

Blending these broken lights, and uniting these historical fragments into a consistent whole, we are prepared now to appreciate that stereoscopic picture of Shakespeare which Jonson and Fuller afford in their respective descriptions of the man and the genius. Jonson's limnal outline is a graphic personal etching; "I loved the man, and do honour to his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent fancy, brave notions and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." What a pity that "rare Ben" should have *stopped*; for he might have gone on filling up this graphic personal etching into a breathing portrait. However, the limner's strokes are sufficiently bold to suggest to the imagination that traces them, how lovable must have been our bard in the ripe maturity of his manhood.

Fuller, in his critical description of the Shakespearean genius, puts the twin-lens into the stereoscope. Comparing our dramatist with "rare Ben" himself, Fuller says: "Which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances: Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."

The historical figure unmasking himself behind these foot-lights, is that of a gentle, affectionate nature; vivacious, pouring out his sweet soul in melodious song, and uttering with unconscious merit,

"Thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations."

Soon after the change of fortune in the Shakespeare family, referred to above, the shadow of a great darkness fell upon our bard, as falls sooner or later upon all great spirits; and he passes through the fiery furnace of trial, only, however, to be purified, and to rise into a self-contained elevation of human excellence which, alas! too few of the world's geniuses have ever reached. Like St. Paul, he is having his experience of "the desert of Arabia." His sky is overcast; patrons are imprisoned; friends are departing; Southampton is declared a traitor; Essex is beheaded; the whole political horizon is electric with threatening dangers. But see how the evil spirits of that period call up the sovereign powers of Shakespeare's inner self, as Macbeth's witches called up from a boiling cauldron images of crowned kings. And