour Lost” was his first play, “The Tempest” his last, showing there was no loss of power in his later writings. “Titus Andronicus,” “Timon of Athens,”

\*A Lecture by the Rev. Canon Norman, Chancellor of Bishop's College.