

II. SHAKESPEARE THE SEER.

§ 1. *The Relations of his Sphere of View.*

Whilst powerful minds were found ready and willing and able to enter into the heart of the fermenting chaos, and develop out from the midst of it, enduring because truthful systems of Religious Thought and Organization ; enduring because truthful systems of Philosophy, of Government, of Law, of Discovery, of Colonization—here was a man who was to embody in beautiful conceptions and words, what fell not formally within the provinces of the others, but what nevertheless, in certain points of view, was not alien to the province of any one of them—the inseparable accidents of our nature,—the feelings, the aspirations, the hopes, the fears, the yearnings, the playful conceits, the blameless, nay, the happy, mercifully-contrived imaginations ever attendant on common human affairs—attendant on friendship, on companionship, on solitariness ; on family and social relations.

The existence of such an one, having power to accomplish this, in such a way as that the emanations of his brain should prove sources of counsel and comfort and purest delectation to after-generations of men, was, we must conceive, not without purpose, in the divine ordering of things ; and if so, it is becoming in us, as thoughtful believing men, to acknowledge it ; and to confess likewise that the relics of such an one, the remaining records of his words, are not to be lightly valued, but to be held in honour, and duly used.

§ 2. *A Literature a fore-ordained Human Development.*

I sometimes think that in that tendency to narrowness which besets us all, we are apt to neglect a hint divinely intended to be taken by us, from the palpable fact, that our religion as Christians is grounded, objectively at least, on a Literature,—on a series of sacred books, greatly varied in contents and style, the product, the accumulation from time to time, of a long succession of generations. That hint was this—that a Literature, vast and varied, was to be an essential development in the predestined progress of man : that man, constituted as he is, intellectually—was fore-ordained to develop *graphai—scripturæ*—books—on all the topics of human thought (as we see he has done) as instinctively as he was to erect buildings for shelter and utility and beauty ; and that these products of his intellect and spirit were to be at once the indices and helpful ministers of his civilization.

§ 3. *Caution Against Confounding Secular with Sacred Writings.*

In speaking thus, we are not putting the two literatures on an equality, the sacred and ancient with the merely so-called secular and modern. That, by which the hint was given (it is through hints that man is divinely educated)—is, like the original of all things on the earth and throughout the wide universe, *sui generis*—is DIVINE : but this we say,—that the secondary development fore-