

Closely allied to Arthur and Mamillus is the son of Macduff found in Macbeth. He, like them, could boast of noble parentage and could lay claim to many praiseworthy qualities. In one respect, however, the son of Macduff differs greatly from the other two characters. In him we do not detect any of that affection so evident in Arthur and Mamillus. His feelings are obscured by his fortitude. The manly way in which he bears up under the threatened calamity, arouses our affection for him. When his mother tells him that his father is dead, and asks him what he shall do without a father, he feels the sad stroke, no doubt, yet he pluckily resolves on a commendable course and answers boldly, "I will do as the little birds." With whatever the hand of Providence deals out to him, he is content. Like the small bird, if needs be, he is ready to labor for his own maintenance. This is a remarkable trait in one of so high birth and tender years. It is difficult for those who have always had all they desired in earthly goods, to bear up courageously when adversity comes. For his years, he had remarkable powers of perception. Throughout the whole interview with his mother he seems to be fully conscious of her intention to play upon his feelings. But in this case the artist is not equal to the task. Lady Macduff is cornered at every turn by her son, and finally has to admit his wit. "Thou speak'st with all thy wit; and yet in faith with wit enough for thee.

How much differently are we impressed when we are introduced to Mrs. and Mr. Page's son in the play entitled *Merry Wives of Windsor*? William Page is the small boy hero of humble origin. We first behold

him undergoing an examination before his parents and teachers. An examination has no attraction for poor little Willie. When summoned before the tribunal, he complies with hesitancy. Upon his coming forward, Sir Hugh Evans, his master, commences the painful ordeal by commanding him to hold up his head. To this, through shyness, he is reluctant, until his mother with encouraging words requests him to do Mr. Evan's bidding. His examination was by no means a brilliant one, yet it was such as quite delighted Mrs. Page. From the fact that he knew "lapis" meant stone, and that a stone was a pebble, and that he could decline a few words, she thought him a wonder in the intellectual order. However, Mrs. Page is the only one that sees her son in that light. In him we find few of those qualities that win our esteem. If we lean towards him it is through pity. William is too shy, awkward and dull to call forth our admiration, but for all this, no one can help sympathizing with him as he stands up for the scrutiny of his cruel school-master.

In the few child characters which I have collected from Shakespeare's works, there is not one but is worthy of our attention. Each has a redeeming quality which the poet portrays. Whether he is portraying the heroic valor of Arthur, the manly disposition of Mamillus, the fortitude of young Macduff, or the dull, yet willing obedience of William, there is always a marked conformity to real life and a touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. We are drawn to those Shakesperian children because of their freshness and originality. They lighten up our hearts when oppressed by many cares and troubles.

JOHN M. FOLEY, '97.