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THE
ELIZABETHAN
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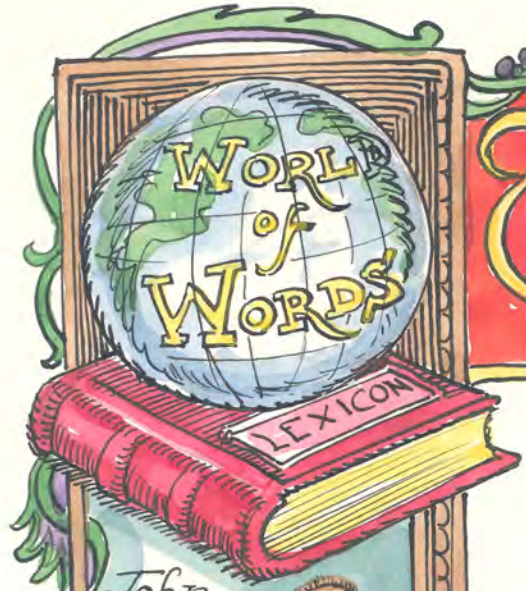
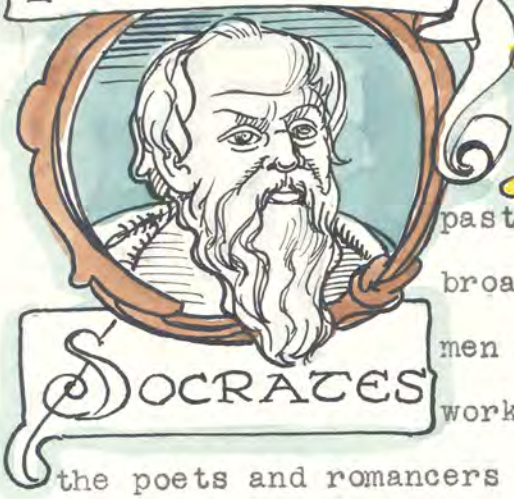


The mental intoxication of a reborn language engendered in the English people a precocity, which, says Maurois, manifested itself in both poems and daily conversation. Also this mental intoxication led to a most remarkable literary productiveness that makes the age of Elizabeth of peculiar importance in the history of English literature.

TRANSLATOR

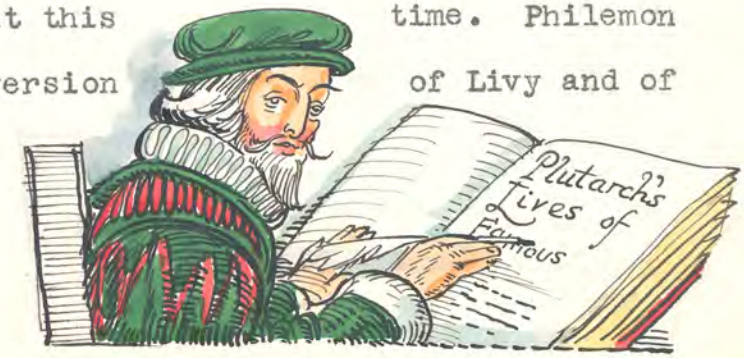
PLATO

CICERO



SOCRATES

In a very real way the world of the past was recovered for the broadening mind of Englishmen by the translators whose work served to develop the creative genius of the poets and romancers in prose. Notable translations of many classical authors were made at this time. Philemon Holland produced an English version of Livy and of Xenophon. Sir Thomas North performed a notable service by translating Plutarch's Lives of Notable Greek and



Roman Statesmen and Warriors.

Chapman's translation of Homer is justly famous. The English poet's fourteen-syllable line has something of the weight and movement of the Homeric hexameter;his style is plain-spoken,fresh,vigorous, and to a certain extent rapid.

As a direct result of the excellent and pains-taking labors of English translators,Tacitus and Sallust,Aristotle and Plato,Seneca and Cicero soon became known in English dress. Ovid,Horace, and Virgil became familiar to English grammar school boys in the original and in translation. Also,with exuberant spirit,the translators turned into English classics from Italy: Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, parts of Boccaccio's Decameron, and the like.

This ground-work was all-important. It bred a point of view,and furnished numerous sources for English writers. John Florio's Worlde of Words contributed in no small measure to the enrichment of the English vocabulary; and this enrichment,further stimulated by John Lyly's famous Euphues(published in I579),became the pride and joy of all classes of society.

Notable among the early literary men of Elizabethan England was Sir Philip Sidney, who is believed to be the finest example of humanistic virtues in his day. Edmund Spenser immortalized Sir Philip as Sir Calidore, the knight of Courtesy, in the Faerie Queene. In the scant thirty-two years of his life, Sidney wrote himself high as poet, scholar, courtier, diplomat, and soldier, and highest as gentleman. None of his literary productions was printed during his lifetime. Before he was twenty, he began the writing of sonnets merely as a literary exercise; but his cycle of 108 sonnets, known as Astrophel and Stella (the first sonnet cycle in English) seems to have something of a genuine passion in it. In the following sonnet we may be able to catch the spirit of Sir Philip's "conceit" and tenderness of passion:

LOVING in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,---
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe;
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,
Oft turning other's leaves to see if thence would flow

Some fresh and fruitful showers
upon my sun-burned brain.
But words came halting forth,wanting
invention's stay;
Invention,nature's child,fled
Step-dame Study's blows,
And others' feet still seemed but
strangers in my way.
Thus,great with child to speak,and
helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen,beating myself for
spite,
Fool,said my Muse to me,look in thy
heart and write!

For presuming to dissuade Queen Elizabeth from her projected marriage with the Duke of Anjou,Sidney was banished from the court. During his retirement,he spent his days writing a pastoral romance,Arcadia,which was dedicated to his sister,the Countess of Pembroke. The story of Sidney's death,after the battle of Zutphen,

where he is reported to have declined a cup of water in favor of a common soldier,and laid down his life for the cause of human freedom,is oft-repeated to illustrate a bit of English character and spirit. Sidney remained the ideal for all young courtiers at the court of Elizabeth. The following lines by Sir Walter Raleigh may be taken as an expression of the prevailing mood:

"An Epitaph upon the Right Hon.Sir Philip Sidney,Knight, Lord Governor of Flushing".

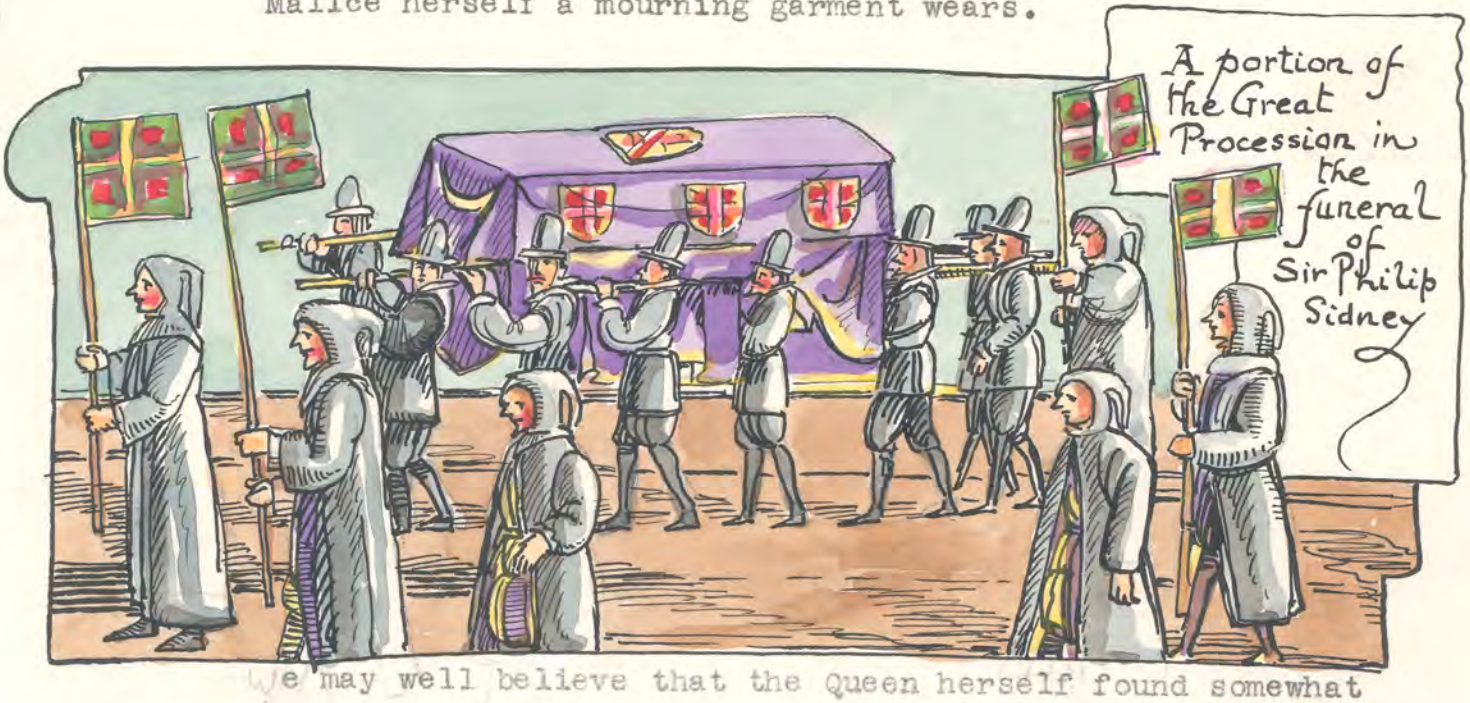
* * * *

Drawn was thy race aright from princely line,
Nor less than such,by gifts that nature gave
(The common mother that all creatures have)
Doth virtue show,and princely lineage shine.

England doth hold thy limbs,that bred the same,
Flanders thy valor,where it last was tried,
The camp thy sorrow,where thy body died,
Thy friends thy want,the world thy virtue's fame.

* * * * * * *

Thy liberal heart embalmed in grateful tears,
Young sighs,sweet sighs,sage sighs bewail thy fall;
Envy her sting,and spite hath left her gall,
Malice herself a mourning garment wears.



We may well believe that the Queen herself found somewhat to wipe from her cheek when the tale came of the death of "my Philip",the pride of her court. Leicester,too,must have minded it sorely. And of a surety Edmund Spenser,in his far home of Kilcolman, in Ireland,was writing---by the Mulla shore---his apostrophe to Sir Philip's soul,the following stanza so full of sweetness and wonderful word-craft:

Ah me,can so Divine a thing be dead?
Ah no: it is not dead,nor can it die
But lives for aye in Blissful Paradise:
Where,like a new-born babe,it soft doth lie
In bed of Lilies,wrapped in tender wise
And compassed all about with Roses sweet
And dainty Violets from head to feet.
There---thousand birds,all of celestial brood
To him do sweetly carol,day and night
And with strange notes---of him well understood
Lull him asleep in an-gelic Delight
Whilst in sweet dreams,to him presented be
Immortal beauties,which no eye may see.

The best English songs of nearly forty years were published in a little book, commonly known as Tottel's Miscellany, and these lyrics served as the "chief propagator" of English love poetry for a generation to come. The chief distinction of the Miscellany was the sheaf of poems by two model poets, the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt, who kept alive the best old classic traditions and echoed with grace and spirit the daintiness of Italian verse.

Surrey was son of the Duke of Norfolk and companion of the King's(Henry VIII's)son. There was no gallant more admired in the gayer circles of the Court. He loved Petrarch's poetry,and made canzonets like Petrarch's. He had a Geraldine(for a Laura),and the following lyric will give us a little taste of the graceful way in which Surrey sings of his love:

I assure thee even by oath
And thereon take my hand and troth
That she is one of the worthiest
The truest and the faithfullest
The gentlest,and the meekest o' mind
That here on earth a man may find;
And if that love and truth were gone
In her it might be found alone:
For in her mind no thought there is
But how she may be true,iwis!

Wyatt was the son of an old courtier of Henry VII, and inherited a castle in Kent, in the little town of Maidstone (we hope you will visit it some day). Brilliantly educated for those times, Sir Thomas was in high favor with the King, ----save one enforced visit to the Tower! In his spare time, he translated Petrarch, and, like Surrey, imitated the Italian poet's manner.

To Wyatt the credit is commonly given for "grafting the Sonnet upon English forms of verse. In about a dozen poems, Wyatt showed himself a master in the lyric. The following lines will give us a pretty good idea of his "lutanist" verse:

My lute, awake, perform the last
Labor that thou and I shall waste,
And end that I have now begun;
And when this song is sung and past,
My lute be still, for I have done.
As to be heard where ear is none,
As lead to grave in marble stone,
My song may pierce her heart as soon,
Should we then sigh or sing, or moan?
. . . . . .

A few more lines from Wyatt, to indicate the conscious craftsman. The rhythm is used with a musician's ear for variety in unity:

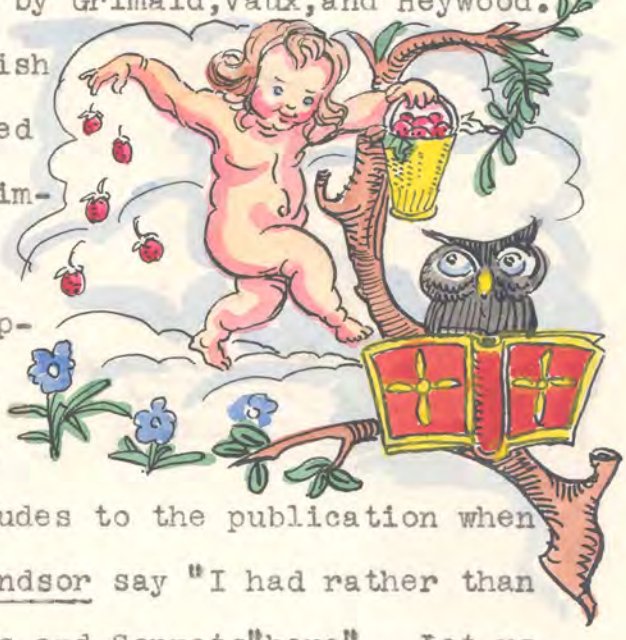
Forget not yet the tried intent
Of such a truth as I have meant,
My great travail, so gladly spent,
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet when first began
The weary life ye know, since whan
The suit, the service none tell can,
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet, forget not this,
How long ago hath been, and is,
The mind that never meant amiss,---
Forget not yet.

Associated with Wyatt and Surrey in the pages of Tottel's Miscellany was a "new company of'courtly makers',a list of noble poets of the first half of the sixteenth century.

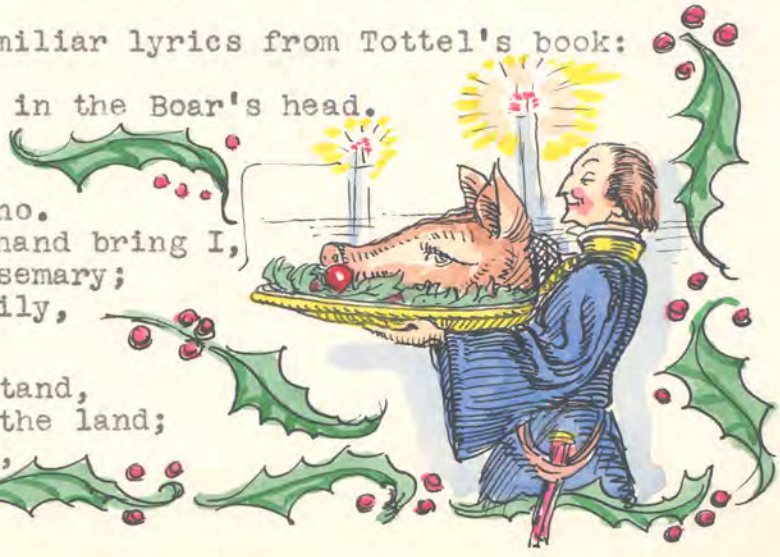
The Renaissance ideal demanded that one bred as a gentleman should be able to make verses;and we may be sure that a number of ambitious young scribblers fulfilled the ideal in this respect. In the Miscellany we find God's plenty of poems written by poets and would-be poets, and among them a few excellent pieces by Grimald,Vaux,and Heywood. Here we find the first published English sonnets,and perhaps the first published English blank verse. The historical importance suggested by these facts is heightened by our knowledge of the popularity of Tottel's book of Songs and Sonnets. Within a few years numerous editions were issued. Shakespeare alludes to the publication when he makes Slender in Merry Wives of Windsor say "I had rather than forty shillings I had my book of"Songs and Sonnets"here". Let us recite a few of the more familiar lyrics from Tottel's book:



Here is a Carol,bringing in the Boar's head.

Caput apri differo,
Reddens laudes domino.
The Boar's Head in hand bring I,
With Garlands gay and Rosemary;
I pray you all sing Merrily,
Qui estis in convivio!

The Boar's Head,I understand,
Is the chief service in the land;
Look wherever it be fand,
Servite cum cantico!

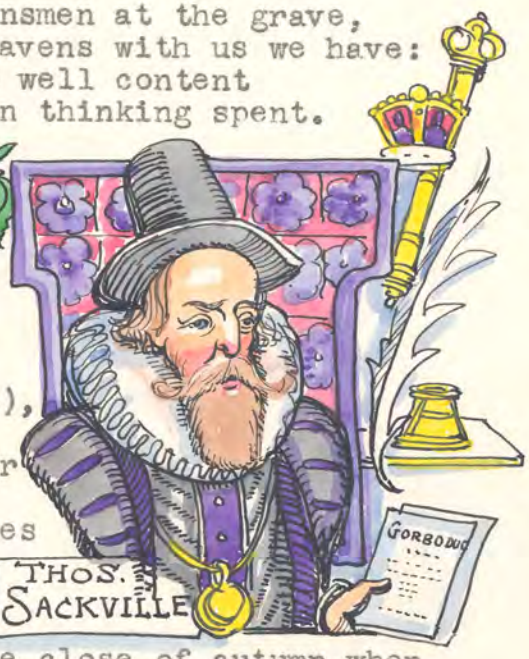


Here is a selection from Lord Vaux's contribution to the book of Songs and Sonnets:

WHEN all is done and said, in the end thus shall you find,
He most of all doth bathe in bliss that hath a quiet mind;
And, clear from worldly cares, to deem can be content
The sweetest time in all his life in Thinking to be spent.

* * * * * * * * * * *

OUR wealth leaves us at death, our kinsmen at the grave,
But virtues of the mind unto the heavens with us we have:
Wherefore, for virtue's sake, I can be well content
The sweetest time in all my life to deem in thinking spent.



For verse that is clear (although he chooses to use a few archaic words), vivid, dignified and easy, there was Thomas Sackville (afterward the elegant Earl of Dorset), who wrote the famous Induction to "A Mirror for Magistrates". Sackville's singing robes were new and colorful! The poet imagines himself walking out at midnight, towards the close of autumn, when the declining light and the approaching winter remind him of the changes of fortune. He discusses in fresh and powerful verse the misfortunes of the great magistrates in history.

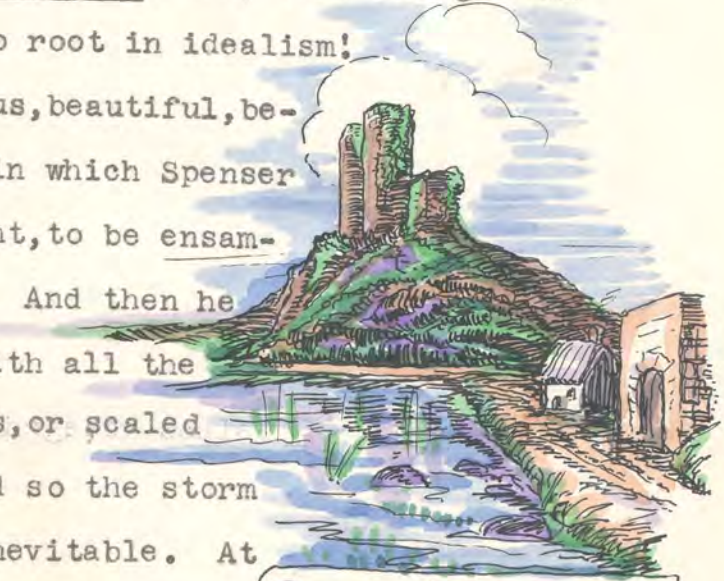
THAT musing on this worldly wealth in thought,
Which comes and goes more faster than we see
The flickering flame that with the fire is wrought,
My busy mind presented unto me
Such fall of peers as in this realm had be,
That oft I wished some would their woes descrive,
To warn the rest whom fortune left alive.....

Sorrow conveys the poet (as Virgil conveyed Dante) trough the infernal regions, where he recognizes many of the unfortunate heroes of history. In collaboration with Thomas Norton, Sackville produced Gorboduc, the first tragedy in English drama.

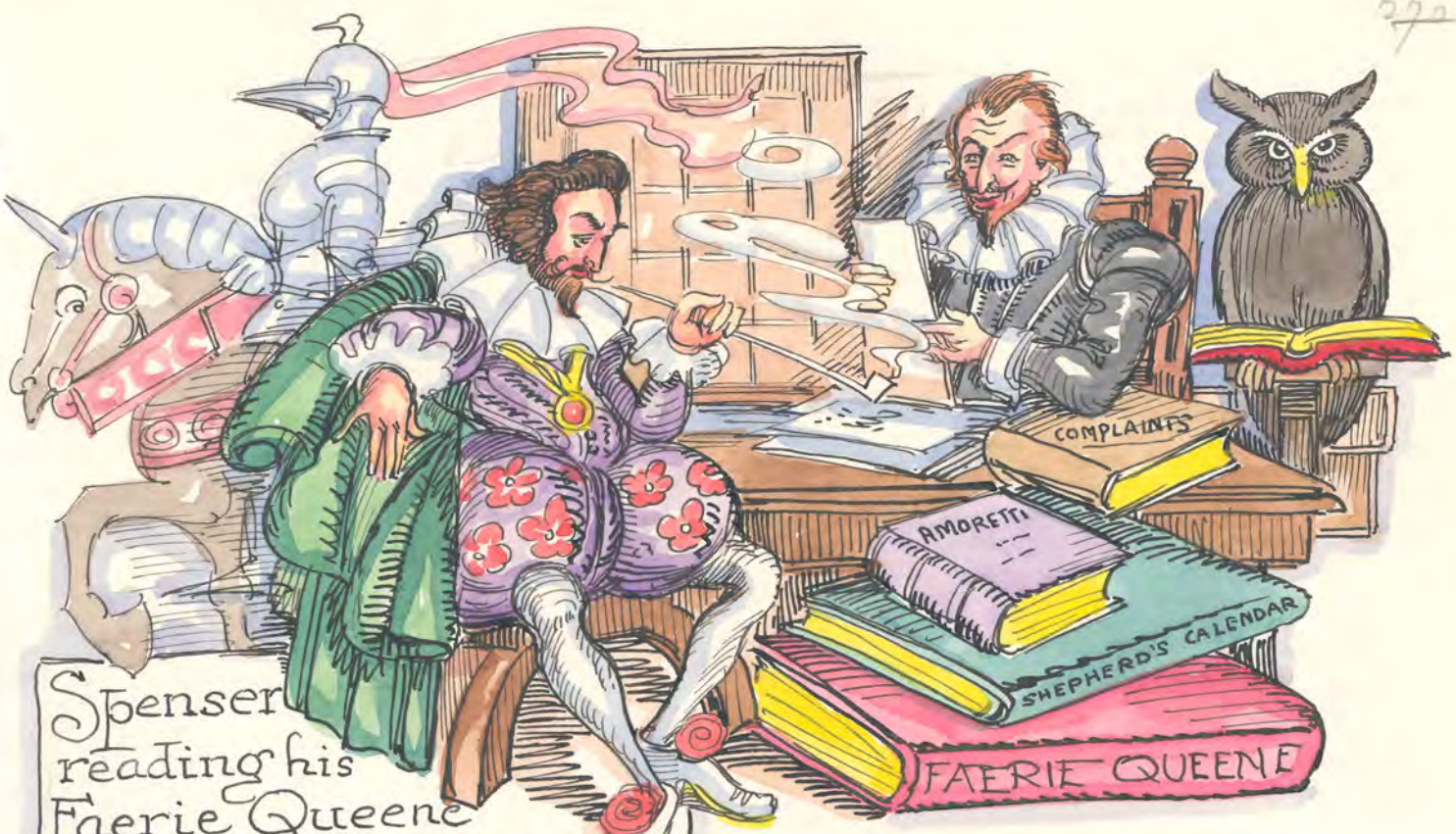
Edmund Spenser, like Sidney, was a poet whose idealism was ever at war with worldliness. Spenser came to London in 1578, and there met Sir Philip, who recognized and appreciated the tender beauty of those woeful plaints against worldliness in the Shepherd's Calendar. It is likely that through Sidney's help, Spenser received an appointment in Ireland.

Spenser's vast undertaking was the Faerie Queen, written on the estate of Kilcolman Castle, an unlovely and wild waste, savage and low and remote. Yet, in this dreary place, the idealist and dreamer finds rich material for his work. In an easy way, he plants the knights and wizards, fairies and maidens in distress, demons and dragons that figure in the phantasmagoria of the Faerie Queen; they come and go like twilight shadows---they have no root in idealism!

The poem is a great, cumbrous, beautiful, bewildering, meandering allegory, in which Spenser assigns to every Virtue a Knight, to be ensampler and defender of the same. And then he puts these Knights to battle with all the Vices represented by elfin hags, or scaled dragons, or beautiful women; and so the storm rages and the battles become inevitable. At the time of composition, Sir Walter Raleigh, that daring adventurer, that roving knight,

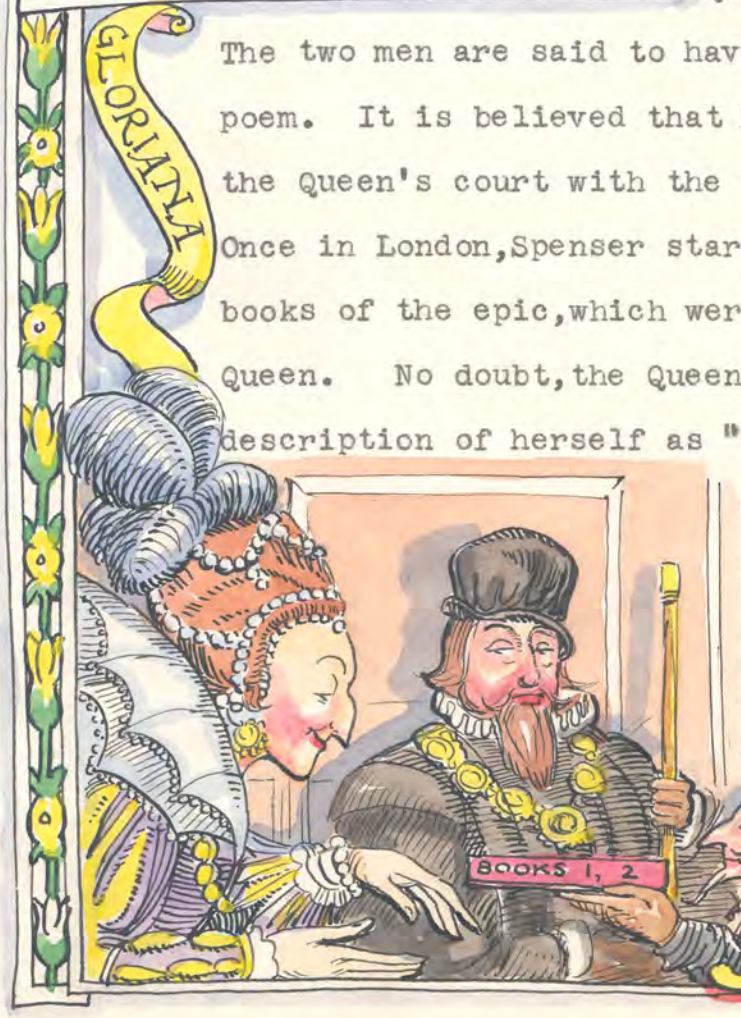


RUINS of KILCOLMAN
Spenser's home in
IRELAND

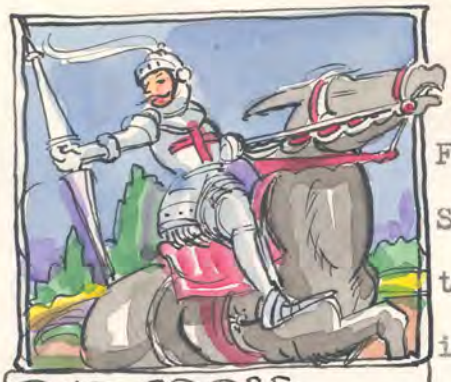


Spenser reading his Faerie Queene to Sir Walter Raleigh

---that great favorite of the Queen---was Spenser's neighbor. The two men are said to have met often and discussed the poem. It is believed that Raleigh urged Spenser to visit the Queen's court with the knight and bring his work along. Once in London, Spenser started publishing the first two books of the epic, which were favorably received by the Queen. No doubt, the Queen was flattered by the honeyed description of herself as "Gloriana". She smiled on the poet and gave him her jewelled hand to kiss. Also she gave him a pension of fifty pounds a year, which the stout old Lord Burleigh considered "too much for a poem".



As was fitting for an Elizabethan, Spenser's whole conception of the



Faerie Queen was gigantic. Professor George Saintsbury used to say,courageously,that it is the only long poem he wished were longer! It is certainly crammed with exquisite harmonies; it is full of sweet fancies,and rich in dragonly horrors. But I fear that a great many dishonest lectures have been made upon the poem by lecturers who have not read the epic through. To my mind a few lines of Spenser's Epithalamium----one of the few noblest lyrics in the English language---is worth a dozen stanzas of Spenser's cloying prettinesses about Gloriana and the Red Cross Knight and Sir Guyon and Britomart. However, the stanza-form of the epic was the poet's own invention,and properly bears his name. It has since become the medium of some of the finest poetry in English: Burn's "Cotter's Saturday Night",Byron's "Childe Harold",and so forth. A single stanza,descriptive of morning,must suffice by way of illustration of Spenser's handling of a difficult structure:

By this the northerne wagoner had set
His sevenfold team behind the steadfast star
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
But firm is fixt,and sendeth light from far
To all that in the wide deep wandering are;
And cheerful chaunticlere with his note shrill
Had warned once,that Phoebus's fiery car
In haste was climbing up the eastern hill,
Full envious that night so long his room did fill.

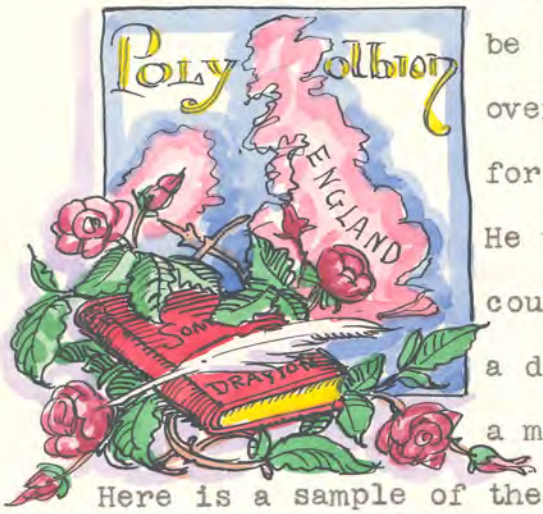
The two important sonneteers who followed later, but who, like Wyatt and Surrey, Sidney and Spenser, enshrined in cycles of sonnets, under a feigned pastoral name, their amatory passion for some cold fair lady, were Samuel Daniel, the laureate who celebrated his lovely "Delia"; and his friend and companion, Michael Drayton.

The fame of Daniel was revived by the Romantic poets of the Nineteenth century. Daniel's Delia was dedicated to Sidney's sister, The Countess of Pembroke, and marks an epoch in the history of the English sonnet. This is the first group of sonnets written solely in the English form (three independent quatrains, closed in by a couplet). Daniel set the style for Shakespeare, in treating the sonnet as a stanza, connecting several of them together as consecutive parts of a larger expression. Here is a sample of Daniel's style; it shows an easy command of polite English:

WHY should I sing in verse, why should I frame
These sad neglected notes for her dear sake?
Why should I offer up unto her name
The sweetest sacrifice my youth can make?
WHY should I strive to make her live for ever,
That never deigns to give me joy to live?
Why should m' afflicted muse so much endeavor
Such honor unto cruelty to give?
If her defects have purchased her this fame,
What should her virtues do, her smiles, her love?
If this her worst, how should her best inflame?
What passions would her milder favors move?
Favors, I think, would sense quite overcome,
And that makes happy lovers ever dumb.

Coleridge was in the habit of saying, "Read Daniel---the admirable Daniel".

Concerning Michael Drayton, who was born within a year before Shakespeare, and died when Milton was already twenty-three, it may be said that "ambition made his verses". He over-mastered the Muse by sheer intellectual force rather than by any natural poetic gifts. He wrote an enormous poem of many thousand couplets called "Polyolbion", in which we have a description of England, county by county,--- a miracle of industry and sustained enthusiasm. Here is a sample of the heavy, dignified verse, which moves like the Lord Mayor's Coach:

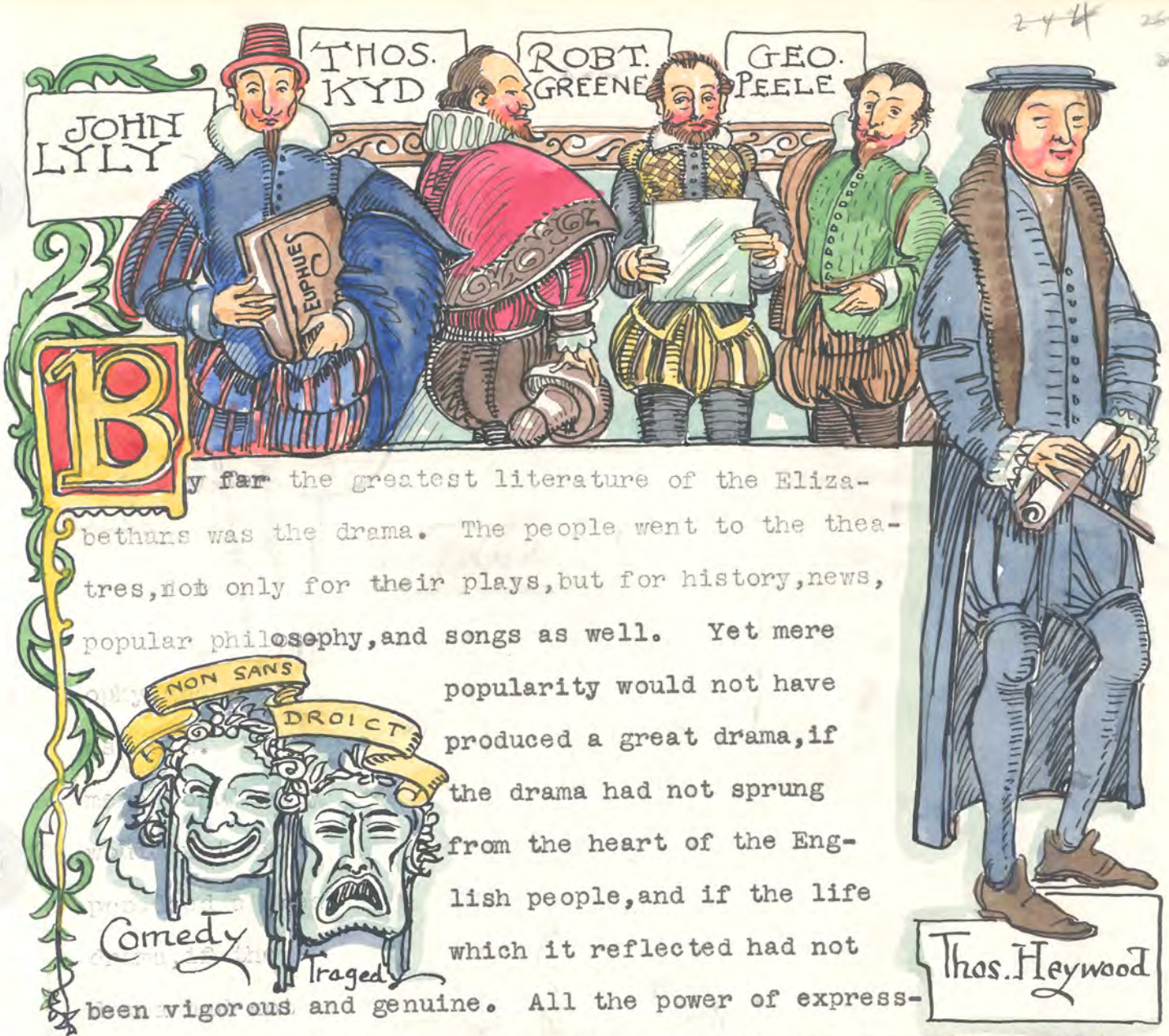


My native country then, which so brave spirits hast bred,
If there be virtue yet remaining in thy earth,
Or any good of thine thou breath'dst into my birth,
Accept it as thine own whilst now I sing of thee,
Of all thy later brood the' unworthiest though I be.

However, in all fairness to Drayton---hailed by his admirers as "golden-mouthed Drayton"-- it must be said that some of his sonnets bear comparison with those of Shakespeare himself. Some of Michael's most charming writing is to be found in his early work, "The Shepherd's Garland", from which we take the following roundelay called "Crowning the Shepherd Queen":

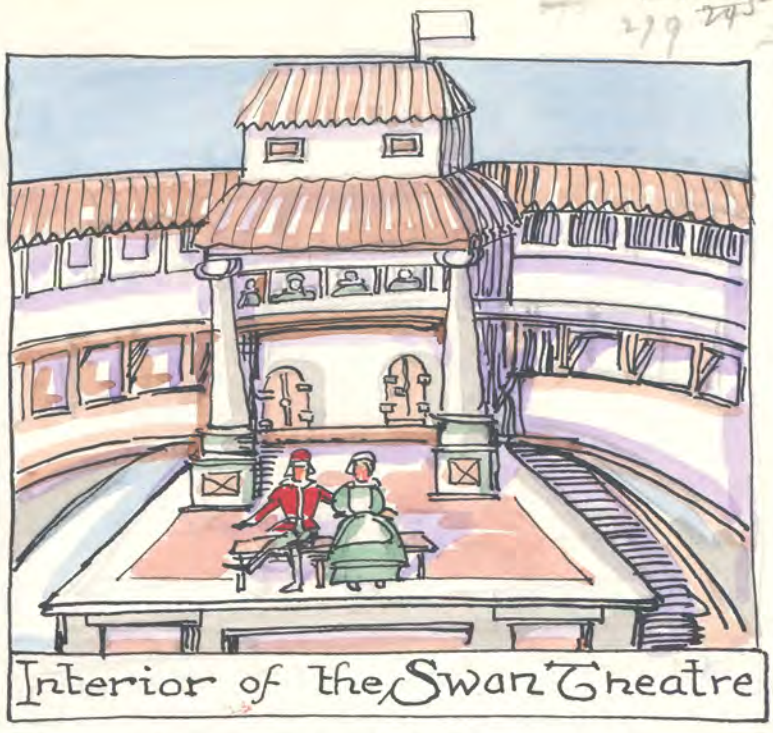
From whence come all the shepherd swains,
And love nymphs attired in green?
From gathering garlands on the plains,
To crown our fair, the shepherd's Queen.

The sun that lights the world below,
Flocks, flowers, and brooks will witness bear;
These nymphs and shepherds all do know
That it is she is only fair!



By far the greatest literature of the Elizabethans was the drama. The people went to the theatres, not only for their plays, but for history, news, popular philosophy, and songs as well. Yet mere popularity would not have produced a great drama, if the drama had not sprung from the heart of the English people, and if the life which it reflected had not been vigorous and genuine. All the power of expression and appreciation, all the aspiration and experience of the New Learning and the recent discoveries had brought into men's minds and hearts the spirit and interest which produced the Elizabethan drama.

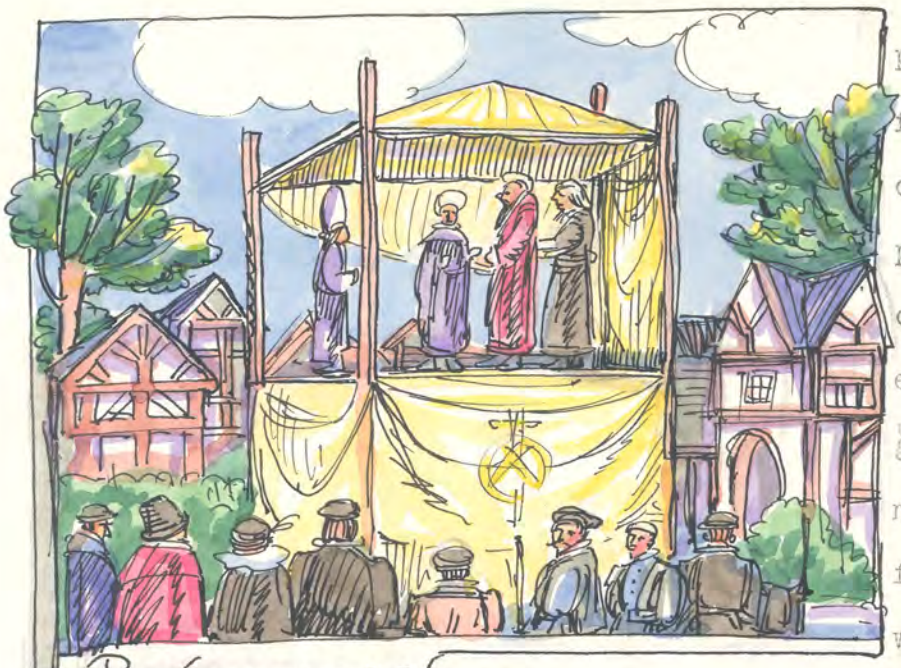
Henry VII found the artless and provincial makeshifts of guild performances and the yet ruder devices of the early morality plays; Queen Elizabeth left full-grown a public theater; which, whether we measure its success by actual artistic results or by the sincerity of its reflection of contemporary life and thought, finds few parallels and probably no equal. At the top of this page we have sketched the figures of some of the men whose plays set the stage-craft well forward in a decade of



Interior of the Swan Theatre

play-writing and play-acting. They raised the English drama from many of its crude archaic ways.

English drama had its chief origin in the Church plays, which were a part of the Easter and Christmas services. At Christmas, for instance, the scene of the Wise men and the Shepherds at the manger would be represented by priests and their acolytes, for the benefit of the illiterate. At first in dumb show, then with words. By the end of the twelfth century, plays dealing with other Biblical subjects were presented. As these "Liturgical offices" grew in importance, they ceased to be a part of the service, though for a long time they were given by the priests, either inside the church, or in the church yard. "Miracle Plays" were worked up from the Old Testament stories, or from episodes in the lives of the Saints. Then followed "Mystery Plays" dealing with Gospel events only. Little by little, these



Performance of a Mystery Play

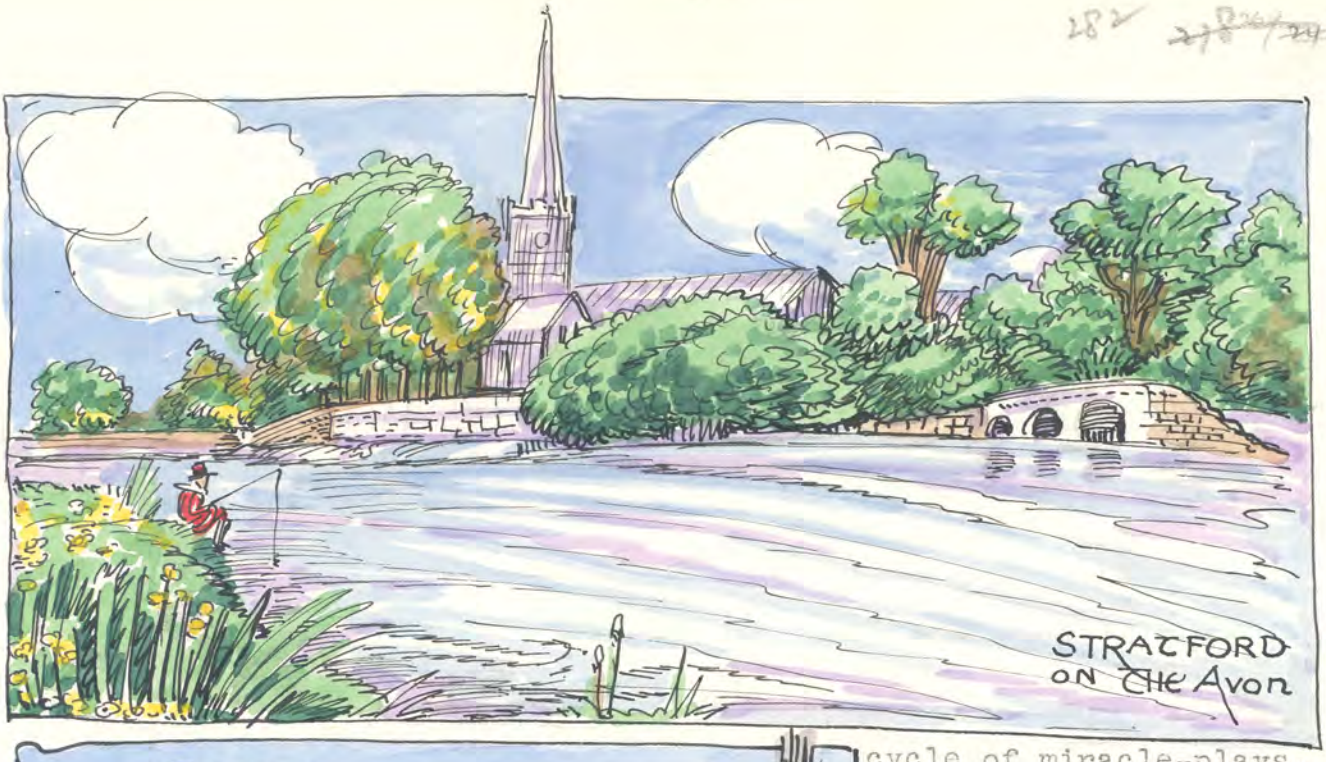
performances were taken from the hands of the clergy, and by the later part of the fourteenth century, were acted almost entirely by the different guilds or unions of craftsmen. These companies went from town to town with large wagons, called "pageants", on which they set up a stage in the market-place.

Guild plays were frequently given in cycles; that is, one company, say of carpenters, would present the story of the creation; another, say of tailors, the story of Abraham and Isaac; and so on, till in the course of a week the citizens of a town, as the wonderful pageants rolled up and passed on, might see enacted the whole story of the Bible. From these Miracles and Mysteries were developed the Morality plays, in which Man, the central figure, was beset by personified vices---such as Sloth, Intemperance---and aided by personified virtues---such as Reason, Honesty, ---till finally Satan, the Evil One, was driven off the stage. Most of these Moralities were heavy and tedious. The best example was the famous play of "Everyman", which was recently

Each Guild gave a Play about some Bible story

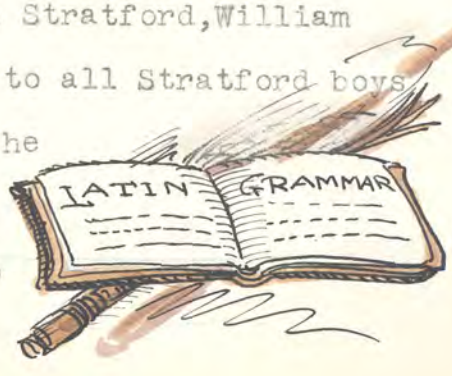
revived with great success. Buffoonery was often introduced to enliven the play. Little humorous sketches, sometimes between the acts of the more serious plays, were called "Interludes". (A well-known example is the humorous "newe and mery Enterlude of a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Pothecary, and a Pedlar, called The Four P's"). Plays grew more and more secular. By the reign of Edward VI, the first English comedy, Ralph Roister Doister, appeared. The Interlude, under John Heywood, became a play by itself, and the chief ancestor of the Elizabethan comedy. The earliest important tragedy was Gorboduc, first acted before Queen Elizabeth in 1562.

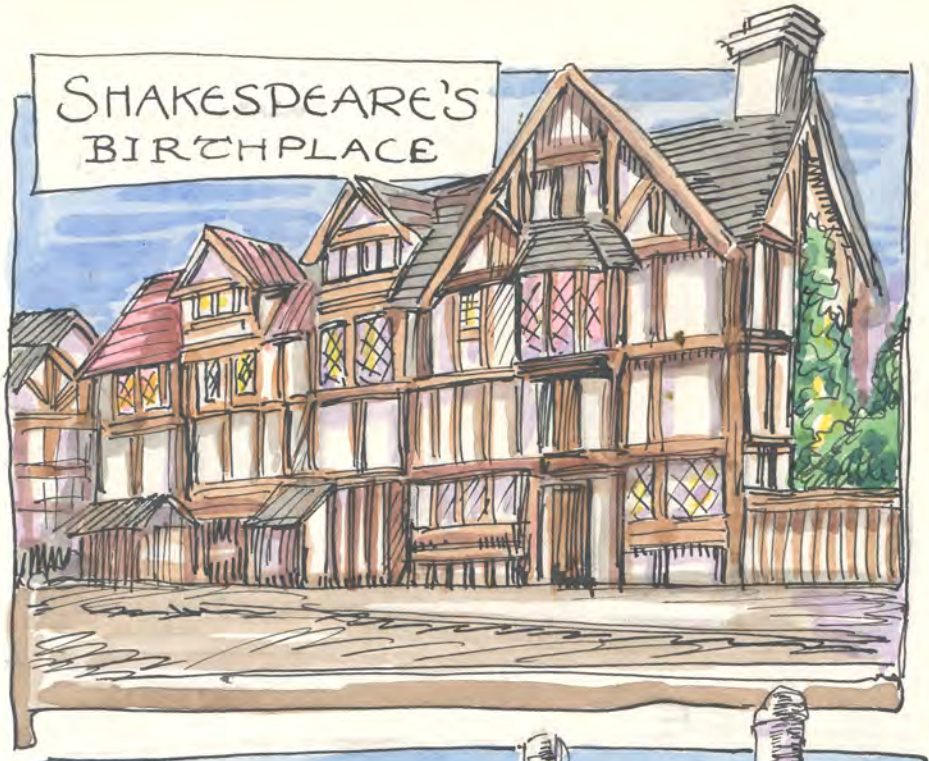
How much of all this Shakespeare, the boy who was growing up in Warwickshire, "the heart of England", received, no one knows. It is quite likely that he visited Coventry, about twenty miles from Stratford, and watched a



cycle of miracle-plays. From a small beginning this English lad was to develop into one of the greatest literary figures in the nation's drama.

The Stratford Grammar school inducted the town's youth into such ancient authors as Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Cicero, Terrence, and Sallust, and made the boys better Latinists than are college men today! It is probable that, as the son of a glover who held various prominent positions in Stratford, William received the normal course of education given to all Stratford boys of his day. What other education he received he must have picked up for himself. But he must have had the faculty of turning information to

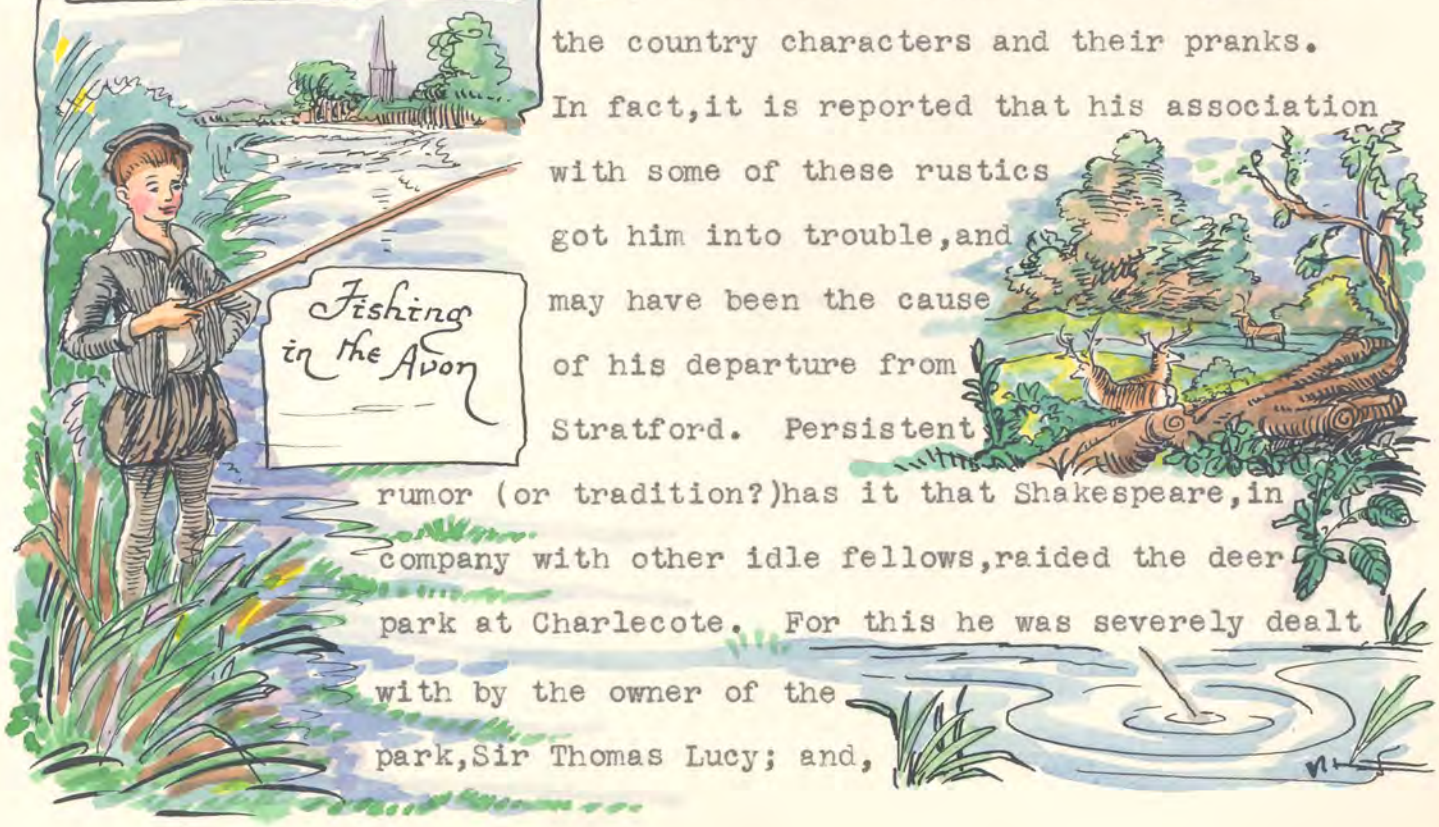




knowledge and power. With such a person a little information counts for much. (A familiar example in another field is Abraham Lincoln).

At Eighteen, William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. On this page we have tried to sketch views of Shakespeare's birthplace, the old Parish Church, and Anne Hathaway's cottage, which we have visited and enjoyed so much. From twenty-one to twenty-eight, Shakespeare's life is unknown. He may have spent all that time in Stratford and in the neighboring towns and villages. Warwick Castle is about eight miles away, Kenilworth only thirteen. In his plays he reveals a familiar knowledge of outdoor life,

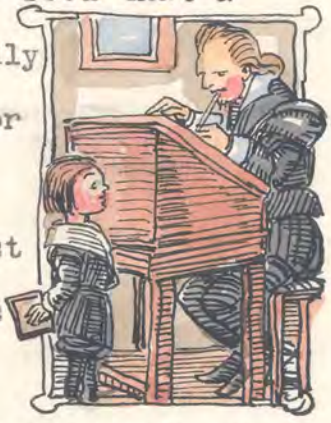
and an unusual acquaintance with the superstitions and folklore of the countryside. He certainly knew much about horses and dogs, flowers and trees. Above all, he knew the country characters and their pranks. In fact, it is reported that his association with some of these rustics got him into trouble, and may have been the cause of his departure from Stratford. Persistent rumor (or tradition?) has it that Shakespeare, in company with other idle fellows, raided the deer park at Charlecote. For this he was severely dealt with by the owner of the park, Sir Thomas Lucy; and,

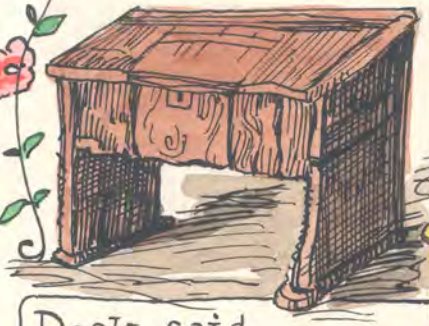


in retaliation, the young man wrote a ballad about the knight, and fled from Stratford. True or false, the story is a good one, and shows the human side of a rare genius!

At this time, William Shakespeare was the father of Susanna, born in 1583, and of Hamnet and Judith, twins born in 1585. How was the young man to provide for his wife and children? Some say that for a while he served as a country school teacher, although his preparation was inadequate for such a position (that is, he was inadequately prepared for certification as a teacher in the conventional grammar schools). However, we feel that a term or two as a school teacher would splendidly equip the non-university trained Shakespeare for his subsequent career as a man of letters. (As everyone knows, says Joseph Quincy Adams, the best way to acquire a thorough education in books is to teach). And it is possible that Shakespeare spent some time with books in a school-room, and in that way acquired a correct use of language and a sure literary sense, which marks his first attempts at composition.


The old School Room




Desk said to be Shakespeare's

At any rate, we shall let William spend a few more months in the

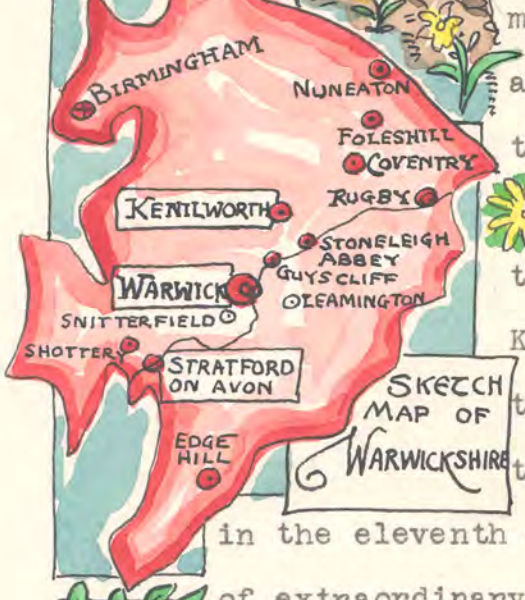
regions about Stratford, which are in truth among the most beautiful in England. Close to his home are the dark primeval forests, the murmuring streams, and pastures with their green mantles embroidered with flowers. Here, in Warwickshire, he found "tongues in trees" and "books in the running brooks". It is not surprising that later, in the woodland scenery of *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he recalls the influence of these sylvan joys upon his imagination.

The Ford, Kenilworth

Within seven miles was the old town of Warwick with its magnificent castle, set upon a stone of rock, overlooking the Avon. Within easy reach, too, was Coventry, "one of the bravest

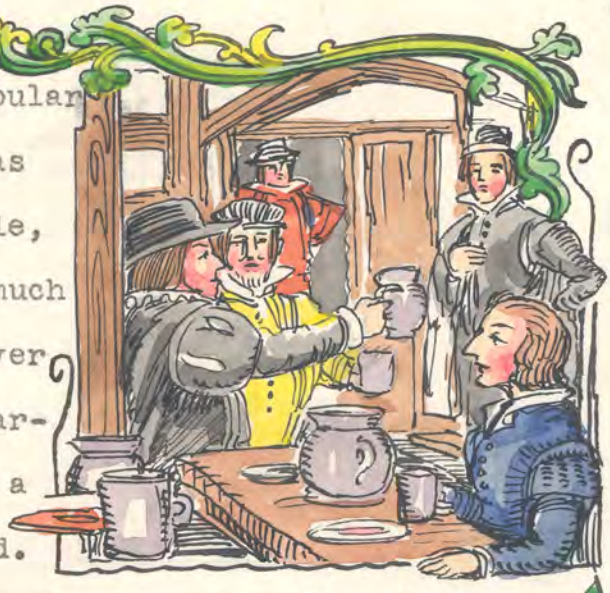
cities in England, notable for its fine monastic buildings, its beautiful spires, and its treasury of legend----including the story of Godiva.

But perhaps the place that most stirred the imagination of the youthful poet was Kenilworth, the home of the Earl of Leicester, the powerful and magnificent favorite of the Queen. The castle, originally erected in the eleventh century, was a fortress of extraordinary strength and largeness. (In his famous novel, Sir Walter Scott has given us a vivid picture of the castle, its towers, courts and gardens. He has given, too, a spirited account of the princely festivities with which Leicester there entertained the Queen.



Surely all these places with their storied past filled Shakespeare with visions of the glorious days gone by. And, it is not unlikely that these visions fired him with ambition to have a part in the activities of the great world outside

when the drama was becoming popular and the demand for new plays was increasing, such fellows as Peele, Greene, Nash, and Marlowe spent much of their time talking things over at the taverns. Christopher Marlowe is believed to have taken a fancy to the man from Stratford.



Marlowe and Shakespeare were of the same age. From Marlowe, who was a University man, Shakespeare soon learned a number of things about writing for the theater.

At the age of twenty-four, Marlowe produced plays of tremendous scope and power. His Tamburlaine the Great is a gorgeous historical drama that captured the contemporary English spirit. Later, when he produced his Dr. Faustus and Edward II, he revealed his ability as a writer of strong dramatic verse which soon became known as "Marlowe's mighty line". Unfortunately for Shakespeare, Marlowe died early, in a drunken brawl (in 1593, at the age of twenty-nine!) But the meetings

The Globe Theater where many of Shakespeare's plays were produced

with other writers who frequented the Mermaid continued. Wrote Ben Jonson of those memorable occasions:

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid!
Heard words that have been
So nimble and so full of subtle flame!

* * * *

From about twenty-six to thirty, Shakespeare was getting his hand in. He found excellent discipline in the revamping of old plays, and in collaboration with other playwrights. Then followed a period of bold and ranging experimentation, with the writing of the ingenious "Comedy

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

of Errors" and the exquisite "Love's Labor's Lost". From thirty to thirty-seven, the dramatist enjoyed success in both art and fortune. He wrote a great variety of plays, and, in the plague years, when the theaters were closed, he published two narrative poems and dedicated his work to the Earl of Southampton.

Shakespeare had already associated himself with "Her Majesty's poor players, and all of them sharers in the Blackfriars Playhouse". His name appeared in a list of sixteen of these players, among whom we find Richard Burbage and William Kemp, Thomas Greene and George Peele. Later, these "Queen's Players" went under the name of the "Servants of the Earl of Leicester". We may be sure that Shakespeare's success as a writer of plays was not welcome to all of his fellow-poets, and one of them (Robert Greene) speaks thus of the young man from Stratford:

Edward Alleyn
the Actor

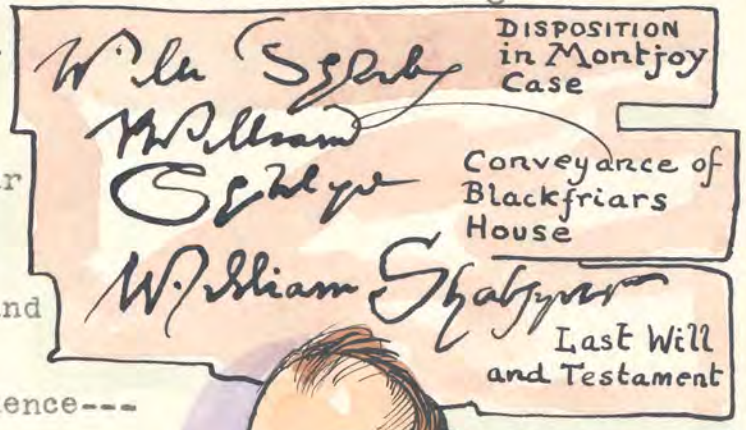
Richard Burbage

"There is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of

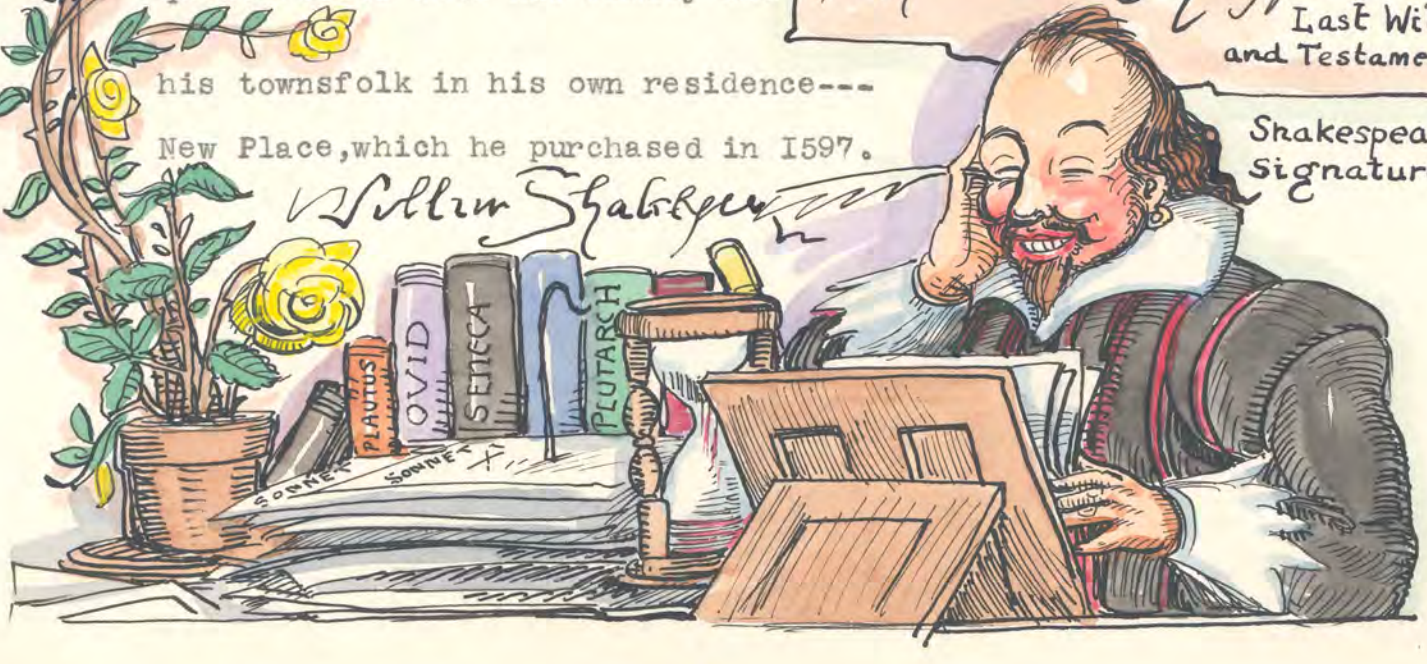
Ye Upstart Crow

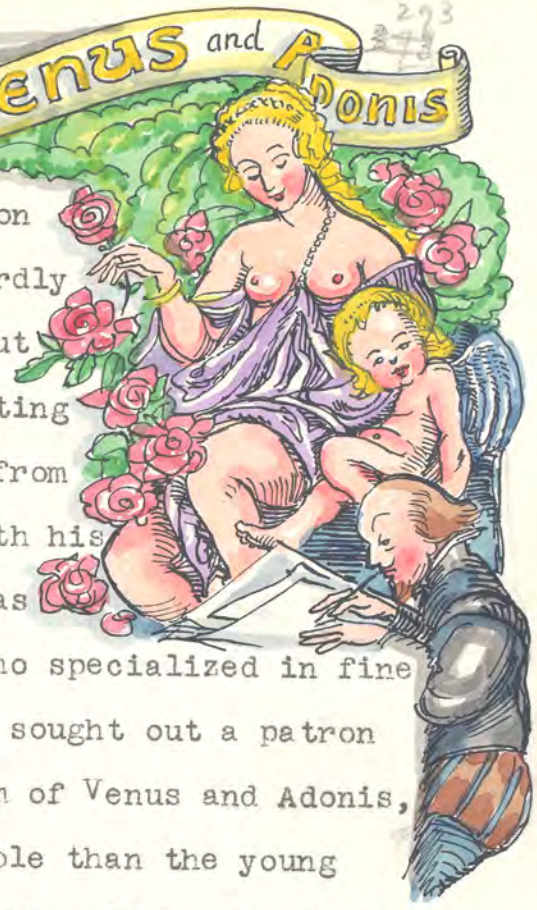
us,and is in his own conceit the only Shakes-scene in a country".

Between thirty-seven and forty-five,Shakespeare continued to prosper. He produced eleven plays of great merit and substance,among them "Hamlet", "Lear","Othello",and "Macbeth". It is rumored that during this period the dramatist"passed through the shadow",that there was a deep personal tragedy in his life. Since he kept no journal and left no letters,we know very little about his domestic affairs. But we have a strong feeling that the successful dramatist and part-owner of a London theater returned every year to Startford,and enjoyed frequent visits with his family and his townsfolk in his own residence--- New Place,which he purchased in I597.



Shakespeare's Signatures.





When the plague raged throughout London in the years I592-3,and there was hardly any market for plays,Shakespeare wrote about Venus who wooed Adonis in the woods,decorating his narrative poem,not with jewels culled from books,but with little observations made with his own eyes. When the poem was finished,it was printed by Richard Field,a Stratford man,who specialized in fine printing. Shakespeare now sought out a patron for his work. For this poem of Venus and Adonis, no person seemed more suitable than the young Earl of Southampton,who was himself an Adonis in Elizabethan society! To the nineteen-year-old Henry Wriothesley,Earl of Southampton,the man from Stratford dedicated the poem,which was sensationally well received,quoted,noted,and soon imitated.

"By this new poem,Shakespeare was transported into a new world",says Professor G.B.Harrison. Southampton showed personal favor,which was something more than patronage. The large household of the Earl was in itself a little court,and Shakespeare had an opportunity of mixing with the Earl's social circle which included several young fellows of better birth than himself,several witty,intellectual and worldly-wise courtiers and men about town. Southampton's secretary was

LUCRECE

John Florio, the Italian, who translated the famous essays of Count Michel de Montaigne into English.

In his ecstacy, Shakespeare fell in with the new fashion of poets and turned sonneteer. However, unlike the others who paid tribute to their fair ladies and mistresses, he expressed his affection for Southampton, the beautiful young nobleman whose patronage he had won. In Sonnet XXV, the poet expresses a yearning after those outward distinctions which take away a man's sense of inferiority amongst his fellows:

LET those who are in favor with their stars
Of Public honor and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlook'd for joy in that I honor most.
Great princes' favorites their fair leaves spread
But as the marigold at the sun's eye,
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foil'd,
Is from the book of honor razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd:
Then happy I, that love and am belov'd,
Where I may not remove nor be remov'd.

According to Harrison, Shakespeare "burgeoned" during these months in the nobleman's household. His life became suddenly full of color; his wit and intelligence were sharpened by contact. He wrote another long poem, "The Rape of Lucrece", published in May 1594, and dedicated to Southampton. It was even more popular than "Venus and Adonis".

There are other sonnets in Shakespeare's collection that we would like to put into this book. Also a few verses from the songs from his plays. These lyrics are beautiful in

themselves,and call for no explanation:

Sonnet CIX

O,never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify.
As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul,which in thy breast doth lie:
That is my home of love: if I have ranged,
Like him that travels I return again,
Just to the time,not with the time exchanged,
So that myself bring water for my stain.
Never believe,though in my nature reigned
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stained,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou,my rose; in it thou art my all.

Sonnet CVI

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:
O,no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown,although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fools,though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ,nor no man ever loved.

Here are the lyrics that are loved and recited by those who,through Shakespeare,catch the spirit of England:

WHEN daisies pied,and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then,on every tree,
Mocks married men,for thus sings he,
Cuckoo!
Cuckoo,cuckoo,---O word of fear
Unpleasing to a married ear!

WHEN shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then on every tree
Mocks married men, for thus sings he,
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo,---O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

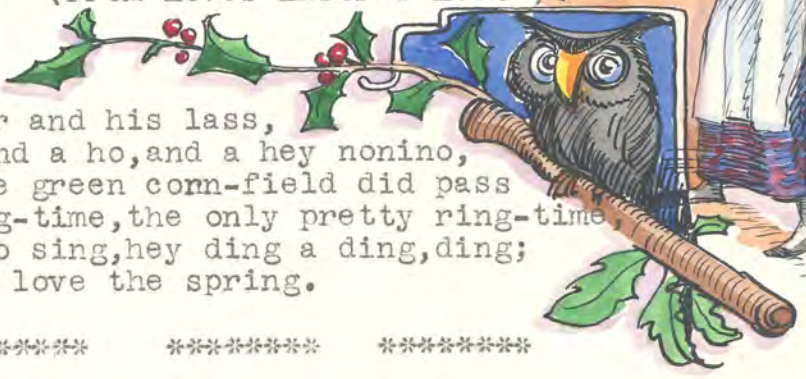
WHEN icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the Shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;

When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring Owl,
To-who;
Tu-whit, to-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

WHEN all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the Parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw;

When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring Owl,
To-who;
Tu-whit, to-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

(From "Love's Labor's Lost")



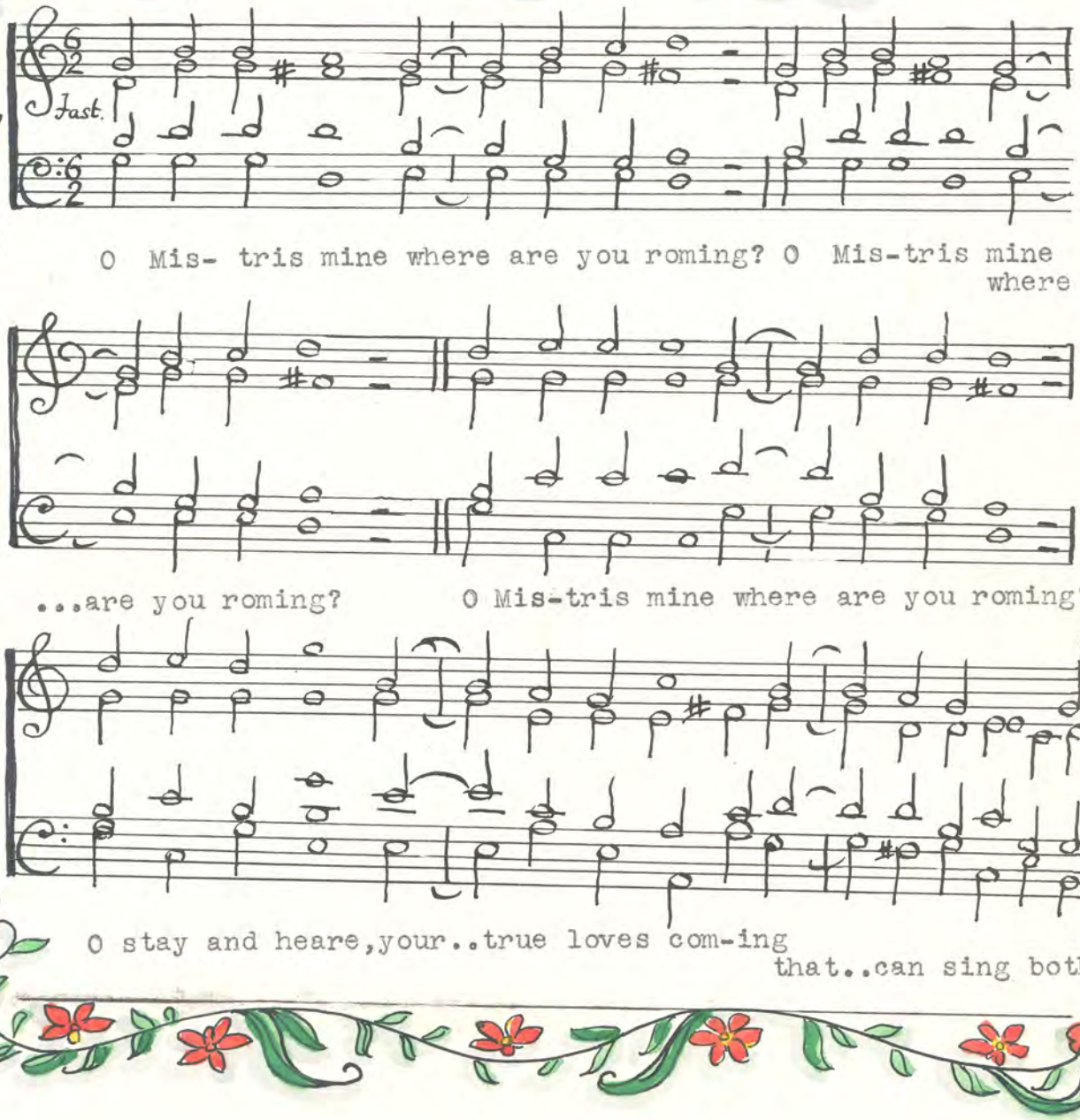
'T was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green corn-field did pass
In the spring-time, the only pretty ring-time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

******** ******** ******** ********

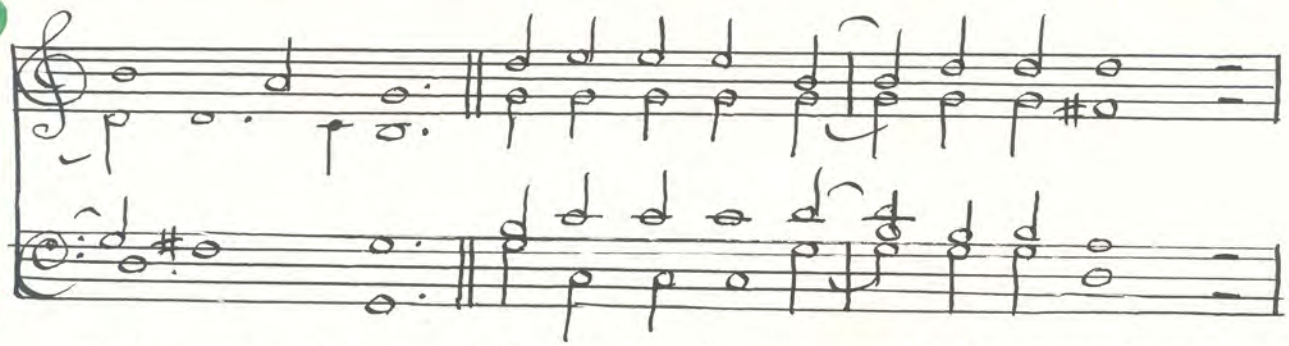
AND therefore take the present time,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crowned with the prime
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time;
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding,
Sweet lovers love the Spring!

We can hardly keep from including in this place a favorite song from Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night"(folio edition,I623). The music is reproduced from the First Booke of Consort Lessons, edited by T.Morley,I599.

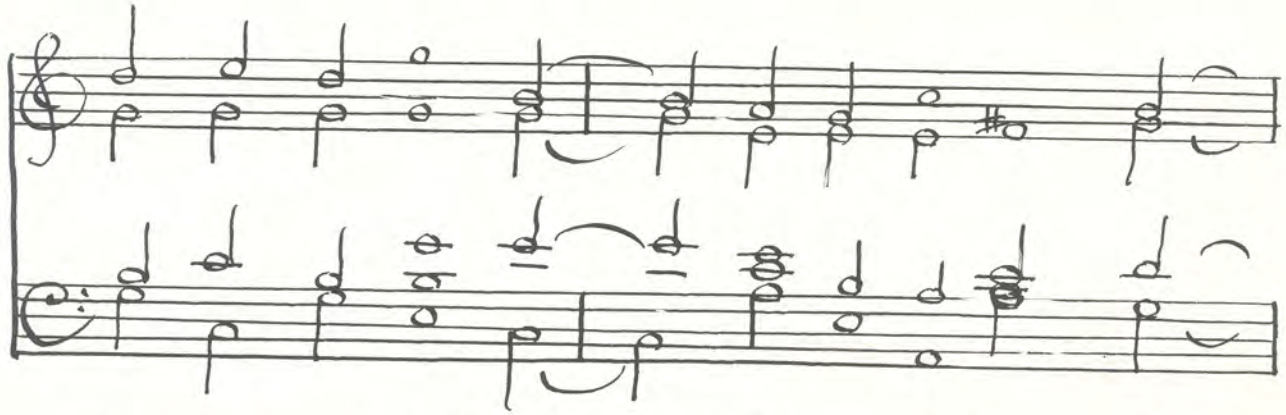
O Mistress Mine



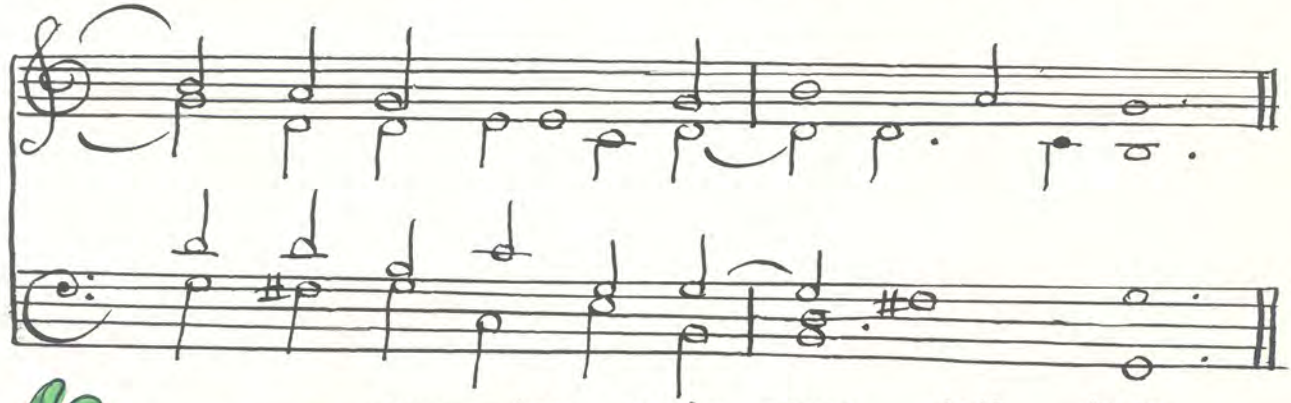
O Mistress Mine



high and low . Trip no fur-ther... pret-tie sweeting ;



Jour - neys end in... lov-ers meet- ing, e- -



- - - very wise man's sonne doth know .

WHAT is Love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter:
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plentie,
Then come kisse me, sweet and twentie:
Youth's a stuffe will not endure.....

There are other pleasant lyrics in the plays which merit a place in our hearts. May we include one or two more, since we

are in a lyrical mood? They are among Shakespeare's best:

TAKE, O! take those lips away,
That so sweetly were foresworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn:
But my kisses bring again,
bring again,
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain,
seal'd in vain.

(from "Measure for Measure")

SIGH no more, ladies, sigh no more.
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore;
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into, Hey nonny, nonny!

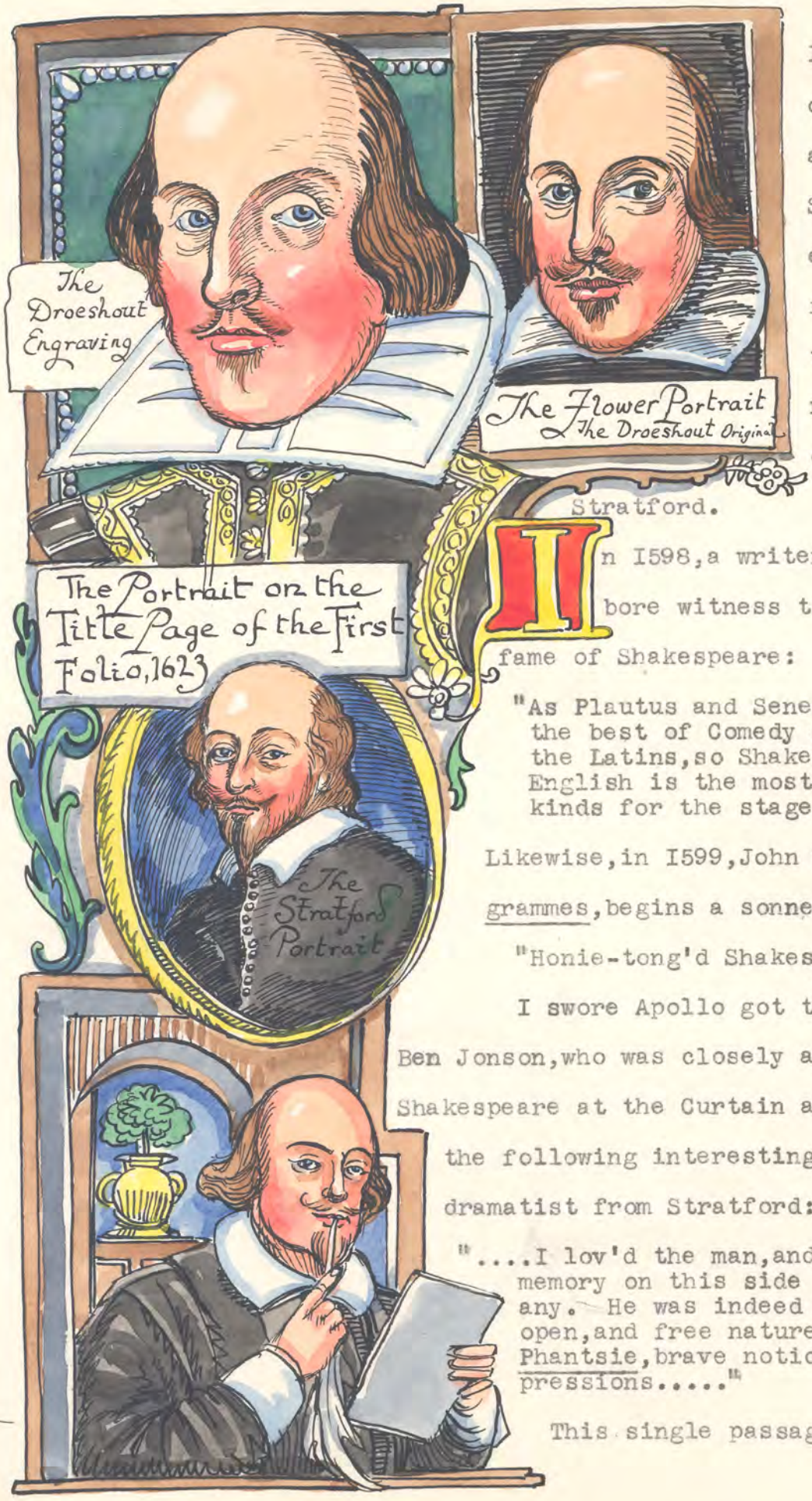
(from "Much Ado About Nothing")

COME away, come away, Death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it:
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my coffin let there be strewn;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there.

(from "Twelfth Night")

UNDER the Greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither!
Here shall he see, No enemy, But Winter and rough weather!



In I602, he acquired a few extra acres of land in Stratford, and seemed to be looking forward to the time when he would retire and end his days in peace in Stratford.

In I598, a writer, Francis Meres, bore witness to the growing fame of Shakespeare:

> "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best of Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage...."

Likewise, in I599, John Weever in his Epigrammes, begins a sonnet:

> "Honie-tong'd Shakespeare when I saw thine issue
> I swore Apollo got them and none other".

Ben Jonson, who was closely associated with Shakespeare at the Curtain and the Globe, makes the following interesting allusion to the dramatist from Stratford:

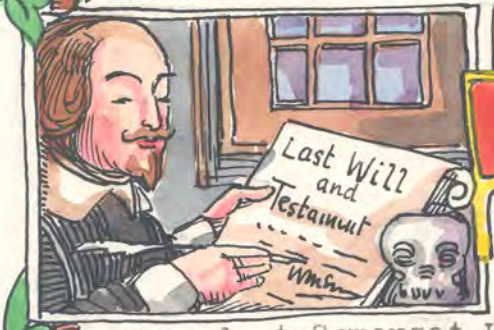
> "....I lov'd the man, and doe honour his memory on this side Idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open, and free nature; had an excellent Phantsie, brave notions, and gentle expressions....."

This single passage is enough to dis-

-pose of the notion that Shakespeare's greatness went unrecognized. Evidently he was idolized.

THE SWAN THEATRE ON THE BANKSIDE

Concerning Shakespeare's last years at Stratford,a few domestic episodes are recorded. In I6I2,his brother Gilbert dies and was buried at Stratford. In the year following,the poet's last surviving brother,Richard,was also buried there. On February I0,I6I6,his daughter Judith Shakespeare married Thomas Quiney,a vintner of Stratford.



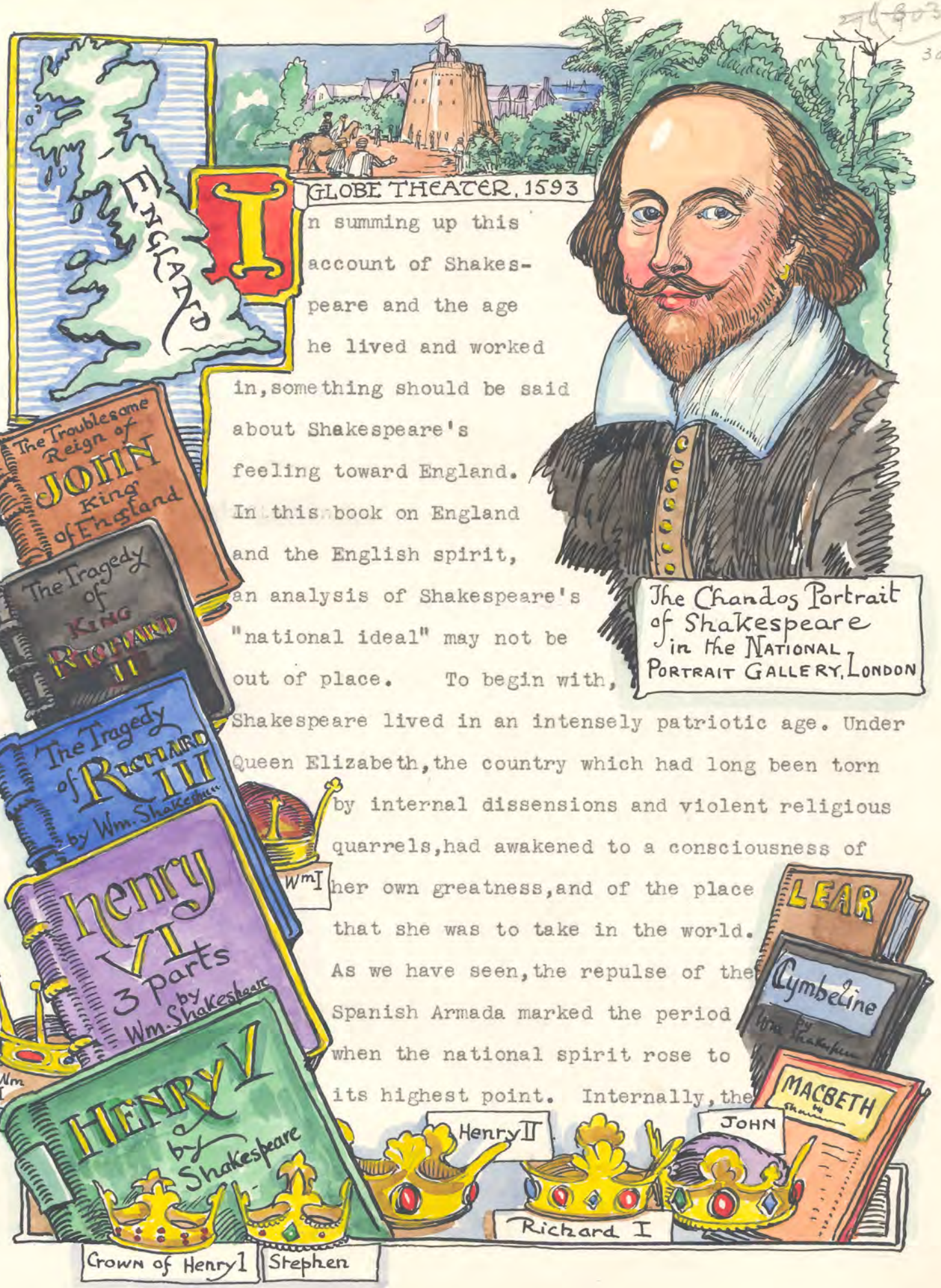
It is likely that Shakespeare knew he had not long to live when on March 25,I6I6 he signed his will in a clerk's copy. This will,preserved at Somerset House in London,leaves 300 pounds to his daughter Judith; 20 pounds to his sister Joan Hart; all his plate to his granddaughter Elizabeth Hall; I0 pounds to the poor of Startford; his residence,New Place,and other property to his daughter Susanna; and several other small sums of money to friends. Last of all, comes the interlined clause,in which he declares that "vnto my wief" he leaves "my second best bed with the furniture"(that is,the curtains,mattress, and bedding).

Anne Hathaway's Bed

The accession of the new monarch, James I, brought new fame and dignity to Shakespeare. The King's Players (as Shakespeare's company was now called) were frequently called to the Court, and Shakespeare's plays were those most frequently performed. The tragedy of "Macbeth" was written with the King (who was author of a book on Demonology) in mind. The dramatist was aware of His Majesty's interest in witchcraft ----hence the importance of the Wierd Sisters in the drama!

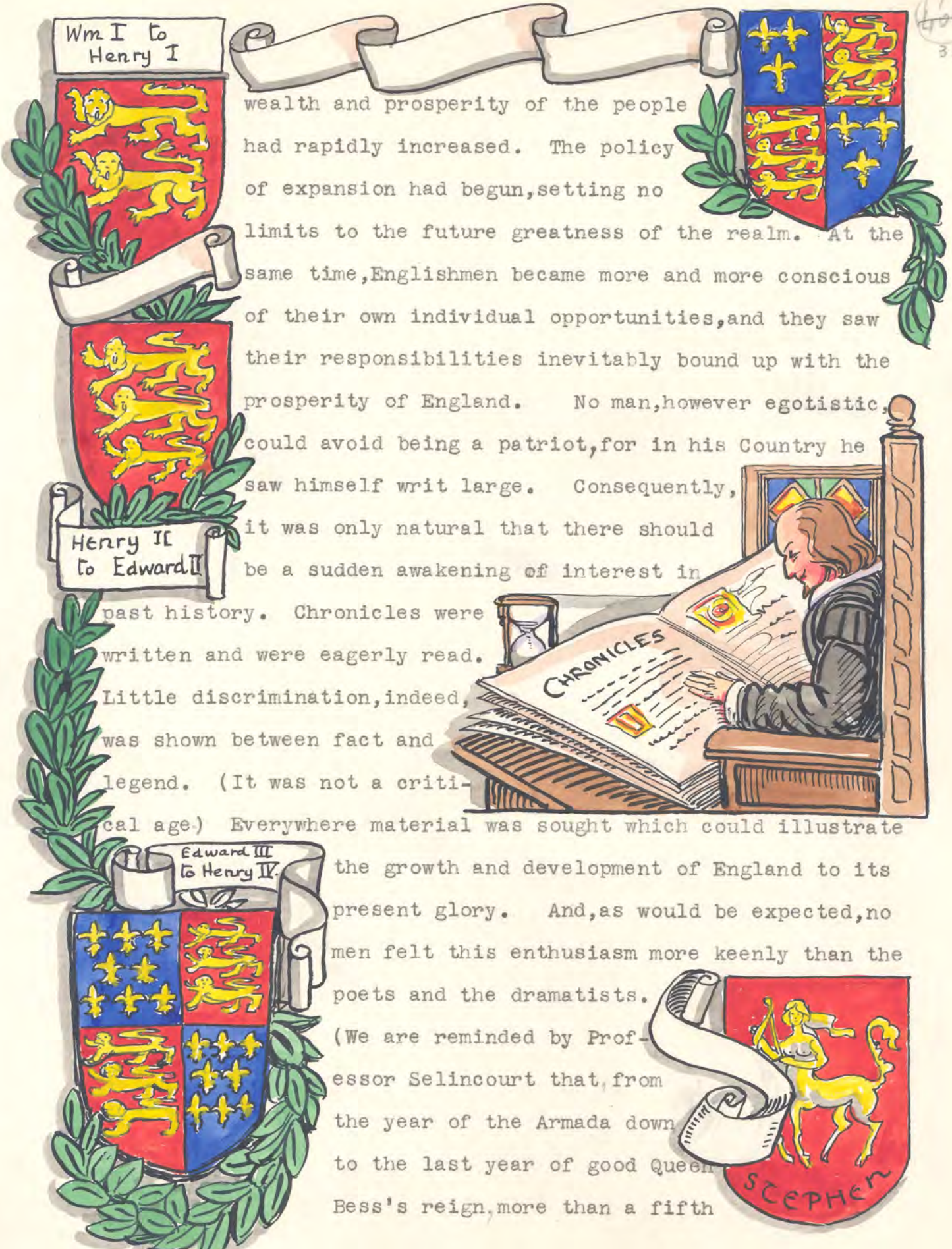
On April 23, 1616---St. George's Day ---in the thirteenth year of the King's reign, the great dramatist died, and was buried in the parish church of Stratford. His tomb bears the following inscription:

GOOD FRIEND, FOR JESUS' SAKE FORBEAR
TO DIG THE DUST ENCLOSED HERE;
BLEST BE THE MAN THAT SPARES THESE BONES,
AND CURST BE HE THAT MOVES MY BONES !



The Chandos Portrait of Shakespeare in the National Portrait Gallery, London

In summing up this account of Shakespeare and the age he lived and worked in, something should be said about Shakespeare's feeling toward England. In this book on England and the English spirit, an analysis of Shakespeare's "national ideal" may not be out of place. To begin with, Shakespeare lived in an intensely patriotic age. Under Queen Elizabeth, the country which had long been torn by internal dissensions and violent religious quarrels, had awakened to a consciousness of her own greatness, and of the place that she was to take in the world. As we have seen, the repulse of the Spanish Armada marked the period when the national spirit rose to its highest point. Internally, the



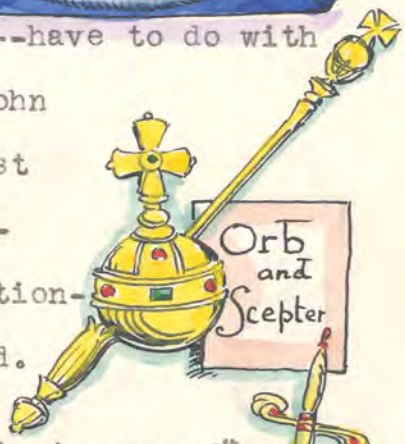
wealth and prosperity of the people had rapidly increased. The policy of expansion had begun, setting no limits to the future greatness of the realm. At the same time, Englishmen became more and more conscious of their own individual opportunities, and they saw their responsibilities inevitably bound up with the prosperity of England. No man, however egotistic, could avoid being a patriot, for in his Country he saw himself writ large. Consequently, it was only natural that there should be a sudden awakening of interest in past history. Chronicles were written and were eagerly read. Little discrimination, indeed, was shown between fact and legend. (It was not a critical age.) Everywhere material was sought which could illustrate the growth and development of England to its present glory. And, as would be expected, no men felt this enthusiasm more keenly than the poets and the dramatists. (We are reminded by Professor Selincourt that, from the year of the Armada down to the last year of good Queen Bess's reign, more than a fifth

The Crown of England

ST. DAVID'S CROWN USED FOR ACT OF CROWNING →

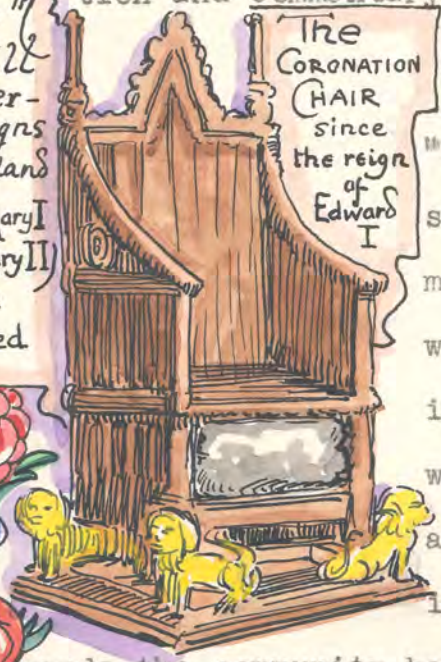
of all the plays whose titles have survived took their subjects from English history.)

Thirteen of Shakespeare's plays ----more than a third of the whole---have to do with English history. From the reign of King John to the reign of King Henry VIII, the dramatist presents in the main a satisfactory description and commentary on the political and national development of England.



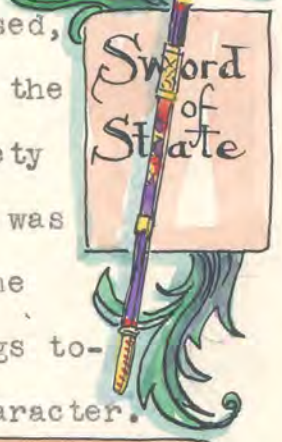
Orb and Sceptre

The Seat in which all the Sovereigns of England (save Mary I and Mary II) were Crowned



The Coronation Chair since the reign of Edward I

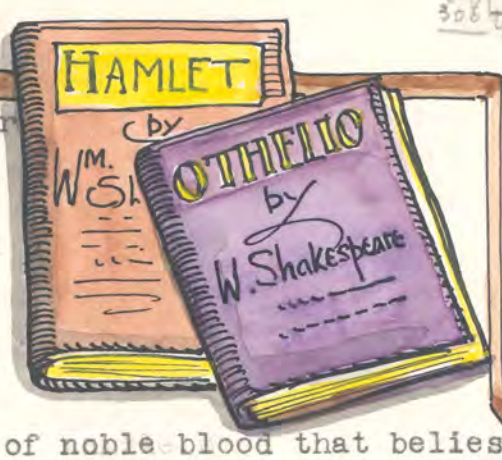
"Shakespeare was profoundly impressed", says Selincourt, "in a way that the modern artist is seldom impressed, with the essentail relation of the individual to that larger society which is called a nation". He was also profoundly impressed by the influence which a man's feelings towards the community have upon his whole life and character.



Sword of State

If, as some critics have pointed out, Shakespeare's reading of history is aristocratic, it should be remembered that, in the time at which Shakespeare wrote, no other presentation of fact would have been possible. Shakespeare was essentially a creature of the time, and he read history with the eyes of his time. However, it

Raphael Holinshed, another Warwickshire man, from whose CHRONICLES, William Shakespeare drew his materials for the history plays ——



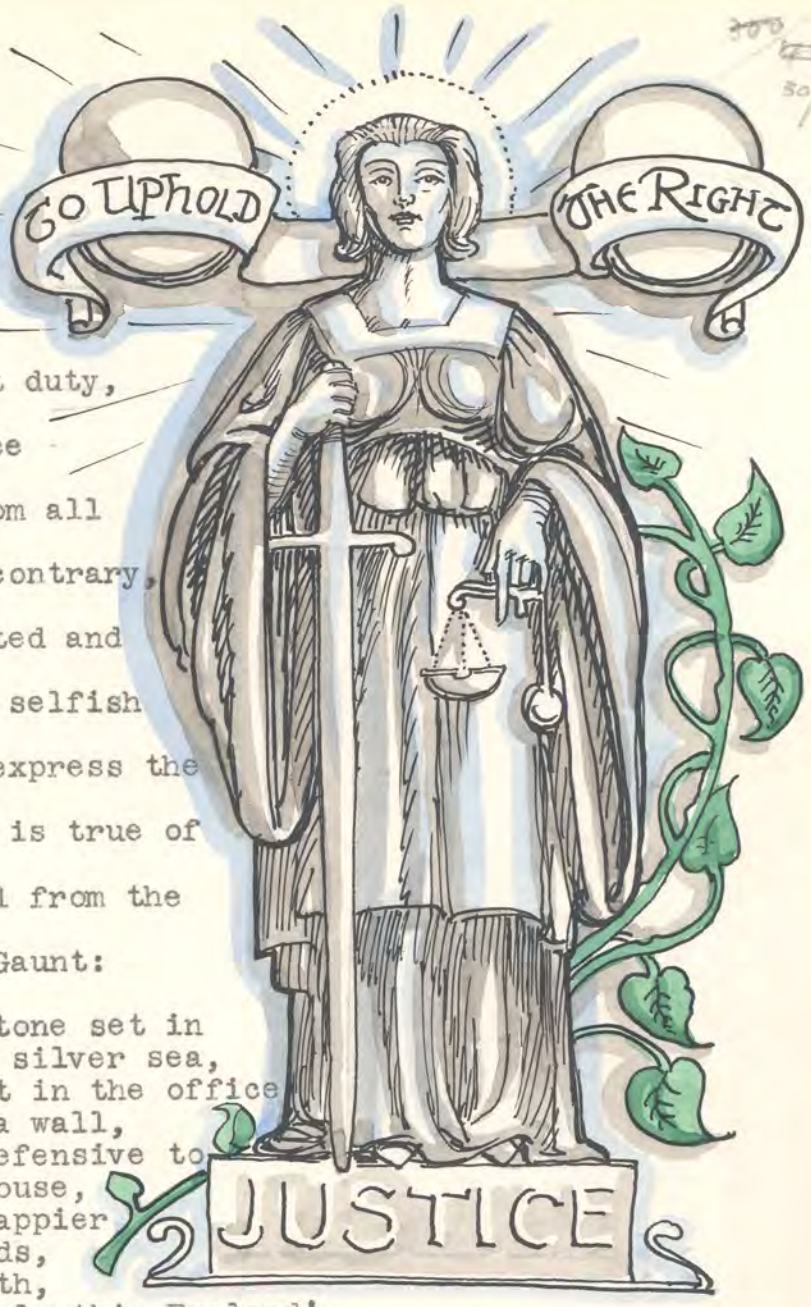
soon becomes evident to the wise reader of the plays that Shakespeare was no bigoted, unreasoning supporter of aristocracies. In "All's Well that Ends Well", he can even justify the heroism of humble birth against the arrogance of noble blood that belies itself, uttering a truly democratic sentiment:

From the lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by the doer's deed:
Where great additions swell's, and virtue none,
It is a dropsied honour....Honours thrive
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers.

Nobility to Shakespeare is, in the last resort, a matter of character rather than of descent.

All persons in positions of power, according to the dramatist, are surrounded by great temptations. It is only when kings and princes surmount these temptations, that they become worthy of honor and respect. The tragedy of most of Shakespeare's English kings consists of certain weaknesses of character----they fall victims to the very vices which they, as leaders, should root out of the state.

In "Richard II", Shakespeare makes his most fervent patriot, old John of Gaunt, denounce the crimes of King Richard to his face. The folly and incompetency of the king bring suffering upon himself and his country. From first to last, the capricious tyrant is a living type of



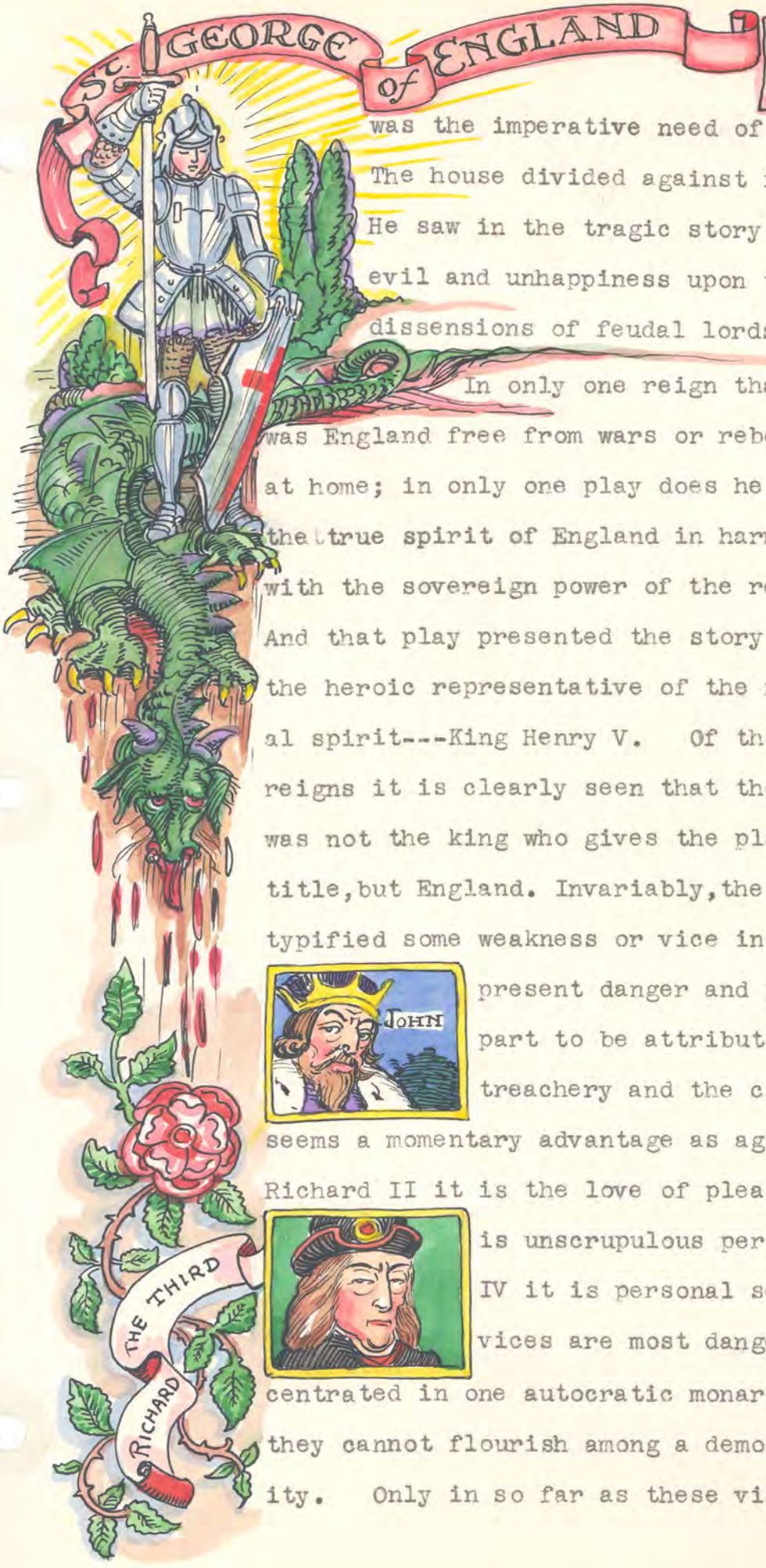
the man whose attitude to the larger duties to his country has been warped by a total ignornace of that duty, which the very existence of a nation demands from all its sons. And, on the contrary, the men whose lives acted and reacted upon Richard's selfish and wicked administration express the patriotic sentiment. This is true of the lovely eulogy that fell from the lips of the dying John of Gaunt:

This precious stone set in
the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office
of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to
a house,
Against the envy of less happier
lands,
This blessed plot, this earth,
this realm, this England!

And it is also true of the sentiments of Gaunt's son, the banished Bolingbroke, whose words find an echo within all patriotic hearts, whenever they are called to leave their country:

Then, England's ground, farewell; sweet soil, adieu:
My mother, and my nurse, that bears me yet!
Where'er I wander, boast of this I can,
Though banish'd, yet a true-born Englishman.

Shakespeare was not a subtle political theorist. He looked on the past and the present of his country with the eyes of an intelligent Elizabethan patriot; and his desire, as a dramatist, was to put before his audience (which was a popular one) what seemed to him the basis of his country's greatness. The first lesson that he read in history



SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN ON ST. GEORGE'S DAY — APRIL 23

was the imperative need of national unity. The house divided against itself cannot stand. He saw in the tragic story of the kings who brought evil and unhappiness upon the land the greed and dissensions of feudal lords and households.

In only one reign that Shakespeare reviewed was England free from wars or rebellions at home; in only one play does he show the true spirit of England in harmony with the sovereign power of the realm. And that play presented the story of the heroic representative of the national spirit---King Henry V. Of the other reigns it is clearly seen that the hero was not the king who gives the play its title, but England. Invariably, the ruler typified some weakness or vice in the nation to which its present danger and perilous state are in part to be attributed. In King John it is treachery and the cowardly pursuit of what seems a momentary advantage as against set principle. In Richard II it is the love of pleasure. In Richard III it is unscrupulous personal ambition. In Henry IV it is personal selfishness. All these vices are most dangerous when they are concentrated in one autocratic monarch. But, implies Shakespeare, they cannot flourish among a democratic people with impunity. Only in so far as these vices are subdued is the

nation strong. The dramatist's attitude to the whole problem is summed up in the words with which he closes "The tragedy of King John":

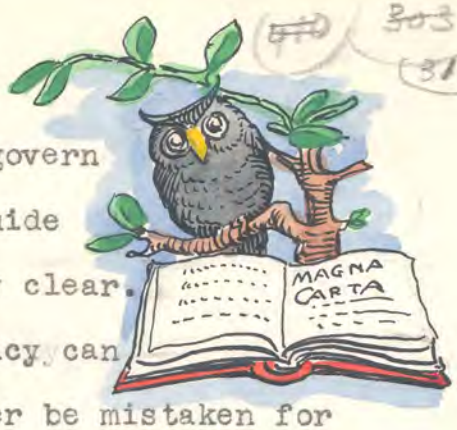
This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true!

But this unity of which Shakespeare speaks does not merely lie in the absence of active civil strife.

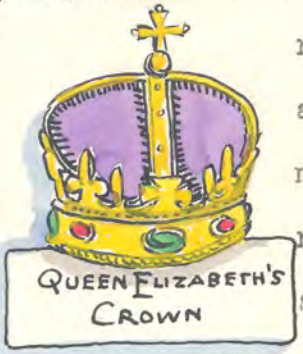
No. The state is to him a complicated human machine, in which each separate part contributes its share to the general efficiency. Consequently, England may at any time be thrown out of gear by the failure of one part to perform its allotted function. This idea is developed in several notable passages. We shall take one from "Henry V":

For government, though high and low and lower,
Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,
Congreeing in a full and natural close,
Like Music. Therefore doth heaven divide
The state of man in divers functions,
Setting endeavor in continual motion;
To which is fixed, as an aim or butt,
Obedience; for so work the honey-bees,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom....

When a man chooses for himself the part that he will play in the national organization, the more incumbent on him is it to to fulfil that part to the utmost.

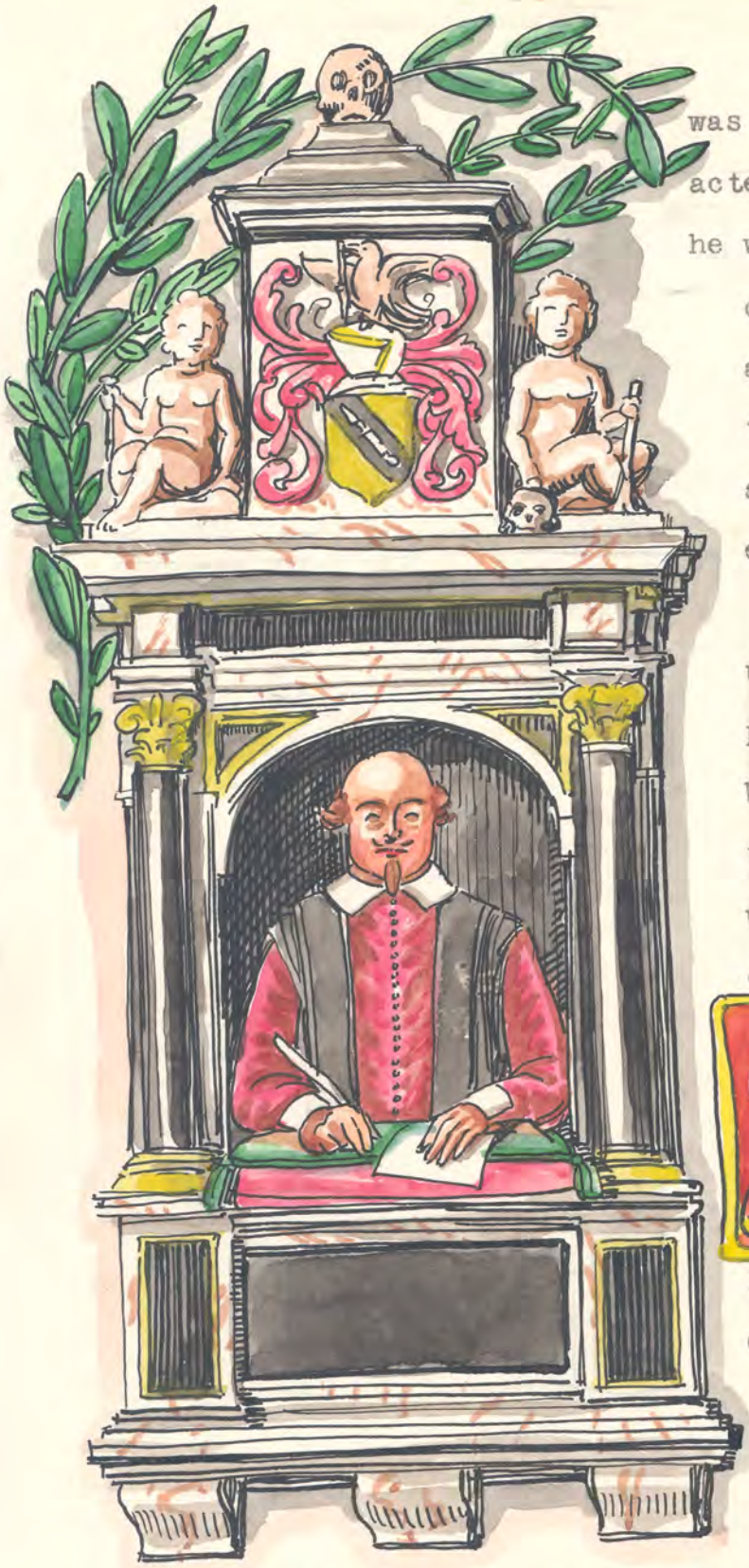


Concerning the principles that should govern the corporate action of the nation and guide its administration, Shakespeare is equally clear. He holds that, ultimately, only a just policy can enjoy permanent success. Might must never be mistaken for right. The breach of moral laws, by the ruler acting in the interests of community or party, meets with the same inexorable nemesis, as if he were acting solely for himself. The thirst for power, the promptings of ambition,---these must be subordinated to a sense of right. Honesty is, to Shakespeare, the only policy that can be successful in the long run. England can prosper only when her destinies are guided and controlled by a government that combines strength and decision of purpose with integrity and justice.


QUEEN ELIZABETH'S CROWN

In the state, as in the life of the individual, Shakespeare sees the workings of inevitable Nemesis. Nemesis is slow at times, but always sure. There, too, he sees the sins of the fathers visited upon the children. There, too, he sees the redeeming power of virtue and of a consciousness of right.

Again, may it be pointed out that the dramatist from Stratford was no professional political philosopher. He was a practical dramatist and a poet, whose first interest and study



was human life and human character. But, like all Elizabethans, he was a patriot who loved to ponder over his nation's history, and this was his reading of history. It stirred his audiences at the Globe Theater to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

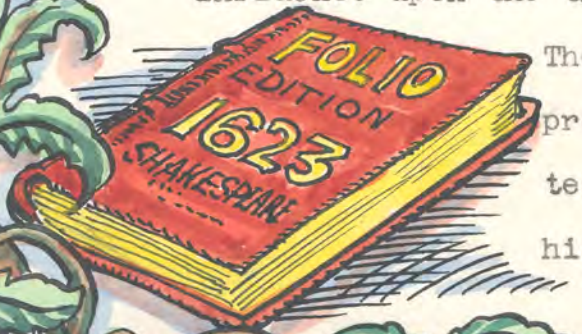
It is not our purpose to sum up the virtues of Shakespeare, to pass aesthetic judgment on him. We agree with Granville-Barker that some such attempts have been well done, others ill done, and yet others on the whole overdone!

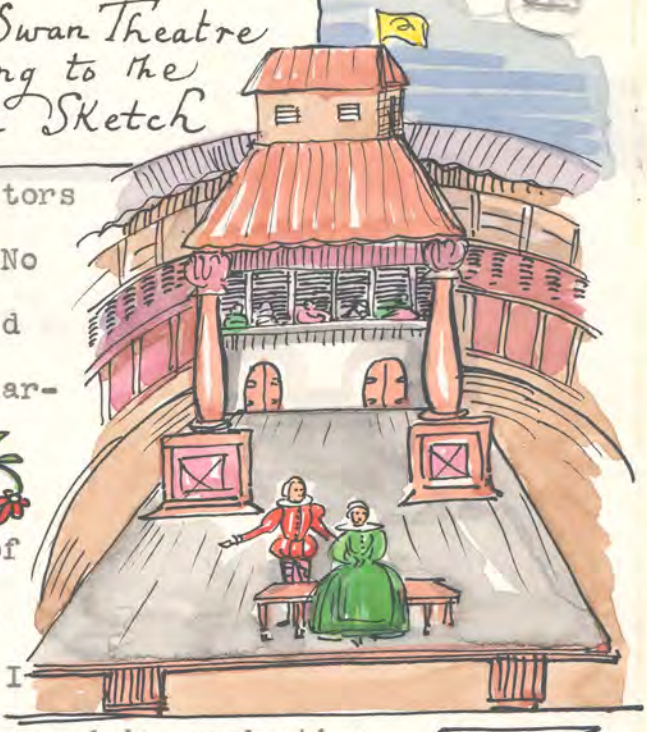
Summing up Shakespeare's character, Hudson justly says: "There is enough, I think, to show that in all the common dealings of life, he was eminently gentle, candid, upright, and judicious..." By his amazing intuition, he comprehended the various hopes, fears, desires, and passions of the human heart; and, as occasion arose, he gave them the most perfect utterance they have ever found in the English tongue.

In the famous memorial volume of his collected plays, known as the First Folio (1623), a contemporary declared that Shakespeare was not of an age, but for all time. The dramatist was addressed as the "Soule of the age---The applause! delight! the Wonder of our Stage!"

The Kesselstadt Death-Mask

Translated into the languages of the various peoples of this planet, the Works of William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-the Avon have been extensively studied, admired, and imitated. These Works have exerted a noteworthy influence upon the thought of the world. They have stimulated a prodigious amount of intellectual activity; and his biographers, editors,





The Swan Theatre according to the Dutch Sketch

translators, critics, and commentators are numbered by the thousands. No other English author has gathered about him such an array of scholarship and literary ability.

There is no abatement of interest in his works. (For the past twenty-five years I have---in a very humble way---engaged in conducting courses in the study of Shakespeare's plays; and through all these years, never have I had to "drum up trade" for Shakespeare! In this year of grace (1945-1946) the classes in Shakespeare continue to be crowded---all seats in the room are filled---and there is promise of greater interest in the year to come!) It is safe to say that

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of Princes, shall outlive his powerful rhyme..."

and that his thoughts and characters, passing into the intellectual life of each succeeding generation of students, are as imperishable as the English language or ENGLAND herself!