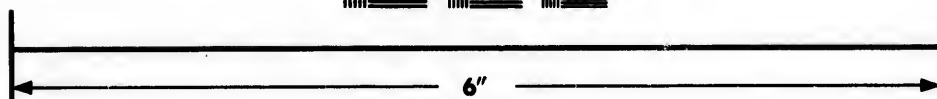
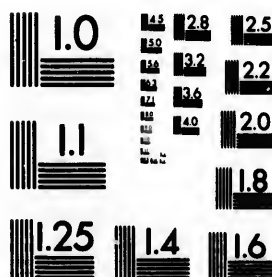


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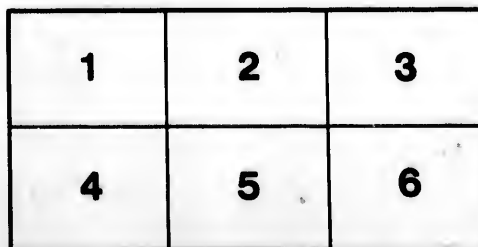
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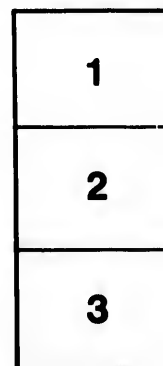
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ANNE HATHAWAY: A DIALOGUE.

BY DANIEL WILSON, LL.D.

HARDEN.—You fancy Shakespeare to have been a very wise fellow.

DELINA.—I think of Shakespeare as the very wisest man that ever lived.

HARDEN.—Well, well, leave that aside for the present. We have, of course, his moralizing Jaques, his subjective Hamlet, his experienced Timon, his Falstaff, Richard, Iago, and all the rest; and can gauge his wit and wisdom as a dramatist. I speak of the man.

DELINA.—Speaking of him then as a man, I picture him to myself in his Stratford mansion at New Place,—not unlike Sir Walter Scott in those bright young Abbotsford days, before ruin came on his romance of a life;—genial, kindly, hearty, one of the most sagacious, far-sighted men of his time; respected by all for his shrewd common sense: and also, like Scott, asserting at times with quiet dignity his rightful place among the foremost of nature's noblemen.

HARDEN.—Your fancy is no photographer, but a court-painter after the fashion of the Elizabethan age, when royalty was pictured without shadows. You take your poet in sober middle age—when the wildest scape-grace gets some common sense,—after he has sown his wild oats; repented him of his youthful escapades in Charlecote chace; and is looking, no doubt, for his next cut of venison, above the salt, at Sir Thomas Lucy's own table. But surely you will not deny that we know enough of Shakespeare's early pranks to feel assured he must have been a graceless young varlet.

DELINA.—Pardon me, but our gentle Shakespeare stands, in my imaginings of him, so far above all common humanity that it grates on my ear to hear his name associated, even in banter, with such language as you now employ. It is irreverent; I would almost say profane. But, taking you on your

own ground: you speak of sowing his wild oats: What are the facts? Shakespeare goes to London a mere youth,—we know not precisely how young; but he was only eighteen when he married Anne Hathaway—

HARDEN.—There you have it! Where's all the wisdom, the far-sightedness, the common sense you credit him with in that dainty procedure?

DELINA.—I shall discuss that point with you willingly. But let us consider first this sowing of his wild oats, of which you have spoken. He went, I say, a mere youth, fresh from his native village, right into the great London hive; and cast in his lot with Kyd and Greene, Peele, Lilly, Marlowe, and all the rest of the actors, and playwrights of his day. They were all University bred men. Lilly, a scholar, pluming himself on his fine euphuisms and pedantries, was Shakespeare's senior by some ten years; and doubtless looked down condescendingly enough on the Warwickshire lad. But, if Nash is to be credited, he was himself "as mad a lad as ever twanged;" in fact, "the very bable of London." As to Peele, and Kyd, and Greene, and Marlowe, they led the lives of rakes and debauchees; scrambled at the theatres for a living, and died in misery; Greene, a repentant, ruined profligate, at thirty-two; Marlowe, still younger, in a wretched tavern brawl. Shakespeare shared with them the same busy haunts of social life; as in later days with Ben Jonson, Drayton, and other wit-combatants of the "Mermaid" in Friday Street; and learned for himself what Eastcheap and its ways were.

HARDEN.—Well, and how did it end? In a fever brought on by the roystering merry-meeting with that same Drayton and Jonson, which finished your wisest and most

prudent of poets and men, and left rare old Ben to enjoy life for another score of years.

DELINA.—A wretched piece of village gossip, unheard of till half a century after his death. Shakespeare's will is dated a month before that, which in itself justifies the inference that his death was far from sudden. I conceive of him there, surrounded by his weeping wife, his daughters and sons-in-law, calmly dictating that simple confession of faith of England's greatest poet: "I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping, and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting."

HARDEN.—Poh! a mere lawyer's formula. Picture him rather—as Malone says,—with his weeping Anne at his bed side, cutting her off—not indeed with a shilling,—but an old bed! The simple truth is your wise poet made as foolish a marriage as ever ruined a man's prospects for life; repented of it when too late; and so forsook her, for London and the choice society of such clever rakes as you speak of.

DELINA.—The choice society, ere long, of the young Earl of Southampton, of the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, as well as of Raleigh, Jonson, Drayton, Beaumont, Fletcher, and others of nature's peerage. The idea that Shakespeare—the calm, the wise, the gentle Shakespeare,—thrust into a formal testamentary document, set forth otherwise with such solemn earnestness, a poor insult to the wife of his youth, and the mother of his children, is too preposterous to be seriously entertained. Charles Knight has dealt with that scandal long ago. With all the gravity of Dr. Dryasdust himself, he gives you Coke upon Littleton to show that the best bed was an heirloom due by custom to the heir at law, and therefore not to be bequeathed; that Shakespeare's widow—an heiress in her own right,—had an ample dower from his land-

ed estate, and that the bequest, on which you would put so vile a construction, was really a substantial mark of respect according to the usage of that seventeenth century.

HARDEN.—You don't mean to pretend that you fancy Shakespeare ever looked otherwise than with irritation and disgust on the woman who took advantage of his youth and inexperience to beguile him into so preposterous a misalliance?

DELINA.—Shakespeare's marriage with Anne Hathaway was no misalliance. She was of gentle blood; and in her greater maturity suited the precocious genius of the young poet. I don't mean to deny that there is a certain amount of imprudence,—folly if you will,—in the marriage of a youth of eighteen to a young woman seven years his senior. But I have frequently noted the preference shown by thoughtful, gifted youths, to women considerably their seniors. If it were not for the prudence of the ladies, such alliances would be commoner than they are. Young Shakespeare probably found a wise counsellor, a sagacious critic, a discriminating admirer of "the first heirs of his invention," in Anne Hathaway, before either thought of anything but the pleasure of congenial society.

HARDEN.—Found in Anne Hathaway a wise counsellor! found in her a designing baggage, who took advantage of his youth to as well nigh ruin all his prospects for life as ever woman did since Adam's—

DELINA.—Come! come! You don't mean to make out her whom Milton styles "the fairest of her daughters,"—our good mother Eve,—the senior of her husband by seven years! But, to be serious; remember you, if there is one point more than all others, in which Shakespeare surpasses his contemporaries, it is in his delineation of woman.

HARDEN.—And, if I remember rightly, one of the earliest of these delineations is "the wondrous qualities and mild behaviour" of Kate the Shrew!

DELINA.—Well: Kate became a model wife.

HARDEN.—And so must we fancy did Anne Hathaway; but I rather fancy both Petruchio and "our pleasant Willy,"—as Spenser calls him,—found themselves most comfortable when their charmers were a hundred miles off. Shakespeare at least put the road to London between them, and once there, it is not hard to find what he thought of young men marrying old wives.

DELINA.—Where, I pray you, does he ever allude to his marriage? The very marvel of Shakespeare's dramas is that, with perhaps the solitary exception of "the dozen white lutes" in Justice Shallow's coat-armour, and the Welshman's blundering travesty of it for the benefit of the "old coat" of the Lucys of Charlecote, there is not a personality noticeable in his whole writings.

HARDEN.—I said nothing about personalities. But what say you to the allusion in "Midsummer Night's Dream"? That is one of his earliest comedies, you must be aware; and contains interesting traces of the goings on in his own Warwickshire neighbourhood when he was a boy.

DELINA.—What allusion?

HARDEN.—No better known passage is to be found in all Shakespeare's plays,—Ly-sander's melancholy inventory of the course of true love:—

"Either it was different in blood,
Or else misgrafted in respect of years."

Do you fancy the poet was thinking very lovingly of his absent wife when he penned that line?

DELINA.—I don't believe he was thinking of her at all. In the original, Hermia has her running comment on one after another of the reputed impediments: regarding each but as—

"A customary cross,

As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers;"

and to this special one she responds:—

"O spite! Too old to be engag'd to young!"

It seems to me that Shakespeare has the best of it even according to your interpretation of his allusion.

HARDEN.—What say you then to the Duke's advice to Viola in "Twelfth Night"? You can scarcely get over that, I think.

DELINA.—Repeat it.

HARDEN.—Let us have the book. Here it is:—

"Let still the woman take

An elder than herself; so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart;
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are."

There surely spoke the poet's own personal experience. You don't fancy he jumped to his knowledge of human character and motives by intuition, and with his eyes shut.

DELINA.—By intuition, I do verily believe; though certainly not with his eyes shut.

HARDEN.—Well, but listen again. The Duke goes on thus:—

"Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent;
For women are as roses, whose fair flower
Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour."

If you can get over that there is no use reasoning with you.

DELINA.—Nay; let us hear Viola's reply; remembering that she is a youth, a "boy," as the Duke calls her,—young Shakespeare, let us suppose.

"And so they are," she says,

"Alas that they are so;

To die, even when they to perfection grow!"

I don't think that chimes in very aptly with your theory of Shakespeare as the repentant Benedict, pillorying his own folly "for daws to peck at."

HARDEN.—You will never persuade me that Shakespeare is not there putting his own experience to use, as one who had committed the very folly he warns against.

DELINA.—A most un-Shakesperianlike procedure. Pardon me, if I say that you must have given little study to the play as a whole. Viola, in her page's suit, looks a mere boy. The Duke, by right of his own matured manhood, constantly addresses her as such. There is a delicate humour involved in the page's comment on the account he gives of his imaginary sister's experience:

"She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i'the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek," &c.

Then he turns to the Duke,—a man, we may suppose, of some forty summers,—and asks:—

"Was not this love indeed?
We men may say more, swear more, but indeed
Our shows are more than well; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love."

Whereat the Duke, without any direct notice of the claim of manhood and its experiences, asks:—

"But died thy sister of her love, my boy?"

He has already, you will remember, selected the supposed page, as fittest by his very youth, to bear a message to Olivia; for, he says:—

"Dear lad,
They shall yet belie thy happy years
That say thou art a man."

There is no irony in this, be it remembered. The Duke is throughout addressing the supposed boy with kindly sympathy, though with a humorous sense of the incongruity of such a stripling having set his affections on a lady of the Duke's complexion, and about his years.

HARDEN.—She looks somewhat young, perhaps, to play the lover; but after all, not greatly more so than the Stratford youth of eighteen with his full blown cabbage-rose.

DELINA.—Not at all. Anne Hathaway at twenty-five would be in the bright bloom of womanhood; and, if with an intellect at all capable of responding to his genius, was well

calculated to captivate a youth of such rare precocity.

HARDEN.—*If* with an intellect!

DELINA.—I assume the woman of Shakespeare's choice to have had an intellect capable of estimating him in some degree at his worth. On no other theory can I account for her reciprocating his love. To her I believe he addressed the fine sonnet, which is meaningless otherwise:—

"I grant thou wert not married to my muse,
And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook
The dedicated words which write use
Of their fair subject, blessing every book.
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue!
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise;
And therefore art enforc'd to seek anew
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days."

HARDEN.—You fancy he sent that to his absent wife, from London?

DELINA.—It seems to me a legitimate inference from the sonnet itself. I doubt not his love for her was the grand armour of proof which bore him scatheless through the temptations that wrought the ruin of so many of his gifted contemporaries. Why, Greene was making the grand tour through Spain, Italy, and where not, while Shakespeare was at home, courting Anne Hathaway; and who had the best of it? For one man that an early marriage cripples, I'll engage to find you a hundred that it has been the making of.

HARDEN.—I wonder if that is the sort of crippling that he refers to in one of his sonnets:—

"So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite!"

DELINA.—I should not wonder if it is. "Fortune's dearest spite" is a very Petrarchian fashion of speaking of just such a favour as a dear wife, and the welcome cares and duties it brings with it.

HARDEN.—Why, he ran away from her!

DELINA.—If he did, was it not to return and make her the sharer of a fortune worthy of her love, such as she in her turn might

call "Fortune's dearest spite?" Was there no place but Stratford where the prosperous poet could buy himself lands, and write himself gentleman? Had London and "The Mermaid," with Raleigh, and Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and all the rest of them, no attractions? As to the story of his flight from Stratford a disgraced man, there is not a tittle of evidence in its support; unless you think Walter Savage Landor, and his inimitable trial scene, good contemporary authority. Critics have been deceived with less excuse.

HARDEN.—Well! Well! I'll grant you, he never sneered at the Shallows, or made sport of "the dozen white louses" which so became the Knight of Charlecote's old coat! There are no Dogberrys in his plays! It is all a much-ado-about-nothing, this talk of youthful escapades. He loved a Justice, as Falstaff would have certified, better than "a Windsor stag, the fattest in the Forest."

DELINA.—Nay, but let us consider it seriously. Can you produce nothing more to the point than what you have yet advanced? If you are to credit Shakespeare with all the sentiments of his dramatic characters, you will indeed make him "not one, but all mankind's epitome." What say you to his Katherine, in Henry VIII.? If she and the bluff Tudor were "misgraffed in respect of years," the poet went out of his way—as a courtier at least,—when he made of her a model wife.

HARDEN.—You go wide afield, indeed, if Harry the Eighth is your model husband. But I still venture to think I have already advanced some pretty apt passages. Can you match them with one in support of your view—from Henry VIII., or that other pattern husband, Othello, or Crookback Richard, or Hamlet's uncle, or Benedict himself? Let us have it, no matter where you cull it from.

DELINA.—I grant you, the demand is a hard one. Gladly would we recover, if we

could, some clue to the personal history of this, the greatest of poets, and as I believe, the greatest of men. But his very dramatic power arises from the objective character of his mind. His was, moreover, too healthy and masculine a nature for morbid introversions of the Byronic type. But if anywhere an autobiographic glimpse is to be looked for, it is in his "sugared sonnets,"—as Meres calls them,—some of which were doubtless among the earliest productions of his muse.

HARDEN.—When you can make any sense out of that incomprehensible riddle with which some wiseacre introduced his sonnets to the world; and tell us who "*The onlie Begetter of these insuing Sonnets, Mr. W. H.*" is, to whom "*The well-wishing Adventurer in setting forth, T. T., wisheth that eternitie promised by our ever-living poet.*" it will be time enough to solve the remainder of the mystical puzzle. But what of the Sonnets? I thought the critics were pretty well agreed that the "*Laura*" of our Petrarchian sonneteer was one of the rougher sex. I have looked into them sufficiently carefully, myself, to know that Anne Hathaway's name is not to be found in the whole hundred and fifty-four.

DELINA.—Perhaps not. Yet Anne Hathaway may be. Wordsworth says of the Sonnet:—

"With this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart."

HARDEN.—And you still persuade yourself Anne had a place there?

DELINA.—I am more certain she had a place in Shakespeare's heart than in his Sonnets; for they resemble in their general character, other well-known collections of the time, by Daniel, Constable, Spenser and Drayton; and were, as Meres tells us, first circulated in manuscript among his private friends. Too much has been attempted to be made out of them. Some undoubtedly express the poet's own feelings. Others deal with fanciful loves and jealousies; or

dwelt on the personal experiences of friends. But there, if anywhere, we have some insight into the inner life of the poet. You know the fine one where he chides Fortune :

" That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means, which public manners breed."

Petrarchian Sonnets, I am well aware, are sufficiently intangible things. I have tried to extract autobiographical material out of those of Wyatt and Surrey, as well as of Spenser : and know it to be something like getting sunbeams out of cucumbers ! Still some of the Sonnets of Shakespeare immediately succeeding that lament over his banishment from the favourite haunts of his boyhood's and lover's days, seem to me to acquire a fine significance as addressed to his absent wife :—

" Alas ! why, fearing of Time's tyranny,
Might I not then say, ' Now I love you best,'
When I was certain o'er uncertainty,
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest ?
Love is a babe ; then might I not say so,
To give full growth to that which still doth grow ?"

Fancy the young husband dwelling, in his absence, on the one disparity between them, of which officious friends would not fail to make the most, and so writing :—

" Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove."

HARDEN.—You are ingenious, I own ; but you will admit that a score of other applications could be, and indeed have already been made to appear equally apt.

DELINA.—I am well aware of the perplexity the Sonnets have occasioned to critic and biographer ; and of the fashion in which some have dogmatized about them. Chalmers had no doubt they were addressed to the maiden Queen ! Dr. Gervinus, of Heidelberg, is not less certain that they are all, without exception addressed to Mr. W. H. This indeed he pronounces to be "quite indubitable"; only he thinks Mr. W. H. was

not Mr. W. H., but a mystification for the Earl of Southampton—an idea of old date. Tyrwhitt, Farmer, Steevens, Malone, and others of the antiquarian type, only differ as to who the man was on whom Shakespeare expended all this amatory verse ; while Mr. Armitage Brown thinks they are not sonnets at all, but stanzas of some half dozen continuous poems to a friend and a mistress. Shakespeare had a nephew, William Hart, the son of his sister Joan. He had a patron William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, to whom his literary executors dedicated his dramatic works, as one to whom their author owed much favour while living. There was a William Hughes in Shakespeare's time ; and one of the Dr. Dryasdusts—Tyrwhitt, I think,—made the grand discovery of his name in the twentieth sonnet, disguised under a pun bad enough to have been the death of old Sam. Johnson :

"A man in hue all *Hews* in his controll'ing !"

Dr. Drake, another of the wiseacres, finds that Lord Southampton's name was Henry Wriothsley.—H. W., if not W. H.—and so thinks he has found the mystical initials of the dedication ; only reversed for the purpose of concealment ; and so we get back to the idea fathered so unhesitatingly by the Heidelberg Professor, and are no wiser than when we set out.

HARDEN.—Truly it is rather a narrow foundation to build a hypothesis upon ; as Lovel said when called in as umpire in the famous Pictish controversy at Monkbarns.

DELINA.—Not a whit, not a whit, say I, with the redoubted Oldbuck ; men fight best in a narrow ring ; and any one may see as far as his neighbour through a millstone, —provided only it has a hole in the middle !

HARDEN.—Pray then what do you believe about these same Sonnets and their only begetter ? Steevens has pronounced them to be too bad for even the genius of their author to make tolerable ; beyond even the power of an Act of Parliament

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to enforce their perusal! Wordsworth says of the very same Sonnets: that in no part of Shakespeare's writings is there to be found, in an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed. Who shall decide when doctors disagree?

DELINA.—Between two such doctors the choice is not difficult, I should think; and as to their interpretation, why should the Sonnets be judged by a different rule from those of Petrarch and Surrey, of Spenser or Drayton. Meres, who knew of them while still in private circulation, before 1598, in his "Wits' Treasury" calls them "Shakespeare's sugared sonnets among his private friends." That is simple enough. To him with all his knowledge of the man and the period, they were just such detached sonnets, written from time to time under varying emotions and external influences, as those in Spenser's Amoretti, in Daniel's "Delia," or in the "Idea's Mirror" of Drayton. Many of them were written in those earlier years in which he penned his "Venus and Adonis," and other lyrical pieces, before he discovered where his true strength lay. But long afterwards I doubt not he found in many a thoughtful mood:—

"'Twas pastime to be bound

Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground."

until at length the whole were collected and printed by Thomas Thorpe,—the T. T. of the involved dedication,—so late as 1609.

HARDEN.—So far, I am very much of your mind. But who then was Mr. W. H.? Have you found in him the father of Anne Shakespeare, and so the only begetter of her and the sonnets too? A William Hathaway would be a match for any W. H. yet named.

DELINA.—I do not greatly concern myself about Mr. W. H. He certainly was not the poet's father-in-law; for his name was Richard. "Mr." in those days implied a University graduate: what if the said Mr. W. H.—to whom, be it remembered, the publisher, and not the author, makes his

quaint dedication,—was no more than some amateur collector, who had earned the gratitude of Thomas Thorpe, by augmenting Jaggard's meagre collection of "Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Musicke," printed ten years before? Printers and publishers in those old days troubled themselves as little about an author's right to property in his own brain-work, as any Harper or Harpy of the free and enlightened Republic of this nineteenth century. Initials are common on their title-pages. Mr. I. H. prints one edition of the "Venus and Adonis," Mr. R. F. another, Mr. W. B. a third, and Mr. T. P. a fourth. One edition of the "Lucrece" bears the initials I. H., another N. O., a third T. S., and a fourth J. B. Sometimes the mystery lies with the printer, at other times with the publisher. The sonnets are "By G. Eld, for T. T., and are to be sold by William Aspley." Why should not the dedication have its share. Everybody who cared to know, could find out who I. H. the printer, or T. T. the publisher was; and probably Mr. W. H. was then no more important, and little less accessible.

HARDEN.—It may be so; and this Will o' the Wisp has led us a round, much akin to that of the old bibliomaniacs you refuse to follow:—

"Through bog, through bush, through brake,
through briar."

What of your promised glimpse of Anne Hathaway in these same sonnet-riddles?

DELINA.—Reading them with the idea of an absent husband responding to the regrets of one who deploras that time has her already at a disadvantage, I find a significance cast on many that were before as obscure, though not as barren, to me as they proved to the critical lawyer, George Stevens. Look for example, at the beautiful one beginning:

"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled
shore,

So do our minutes hasten to their end;"

and yet he comforts himself that his verse shall live to praise her worth, despite Time's

cruel hand. The same idea is repeated in many forms.

HARDEN.—And by many lovers—though they had not married their grandmothers!

DELINA.—If you can but jest, we had better drop the subject.

HARDEN.—I crave your pardon. I shall try to dismiss altogether from my mind the seven-years disparity between the boy-poet and his bride. Proceed if you please.

DELINA.—Not, if you are to dismiss from your mind that difference of age; though the sooner you rid your mind of the assumed domestic discord of which it has been made the sole basis, the better.

HARDEN.—I await your disclosures with unbiased impartiality.

DELINA.—Disclosures I have none. What can you make of scores of Wordsworth's sonnets, for example, but crystallizations of the poet's passing thoughts. So also is it with those Shakespearian gems. Sometimes they are his own thoughts, at other times he manifestly impersonated others. Let me direct you to one of the latter. I have repeatedly pleased myself with the fancy that Shakespeare penned the twenty-second sonnet as the expression of his absent Anne's feelings; cheering her thus, by putting her own thoughts in verse, when in some despondent hour she has recalled how time with her started unfairly in the race:—

"My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date;
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate.
For all that beauty that doth cover thee,
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me;
How can I then be elder than thou art?
O, therefore, love, be of thyself so wary,
As I not for myself, but for thee will;
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary,
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.
Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain;
Thou gav'st me thine, not to give back again."

HARDEN.—You fancy this sonnet should be headed "*Anna Shakespeare loquitur!*"

DELINA.—It seems to me it might.

HARDEN.—And that the poet has himself in view in "all that beauty" he refers to!

DELINA.—I suppose him to be only versifying the thoughts of his wife; in fact, rendering one of her letters into a sonnet.

HARDEN.—An ingenious fancy, certainly; and not worse than some of the older hypotheses you reject. Better indeed than that of William Hart, the nephew, who was not born when some of the sonnets were written; or than William Hughes so ingeniously unearthed by Tyrwhitt out of a sorry pun! And you would find by a like process some definite meaning or other in each of those vague little abstractions.

DELINA.—Many of them are full of meaning and personal character. Look at the very one that follows:—

"As an imperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put beside his part."

The personality is obvious in the 134th sonnet, where he puns, and sports with his own name. It is no less so in the 111th, where the poet complains of the fortune that forced him into public life; and why not also, when, as in the 97th sonnet, he bewails an absence that made the "summer time" and "the teeming autumn" seem to him like the freezing of old December; or again in the 98th:—

"From you have I been absent in the Spring,
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his train,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything."

HARDEN.—The story of Shakespeare's unhappy wedded life has been so long current, and so oft repeated, that I confess I have never before fully recognized how entirely it is an inference, or invention of later times. I shall turn a new leaf, and try to read the page on which you throw this novel light. But it will take some schooling before I can hope to reach your enviable state of faith; and without that I fear the sonnets must still remain a riddle. Perhaps I had better betake myself meanwhile to Niebuhr, and cultivate anew my school-boy faith in the loves of Numa Pompilius and the nymph Egeria.

