



**Nathaniel Merriman**

# Nathaniel Merriman's Lecture: "On the Study of Shakspeare"

Edited by LAURENCE WRIGHT

Nathaniel Merriman's lectures on Shakespeare were published in 1857 and 1858. The first, "On the Study of Shakspeare," was delivered in the Court House, Grahamstown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1857 to an audience of more than four hundred and fifty people. The second, "Shakspeare, as Bearing on English History," was given in the same venue two months later, on Friday, 6 November 1857, and was also well attended. The lectures were published under the auspices of the Committee of "The General Institute," which sponsored the lectures, and printed at the Anglo-African Office in the High Street. The *Anglo-African* newspaper was started by C.T. Campbell in 1853, and his press undertook jobbing printing as a side-line. A general background to the lectures in the context of nineteenth century Grahamstown is provided in the accompanying article.

The purpose of preparing annotated editions of these lectures is to make them more accessible to scholars and draw them further into the mainstream of international discussion on colonial Shakespeare. It seemed important to interfere with the text as little as possible, first, to preserve the character of the lectures as occasional pieces produced for a particular audience and situation and, second, to retain a sense of the materiality of their production: pamphlets produced by a colonial newspaper office and print shop at the behest of a local cultural society. While much of what Merriman has to say is thoroughly derivative, his remarks in particular on *Hamlet*, *The Tempest* and *I Henry IV* make fascinating reading in relation to contemporary discussions of colonial Shakespearean appropriations (see, for instance, work by Cartelli, Loomba and Orkin), and a start has been made towards establishing the local significance of the lectures in publications by Johnson (2000) and Wright (2008). The lectures were introduced into contemporary academic discussion in David Johnson's pioneering 1996 book, *Shakespeare and South Africa*.

The two lectures and their context are little known in Shakespeare studies because the original pamphlets are rare. The first lecture appears in *Mendelssohn's South African Bibliography* (1910), while the second is picked up only in the 1979 revision of that work. Copies of "On the Study of Shakspeare" are held by the Mendelssohn Library in the Library of Parliament, Cape Town; by The South African Library, Cape Town; and in the Oppenheimer Collection, Johannesburg. Copies of "Shakspeare, as Bearing on English History" are held by the Mendelssohn Library; by the University of the Witwatersrand Library, Johannesburg; and by the Kimberley Public Library.

The two lectures were published as pamphlets, each with a title page, an end leaf with an errata notice printed on the inner page, and 16pp of text. "On the Study of Shakspeare" is 21cm; "Shakspeare, As Bearing on English History", 20cm.

It is to be doubted whether Merriman himself oversaw their publication. There are too many slips of a kind that no author with Merriman's educational background could have missed. Such mistakes have been silently corrected: for example, in regard to names, "Schleyel" for "Schlegel", or "Sampson Agonistes" for "Samson Agonistes" in the first lecture; or Palsgrave for Palgrave, Malborough for Marlborough, and Thiery for Thierry in the second. Punctuation and presentation of titles have not been regularised, but are left in the haphazard state characteristic of the original. There are exceptions: for instance, Longfellow's "golden legend" has been

silently capitalised for the sake of intelligibility; and historical spellings have been retained (“connexion”; “pourtrayed”; “embued”; “cotemporary”). Merriman’s occasional explanatory interpolations, a legacy of the lecture format, have been preserved. The marginal notes, whose authority is indeterminate, have been set in their approximate positions as in the original.

Undoubtedly the printed text was proof-read, because the Errata notes at the end of each of the pamphlets (for instance, “Page 8, line 24 from bottom, for “pastime” read *foretime*”) indicate as much. However, the corrections indicated (three in all!) are of literal errors – possibly occasioned by an uninformed and inattentive typesetter working from a barely decipherable manuscript – rather than matters of critical and scholarly import that would occur to a modern reader, many of which would have bothered Merriman himself.

The editorial intention here is not to renovate the text to comply with today’s scholarly ideals, but to present a reading text close in spirit to the printed pamphlets, merely tidying up obfuscating errors, rectifying the impact of broken or missing type, and leaving the text much as it appears in the originals. This means acceding to Merriman’s loose ‘quotations’ from his sources; numerous passages which he evidently regarded as adequately faithful to the original for spoken presentation, but which contain omissions and elisions, mostly of a deliberate nature. These sometimes reflect what Henry Hardy calls “the ventriloquistic practice of ‘semi-quotation’,”<sup>1</sup> an influence often discernible when printed texts are created from work intended for the lecture hall. Punctuation is generally both erratic and eccentric. Punctuation within quotations tends to be rendered for fluent spoken effect, rather than literal accuracy. At least for the first lecture, Merriman had no sense that his work was destined for publication, and the assumption is that the typesetter was working directly from Merriman’s hand-written lecture text. Where Merriman’s quotations play fast and loose with his sources, in important instances a full transcript of the passage has been provided in the Notes. Where they are available, I have used Merriman’s own copies of books; in other cases editions that might have been available to him or editions from Merriman’s era, have been employed. It would have been possible, perhaps even simpler, to cite such passages from the latest scholarly editions, but this would be to superimpose decades of subsequent scholarship unavailable to Merriman. In several cases it has proved possible to track down the actual volumes he used in preparing the lectures, because Nathaniel Merriman’s personal library was in part incorporated into that of his son, John X. Merriman. In 1937 this library was purchased by Sir Abe Bailey and donated to Rhodes University. The volumes are dispersed through the Rhodes collection, some on the shelves and some in store, while some have been withdrawn. However, a full record of the Abe Bailey donation is preserved in the original hand-written accession register of the Rhodes University Library. In another instance, the two volumes of Grey’s *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia* (1849) in the Cory Library’s Stanford Collection, inscribed in Merriman’s hand, may have been taken into the Collection directly from the library of St Bartholomew’s Church, in Market Street, Grahamstown, an institution in whose formation Merriman played a large part. It is highly likely that these were the volumes from which Merriman quotes in his first lecture. Other instances where Merriman’s own texts have been identified are indicated in notes.

No edition of Shakespeare is included in the Abe Bailey donation, and the Shakespeare text in the lectures is reproduced without annotations. While the Rhodes copy of Henry Reed’s *Lectures on English History and Tragic Poetry* (1855) is autographed “N.J. Merriman, 1856” – this work is a crucial influence in both lectures – I could not trace his copy of Reed’s *Lectures on English Literature, From Chaucer to Tennyson* (also 1855), another important influence, and have instead used the 5<sup>th</sup> edition (1860) from which to identify Merriman’s quotations. It seems likely that these two works by Henry Reed were purchased by Merriman in England towards the end of the family’s period of leave between 1853 and 1856.

The second lecture, “Shakspeare as Bearing on English History” will appear in volume 21 (2009) of the journal.

## NOTES

1. From the “Editorial Preface” to his edition of Isaiah Berlin’s *Russian Thinkers* (2008), xiv, Note 2.

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## ON THE STUDY OF

**SHAKSPEARE.**

I have purposely entitled this Lecture “On the Study of Shakspeare,”<sup>1</sup> in preference to a Lecture simply on Shakspeare or on the Drama, because I wish, at the outset, to be understood as desiring to keep entirely clear of the notion of any Theatrical representation being mixed up with the subject I am handling. The use or abuse, in different ages, and under different circumstances, of this species of entertainment may well form a distinct matter of enquiry on which some future Lecturer may give us his thoughts, but it is one with which my present subject has no connexion.

In inviting your attention this evening to the truly wonderful productions of Shakspeare’s genius—creations as they are of the very highest order of intellect, and yet so directly appealing to all the broad sympathies of our common nature that it requires but little literary attainment, or cultivation to appreciate very much of their merits, I desire to speak of them in the shape and way in which they are fairly accessible to all—*i.e.* in printed volumes; volumes perhaps more widely disseminated than any others in our language, except it be the sacred Scriptures themselves. I would fain show to you the claim that these Dramas have on our regard and our study, as instruments of at once elevating and instructing the mind, without any necessity of embodying them to the eye and the ear; for they are works of art not like pictures and statues that must be gazed at to be appreciated, or

like fine music that must be both well performed and listened to, but they are peculiarly *studies*—studies in which a very little reading may kindle a vast amount of thought, of pleasurable, healthful invigorating thought; studies in which the mind may be wholesomely diverted from a grovelling attention to material objects, and by which that stagnation of intellect (which we have in the course of these Lectures heard deprecated as one of our great dangers) may be very effectually prevented.

No writer has ever furnished a richer intellectual treasure house. For whether it be only in the varied, flexible, nervous, and lofty use of our mother tongue, Shakspeare exceeds all writers before or since his time, or whether it be in a deep intuitive perception of the mysteries and intricacies of human nature, or an exhibition to us of all the strength and the weakness of what we are conscious of in our own bosom, or whether it be in the power of setting before us the effects of human actions in their different relations, and the way in which Divine Providence makes these actions tell on the agents and the subjects of them sometimes with retributive justice, sometimes with chastening discipline, sometimes with consolation and reward,—in all these Shakspeare is an inexhaustible mine of study, and will be so as long as the English language is read and spoken in any quarter of the habitable globe. In speaking of Shakspeare as a fit subject of earnest study, I of course do not infer that every one's faculties require the same food, or admit of the same processes of training. Physical science may afford the best, and most healthful exercise to some minds, Mathematical and Metaphysical to others. To others differently constituted the varied realms of Literature are their appropriate field. But be it remembered, that the faculties which we bring into exercise in studying Shakspeare, and in exploring the depths and unravelling the mysteries of our nature as mirrored in his matchless works, are the self same faculties which we are required to use in a far higher pursuit—I mean, in studying that one Divine Book which is given for the instruction of all mankind.

But must be used with due consideration. Considering how large a portion of the Holy volume consists of history, poetry, and parable, often blended together and assuming a form which I may call essentially Dramatic, we may be sure that a healthy, and philosophical, and well-regulated use of imaginative literature will not fail to prove a valuable accessory to religion.

The Bible will not give forth its full teaching to the obstinately unimaginative mind, and this is perhaps my best plea for striving to direct your thoughts to the mightiest uninspired master of imaginative creation that I believe the world has ever seen. Good and evil there is depicted in his works, in profusion and in intensity, a sublimation so to speak as far as it is open to man's eye of the world around us and the world within us. There is, I am bound to say, one form of evil needlessly obtruded on us, sometimes in his pages, in a coarse and abominable speech. It is painful at the outset to have to advert to this fact,—but it is a naked blemish which all will now revolt at, as the relic of a coarser age, far less insidious in its evil than the refined immoralities often glossed over in modern works of fiction, but still such as to render Shakspeare no fit book to read aloud, except through an edition such as Bowdler's Family Shakspeare, where this blemish is corrected.<sup>2</sup>

We need not go far to seek the testimony of the gravest and most solemn spirits of our own nation from Milton to Coleridge as laymen, and of divines almost all who have deeply studied the inner core of man's nature with his relation to all around him, to see them betraying a consciousness of the inestimable value of the best Dramatic poetry. They have seen and acknowledged its tendency to elevate man's moral nature, and have not failed to testify to the towering eminence in which Shakspeare stands above all others in fathoming the deep things of the human heart, and in exhibiting the different phases of our inner being,—sometimes as beacons to warn us, sometimes as glorious visions of good, alluring us to admire and to imitate. The latest eulogistic testimony of this kind that has fallen under my notice, is from the pen of Sir Jas. Stephens, in a recent lecture, delivered to the "Young Men's Christian Association," where in speaking of the age of Queen Elizabeth,—he says:—"There was then living a man to whom the eternal fountain of all wisdom had seen fit to impart a soul in which as in a mirror were concentrated, all the lights radiating from every point of human observation, and from which as from a mirror those lights were reflected back in every possible combination of beauty and sublimity of wisdom and of wit, of pathos and of humour."

"He completed the noblest literary monument which it has been permitted to any uninspired man to erect for the illumination of his brethren of mankind, and I scruple not to add for the glory of the Giver of every good and perfect gift."<sup>3</sup>

But I go to a higher authority, to our great and solemn Milton, as a warm appreciator of the dramatic form of poetry. Milton doubtless felt that the intellectual power by which he had been exalted to conceive and execute his two great poems of "Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained," (which were originally designed to be given to the world as tragedies) had been mainly fed and fostered by a continual study of the Greek drama.

In his preface to the *Samson Agonistes*, in speaking of Tragic poetry, he says—"it hath ever been held the gravest, moralist, and most profitable of all other poems,"—and after reminding us that the first Christian drama

that we know of, was written by no less a Divine than Gregory Nazianzen; he says, Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the text of Holy Scripture. (He means the verse "Evil communications corrupt good manners," which though it probably comes from another poet than Euripides, yet sufficiently substantiates Milton's remark).<sup>4</sup> But how highly Milton valued Shakspeare and his memory, may be seen by the earnest tone in which he commemorates the death of the great Dramatist in a tender sonnet, beginning—

"What needs my Shakspeare for his honoured bones  
 "The labor of an age in piled stones,  
 "Or that his hallowed relics should be hid  
 "Under a starry-pointing pyramid?  
 "Dear son of memory: great heir of fame,  
 "What needs there such weak witness of thy name?"

And then going on to speak of the enduring monuments the poet had wrought for himself which Kings might envy, he adds:—

"Each heart  
 "Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book  
 "Those Delphic lines with deep impression took."<sup>5</sup>

It would be a shame indeed, if in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Englishmen should make Shakspeare an unvalued book in a different sense to what I think the Poet Milton intended the phrase in the 17<sup>th</sup>. Shakspeare a general instructor. For he doubtless meant by "unvalued" an invaluable book,—a book beyond all value from which the heart should take, with deep impression lines, and sentences as from a Delphic oracle. Now it is not a little remarkable, how literally this last prophetic enunciation of Milton's, for so we may with propriety consider it, has been since his day fulfilled.—And it proves the peculiar adaptation of Shakspeare's writings to the whole length and breadth of the English mind, more than any other circumstance that I can adduce, that his idioms and phrases, his metaphors and peculiar epithets have woven themselves in such countless profusion into the ordinary familiar speech of the whole English people. Shakspeare's phrases are household words with every one of us, though very few perhaps are conscious of the fact at the time of using them. His sentences pass from mouth to mouth in the shape of proverbs, a kind of pithy wisdom whose authorship is rarely in any instance traced or cared about.

It would demand some thoughtful study, and make a larger demand upon your patience than I am now disposed to do, if I undertook to show how Shakspeare's genius had affected our whole circle of English literature—how it has impressed its indelible stamp upon our greatest and most popular writers, and especially how in these our latter days, the most philosophic minds like those of Coleridge and De Quincy, and the amiable Charles Lamb,<sup>6</sup> had devoted themselves quite reverentially to the study of him.—How deeply Southey and Arnold and Scott,<sup>7</sup> had been imbued with his teaching and spirit.—How the greatest critics of Germany, Von Schlegel above all,<sup>8</sup> had almost rapturously set themselves to the task of analysing and shewing forth to their countrymen, the wonderful creations of that fertile brain, which have earned for Shakspeare the title of "the myriad-minded one"<sup>9</sup>—But without carrying your thoughts over this wide surface (which in a single lecture it would be impossible for me to do effectually,) I prefer now to appeal to the homelier instances which our daily speech affords, in proof of Shakspeare being an instructor of every Englishman, whether he is conscious of it or no, and exercising an influence on our speech sufficient almost to warrant the Poet's words—

"We must be free or die,  
 "Who speak the tongue that Shakspeare spake,"<sup>10</sup>

One might soon form you a whole Dictionary of such Shaksperian phrases, familiar to everybody, as "out Herod Herod," "aye, there's the rub," "better part of valor is discretion," "brevity is the soul of wit," "consummation devoutly to be wished,"—expressions sometimes of great philosophical beauty as "in my mind's eye," exquisite epithets, whose poesy is only lost sight of by their frequency of use, as "palmy state," "golden opinions," "skiey influences," this "working day world,"—rich metaphors as "unfold a tale," "shuffle off our mortal coil"—or choice images presented to the imagination as "patience on a monument smiling at grief,"—"undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns"—and above all—deep utterances of solemn wisdom "those Delphic lines," as Milton terms them, such as "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul"—or "Conscience makes cowards of us all."

These examples, of which I have purposely culled the greater part from a single Drama,<sup>11</sup> serve to shew you in what countless profusion Shakspeare's words and ideas have wrought themselves into our familiar discourse. They are what have helped, together with Household phrases from Shakspeare. the general style of Shakspeare's speech, and his exquisite choice and arrangement of words to make our English tongue so rich an inheritance as it is to us all. And those who know the influence

of language in the formation of character, will easily see how the best parts of the English character have been ministered to by Shakspeare's rich and noble usage of words. By the best parts of English character, I mean, its plain good sense, homely, yet deep philosophy, its manly truthfulness, freedom from affectation, abhorrence of all sham,—in a word, its earnestness.

I have very gladly come down to our every day speech, and to instances which, any Newspaper may supply us with, in citing the first illustration that I set before you of our great bard. For I would fain shew you that his profound wisdom and insight into the deep springs of our nature is not like a dainty jewel which few can appreciate or participate in, but is eminently the property of us all,—of the unlettered man as well as of the refined and thoughtful scholar,—and I should rejoice to be able to direct any man's attention from some one of these household sayings, whose poetry and whose deep philosophy seem obscured and smothered (vulgarised they really cannot be) by the commonness with which they are bandied, almost without thought, from mouth to mouth,—to the rich mine and storehouse of thought from which they are derived.

Take for instance one of the commonest examples, in the words "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul," and having pondered a moment on the exquisite beauty and propriety couched in the metaphor "flattering unction," as taken in this combination,—then track this saying to the source from which it comes.

It is from what is called the closet scene in Hamlet—I take it for granted, that all know the outlines of Hamlet's story. How he is urged to avenge his father's murder upon his guilty uncle. How he partly feigns madness, and partly is really distracted in his over susceptible nature by the burden which lies upon him. How after contriving to probe the conscience of the guilty pair (*viz.* his uncle and his uncle's paramour, his own fallen mother) with a play that he causes to be enacted before them, he then remonstrates privately with his mother in her closet, and how lastly, he lingers, and halts, and communes with himself, in the execution of his purpose of vengeance, till circumstances bring about the horrid catastrophe of the death of all the party in a way beside his intention and desire. Here we have him reasoning with his mother, in a scene far too long to quote at large,—a scene unequalled in the power of heart-searching scrutiny, and of homethrust truths forced on a guilty soul.

We will take the speech from which I have already quoted a single line. It is in answer to his mother persuading him that the image he saw of his murdered father was but "the coinage of his brain," telling him

"This bodiless creation—ecstasy  
Is very cunning in."

He replies—

"Ecstasy!  
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have utter'd:—bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will re-word; which madness  
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,  
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,  
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks;  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place;  
Whiles rank corruption,—mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to Heaven;  
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,  
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,  
For in the fatness of these pursy times,  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg;  
Yea curb and woo, for leave to do him good.

Then when the confession drops from her—

"O Hamlet! Thou hast cleft my heart in twain,"

He goes on—

"O throw away the worser part of it,  
"And live the purer with the other half."

Having thus introduced you into the middle of the Tragedy of Hamlet, I am tempted further to remark that it is in this Tragedy our great Dramatist has sounded the depths of human nature, and fathomed its mysteries, in a way more astonishing perhaps than is elsewhere to be met with in the range of his most prolific creations.

Others of his Dramas dive into and embody the different passions of our nature, tracking their courses, exhibiting their combinations, and marking out as it were imperceptibly the steps of their cure or their punishment. But here is scarce anything of passion,—though a revengeful nature is the great figure in the Drama. There is neither Othello's jealousy,—nor Lear's frantic anger—nor Macbeth's ambition,—nor Iago's malice,—nor Wolsey's pride,—nor Timon's misanthropy. But we have a Drama from which passion is as far as may be expunged, in order that intellect may be made rather the subject of our observation. Intellect in all the strength of noble conception, and all its pitiable feebleness of action when coupled as in Hamlet with an overwrought susceptibility of disposition.

I dare not pretend to enter into an elaborate discussion of this very wonderful and complicated phase of humanity as exhibited by Shakespeare with such skill in this Drama. But before I go on to cite one or two other passages which both embody some of the familiar phrases above quoted, and which exhibit the strange workings of that powerful, but half-diseased mind,—bent on a great purpose of questionable morality, unable as Shakspeare elsewhere expresses it,—

“To screw its courage to the sticking point,”

I would remind you what foundation there was in the history of Shakspeare's own time for this particular delineation, of a giant all-pervading intellect, joined to weakness, nay, more perhaps than in Hamlet, to a great obliquity of moral purpose.

I institute no comparison in any other point of view, but I cannot but observe that it was about the time that Hamlet was first brought out, that the towering intellect of Lord Bacon stooped to the pitiable degradation of conducting the memorable trial against his patron, Lord Essex, and that this was but the beginning of an exhibition in the face of all England, and of all posterity, of the wide difference between the man of a sublime speculative, keen, searching intellect, able to guide others into every realm of thought and every field of progress, and the man of simple, vigorous, hearty, honest action.

Truly these are great beacons to point out the shoals and quicksands of our nature. Bacon, the faithless friend, the corrupt judge, the fawning minister,—and Hamlet the musing, self-tormenting, wisdom-uttering—victim of his own unlawful, and almost impotent revenge.

It may seem rude and ungentle to the admirers of Bacon's vast intellect, not to throw a veil over his faults,—but toiling humanity has a full right to the consolation of learning how little cause there is for the hard hand, and the brow moistened with the sweat of honest labour, to envy the possession of that capacious, busy, over-refined intellect, which, when brought into contact with the realities of active life, reduces Bacon from a giant to a pigmy, and has left his name recorded as you find it in the Pictorial or People's History of England, as the “greatest wit, scholar, and scoundrel of his age.”<sup>12</sup>

But to return from history to the no less truthful pages of the Tragedian. While Hamlet expresses his amazement so naturally at the rude grave digger—“Has this fellow no feeling of his business; he sings at grave making,” what bystander who could measure the two from the insight the poet gives us to the heart of each, would not be inclined even to go beyond the extenuating plea put in by his friend Horatio—“Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.” Who would not really pity Hamlet, with all his philosophy, on comparing him with the two plain matter of fact characters between whom he is standing, his friend Horatio and the shrewd homely clown, who is digging Ophelia's grave. Then as he replies to Horatio so feelingly—“'Tis e'en so; the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.” That daintier sense which was his bane and torment, recalls to us at once the deep agony of his soliloquy, in which after witnessing the emotions of the player who had been personating a tragic recital of the downfall of Troy, he schools his own wavering and shrinking soul in that remarkable speech—too long for quotation—but beginning—

“So—now I am alone.

O, what a rogue, a peasant slave am I!  
Is it not monstrous, that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,  
That from her working all his visage wann'd;  
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!  
For Hecuba!  
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  
That he should weep for her? what would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have?



Then follows his bitter self-questioning about his own supposed cowardice and irresolution, till he becomes ashamed of his own vehemence in the terms of execration he heaps upon his guilty uncle. But though he sees the folly of his thus rating and setting to work as he says,—“to unpack his heart with words and fall to cursing like a very drab—a scullion,” still his scrupulous, self-tormenting, intellect is at work as before not hastening on,—but aiding him to put off the action,—he proceeds,

Fye upon 't! foh! About my brains, Humph, I have heard,  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,  
Have by the very cunning of the scene  
Been struck so to the soul,—that presently  
They have proclaimed their malefactions;  
For murder, tho' it have no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players  
Play something like the murder of my father,  
Before mine uncle:—I'll observe his looks  
I'll tent him to the quick; if he do blench  
I know my course. The spirit, that I have seen,  
May be a devil;—and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape;—yea, and, perhaps,  
Out of my weakness, and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds  
More relative than this; The play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

There is naturally much of soliloquy in this play of Hamlet—for as Chas. Lamb speaking of the entire unfitness of all stage representation to give effect to the deep wisdom of this drama, remarks—“Nine parts in ten of what Hamlet does are transactions between himself and his moral sense. Effusions of his solitary musings which he retires to holes and corners, and the most sequestered parts of the palace, to pour forth;—or rather they are the silent meditations with which his bosom is bursting reduced to words for the sake of the reader, profound sorrows, light and noise-abhorring ruminations, which the tongue scarce dares to utter to deaf walls and chambers.”<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly the next time Hamlet is brought before us after the passage above cited, is in one of those deep and terrible self-communings in which his goaded spirit seems pushed to the very verge of contemplated suicide. He had been represented in the 1<sup>st</sup> Scene, in which he is introduced in the drama as complaining—

“How weary stale, flat, and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world,  
Fye on 't, oh fye! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed—things rank and gross in nature,  
Possess it merely—”

and all this hyper sensitive weariness at his condition, coupled with the wish that his

“Too, too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that th' Everlasting had not fixed  
His Canon (i.e. his Law) 'gainst self-slaughter,”

returns to him with tenfold force when he feels himself marked out for a course of action for which he is unfitted. But such a mind as Hamlet's could not but ponder thoughtfully and fearfully on the future, and now after speaking of death as “a consummation devoutly to be wished” the thought of a self-sought death presents itself in its true and appalling colours—

“To die, to sleep,  
No more, and, by a sleep, to say we end  
The heart ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die; to sleep,  
To sleep! perchance to dream; aye, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause: there's the respect,  
That makes calamity of so long life:  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

Th' oppressors wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
 The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,  
 The insolence of office, and the spurns  
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
 When he himself might his quietus make  
 With a bare bodkin?  
 Who would fardels bear,  
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life;  
 But that the dread of something after death,  
 The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
 No traveller returns—puzzles the will;  
 And makes us rather bear the ills we have,  
 Than fly to others that we know not of?  
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;  
 And enterprises of great pith and moment,  
 With this regard, their currents turn awry,  
 And lose the name of action.

I feel that I have been tempted to extract a great deal more from this Tragedy of Hamlet than I had at first any intention of doing. My excuse for it must be that, finding such a multitude of those phrases and expressions which enrich our ordinary speech scattered broad-cast over every part of this Drama, I became convinced, that in spite of the unfathomable philosophic depths on which the whole conception of Hamlet's character is founded,—it had in it some extraordinary, perhaps mysterious elements of popularity;—something which speaking home to our common sympathies seemed to strike a responsive chord, not in the bosom only of the man of highly cultivated intellect, but of every thoughtful Englishman, who feels that he has a soul struggling with emotions he cannot penetrate, buoying itself up under weaknesses it cannot shake off, and yet possessing an internal and enduring strength designed to have play in another and better sphere than what Hamlet so feelingly calls the "uses of this world."

I cannot conclude this portion of my subject without expressing my conviction, in spite of its seeming paradoxicalness to some that Hamlet with all his high endowments, his profound philosophical intellect, his loving gentle spirit, his filial tenderness, or even to view him through the admiring eyes of Ophelia, having

"The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye tongue, sword,—  
 Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
 The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,  
 The observed of all observers,"

is yet of all Shakspeare's heroic characters in some striking respects, one of the most hateful; and regarded as a man of action, perhaps the most contemptible. Scott in his poem of Rokeby, represents young Wilfred as loving

"To ponder Jaques's moral strain,  
 And muse with Hamlet *wise in vain*."<sup>14</sup>

Those three monosyllables "*wise in vain*," are the most suggestive comment on Hamlet I have every met with. Hamlet is from the beginning of the play dallying with an unlawful thirst of vengeance, and though he is restrained by his better nature and his self-questioning scrupulosity, the *will* to do the meditated deed never quits him, and he who at the outset—i.e. before he had seen (or thought he had seen) his father's ghost meets us with the monstrous and unchristian exclamation—"Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven, or ever I had seen that day Horatio," continues in spite of his lofty philosophy, true to this hateful form of human weakness and wickedness, as one longing and purposing to take vengeance into his own hands, but yet as irresolute in act as he is waywardly strong in desire. He shows himself the source of his own feebleness, when he, who before rushing to hold converse with his father's ghost had declared—

"I do not set my life at a pin's fee,  
 And for my soul what can it do to that,  
 Being a thing immortal as itself."

Yet after dallying so long with the supposed command of the unembodied spirit confesses—

"Whether it be  
 Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple,

Of thinking too precisely on the event,  
 A thought which quartered hath but one part wisdom,  
 And ever three part coward, I do not know,  
 Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,  
 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
 To do't—"

Now let me say in a word, when I first thought of commending the Study of Shakspeare to your attention, I did it in the conviction that the Bard by "holding the mirror up to nature, shewing virtue her own features, scorn her own image" and the like, which is the description he gives of his own art, was able in every one to waken a deeper self-consciousness, and by displaying some of the sad conflicts of humanity, to disclose to each the hidden energies of man's spirit. This being effected by the Drama, just as it has been well said, the "unfelt and unknown strength of a nation is brought out by the necessities and tribulations of war."<sup>15</sup> And while in the Tragedy of King Lear we may study the career of a human spirit under the stern discipline of affliction, a heart to which filial ingratitude had "tied sharp-toothed unkindness like a vulture,"—so in Macbeth you may trace the downward course of a noble soul giving way to temptation, and through ill persuasion going on to a fearful height of crime. Nor is there a less worthy though more abstruse lesson to be learned in watching the refined susceptibility of Hamlet's nature, making him a being gazed at in admiration,—one to be instructed by—but *never, never* to be envied or imitated.

But it would be a very inadequate and unjust view of Shakspeare's power did we think to draw lessons only from the study of particular and isolated characters. It is in the combination of numerous elements of humanity—all in their just proportions—the relations in which men think and speak, and act, towards each other, that the master mind of the great Dramatist shews itself. The German critic Schlegel who gave the most loving and reverential Study to our great Bard, observes—"It is in the capability of transporting himself so completely into every situation even the most unusual that he is enabled as plenipotentiary of the whole human race to act and speak for every individual. The inconceivable element herein, and what moreover can never be learned is that the characters neither appear to do, not to say anything on the spectators account merely, and yet that the poet simply by means of the exhibition of his personage and without any subsidiary explanation communicates to his audience the gift of looking into the inmost recesses of their mind."<sup>16</sup>

I will observe here, that the unperishable individuality impressed upon a large number of our great historical characters with a more than historic truthfulness, is in itself a real boon to our literature. But intending to refer to this department by and bye, I go on with Schleyels' testimony to Shakspeare's art. Schlegel to remark, "Never was there so comprehensive a talent for characterisation as Shakspeare. It not only grasps every diversity of rank, age, and sex, down to the lispings of infancy.—Not only do the king and the beggar, the hero and the pickpocket, the sage and the idiot, speak and act with equal truthfulness, not only does he transport himself to distant ages and foreign nations; pourtraying with the greatest accuracy ancient Romans, French, and English, during a great period of their history, the cultivated society of his own day, and the rude barbarism of a Norman [foretime]; but he opens the gates of the magical world of spirits, calls up the midnight ghosts, exhibits before us the witches with their unhallowed rites, peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs, and these beings though existing only in the imagination nevertheless possess such truth and consistency, that even with such mis-shapen abortions as Caliban, he extorts the assenting conviction, that were there such beings, they must so conduct themselves. —In a word, he carries a bold and pregnant fancy into the kingdom of Nature, and carries Nature into the regions of fancy which lie beyond the confines of reality."<sup>17</sup>

In this honest eulogy of the great critic, there is one name in his catalogue before which I am tempted to pause. I wish to call your attention briefly to the mis-shapen abortion Caliban. I presume all who have ever opened a Shakspeare, or ever seen pictures from it, know the place that Caliban holds in that wildly imaginative, yet most exquisite, and delicately polished Drama, "The Tempest," where one man Prospero and his daughter Miranda (their natures elevated by previous misfortune and persecution), are set on an uninhabited island, surrounded by spirits of the air, and of the earth which are subjected to his sway.—And were the most unimaginative person present, to try and convince me that this strange ideal world of Shakspeare's creation (which he has given us in the Tempest, and the Midsummer Night's Dream) peopled by such beings as the fairies Puck, and Oberon, and Titania, or the tricky spirit Ariel, and the lumpish earthly Caliban, had no bearings on real life,—I would point out to him the remarkable phenomenon that any how this dreamiest of all Shakspeare's conceptions in his play of the Tempest, and that this very character of Caliban, had won its greatest share of admiration in a hard, iron, practical, age of stern politicians.

It was during the parliamentary struggle in the unhappy reign of Charles I., that what I may call the Favorite in the time of Charles I. triumphs of mis-shapen Caliban established themselves in the mind and taste of readers and spectators.—I believe I shall wound no one's political feelings if I say the very brightest and best character of that stirring era, the gentle, loving, valiant, but world-wearied Falkland, expresses the most unbounded admiration which he shared with many around him, for the wonderful creation of this impersonation of malignant Caliban, only half-reclaimed it might seem, from the brute creation.<sup>18</sup>

De Quincy, whom I find one of the best and most philosophic guides to some of the mysteries of Shakspeare's great art, remarks as follows:—"Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed, for all Shakspeare's great creations are like works of nature, subjects of inexhaustible study. It was this character of whom Charles I, and some of his ministers expressed such fervent admiration, and among other circumstances most justly admired the new language almost with which he is endowed for the purpose of expressing his fiendish, and yet carnal thoughts of hatred to his master."<sup>19</sup>

But the reason that I call your attention to this strange, degraded, unearthly monster, and carry you at once from Hamlet to Caliban, from the highest point of intellectual nature, to the most grovelling that a poet's imagination could strike out, is to exhibit to you, not the refreshing novelty of conception embodied in his strange language, but to ask you to contemplate for a moment one great moral purpose for which Shakspeare employs him. The Bard continues, skilfully to show us the hideous aspect which the low-lived and selfish vices of European civilization assume when placed as they are by his master hand side by side with this poor savage. Here we have in Caliban the embodiment of more hatred and more treachery than any will impute to the worst tribe of wild Kaffirs—more ingratitude and folly than they will charge upon the deluded Hottentot (though Caliban like them, excuses himself on the plea of having been cheated out of his land) here is more grovelling and unreclaimable barbarism than we usually ascribe to the Bushman, yet when he is purposely brought into comparison or contrast with the dissolute seaman and the drunken butler Trinculo and Stephano, with what a wonderful moral and poetic force does the loathsomeness of civilized vice exhibit itself to our eyes. Caliban in some contrasts rises almost to the dignity of moral, and certainly to the superiority of intellectual power. He can instruct these degraded men,

A moral purpose for which Shakspeare employs him. they are by his master hand side by side with this poor savage. Here we have in Caliban the embodiment of more hatred and more treachery than any will impute to the worst tribe of wild Kaffirs—more ingratitude and folly than they will charge upon the deluded Hottentot (though Caliban like them, excuses himself on the plea of having been cheated out of his land) here is more grovelling and unreclaimable barbarism than we usually ascribe to the Bushman, yet when he is purposely brought into comparison or contrast with the dissolute seaman and the drunken butler Trinculo and Stephano, with what a wonderful moral and poetic force does the loathsomeness of civilized vice exhibit itself to our eyes. Caliban in some contrasts rises almost to the dignity of moral, and certainly to the superiority of intellectual power. He can instruct these degraded men,

"In the wonders of the Isle

Bring them where crabs grow,

And with his long nails dig them pig nuts,

Show them the jay's nest, and instruct them how to snare

The nimble marmoset"

And while the poor savage is ready to worship Stephano with his bottle, he is quite unable to understand how the sight of so much "frippery" as Prospero's wardrobe, should check these covetous men, staying them in the very act of accomplishing their final design of murdering its owner.

The poor astonished monster seeing them helping themselves at the mouth of Prospero's cell, cries naturally enough—

"The dropsy drown this fool! what do you mean

To dote thus on such luggage? Let's along."

And presently when ordered—

"Put some lime upon your fingers, and away with the rest."

"I will have none on't: we shall lose our time,

And all be turned to barnacles, or to apes

With foreheads villainous low."

I will not challenge your memory, or your candor, to say whether this creation of the Poet's fancy has ever in spirit found a good deal of its counterpart in this land, whether drunkenness and covetousness have ever had their hideousness heightened by being enacted before some wandering Caliban, who has perhaps reflected afterwards much in the vein that Shakspeare makes his monster do—

"What a thrice double-ass

Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,

And worship, this dull fool."

But I will ask you to follow our present Governor, Sir George Grey, in the narrative of his interesting travels of discovery in Western Australia, where the natives (some of whom were of their party) are generally thought to approach as near to Caliban as any part of the human species. You will I think there be involuntarily reminded [of] this scene at the mouth of Prospero's cell.

The travellers were at their last resource,—water, provisions, everything failing them, their strength exhausted, many hundred miles of desolate country before them, it seemed as if without the most vigorous exertions a lingering and dreadful death must await them all. The journal proceeds—‘Our movements were soon again delayed by Woods, who began as usual to lie down, and declare his inability to proceed any further. I desired him to leave behind the heavy load he was carrying; but as on former occasions, he again declared his determination to die rather than part with this mysterious bundle which appeared to possess an extraordinary value in his estimation. It was easy to see from his appearance that he was now really ill, and unable to carry such a weight as he was striving to do;—at length he again laid himself down declaring that he was dying, and so I was determined no longer to see his life endangered by his so obstinately insisting on carrying on his bundle.—I took it up, informing him of my intention to pay him to the full value of any property of his that I might destroy.—I proceeded to open it with the intention of throwing all useless articles away. Upon this announcement of mine, he burst into tears, deploring alternately, his dying state and the loss of his bundle, and then poured forth a torrent of invectives against me, in the midst of which I quietly went on unfolding the treasured parcel, and exposing to view—3 yards of thick heavy canvass, some duck that he had purloined, ditto a large roll of sewing thread, a thick pea jacket which I had abandoned at the boats, and various other old pieces of canvass and duck, also a great part of the cordage of one of the boats, which he had taken without permission. When these various articles were produced, it was difficult to tell which was the prevailing sentiment in the minds of some of the party, mirth at thus seeing the contents of the mysterious bundle exposed, or indignation, that a man should have been so foolish as to endanger his own life, and that of others, for the sake of such a collection of trash.’<sup>20</sup>

Sir George Grey does not go on to say what were the remarks of the native Kaiber who accompanied them; but one can hardly think they would have been much other than those which our bard puts into the mouth of Caliban.

Now I have used the liberty of illustrating to you incidentally some moral use to be made of those preternatural creations in which Shakspeare’s vast intellect seemed so wonderfully to delight in reve[a]lling;—and you may trace the same use if you will, in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*—where all the follies of love-making and quarrelling, are subjected to the mirth of Puck.

“Then will two at once, woo one;  
 “That must needs be sport alone;”  
 “Shall we their fond pageant see?  
 “Lord! what fools these mortals be”

But let the prosaic mind, if it can see nothing more in those things, acquiesce at least in the reason for the use of them in poetry as Shakspeare so finely puts into the mouth of the kindly, yet un-imaginative, Duke of Athens, in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

In reply to his wife’s narration he says—

“More strange than true. I never may believe  
 These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.  
 Lovers, and madmen, have such seething brains,  
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,  
 Are of imagination all compact;  
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;  
 That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,  
 Sees Helen’s beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
 The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
 And, as imagination bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation, and a name.  
 Such tricks had strong imagination;  
 That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
 Or, in the night, imagining some fear,  
 How easy is a bush suppos’d a bear?”

I believe the veriest metaphysicians will hardly desire a more philosophical account of the matter than this—  
 Philosophy of this.                   couched as it is in a noble strain of poetry; and when in a play written probably at  
   the close of his public life (for so the *Tempest* is thought to be), Shakspeare finally  
 dismisses from the scene in the person of Prospero, all these wondrous fantasies, abjuring his rough magic,  
 desiring to “break his staff and bury it certain fathoms in the earth, and deeper than did plummet ever sound to  
 drown his book” (thus perhaps typically representing himself bidding adieu to his art)—we must remember the  
 poet makes this same Prospero at that moment the admonisher to us of the most solemn and real truths,  
 couched too in some of the sublimest words of any that the range of our English literature furnishes to us.

Who fitter than Prospero in his calm wisdom, to speak of an art which we must remember the poet  
 represents him as making no ill use of.

It is to his amazed son-in-law Prince Ferdinand, that he says—

“Be cheerful, sir;  
 Our revels now are ended: these our actors,  
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
 Are melted into air, into thin air:  
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
 The cloud-capp’d towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;  
 And like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 Leave not a rack behind: We are such stuff  
 As dreams are made of, and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleep.”

Perhaps those who can appreciate the lofty tone of moral teaching to which the visionary region of the  
 shadowy and supernatural, thus lead up the vast mind of Shakspeare, will think these creations of his brain  
 entitled to something more than the designation of “fairy toys.”

I have allowed the mention of Caliban to lead me already further than the time would warrant into this  
 province of supernatural creation, which Shakspeare has by his inventive genius, almost reconstructed into a  
 domain peculiarly his own.

I would gladly have said more, for I feel there is very much on the point yet unsaid: but I will not forget  
 that this very field opens me a point of contact with one large group of  
 Connexion between this                   Shakspeare’s characters, which I am sure must be dear to every Englishman and  
 field and the Historic                   with which all supernatural agency might at first sight seem to have little enough to  
 Drama.                                       do, I mean the characters of the Historical Drama. Those chronicle plays (as they  
 are called) in which the doings of our Plantagenet monarchs form the chief feature.

They would require more than one lecture to themselves. I am sorry to be compelled to give them now but a  
 rapid glance.<sup>21</sup>

From King John to Henry VIII, Shakspeare has illustrated the main features of English History. He has  
 once touched a legendary period of Scottish History in the legend of Macbeth. In this last Drama, he has used  
 the agency which he ever wields so skilfully, of the supernatural world. Now what the Weird Sisters do in  
 Macbeth, tempting on the hero with their horrible incantations to murder Duncan and usurp the throne, and  
 then leaving him stranded as it were in his misery, sleepless, worn, and weary of life, though he had attained at  
 their suggestion, all the objects of his ambition, all this with some analogy of circumstances, is handled by the  
 same great master, without any supernatural agency, in the dethronement of Richard II, by his cousin  
 Bolingbroke.

The poet who saw the propriety of introducing the witches, harmonising so well with the legendary age of  
 Scottish history, with the mountain, the heath, the storm, the thunder, and the  
 Wierd Sisters of Mac-                   distant battle, to work the ruin of Macbeth, knew well how to show us the downfall  
 beth.                                       of an ambitious spirit in the case of the English usurper Bolingbroke, without  
 seeking any other agency beyond those which mere history deals with. This connexion has been well pointed  
 out by an American critic, who says—“In the case of Macbeth, the weird sisters foretell to him that he is to be  
 King of Scotland. The wicked prophecy sinks deep into his heart, and he never doubts the fulfilment of it. But  
 how does this confidence affect him; he does not passively await its fulfilment. It is only once that the thought  
 crosses his, mind. ‘If chance will have me King, why chance may crown me without my stir.’”

The prophecy proves an incitement to action for its fulfilment, and goaded too by the concentrated ambition of his wife, he perpetrates both treachery and murder and makes himself king. It seems to me, he continues,—that there was enough in the concurring events of the time of Richard II, to speak to the ambitious and speculative spirit of Bolingbroke, as audibly almost as the mysterious voices of the witches as they addressed themselves to Macbeth upon the blasted heath. The wicked temptations which in the case of Macbeth, are made visible in the hideous forms of witches, are not less real, because unseen, in the evil passions in the heart of Bolingbroke.”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, those 40,000 admiring citizens, whom the old chronicler, Froissart, describes as crowding the street lamenting Bolingbroke’s departure, on the unjust sentence of banishment pronounced against him, and declaring that he was more worthy to reside in the kingdom than those that caused his banishment, may well be thought to have inspired him with thoughts that never let his ambitious spirit rest till he was seated on the throne.<sup>23</sup> Shakspeare represents even the king unable to suppress his misgivings concerning his cousin.—

“’Tis doubt,  
When time shall call him home from banishment,  
Whether our kinsman come to see his friends.  
Ourself, and Bushy, Bagot here, and Green,  
Observ’d his courtship to the common people:  
How he did seem to dive into their hearts,  
With humble and familiar courtesy;  
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,  
Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles,  
And patient underbearing of his fortune,  
As ’twere to banish their affects with him.  
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench;  
A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,  
And had the tribute of his supple knee,  
With *Thanks my countrymen, my loving friends;*  
As were our England in reversion his,  
And he our subjects’ next degree in hope.

We all know from the history how short he made his banishment, and Shakspeare truly represents to us how on his return he caresses the nobles as he had the commons on his departure. But we must look on to a later period of his career, to see what his wicked ambition has done for his personal happiness, and how the murdered King’s blood cried in vengeance against him from the ground. He had not, like Macbeth, wrought the deed of violence with his own hand—a cool state craft had been the dagger he had used. Accordingly he has not the wild emotions of a soul harrowed by bloody remembrances or a tormenting conscience, crying out to him at the very instant of the murder, which finds so fine an utterance in Macbeth—

“Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more!*  
*Macbeth does murder sleep—the innocent sleep;*  
*Sleep that knits up the ravell’d sleeve of care,—*  
*The death of each day’s life, sore labour’s bath,—*  
*Balm of hurt minds, great Nature’s second course,*  
*Chief nourisher in life’s feast!”*

In Bolingbroke this feeling of uneasiness for the crime at the time when it was committed, we see, is swallowed up in intense selfishness, and it can afford to vent itself in execrating Exton, whom he had employed to murder the dethroned Richard. “Exton, I thank thee not, for thou hast wrought a deed of slander with thy fatal hand upon my head.”

This expression “Deed of Slander,” reminds us not of the internal agony of Macbeth but rather of the selfish reply which, with such an inimitable touch of nature, the poet has put into the mouth of Lady Macbeth. When Macduff with a noble reality of surprise and sorrow declares,—

“O gentle lady,  
’Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:  
The repetition in a woman’s ear  
Would murder as it fell.”  
Then on Banquo’s entrance.—  
“O Banquo! Banquo!  
Or royal master’s murder’d,”  
She replies— “Woe, alas!  
What, *in our house?*”

But no less surely though more slowly does the retribution of a sleepless anxiety come upon the vaulting Bolingbroke. All who know the wonderful significancy with which Shakspeare indicates in the very opening of his plays, the character of that, which is to follow in them will be struck after the King's address[s], to Exton, which closes the Drama of Richard II, with the first line of the succeeding play of Henry IV, where the usurping Monarch begins:—"So shaken as we are, so worn with care, find we a time for frightened peace to pant." It required indeed the genius of a great poet to give us a vision of the royal sadness in words as truly natural and as truly practical, and yet more after the every-day pattern of things than in the distempered tone of Macbeth. It is poetry and history in their best combination that present the affecting spectacle of the care-worn King in the dead of night, beholding from the palace window the silent dwellings of a sleeping city, and then giving utterance to that mournful and yet beautiful apostrophe to sleep.

"How many thousand of my poorest subjects  
Are at this hour asleep!—Sleep, gentle sleep,  
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,  
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,  
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?  
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,  
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,  
And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,  
Than in the perfum'd chambers of the great,  
Under the canopies of costly state,  
And lull'd with sounds of sweetest melody?  
O! thou dull god, why liest thou with the vile,  
In loathsome beds and leav'st the kingly couch,  
A watch-case or a common 'larum-bell;  
Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains  
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?  
And in the visitation of the winds,  
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,  
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them  
With deaf'ning clamours in the slippery clouds,  
That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?  
Cans't thou, O partial sleep! give thy repose  
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude;  
And, in the calmest and most stillest night,  
With all appliances and means to boot,  
Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down!  
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

I find I must forego any further exhibition in detail of Shakspeare's historical characters with the exception of a few words presently on the dethroned Richard. I do not now even like to close my subject without briefly pointing out to you the wonderful harmony and connexion subsisting between true History, and all the highest and purest form of the Drama. How a highly wrought and cultivated imagination ministers, not as is sometimes thought to error, but to plain historic truth.

Any one studying Shakspeare's historical pictures with moderate attention would be conscious of the force of what has been well said by a modern critic.—"It is the precious moral agency of the imagination to raise us out of a narrow-minded selfishness. It enables us to think and feel with others, and thus to judge of them with candor and with charity, and therefore with truth. It puts in the historian's power to look upon distant ages, and in the spirit of those ages, and thus to give a genuine knowledge of them."<sup>24</sup>

So completely does this estimate apply to Shakspeare's mode of representing history to us that the strongest practical minds, who have handled history or biography in our own day, who have employed the most research, coupled with the most hard thinking, such as Hallam, Lord Campbell, and Dr. Arnold, have expressed their admiration,—the two first of Shakspeare's wonderful impartiality, and the latter, of the positive necessity of imbuing some of his dramatic spirit in conceiving historical characters with fidelity.<sup>25</sup>

Arnold, the intensely practical and single-hearted Arnold, who was an honest champion of what he conceived to be truth, whether in the history of ancient politics or the present questions of modern society, exclaims in one of his letters—"what a treat it would be to teach Shakspeare to a good class of young Greeks in



regenerate Athens. To dwell upon him line by line, and word by word, and so to get all his pictures and thoughts leisurely into one's mind, till I verily think one would after a time almost give out light in the dark, after being steeped as it were in such an atmosphere of brilliancy."<sup>26</sup> But it is in a graver strain that he speaks when grappling as an historian with some of the great characters who swayed the destinies of Rome, and feeling the value of Shakspeare's all grasping and penetrative mind to deal with such subjects adequately; he says—"the genius which conceived the incomprehensible character of Hamlet could alone be able to describe with intuitive truth the character of Scipio or of Cromwell." With such Testimony as this before us we may well think "if we let imaginative literature drop out of our reading we are neglecting a whole region of truth and reality, which the highest prose authority acknowledges itself unequal to."<sup>27</sup> Surely, tragedy is performing its noblest task when it traces for us with fidelity what the chastening hand of affliction could do on such a soul as the deposed Richard II, of England.

I have, no doubt, that notions of the reign of this unhappy monarch if confined to mere historical details, would leave him faintly impressed as a most uninteresting character in our eyes. But Shakspeare's genius by a skilful use of a few known facts, has invested him with an imperishable individuality,—that leaves him stamped on our minds, in colours as clear and touching as those in which so much cotemporary literature has painted the erring and suffering monarch Charles I.

At the commencement of the Drama of Richard the II, the King is represented to us in the height of his pride and folly, much as we can fancy him appearing in the eyes of his great rival Bolingbroke—

"The skipping King he ambled up and down,  
With shallow gestures and rash bavin wi[t]s,  
Soon kindled and soon burn'd, carded his state,  
Mingled his royalty with capering fools,  
Had his great name profaned by their scorns,  
And gave his countenance against his name,  
To laugh at gibing boys, and stand the push  
Of every beardless vain comparative."

We see Richard already a different man, though with most perfect Dramatic unity in his character, when following like a captive in the train of Bolingbroke.

"Then with contempt, men's eyes did scowl on Richard;  
No man cried, God save him;  
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home:  
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head;  
Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,—  
His face still combating with tears and smiles,  
The badges of his grief and patience,—  
That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd  
The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,  
And barbarism itself have pitied him."

We should note the dramatic propriety with which Shakspeare represents Richard, gradually mellowed by adversity, taking date from the time of the execution of his favourites Bushy, Bagot, Green, and the Earl of Wilshire, who had been the misleaders of his youth and pamperers of his vices. The poet nobly represents him, shewing many flashes of kingly dignity, many fluctuations between confidence and despondency, at one time strong in the persuasion—

"Not all the waters in the rough rude sea,  
Can wash the balm from an anointed King,  
The breath of wor[l]dly men cannot depose  
The deputy elected by the Lord."

Then again conscious of his helplessness, he is ready to give up all to exchange, as he says: —

"My large kingdom for a little grave,  
A little—little grave, an obscure grave,  
Or I'll be buried in the king's high way,  
Some way of common trade, where subjects feet  
May hourly trample on their sovereigns head,  
For on my heart they tread, now whilst I live,  
And buried once—why not upon my head."

But the gentle and lofty morality of the drama is best traced in the concluding scene, the prison scene, where before Richard's soul is summoned from the earth, there is added to the utterance of his anguish the contrite confession of a mis-spent life,—and very beautifully and significantly is this connected with the introduction of music. It is by a rude hand—the King's former groom—outside the prison.

“Music do I hear? Ha! Ha!—Keep time,  
How sour sweet music is, when time is broke,  
So is it in the music of men's lives.  
And here have I the daintiness of ear,  
To check time broke in a disorder'd string;  
But, for the concord of my state and time,  
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.  
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;”

Yet with all the conscious misery of his downfall, the music calls forth a kindly feeling and a blessing, for he thinks of it as the last tribute, as indeed it proved to be of some humble and still loyal subject, who is lingering with affection about his prison walls.

“This music mads me—let it sound no more;  
For, though it have holp madmen to their wits,  
In me it seems it will make wise men mad.  
Yet blessings on his head that gives it me!  
For 'tis a sign of love; and love to Richard  
Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.”

Thus is it, says the American Reed, that Shakspeare, as a great historian and a great moralist teaches through tragedy how the power and divinity of suffering can bring the weak, the wilful, and the wicked to a better mind, and can win for them a just sympathy.<sup>28</sup> Let me as I conclude point to the sad contrast of a poetic

Contrast of dramatic and dramatic talent when misused. Turn for a moment in your thoughts to the power misused. dazzling and unreal pictures of life and character, presented to us by the unhappy and diseased mind of Byron. It has been well said, that “in the long Byron wail you search in vain for a single healthful impersonation of humanity. His heroes are as feeble as they are unreal,—for there is no strength in them, but that of their intensely selfish passions; but, his genius is prostituted to a worse abuse in confounding and sophisticating the simplicity of conscience, breaking down the barriers between right and wrong, abating the natural abhorrence of crime while he arrays the vilest guilt in a false splendour and pride. How different to Shakspeare's genuine morality so loyal to the best moral instincts, never making vice attractive nor tempting us to look fondly on the proud and sinful temper, until it be chastened by adversity still less holding up to admiration, the moral monster in whom one virtue is linked with a thousand crimes.” (Reed.)<sup>29</sup>

Or to take a far healthier poet than Byron,—for Byron's characters are all reflections of one image, and that image himself, let us ask ourselves, would it ever for an instant have presented itself to the mind of Shakspeare,

Longfellow's golden to depict a character like Prince Henry in the Golden Legend of Longfellow. The legend. Prince beginning in the 1<sup>st</sup> scene to resign himself to the tempter, then goes on in weakness and selfishness and fear of death, sacrificing the innocent Elsie,—till just before the close of the drama. Lucifer is represented saying—

“He is already mine,  
Let him live to corrupt his race,  
Breathing among them with every breath,  
Weakness, selfishness, and the base  
And pusillanimous fear of death;  
I know his nature, and I know,  
That of all who in my ministry  
Wander the great earth to and fro,  
And on my errands come and go,  
The safest and subtlest are such as he”

And after all this, without any further change than that of his marrying a devoted girl, who had more reason to despise him, he is left in tranquil scenes of happiness, such as a poet's dream of fairy land might well picture. Then at the close of the piece, we are to learn from an Epilogue put into the mouth of an angel—

“Down goes the sun,  
“But the soul of one,

“Who by repentance,  
 “Has escaped the dreadful sentence.  
 “Shines bright below me as I look.”<sup>30</sup>

Contrast I say, all this misuse of the choicest gifts of poetry, (gifts so well employed elsewhere in Longfellow’s Works) with the vigorous, healthy tone in which Shakspeare exhibits to us the need of repentance—not in unreal words mawkishly enough uttered, when the subject of them is reposing languidly with his chosen bride on a lovely terrace by his castle on the Rhine;—but in the stern reality of action and suffering. Richard from his prison, or his usurping successor, from his sleepless bed, give us indeed a far other lesson.

Shakspeare, it is true, never tarries to sermonise, nay, never betrays a consciousness that he is saying a word to auditors or readers in his own person, yet everywhere sets up the most unmistakeable finger-posts pointing to the moral government and the retributive justice of God in the affairs of men. Nor is this the property only of his historical Dramas. For instance, the pride and hatred of the Montagues and Capulets, in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the hasty wayward loves of their children, each find a fitting monitor to shew us to what their passions tend,—and there is something real in the action of the Drama in answer to the Prince’s reflections—

“Capulet! Montague!  
 See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,  
 That heaven finds means to kill your joy with love!  
 And I for winking at your discords too,  
 Have lost a brace of kinsmen;—all are punish’d.”

So there is something in the action to answer to the pregnant words of the good friar—

“These violent delights have violent ends.  
 And in their triumph die; like fire and powder,  
 Which, as they kiss, consume; the sweetest honey  
 Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,  
 And in the taste confounds the appetite:  
 Therefore, love moderately;

I now take leave of my subject with a brief remark on our cotemporary writers of fiction, with whose writings, however, I do not pretend to have any but a cursory and second hand acquaintance. One Dramatic writer at least, I believe, the age has produced, whose Dramas are destined to live to a future generation. I mean the author of *Philip Von Arteveldt*.<sup>31</sup> And it is worthy of note, that his genius appears to have been kindled by a strong and intense revulsion against the hollowness and unreality of Lord Byron’s poetic-creations. There are besides many other writers of fiction who throw their productions into the form of Novels and Tales which since the days of the immortal Shakspeare, will seem all destined to assume more or less of a dramatic cast. Whether Dickens, or Thackeray, or Mrs. Stowe, or Miss Younge,<sup>32</sup> are destined to give pleasure or instruction to future ages, will (as I feel assured from the example of Scott) depend on how far their minds are cast in a Shaksperian mould, or they have trained their faculties in accordance with the inspirations of his genius.

I well know that the imagination will always require some food to prey on, and works of imagination, either good or bad, will always obtain an ascendancy in every age. I believe I am ministering at once to the cause of good morals and good taste, when I direct your mind to an enduring standard (such as Shakspeare affords) by which such works may be tried and measured.

How much of mischievous poison has deluged the world, especially in translations from profligate French novels, I feel that I need hardly warn you. No one, I am assured who had ever really studied and appreciated a single play of Shakspeare would fall back with an enjoyment to the low and degrading productions of Victor Hugo, or Eugene Sue.<sup>33</sup>—and I entertain the hope that in inculcating a manly, healthful, use of such intellectual food as that which I have barely, and very inadequately, touched on this Evening, I am opposing the strongest barrier, next to the workings of pure religion itself, to a sickly sentimental vice, and to the morbid, selfish, faithless, weariness of life, which a debased Literature of low fiction, has so fatal a tendency to encourage.

## NOTES

*This edition contributes to the Southern Hemisphere Spread of Shakspeare Research and Publication Programme.* See <http://www.ru.ac.za/institutes/isea/SHSOS/index.html> for further information. The contribution of librarians to this work is greatly appreciated, in particular Petrie le Roux of the National Library, Cape Town; Sue van der Riet and Sue Rionda of Rhodes University Library, and Sally Schramm of the Cory Library for Historical Research.

1. The spelling, ‘Shakspeare’, was very usual in the nineteenth century and in adopting it Merriman keeps company with important influences on his lecture such as Lamb, De Quincey and Schlegel (in the translation by John Black), not to mention Henry Reed, whose posthumously published books *Lectures on*

*English History and Tragic Poetry* (1855) and *Lectures on English Literature, From Chaucer to Tennyson* (1855) inform much of what he has to say. Coleridge used Shakspeare while Hazlitt preferred Shakespear.

2. The *Family Shakespeare* first appeared anonymously in 1807, written by Thomas Bowdler's twin sister Henrietta Maria (a fact withheld because it might be considered improper that a woman should be able to identify indecencies). The publication treated twenty of "the most unexceptionable" plays. In 1818 *The Family Shakespeare, in Ten Volumes; in which nothing is added to the original text; but those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family* was published under Thomas Bowdler's name. Based on the Steevens text, by 1850 the work had been through eleven editions. Defence of the Bowdlers' efforts had some surprising sources. In his essay 'Social Verse' from *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (1894), Swinburne famously wrote, "More nauseous and more foolish cant was never chattered than that which would deride the memory or depreciate the merits of Bowdler. No man ever did more service to Shakespeare than the man who made it possible to put him into the hands of intelligent and imaginative children" (98).

3. Sir James Stephen, "On Desultory and Systematic Reading", 25. Stephen (1789-1859), a barrister and former Secretary to the Colonies, was appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1849. He was known for his *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography and Other Subjects* (1849) and *Lectures on the History of France* (1851).

4. The true source is generally accepted to be Menander's *Thais*. Gregory of Nazianzus, or Gregory the Theologian, was once considered by some to be the author of *Christ Suffering (Christos Paschon)*, and is accepted as such by Milton in his Introduction to *Samson Agonistes*: "Gregory Nazianzen, A Father of the Church, thought it not unbeseeming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy, which he entitled *Christ Suffering*" (517). For a recent discussion of the attribution problem, see Wittreich (2002).

5. From "On Shakespear.1630", Milton's first poem published in English, which was printed in (and presumably written for) the Second Folio (1632) under the title "An Epitaph on the admirable Dramaticke Poet W. Shakespeare".

6. John Payne Collier's problematic production, *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* by Coleridge, first published in 1856, was based on elaborated transcriptions of Collier's notes taken at seven of the seventeen lectures Coleridge delivered in 1811-1812. The Rhodes library copy formed part of the John X. Merriman Library, donated to the University by Sir Abe Bailey in 1937. This book might well be Nathaniel Merriman's own copy, possibly purchased during the family's sojourn in England between 1853 and 1856, and incorporated into his son's library along with others of Merriman's books at his passing. De Quincey (Merriman leaves out the 'e') wrote on "Shakespeare" for the seventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1838 (the piece appears in his collected works), while Lamb produced "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Presentation" (1811), originally published in Leigh Hunt's journal, *The Reflector*. This latter piece may have influenced Merriman's focus on Shakespeare in the study, rather than on stage.

7. Southey began his reading of Shakespeare at the age of eight under the influence of his mother's well-to-do half-sister, Elizabeth Tyler, with whom he lived in Bath from the age of two. Indulging a taste for the Gothic, in later life *Titus Andronicus* became a favourite play. In addition to the famous sonnet on Shakespeare ("Others abide our question. Thou art Free - -"), Merriman is probably thinking here of Matthew Arnold's engagement with Shakespeare in the 1853 Preface to his poems, where he described Shakespeare as "Foremost among - - - models for the English writer" (599). Early in the century, Scott had been lionised as a new Shakespeare (Carlyle was a notable exception), because of his inventive vigour and range of characters.

8. A reference to Schlegel's *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1809).

9. See Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XV, 19.

10. Wordsworth, XVI in *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*. Commonly known as "We Must be Free or Die". See *Collected Poems*, 244.

11. Figures that do not appear in *Hamlet* are "better part of valor is discretion" from *Henry 4 Part 1*; "golden opinions" from *Macbeth*; "skiey influences" from *Measure for Measure*; "working day world" from *As You Like It*; and "patience on a monument smiling at grief" from *Twelfth Night*. The phrase "those Delphic lines" is from the Milton sonnet (see Note 5, above).

12. *The Pictorial History of England, Being a History of the People, As Well as a History of the Kingdom*, edited by George Lillie Craik and Charles MacFarlane, appeared in four volumes between 1837 and 1841. The Bacon quotation appears in Volume 4, Book V11, Chapter 1, "Narrative of Military and Civil Transactions," 64.

13. The passage, in Talfourd's edition of Lamb, reads: "Why, nine parts in ten of what Hamlet does, are transactions between himself and his moral sense; they are the effusions of his solitary musings, which he retires to holes and corners and the most sequestered parts of the palace to pour forth; or rather, they are the silent meditations with which his bosom is bursting, reduced to *words* for the sake of the reader, who must else remain ignorant of what is passing there. These profound sorrows, these light-and-noise-abhorring ruminations, which the tongue scarce utter to deaf walls and chambers, how can they be represented by a gesticulating actor, who comes and mouths them out before an audience, making four hundred people his confidants at once!" (583).

14. Walter Scott, "Rokeby," Canto XXIV, 332.

15. Reed, *History*, 409. Henry Reed (1808-1954) was Wordsworth's editor in America, and did much to promote his reputation there. Reed's book, *Lectures on English History and Tragic Poetry, As Illustrated by Shakespeare* (1855), is based on two courses of lectures delivered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1842 (on Tragic Poetry) and 1846 (on the History Plays). They were posthumously edited for publication by his lawyer brother, William Bradford Reed, after Henry Reed died in a shipwreck off Cape Race, Newfoundland in 1854, returning from a visit to Europe. The Rhodes library copy carries Merriman's autograph and the date, 1856, in ink, on the first facing page. The volume was part of John X Merriman's library donated to the University by Sir Abe Bailey in 1937.

16. An accurate transcription from Black's translation reads: "It is in the capability of transporting himself so completely into every situation, even the most unusual, that he is enabled, as plenipotentiary of the whole human race, without instructions for each separate case, to act and speak in the name of every individual. - - - The inconceivable element herein, and what moreover can never be learned, is, that the characters neither appear to do, nor to say any thing on the spectator's account merely; and yet that the poet simply, by means of the exhibition, and without any subsidiary explanation, communicates to his audience the gift of looking into the inmost recesses of their minds" (362).

17. The full Schlegel quotation in Black's translation reads:

Never perhaps was there so comprehensive a talent for characterization as Shakespeare. It not only grasps every diversity of rank, age, and sex, down to the lisplings of infancy; not only do the king and the beggar, the hero and the pickpocket, the sage and the idiot, speak and act with equal truthfulness; not only does he transport himself to distant ages and foreign nations, and portray with the greatest accuracy (a few apparent violations of costume excepted) the spirit of the ancient Romans, of the French in the wars with the English, of the English themselves during a great part of their history, of the Southern Europeans (in the serious part of many comedies), the cultivated society of the day, and the rude barbarism of a Norman fore-time; his human characters have not only such depth and individuality that they do not admit of being classed under common names, and are inexhaustible even in conception: no, this Prometheus not merely forms men, he opens the gates of the magical world of spirits, calls up the midnight ghost, exhibits before us the witches with their unhallowed rites, peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs; and these beings, though existing only in the imagination, nevertheless possess such truth and consistency, that even with such misshapen abortions as Caliban, he extorts the assenting conviction, that were there such beings they would so conduct themselves. In a word, as he carries a bold and pregnant fancy into the kingdom of nature, on the other hand, he carries nature into the regions of fancy, which lie beyond the confines of reality.

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18. The Falkland reference appears in several early editions of Shakespeare's plays. Nicholas Rowe writes in the introduction to his 1709 edition: "The Observation, which I have been inform'd three very great Men concurr'd in making upon this Part [that of Caliban], was extremely just. *That Shakespear had not only found out a new Character in his Caliban but had also devis'd and adapted a new manner of Language for that Character.*" His Note 16 reads: "Lord Falkland, Lord C.J. Vaughan and Mr. Selden." He refers to Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, 1610-1643; Lord C.J. Vaughan, Sir John Vaughan, 1603-1674; and Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, John Selden, 1584-1654. Johnson, in his note on *The Tempest* (1.4), cites the same tradition from Warburton, but although Merriman was familiar with Johnson's edition (see "Shakspeare, as Bearing on English History", Note 33) he would have had to ignore Johnson's damning strictures on the notion that Shakespeare had "devised and adapted a *new manner of language*" for Caliban: "They certainly mistook brutality of sentiment for uncouthness of words" (see Raleigh, 66).

19. See De Quincey, "Shakespeare," 85. There are minor inaccuracies in the transcription.

20. George Grey, Vol. 1, 10. There are minor inaccuracies. The two volumes of Grey's *Journals* in the Stanford Collection of Rhodes University's Cory Library are inscribed, in Merriman's hand, "St Bartholomew Church Library No. 129" and "No. 130", respectively. Merriman was instrumental in the establishment of St. Bartholomew's, and it may well be that these were the volumes he worked from in preparing his lecture.

21. It would seem, then, that Merriman's second lecture, "Shakspeare, As Bearing on English History" (1858), was not formally contemplated at the time the first was delivered.

22. Reed, *History*, 187: There are minor inaccuracies (or adaptations) in the passage as it appears in the lecture. In Merriman's copy (see Note 15 above), the particular passage is marked in pencil with a vertical line and the word 'Macbeth' transcribed vertically in the right-hand margin in Merriman's hand – evidently part of his preparations for the lecture.

23. Froissart's *Chronicles*: the passage from Froissart upon which this sentence is based is quoted in Reed (*History*), 191. In the Rhodes Library copy of Reed (see Note 19, above), the words "Weird Sisters" are pencilled vertically in Merriman's hand in the right-hand margin behind a line marking the passage.

24. Reed, *History*, 37. Again, there are minor inaccuracies or adaptations in transcription.

25. Henry Reed (*History*) relies on Dr Arnold as an antidote to the sceptical history of Hume (see 39). Or the reference to him may simply represent Arnold's reputation as the author of, among other works, the *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (1842), and the *History of Rome* (1838). A copy of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the latter work, 1848/1850, in the Rhodes Library, is from John X. Merriman's Library, and may have been owned by Nathaniel Merriman. Merriman reiterates his stance on Arnold and Hume even more vigorously in the second lecture "Shakspeare, as Bearing on English History" (1858) and refers specifically to Arnold's *History of Rome*. Henry Hallam (1777-1859), historian, was the author of an *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (1838-1839) and of *Literary Essays and Characters from the Literature of Europe* (1852); his son, Arthur Henry Hallam, was the A.H.H. of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Lord John Campbell (1779-1861) published a famous and unjustly derided work *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements* in 1859 – too late to be alluded to here. However, his *Lives of the Chief Justices of England* (1849-1857) is shot through with references to Shakespeare, including a foretaste of the views articulated in the 1959 publication (See Volume 1, 43).

26. Thomas Arnold, Letter to Mr Justice Coleridge (Rugby, September 23, 1836). Merriman probably read the letter in Stanley's *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* (1844). A full transcription from the latter source reads:

- - - what a treat it must be to teach Shakespeare to a good class of young Greeks in regenerate Athens; to dwell upon him line by line, and word by word, in the way that nothing but a translation lesson will ever enable one to do; and so to get all his pictures and thoughts leisurely into one's mind, till I verily think one would after a time almost give out light in the dark, after having been steeped as it were in such an atmosphere of brilliance.

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27. Reed quoting Arnold's *History of Rome* (vol. 3, 385), *English Literature*, 79, 80.

28. Reed, *History*, 179. An accurate transcription from Reed is:

Thus it is that Shakspeare – a great historian – teaches how tragedy – "the power and divinity of suffering" – can bring the weak, the wilful, and the wicked to a better mind, and can win for them a just sympathy; - - -

The parenthetical quotation appears in Reed's *Lectures on English Literature, From Chaucer to Tennyson* (1855), also edited by his brother, William Reed.

29. This long 'quotation' from Reed is in fact a collage drawn from his Lecture IX ("Contemporary Literature") in the *Lectures on English Literature, From Chaucer to Tennyson* (1855). I consulted the 5<sup>th</sup> edition (1860). The phrase, "the long Byron wail", is lifted from a quotation from Sir Arthur Helps' *Friends in Council, a Series of Readings and Discourse thereon* (1847-1859), in a passage quoted by Reed on page 281. The passage "you search in vain - - - impersonation of humanity" appears on page 278. The passage "His heroes are as feeble as they are unreal" appears to be a digest of Sir Henry Taylor's comments in the Preface to his "*Philip Van Artavelde*" quoted on pages 279-80, while the passage "there is no strength in them - - - intensely selfish passions" borrows Taylor's actual words on page 280. The

next passage, “his genius is prostituted - - - the vilest [vice] in a false splendour and pride - - - linked with a thousand crimes [!]”, lightly altered, is by Reed on page 283.

30. “The Golden Legend” (1851) became Part Two of Longfellow’s long poem *Christus: A Mystery*, and it represents the Middle Ages in the historical scheme of the larger work. It is based on the story of *Der Arme Heinrich* in Mailáth’s *Altdeutsche Gedichte*, published in Stuttgart in 1809. The title is not capitalised in Merriman’s published lecture.

31. Sir Henry Taylor (1800-1886) wrote four tragedies of which the elaborate poetic drama *Philip van Artevelde* (1834) was the most successful. The work is discussed by Henry Reed in both his *Lectures on English History* (23-25) and his *Lectures on English Literature*, Lecture X (“Tragic and Elegiac Poetry”). Taylor’s *Notes from Books* (1849), which influenced favourably the reception of Wordsworth and Southey, is treated in the second chapter of the *Lectures on English Literature*.

32. Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852); Charlotte M. Yonge, prolific High Church novelist whose best-known work is *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853).

33. Victor Hugo, whose work chronicles the romantic unease of post-revolutionary France, is best known as the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, 1831 (in English, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*) and, later, *Les Misérables* (1862). Merriman’s remark may have been conditioned by the response to such early works as his novel *Le Dernier jour d’un condamné*, 1829 (*The Last Day of a Man Condemned to Death*) or *Claude Gueux* (1834), a documentary short story on the life of a murderer, excoriating the death penalty. Hugo’s social activism and his penchant for low-life subjects would be at odds with Merriman’s religious idealism. Likewise, some of the seamy urban novels of Eugène Sue, such as *Les Sept pêchés capitaux* (*The Seven Deadly Sins*; 16 vols., 1847-1849), or *Les Mystères du peuple* (1849-1856), a work which was suppressed by the censor in 1857, attracted the kind of public attention that would be uncongenial to Merriman’s moral outlook.

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