

that Shakespeare was the great national poet of his day, that his works were well known and eagerly sought for throughout England, and that they were reproduced by companies of strolling actors in the remote provincial towns. He acquired a much greater popularity during his life time than fell to the lot of the ordinary dramatist. This is clearly attested by the fact that his plays alone were selected from a host of others and published, and this is an age when but little reading was done. Shakespeare was introduced to the people under the most favorable auspices. Froude says: "acting was the special amusement of the English during the sixteenth century from the palace down to the village green."

Shakespeare's sway in the sixteenth century is less marked. Three great forces were at work to account for this. The rise of Ben Johnson and the Metaphysical School. Again national discontent in reality an outburst of political feeling assumed the garb of Puritanism. Mental culture received a deadly blow when Puritan England suppressed the drama and trod underfoot the time honored customs of the Yule-log and the May-pole. Then the accession of Charles II gave free reign to French, thought which rapidly prevailed politics, religion and morals nothing was exempt. The drama became that of Corneille and Racine, while Dryden rendered homage to the new order of things by writing tragedy in rhyme. Vanbrugh, Wycherley and Congreve were read by the courtiers. Yet even in this age Dryden says "He was the man who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul." Milton speaks of him in a poem prefixed to the edition of 1632 as:—

"Dear son of memory, great heir of fame
What needest thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a live long monument."

The annals of literature with those of science give evidence that "to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." The reaction began when the eighteenth century ushered in the dawn of a great national awakening. The signs of the times were visible in a series of articles which appeared in the Spectator favorable

to the poet. Numerous editions and reviews of Shakespeare followed Rowe's edition of 1709. These tended to neutralize the French influence though the leading literary lights, Pope and Johnson still clung to the precise French drama and Shakespeare's violation of the "Unities" received due censure at their hands. A Pharisee of the most rigid type could scarce have adhered more strictly to the letter of the law than they to the form of the Greek drama. Meanwhile Garrick won his first laurels, while personating Richard III, and thenceforth devoted much energy and talent to a Shakespeare Jubilee and the remainder of his life was spent amid the influence of Shakespearean literature. The nineteenth century is one grand burst of song, the measured cadence of Alfred Tennyson struck the key-note. The strains of Longfellow, the sweet singer of the American nation and the sage, homely counsel of Whittier have smoothed the rough places and rounded the angles of life. Nor will the rugged, majestic sweep of thought traced in Carlyle's English, the liberal views and caustic remarks of Macaulay, the deep research of Matthew Arnold be forgotten while the landmarks of a national literature remain. An effort to trace the relation of cause and effect, carries the mind back to the sixteenth century; while the flag of England floats side by side with that of the young republic whose people bear so largely the impress of Saxon thought and feeling the name of William Shakespeare will be revered.

Our modern literature owes much to the reflex influence of Shakespeare through Germany and her writers. Lessing was the first German savant to recognize his genius, Schlegel and Wieland translated his plays into German. These in the meantime were permeating German thought until finally the climax is reached in the triumphant outburst of German literature which points to the names of Goethe and Schiller. The great revival known as the Sturm und Drang period moulded to a great extent nineteenth century literature. Scott's boyish admiration of Goethe grew with his years, and in his day no novelist was more widely read than Scott. No author has wielded a greater sway over the English speaking race than Carlyle, and he was a

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