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### ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

#### SHAKESPEARE'S REFERENCES TO CONSUMPTION, CLIMATE, AND FRESH AIR.

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WE have recently celebrated the Tercentenary Year of Shakespeare's death. On April 23, 1616, there died in Stratford-on-Avon the greatest of Englishmen, and one whose knowledge and insight into our frail humanity show that he possessed a master mind in medicine—as, indeed, he had in so many of the arts and sciences of life. We know that he was an actor and a playwright, and have not books been written to show that Shakespeare must have been a soldier,<sup>1</sup> a sailor, a lawyer,<sup>2</sup> an astronomer, a divine,<sup>3</sup> a printer,<sup>4</sup> a courtier, a sportsman, an angler,<sup>5</sup> and a gardener?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Was Shakespeare ever a Soldier?" By W. J. Thomas, F.S.A., 1865.

<sup>2</sup> "Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements considered in a Letter to J. P. Collier." By John, Lord Campbell, 1859. "Shakespeare a Lawyer." By W. L. Rushton, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Eaton's "Shakespeare and the Bible," 1858.

<sup>4</sup> "Shakespeare and Typography; being an Attempt to show Shakespeare's Personal Connection with, and Technical Knowledge of, the Art of Printing." By William Blades, 1872.

<sup>5</sup> "Was Shakespeare an Angler?" By H. N. Ellacombe, 1883.

<sup>6</sup> "The Plant-Lore and Garden Craft of Shakespeare." By Rev. Henry N. Ellacombe, M.A., London, 2nd ed., 1884.

Before this Tercentenary recedes too far from our memory it might be interesting to set down a few references I have found in Shakespeare's works dealing with consumption, climate, and fresh air. It is curious that, although I could give quite a large number of quotations concerning syphilis, there are not half a dozen references to consumption in his plays. If Timon of Athens was referring to tuberculosis when he says, "Consumption catch thee" (iv. 3), he certainly suggests that the disease was looked on as contagious in the sixteenth century.

Falstaff may or may not be illustrating an analogy from phthisis and the general view that it was incurable when he says:

I can get no remedy against this consumption of the purse; borrowing only lingers and lingers it out, but the disease is incurable.—*Henry IV.*, Part II., i. 2.

Beatrice, in a merry spirit, says she takes pity on her lover, as she had heard he was in a consumption:

BEATRICE. I would not deny you; but, by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion; and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.—*Much Ado About Nothing*, v. 4.

It should be noted that Beatrice indicates that, even in those days, consumption was curable.

Shakespeare shows an æsthetic appreciation of pure air:

The climate's delicate; the air most sweet.—*The Winter's Tale*, iii. 1.

The air breathes upon us here most sweetly.—*The Tempest*, ii. 1.

He well describes the air on cold nights—

HAMLET. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO. It is a nipping and an eager air.

*Hamlet*, i. 4.

and appreciates the perfumed air of daybreak, for even the Ghost in "Hamlet" says:

But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air.—*Hamlet*, i. 5.

He accepts the popular idea, still too common, that there is something particularly harmful in night air:

PORTIA. Is Brutus sick? and is it physical  
To walk unbracèd, and suck up the humours  
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,  
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed  
To dare the vile contagion of the night,  
And tempt the rheumy and unpurgèd air  
To add unto his sickness?

*Julius Cæsar*, ii. 1.

The good air of Scotland evidently appealed to him, for in "Macbeth" he exclaims:

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our senses. . . . The heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here. . . . The air is delicate.

*Macbeth*, i. 6.

But much more remarkable is his frequent commendation of fresh air for various conditions. Thus, for ordinary fainting, how slow is the willing but untrained public to act on the first principle so well expressed in the following lines:

Stand from him, give him air; he'll straight be well.—*Henry IV.*, Part II., iv. 4.

So play the foolish throngs with one that swoons;  
Come all to help him, and so stop the air  
By which he should revive.

*Measure for Measure*, ii. 4.

Free access of fresh air is advised for other conditions besides attacks of fainting. The line

The most wholesome physic of thy health-giving air.—*Love's Labour's Lost*, i. 1.

might serve as a motto for a sanatorium for tuberculosis, and the good influence of air on digestion is thus described:

The air is quick there, and it pierces and sharpens the stomach.—*Pericles*, iv. 1.

Even in more general affections, fresh air is one of Nature's best awakeners:

PEMBROKE. His highness yet doth speak, and holds belief  
That, being brought into the open air,  
It would allay the burning quality  
Of that fell poison which assaileth him.

PRINCE HENRY. Let him be brought into the orchard here.

*King John*, v. 7.

I pray you give her air.

Gentlemen,  
This queen will live: nature awakes; a warmth  
Breathes out of her.

*Pericles*, iii. 2.

As opposed to a fresh-air régime, the drawbacks of a sedentary life, in which the vitiated air is the chief factor, are thus described:

Long sitting to determine poor men's causes  
Hath made me full of sickness and diseases.

*Henry VI.*, Part II., iv. 7.

The atmosphere of crowded "At Homes" is little better now than in the days of Henry VIII.:

WOL. There's fresher air, my lord, in the next chamber.  
KING. Lead in your ladies.

*Henry VIII.*, i. 4.

In spite of their easily aired clothing and their cult of baths, the great unwashed in Rome made it impossible then, as now, to ventilate a crowd. Menenius shouts to the Roman citizens:

You are they  
That made the air unwholesome.  
*Coriolanus*, iv. 7.

In Timon's curse on Athens, after calling down plagues, fevers, sciatica, venereal diseases, itches, blains, and general leprosy, he exclaims:

Breath infect breath,  
That their society, as their friendship, may  
Be merely poison!  
*Timon of Athens*, iv. 1.

The following line is taken, curiously enough, from "A Lover's Complaint":

O, that sad breath his spongy lungs bestow'd!  
*A Lover's Complaint*, St. 47.

Now, there are few diseases that cause a characteristic foetid breath, and I would suggest that Shakespeare attributed to the lungs the odour which in all probability arose from the gums. If the line were thus altered,

O, that sad breath his spongy gums bestow'd,

it would serve as an excellent text for a paper on pyorrhœa! One of the risks of mouth-breathing was realized by Casca, when he said:

I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air.—  
*Julius Cæsar*, i. 2.

and in connection with the mouth, it is most noteworthy that Coriolanus is made to send the following message to the citizens of Rome:

Bid them wash their faces,  
And keep their teeth clean.  
*Coriolanus*, ii. 3.

Now, when we recollect that probably the first British monarch to see a tooth-brush was George III., and that the cult of this instrument of health is far from universal, it is little short of astonishing that Shakespeare should have preached this æsthetic hygiene three hundred years ago. Truly, he is one of our masters of medicine!