

the murderer of his own brother, and sat upon the throne by reason of his crime—and in the mouth of such a king Shakespeare puts these words :

“There’s such divinity doth hedge a king.”

So, in *Macbeth* :

“How he solicits Heaven himself best knows ; but strangely visited people
All swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despairs of surgery, he cures ;
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers : and ’tis spoken
To the succeeding royalty—he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne,
That speak him full of grace.”

Shakespeare was the master of the human heart—knew all the hopes, fears, ambitions, and passions that sway the mind of man ; and thus knowing, he declared that

“Love is not love that alters
When it alteration finds.”

This is the sublimest declaration in the literature of the world.

Shakespeare seems to give the generalization—the result—without the process of thought. He seems always to be at the conclusion—standing where all truths meet.

In one of the sonnets is this fragment of a line that contains the highest possible truth :

“Conscience is born of love.”

If man were incapable of suffering, the words right and wrong never could have been spoken. If man were destitute of imagination, the flower of pity never could have blossomed in his heart.

We suffer—we cause others to suffer—those that we love—and of this fact conscience is born.

Love is the many-colored flame that makes the fireside of the heart. It is the mingled spring and autumn—the perfect climate of the soul.

XIII.

In the realm of comparison Shakespeare seems to have exhausted the relations, parallels, and similitudes of things. He only could have said :

“Tedious as a twice-told tale
Vexing the ears of a drowsy man.”