FOLKLORE AND BALLADRY

IN

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CHAPTER I

SHAKESPEARE AND ART

We are dealing with genius, a term only equalled in elusiveness by "life", the "soul", "God", a term of whose significance we outside the pale cannot hope to have more than a glimmering. When we see great men humble and small men assertive, we sometimes wonder if those blessed of the race are aware themselves of the significance of their blessing. Of that boast of England, with whom at the moment we are concerned, we wonder if conscious genius, in the very expression of its most powerful lines, could have longed to be "like to one more rich in hope,

"Desiring this man's art and that man's scope";

could so blandly neglect the very thought of posterity; could, in the best years of life, fling aside a shining career whose brilliance grew year by year more strong. Perhaps our perspective is biassed by an age in which consciousness of genius expresses itself in a commercial spirit. Our doubt, however, gathers confidence in the assured negative of A. W. Schlegel--"In strength a demi-god; in profundity of view a prophet, in all-seeing wisdom a protecting spirit of a higher order, he lowers himself to mortals, as if unconscious of his superiority; and is as open and unassuming as a child."[1] J.W. MacKail writes, too--"Unconsciousness of genius is part of his translucency; it is part of that boundless capacity for taking impressions from his whole environment....it is in a way the secret...of that mastery of verbal and metrical expression".[2]

1 "Lectures on Dramatic Literature", page 138.
2 "The Approach to Shakespeare", page 112.

Such a belief need not, however, demand the conclusion that Shakespeare's art was happy dabbling. Mr. MacKail, on the strength, one would suppose, of his theory of Shakespeare's unpretentiousness, goes on to assert firmly that Shakespeare is not a teacher, that he "has no attitude towards life".[1] Few serious artists, I believe, can be without an attitude towards art, a theory, whether conscious or otherwise, of its value--and no one, after reading his tremendous works, can doubt Shakespeare's seriousness. The serious man's art, furthermore, is his life; thus the artist's attitude towards art and his attitude towards life are inseparable.

Such countless and diverse theories of art have been gleaned from Shakespeare's over-dissected plays that it seems only possible to select. Strangely enough, justice, at first glance, would seem to claim for each and all of them a fitness of remarkable exactitude. Art, it may seem superfluous to note, has fallen into two general divisions--didactic art and purely aesthetic art. Every artist leans towards one or the other of these divisions. The former tendency has blazed a rosy trail down through the centuries--there are such names as Homer and Sophocles, who "imitated higher types of character";[2] Aristotle, with his creative imitation; Boileau, to whom a good poet must be a good man; Ben Jonson, Samuel Johnson, Carlyle; Ibsen, the progenitor of our modern problem play.

1 "The Approach to Shakespeare", page 122, and page 144.
2 "The Poetics of Aristotle", page 13.

Today the constant query of ambitious minds is, "But what does he mean? What is the purpose of it?" And it does seem a natural attitude. Life <u>is</u> morality; we can't shake it off; we can never get away from it; it is the basis of the universe--good and bad, love and hate, health and disease. We doubt the reality of almost everything else but this.

Hosts of artists, on the other hand, especially since the Renaissance, have trumpeted the independence of art. There must be no subordination of it. By its very nature it cannot be subordinated. It stands aloft, aloof, fixed; it is the mountain, we must go to it. The soul of art, to these men, is that "beauty" which Tolstoi ridicules in his "What is Art?", but which theoretically is so convincing and so attractive to most of us. At this point the didactic and aesthetic theories may come very close together. The Art of beauty, of delight, may succeed in raising the standard of the human conception of enjoyment. To get drunk, as Burns would seem to indicate in his "Tam o' Shanter", though to many a very keen delight, is yet short-lived, and sometimes in both its immediate and ultimate results very drastic. On the other hand it is the very lasting quality of the pleasure we derive from Shakespeare that dubs it a high and special grade. His plays, like Cleopatra, make hungry where most they satisfy. Which reminds us that we are plumming the art of Shakespeare, and not discoursing upon ethics.

But whether we are to select the old theories or to invent a new, it is to his plays that we must go for our conclusions. What is, then, one's impression on reading or seeing--let us say, Othello, or The Merchant of Venice? There is beauty, of course, but that, I think, is not all. The moralist may claim there satisfaction of his views--he may call King Lear a sermon on pride, Macbeth a sermon on ambition, and so on--but that, too, is only one aspect. We hear of the realness of his men and women, the majesty and color of his poetry, the vision of his judgment, the completeness of his world. All these are true, but they do not cover Shakespeare. There is a largeness and spaciousness and mightiness besides. Samuel Johnson says that he portrays life wholly;[1] but that does not explain him. In the first place, since no two people in the world see life alike, we lack a criterion. In the second place, he seems to emphasize certain, more than others, of the elements that make up life. An Iago in the flesh, with his keen mentality, strength, courage of a sort, and flawless hypocrisy, would most probably command respect. A certain faction would tend to mock Othello, the dupe of a cleverer man. But Shakespeare never allows it. Someone has noted that Shakespeare's heroes are godlike--strong in body, great in character, dominating in mentality. Not only this, but the poetry, and the atmosphere--the consciousness of unrelenting Destiny--are strong and grand.

[1] "Readings in English Prose of the Eighteenth Century", page 370.

For a comparison, we can turn only to the Golden Age of Greek tragedy, which arose, Aristotle tells us, from those early graver spirits who, in the infancy of poetry, "imitated noble actions and the actions of good men".[1] What wonder that men revere the ancients ! Think of the Iliad, the Electra, the Medea, the Aeneid, and even, though they may seem unworthy of the place, such legendary histories as the "Morte d'Arthur". Their heroes are gods, but very human gods. Their goodness may temporarily err, strength weaken, both may be ill-rewarded, but their domination is too immense to be affected. Then consider Shakespeare. When Lady Macbeth cries,

"I have given suck and know,
"How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
"I would, while it was smiling in my face,
"Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
"And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
"Have done to this",[2]

they might have been the words of one of the glorious, very real heroines of Euripides. Antigone, with her defiant adherence to her sense of right, her invulnerable spirit, and her gentleness, might have been one of many of Shakespeare's heroines. And in Shakespeare, as in Antigone, "dreadful is the mysterious power of fate; there is no deliverance from it by wealth or by war, by fenced city, or dark, sea-beaten ships".[3] In both there is a dignity of word and action, that is never

1 "The Poetics of Aristotle", page 17.
2 Act I, Scene 2.
3 "Sophocles, The Plays and Fragments", Part III, page 171.

so striking since, I think, until Faust. Shakespeare's characters are clearly distinguished by the presence or absence of this dignity of carriage. How are we to account for this distinction, and what is its effect? Let us continue to use Othello as an example. Every word and gesture and action of the Moor is permeated with dignity. Iago, with all his brilliance, consistently lacks it--the effect of him upon us is one of stagnation and futility. Goethe discusses the subject of dignity in the description of his Pedagogical Utopia which Carlyle declares he would rather have written, been able to write, than have written all the books that have appeared since he came into the world.[1] Dignity, we know, cannot exist without self-respect. Self-respect, Goethe tells us, is attained only through reverence--reverence for God and authority; for our equals, the human race--"Use men", says Hamlet, "after your own honour and dignity";[2] and for Nature. And this reverence, "on which all depends for making man in every point a man" is the one indispensable thing which no child brings into the world with him. Without it, man soon comes to be "indifferent towards God, contemptuous towards the world, spiteful towards his equals; and the true, genuine, indispensable sentiment of self-estimation corrupts into self-conceit and presumption".[3] Reverence, then, must be educated in us. To some of us life teaches it, but not to the mass.

1 "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays", vol. 4, page 473.
2 Act II, Scene 2.
3 Wilhelm Meister, page 214, 215.

To return to Shakespeare, Othello, in accordance with Goethe's theory, had learned reverence, and, consequently, dignity; his attitude towards other men is invariably respectful; his dignity, in turn, tends to inspire in us reverence for him, for his large, fine, if slightly impractical outlook, for his strength and freshness of character--Shakespeare will permit nothing else from us, even when Iago scornfully gloats over him. Iago has not learned it--his attitude towards other men is invariably one of mockery; in place of self-estimation there is the expected self-conceit and presumption, notably evident in his first few spiteful speeches, in his constant unfounded suspicion, and his crude cynicism. Claudio, Richard III, Edmund, and Shylock leave that same impression of irreverence and stagnation. Edmund and Richard particularly, exhibit a sense of self-sufficiency, of indifference towards invisible power. Edmund mocks defiantly and scornfully of "villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance. . . . and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on".[1] Richard, by his own admission, loves only himself, gaily admits himself a villain. Their brains are well above the average--Iago is cleverer than Othello, Edmund than Edgar; they have courage and strength of will; yet we cannot admire them. On the other hand, we venerate the erect character of Brutus, the inherent nobility and gentleness of Macbeth, the shadowy Antonio in his unselfish love for Bassanio, Portia for her honesty and clear-

[1] "King Lear", Act I, Scene 2.

sighted mentality. From all of these and others we receive an impression of great height, a call to worship. Atmospheres, too--especially the presence of an invisible, unknown power--likewise call to reverence. Carlyle feels the same necessity for reverence, as is evident in almost all of his works. In Shakespeare it is a sort of faith; its effect contains something of the Aristotelian purgation of the emotions.[1] We see his theory worked out among his characters. Between Prospero, who is too far above common men to be seen clearly and appreciated by many of us, and the good and loyal Gonzalo, there is mutual respect. But Antonio and Sebastian, not at all to our surprise, forfeit their title to dignity by an inability to venerate either. Timon's servant, Flavius, is the one firm anchor in the swirling muck of Athens, and vacillating Timon is only redeemed by his reverence for that loyalty. Only Enobarbus' fatal mistake brought home to him vividly the truth of his own words, that "he that can endure

"To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord

"Does conquer him that did his master conquer."[2]

Enobarbus learned reverence late.

And so it is with Hamlet and Horatio and Claudio, with Glocester and Edgar and Edmund. In some of his earliest plays we find germs of this theory. We reverence the courage and generosity of Valentine; just so do his outlawed followers, who,by Valentine's word, prove to be "endued with worthy qualities", and

1 "The Poetics of Aristotle", page 23.
2 "Antony and Cleopatra", Act III, Scene 13.

"fit for great employment".[1] This, however, is but a suggestion of the vague, sweeping sense of uplift that pervades the best of his plays and fills readers and audiences with wonder and veneration. Antony's "taints and honors waged equal with him", but "you, gods, will give us some faults to make us men".[2] His heights and depths, his indomitableness and infinite gentleness, his untameable striving to be worthy of his inherent greatness, culminating at last in the deed which, to a Roman, crushed all fault--"Patience is sottish, and impatience does

"Become a dog that's mad; then is it sin
"To rush into the secret house of death,
"Ere death dare come to us?"[3]--

this character which knew only superlatives is a masterful contrast to the dull, untempted rightness of Octavius; but Octavius at length disproved the charge of stagnation by his capacity to pay sincere homage to the Colossus who inspired reverence in every character of the play, whose "legs bestrid the ocean"[4]. Cleopatra is more difficult to classify; her character seems to develop; and her maids worshipped her. Hazlitt writes, "She had great and unpardonable faults, but the grandeur of her death almost redeems them. She learns from the depth of despair the strength of her affections"[5]--humbly she sighs, "No more

1 "Two Gentlemen of Verona", Act V, Scene 4.
2 "Antony and Cleopatra", Act V, Scene 2.
3 Act IV, Scene 15.
4 Act V, Scene 2.
5 "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays", page 76.

but e'en a woman, and commanded
"By such poor passion as the maid that milks
"And does the meanest chares."[1]

We have seen the elevation of certain of his men and women, in the dignity with which he invests them. This aura of dignity is achieved not only through their deeds, their attitudes and reactions, but through the very language that they speak. If Portia spoke no other words than her little poem on the quality of mercy, we would reverence her for that. But in Shylock's speech there is pomp without dignity. There is dignity in the expression of Kent's veneration of Lear, "You have that in your countenance which I would fain call Master";[2] indeed, in every natural phrase that he speaks; in Lear's beautiful words beginning, "Come, let's away to prison".[3] Edmund, on the other hand, dies on a half-jest--"Some good I mean to do, despite of my own nature".[4] Shakespeare's constant endeavour to educate us in reverence, we see, is inescapable; it permeates his art from every aspect. But there is another thing. If Shakespeare deliberately emphasizes this element of life, for the enlightenment of mankind, he would not be satisfied to gain the ear of the cultivated few. It is they who need such enlightenment least of all. It would be in general to the average man of slight education, and to the worst and shabbiest mentally and morally, as well as to those few who would be the first to proclaim him.

1 Act IV, Scene 15.
2 Act I, Scene 4.
3 Act V, Scene 3.
4 Act V, Scene 3.

that his ideas would be applicable. To begin with, he must capture and hold their interest; afterwards he might strike deeper. Many people have noted Shakespeare's consistent and successful effort to popularize his drama, and have attempted, by devious plans, to explain the apparent desecration of his art by one so exquisitely tuned to take impressions. Goethe lauds him as a "celestial genius, descending among men, to make them, by the mildest instructions, acquainted with themselves".[1] To do so, he baited his plays with blood, buffoonery, horror, with the shortlived fads of the hour, that must surely have grated on the refined imagination of their creator. The aesthetes find in his work their code of ideal beauty, ethicists their code of morality, the restless find adventure, the mystics mysticism. These, however, are but surface ripples, that dancing catch the light, and hold the eye. We see his interest in the individual through his impartial attitude of sympathy towards his heterogeneous flock of live things, whatever their rank, character, or mentality. Quiller-Couch writes, "Shakespeare had an imagination so warm, large, human, catholic, that it could not, creating even a Caliban, help sympathizing with Caliban's point of view".[2] This is self-evident. He will permit no character to be continuously trampled upon. We roar with Stephano over Caliban,[3]but Caliban is subsequently permitted to scorn him.[4] Antonio and Sebastian are villains of the most

1 "Wilhelm Meister", vol. 1, page 165.
2 "North American Review", vol. 203, page 442.
3 Act II, Scene 2.
4 Act V, Scene 1.

despicable sort, yet we cannot restrain a sort of goodnatured chuckle at their shameless irrepressibility. No heart, surely, is untouched by Iago. Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene; Claudio on his knees longing vainly to pray; Richard III's deformity--each of these touches points out a shadowy, unsuspected corner of their hearts, and forestalls our utter condemnation. On the other hand, none of his characters has a permanent seat on top of fortune's wheel. The Epicure, I think, could consistently envy none but the irresistible Autolycus, who, writes Quiller-Couch, sets the most carefully disciplined fingers itching. Even in the fairy world of Midsummer Night's Dream, royal quarrels upset the kingdom.

Allardyce Nicoll divides Shakespearian tragedy--and this, I believe, applies as well to the majority of his comedies and histories--into an outer and an inner framework. The former comprises "themes essentially stirring and often melodramatic, calculated to arouse the most mentally inert spectator". But within is a "more subtle, poetical, and less tangible"framework.[1] The bait of the former captured the fancy--this we have dealt with; but in order to fulfill his purpose, he had still to work his way into the heart of every individual.

[1] "Studies in Shakespeare", page 25.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF FOLKLORE AND BALLADRY IN SHAKESPEARE'S ART

Long ago, before men learned to write, early editions of mankind, urged on by a mixture of curiosity and wonder and fear, pondered upon the unknown. These primitive philosophers grappled doggedly with their problems; and gradually imagination cooperated with fact to lay bare, as it seemed to them, the scheme of things. Down through the ages ,man, who by nature clings to tradition, stamped these early religious beliefs and associated customs and legends of his forefathers with the seal of his own experience, added to them, and passed them on to succeeding generations. Thus religious systems, similar in essentials, were built up in all parts of the world; out of them grew a remarkable and variegated world of beings--since the savage nature, just as in a lesser degree the civilized nature, interprets all things in terms of himself, inanimate nature came to life; the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, the ocean all were creatures of thought and feeling; being greater and more powerful than man, they became things to be feared and propitiated; even these gods , as they were called, could have their favorites and endow them with abnormal powers; certain of the heroes who were marked by such favor have become immortalised in song and story. From the two problems of creation and death, and the natural antipathy to extinction, grew up the conception of a world after death, and a separable soul. The vision of a dead friend in

dreams suggested to the superstitious mind the possibility of the re-appearance of a soul among its old associations--perhaps for revenge, perhaps to be near a loved one. Hence the world became peopled with good and evil spirits. Through the relations of these spirits with mortals many beliefs evolved--in the possibility of compacts between men and these unearthly creatures, originated the conception of magicians and witches. Certain of these creations, demons and wizards and supermen, became personalities in their national and individual traits and deeds, and gained for themselves a universal immortality. They became very real; and the gifted, with tongues unstilted by canons, and free from the chains of a thousand years' culture, exalted them in song. Thus were brought into being legendary histories, some of great ingenuity and beauty, of which only shreds, for the most part, exist today.

As a sort of by-product of each of these early religions, there gradually took root, very deep in the hearts of these groping, fearful mortals, an amazing store of superstitions and ceremonial customs, which increased very rapidly as time went on. Students of past civilizations have discovered that, strangely enough, or perhaps not at all strangely, many of the most convincing of these superstitions and customs have practically duplicated themselves all over the world. Thus, Marian Roalfe Cox, in her "Introduction to Folklore", writes, "A Scotch mother will leave an open Bible beside her child to keep the fairies away. The Chinese scares away the evil spirits by placing his clas-

sics under his pillow. In ancient Assyria, written texts were bound round a sick man's brains, and the Jews believed that the phylacteries would avert all evil and drive away demons. In Saxo we read how some dreadful spells graven on wood and put under a dead man's tongue forced him to utter a strain terrible to hear."[1] Similarly, to the Persians, the Indians, several Slavic and Finnish nations and to our own, the neigh of a horse was an omen of luck.[2] This duplication applies similarly to the existence in every part of the world of traces of the aforementioned legendary histories, very deeply -engraved traces of spirit-lore and magic, and a fairly well populated fairy world. Such traces of the past--especially of its superstition--still exist, long after the religious systems which brought them forth are forgotten. Today, then, we find ourselves face to face with a heterogeneous company of legends and songs and ghosts and devils and witches and charms, which have stalked vigorously down through the centuries, borne on by the instincts which brought them forth. This dogged ghost of the past is distinguished by the name of folklore. We still ponder on the unknown, though education has, to some extent, leashed our imaginations. Probably most of us, influenced perhaps by the habits of very distant ancestors, have a gnawing urge to abandon ourselves to the superstition within us; and intellectual pride restrains us.

1 "An Introduction to Folk-lore", page 14.
2 "An Introduction to Folk-lore", page 16. The bulk of my foregoing material in this chapter I have taken from this book.

We quell this urge, or feed it surreptitiously; and nothing can be more satisfying than to see it taken seriously by the intellectual. The ghost in "Hamlet" thrills and terrifies us still. It is impossible to describe the unique and thrilling tang of folklore, unparalleled as the flavor of mushrooms. It grew up with us, and long ago took permanent root within us. Perhaps, though, we may be able to some degree to account for it.

Man is made up of emotions, of instincts. Every sort of passion within the bounds of imagination rages or lies dormant in his bosom. Certain of them in certain individuals seem never to reveal themselves, but we cannot comfortably assure ourselves that they never will. There are a few, however, that, except in a character somehow warped, never fail to appear, and of these I select two, that, I should venture to claim, rank well above all others in strength and invulnerability. These--and they seem contradictory--are the fascination of the unknown, and the strong, sometimes semi-conscious pull of the intimately familiar. So obvious are they, that they hardly need the support of argument. As to the second, we all love our country, our home, our school. If we have been reared in the mountains or near the sea, we cannot be quite happy in the desert. At the same time there are few of us who have never known unquenchable attacks of wanderlust. Our own planet exhausted, who of us has never dreamed of standing on the threshold of an unexplored world? Of the same feel-

ing, on a lower plane, Trincule said of his countrymen, "When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."[1] It is the mystery of the unknown that keeps many of us living from day to day--countless delightful miracles may occur tomorrow.

And thus we account for the power of folklore. It is the union of these two most virile of human instincts in their most effective proportions. It is familiar,with the intimacy of thousands of generations; its mystery is the unplummed depth of the universal unknown--it was this instinctive fascination of man with the unknown that produced it. It constituted the very roots and origin of civilization. Therefore the subtle and skilful working of that early art of ours into our own literature should stir us to our very vitals. Shakespeare, then, found his instrument ready-made for him, and this instrument he wielded with the delicacy and sureness of a brain surgeon. "The literature which influenced Shakespeare most habitually," writes Raleigh, "and left its mark everywhere on his plays, is literature of . . . a kind which is hardly entitled to the formal dignity of the name, and may perhaps be more truly considered as an aspect of social life. His plays are extraordinarily rich in the floating debris of popular literature--scraps and tags and broken ends of a whole world of songs and ballads and romances and proverbs. In this respect he is notable even among his contemporaries; few of them can match him in the wealth that

1 "The Tempest", Act II, Scene 2.

he caught out of the air or picked up by the roadside." [1] Many things cooperated with Shakespeare's genius. His was an age of high artistic development, an age that loved the theatre, and an age that, according to Mr. Drinkwater, loved both great poetry and great rhetoric. "The beauty, the fire, the imagery of the word were not agreeable decorations, they were a living element of the drama, almost, one might say, the heart of it. Without these, the action and the scene were nothing; with them, no improbability of action and no inconsistency of scene could offend."[2] It was, further, an alert and imaginative age--no age could be otherwise, when kindled with such triumphs as the "Spanish Armada" and the picturesque exploration of Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake. Hazlitt writes of Elizabethan times, "Man's life was (as it seems to me) more full of traps and pit-falls; of hair-breadth accidents by flood and field; more way-laid by sudden and startling evils; it trod on the brink of hope and fear; stumbled upon fate unawares; while the imagination, close behind it, caught at and clung to the shape of danger, or 'snatched a wild and fearful joy from its escape'." . . . ."Again, the heroic and martial spirit which breathes in our elder writers, was yet in considerable activity in the reign of Elizabeth". . . . "the sound of civil combat might still be heard in the distance, the spear glittered to the eye of memory, or the clashing of armour struck on the imagination of

1 "Shakespeare", page 102.
2 "Shakespeare", page 73.

the ardent and the young".....The manners and out-of-door amusements were more tinctured with a spirit of adventure and romance."[1] It was altogether a spectacular and a stirring age. Such an imagination, so stirred, one might well suppose would revel gratefully in magic and demonology and spirit lore--in fact, in all its great heritage of mythology and legend. The warning note in Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus" would indicate that it was so. R. M. Alden writes, "They believed universally, it would seem, in ghosts and other apparitions".....in demonology and witchcraft".....The belief in fairies was still commonly extant, occasionally adding a touch of terror to life's mysteries, but on the whole contributing more of charm than sadness."[2]

It was a delicately-tuned instrument, this of Shakespeare's, for to a part of his public this disembodied world had ceased to be real; to the rest it was more real and awful than reality. It is interesting to note that certain of his commentators have plausibly explained away his ghosts as creatures of the imagination, and his witches as symbols of abstractions--such is his irresistibility that it seems that all men with an ideal or a theory or a system of philosophy succeed in fitting him to it. By his brilliance of design, which made either interpretation plausible, sceptics underwent mildly with the rest, the very treatment which they would have denounced. Someone has said that although his ghosts may have been intended as hallucinations, their effect on Shakespeare's audiences is not that of a

1 "Selections from William Hazlitt", W. D. Howe, pp.76, 77.
2 "Shakespeare", page 35.

hallucination, but of a ghost. This truth applies to his witches, as we see in "Macbeth". These witches are masterly creations; they are as alive as Benedick or as Feste. Those of his audience, then, who had the slightest superstitious leanings would have been swept out of themselves immediately, and into his power. Those who were well enough in advance of their contemporaries to look upon witches as a quaint or a vulgar belief, must of necessity have been intelligent or educated enough to appreciate the superiority of his intellectual power. To such an intellect, obviously in advance even of their own, human nature would direct them to attribute a similar attitude. The first impulse would lead them to interpret him symbolically--they would probably clutch at the perhaps significant term "weird sisters", suggestive of a symbolism of Fate, a power that few, even in our own day, and especially in Shakespeare's, would venture to question--the evidence is with it, call it determinism, divine intercession, or what you will. Macbeth, the character, then, loses nothing--gains, indeed, for no mind, however matter-of-fact, is quite unaffected by the hypnotism of Shakespeare's living, moving witch-scenes well-performed. Combine with this a sense of inescapable Destiny, and Macbeth's fate seems even more convincingly taken practically out of his own hands.

We see, then, the influence of the folklore element on the minds of his audience, never more powerful than in this play. This first short scene captured their emotions and overruled their minds immediately. But Shakespeare is not satisfied that his work is complete.

In this play, as in only three or four other plays of Shakespeare's, folklore has a direct influence on the plot. Macbeth, as we see in the first few scenes, is a man of unusually fine character, kind, loyal, gentle, and brave. That such a man should commit a terrible crime against his benefactor, urged on merely by a nagging wife, and by motives which it is impossible to believe ruled him, is not convincing. But the entrance of exterior, supernatural compulsion changes all this. Confronted by the stormy witch-cauldron scene no normal man can feel quite all-sufficient against the powers of evil. But we must not be allowed to lose this consciousness of the presence of evil power, and thus our consciousness of reverence for the normal Macbeth; the succeeding unspeakable deeds of the maddened man, if the supernatural element in the play vanished after that one scene, would drive all its effects from the mind. Shakespeare, however, continues, even emphasizes, the sense of the supernatural, as the play advances--there are the reappearances of the witches, the phantom dagger, Banquo's ghost, storms, darkness "brooding over the tragedy"[1], even "entombing the face of earth when living light should kiss it"[2], howling wolves, shrieking owls. Bradley calls attention to the continual recurrence of the word "blood" in the dialogue--"It is as if the poet saw the whole story through an ensanguined mist".[3] He notes, too, the "vividness, imagnitude, and vio-

1 "Shakespearian Tragedy", A.C. Bradley, page 333.
2 "Macbeth", Act II, Scene 4.
3 "Shakespearian Tragedy" , page 335.

lence of the imagery". . . ."the earth shaking in fever" .. .."sorrows striking heaven on the face, so that it resounds and yells out like syllables of dolour". . . ."the mind full of scorpions; the tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,"[1] and so on.

There are many isolated allusions to witchcraft and the superstitions connected with it through the plays, usually to procure emphasis of various sorts--so, in Troilus and Cressida, Ajax, seeking a sufficiently expressive insult for Thersites, calls him "Thou stool for a witch !"[2], alluding to the "trial by the stool" method of detecting witches.[3] This carries to the audience superlative horror and disgust. Richard III, seeking, when his power was uncertain, a sufficient excuse to rid himself of such a confirmed patriot as Hastings, accuses him of aiding witch-charms against himself[4]; and the accusation drives home the villain's unscrupulousness. Even a modern audience is impressed, after enduring the terrors of the ghost, with the relief of Marcellus' allusion to that hallowed and gracious season when "no planets strike,

"No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,".[5] Antonio's passionate thrust at the supposed Sebastian--"A witchcraft drew me hither"--[6] emphasized the depth of his indignation and sorrow.

In addition to Macbeth, there are four further plays we must note whose plots are appreciably affected by the use of folklore. These

1 "Shakespearian Tragedy", page 336.
2 "Troilus and Cressida", Act II, Scene 1.
3 "Folk-lore of Shakespeare", T.F.T. Dyer, page 31.
4 "Richard III", Act III, Scene 4.
5 "Hamlet", Act I, Scene 1.
6 "Twelfth Night", Act V, Scene 1.

are, of course, Hamlet, Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Pericles. In Hamlet we are again faced by commentators to whom the ghost is not a ghost. One grows impatient. Why, then, did he call it a ghost? Shakespeare was no symbolist elsewhere, unless we follow the many who read allegory into The Tempest. Furthermore, the ghost in Hamlet heightens and colors the situation, both by its effect on the audience, and by its supposed effect on Hamlet. It emphasizes the character of Hamlet in itself, and it emphasizes the still-existing problem of Hamlet's inaction. As for the question of his mental condition, it may be used as an indirect argument for either side; one writer states that the very proof of Hamlet's superlative sanity is the fact that his mind could withstand the series of deadly shocks--chiefly the ghost--that came upon it. Another writes that it was the ghost that definitely unsettled him--he came away from his interview with it, talking uncontrolled nonsense.

Consider the effect of the ghost on Hamlet. It is suddenly revealed to him that his father, whom he adored as a god, not only has been murdered by his own brother--and that a "slave", a "mildew'd ear" --but is even then suffering acute torments, too frightful even to repeat to a mortal man, torments imparted to Hamlet by insinuation and suggestion, a method, especially to an imaginative mind, obviously much more impressive than fact. And the force of this news is greatly enhanced by the medium through which it is revealed--the most terrifying of all spectacles--a disembodied spirit. Then, the audience,

versed in every item of spirit-lore--how they would beat with every shade of Hamlet's emotion. The modern level-headed denial of the existence of ghosts does not change things, for by the close of that masterly first scene, no audience is level-headed. That sense of dreadful expectancy, Francisco "sick at heart"--these things are much too real to everybody. The whole play, in spite of its mediaeval setting, is incomparably real. The very fact that Hamlet's inaction is not specifically motivated makes it more real, leaves it to everyone to interpret it in terms of his own character. And everyone will, for, though murder may be comprehensible at the dead of night, under such an influence as this, yet what man would be as ready for murder, in cold blood, in the brightness of day, surrounded by the reality of normal people, engaged in normal pursuits? The ghost even of one's father would seem little more than a fearful nightmare. There is a suggestion of such an impression in a later soliloquy of Hamlet's,

"'Tis now the very witching time of night,
"When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
"Contagion to this world; now could I drink hot blood,
"And do such bitter business as the day
"Would quake to look on". [1]

When he is in this mood, we get from him his first show of action--impulsive action, and unsuccessful. Immediately after this deed, the ghost returns to remind Hamlet forcefully of his almost blunted pur-

1 Act III, Scene 2.

pose, and to renew its effect on the audience. Possibly it is the necessity of such an effect that leads Shakespeare to render the ghost invisible to the queen, and thus enhance its awfulness. Hamlet convinces us that it is not an hallucination; nevertheless it seems to have a certain relation to conscience, somewhat, though to a lesser degree, as the ghosts which appear to Richard III, whose"conscience hath a thousand several tongues".[1] These provide a particularly effective climax--after the continual terrors of the rule of Richard, at whose birth "the owl shriek'd . . . . the night-crow cried . . . . dogs howl'd, and hideous tempests shook down trees"[2], an adequate climax was a matter of great difficulty. Richard himself was losing color, as he lost arrogance--

"I have not that alacrity of spirit
"Nor cheer of mind that I was wont to have"[3]--it is a one-man play, and it cannot be allowed to fade away in the atmosphere of Richard's fading spirits. At this point it must surpass itself in color and depth of awe. Nothing could be more effective for such a scene than these majestic spirits, monotously repeating their grand and terrifying lines--"Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow", "Despair and die !"[4] The appearance of Caesar's ghost to Brutus is more easily interpreted as an hallucination, though its appearance in such a form drives home the impression of Brutus' shattered spirits. Always these ghosts of Shakespeare's are rendered especially forceful by little touches of realism taken from the superstition with which the people had surrounded them.

1, 3, 4, "Richard III", Act V, Scene 3.
2 "Henry VI", Part III, Act V, Scene 6.

Brutus notes, "How ill this taper burns !"[1], and Richard, "The lights burn blue"--for ghosts, accustomed as they are to nightly vigils, cannot bear the light.[2] In reference to the ignorant attribution of supernatural knowledge to the learned, Marcellus says, "Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio".[3] The power of the cock's crow, the appearance of the spirit in well-known garments, the hour midnight, the evil effects of"crossing" it, the ominousness of such a visitation--all these associations are alluded to in Hamlet.[4]

Closely allied to this communication with departed spirits are such branches of spiritualism as demonology, exorcism, and "possession". Shakespeare employs demonology--in which Elizabethan England believed as firmly as in witchcraft[5]--more extensively than any other branch of folklore, for his effects. There are scores of scattered allusions to it. So, Iago, when, at the success of his first skirmish, he plans his campaign--"Divinity of hell !

"When devils will the blackest sins put on,

"They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,

"As I do now !"[6]

How expressive is the characterization to a revolted audience ! Edgar, when Gloucester has supposedly fallen from the cliff, is faced with a situation demanding instant handling, and involving the life of his fa-

1 "Julius Caesar", Act IV, Scene 5.
2 "Folklore of Shakespeare", Dyer, page 48.
3, 4, "Hamlet", Act I, Scene 1.
5 "Elizabethan Demonology", T.A. Spalding, page 11.
6 "Othello", Act II, Scene 3.

ther. It is a tense moment. With unparalleled presence of mind, he seizes on the only explanation plausible, if dangerous; excitedly he cries,

"As I stood here below, methought his eyes
"Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
"Horns whelk'd and wav'd like the enridged sea;
"It was some fiend."[1]

Gloucester is deeply impressed, in his susceptible condition; the seeming intervention of Providence restores his spirits to a normal level, and he vows, "henceforth I'll bear

"Affliction till it do cry out itself
"'Enough, enough,' and die."

Othello's height of passion, when Iago's treachery is revealed, seizes on demonology for adequate expression--"I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable.

"If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee."[2]

Exorcism and "possession", Shakespeare employs both for comic effects and tragic. In the "Comedy of Errors", one of the first plays he wrote, these devices are used, with an enhancement of comic effect only fully appreciated when the play is seen on the stage.[3] John Weiss writes, in his "Wit, Humor, and Shakespeare", that the cause of laughter is the momentary and unexpected relation of incongruous things; among certain requirements for the production of laughter, he emphasi-

1 "King Lear", Act IV, Scene 6.
2 "Othello", Act V, Scene 2.
3 "Comedy of Errors", Act IV, Scene 4.

zes the importance of the human interest, the "movement of sympathy".[1] In the mad scene of the Comedy of Errors, the incongruity lies in the ignorance and intense seriousness of each of the participants on the stage, as opposed to the knowledge of the audience; in this way, too, the audience enjoy a pleasant sensation of superiority, half-unconsciously. Folklore in this instance provides a deeply personal touch, the human interest, devoid of the sense of terror that usually accompanies it, which heightens the comic, as in serious situations it heightens the tragic, effect. Under such circumstances it is satisfying to see an object of terror ridiculed--there is no suspicion that the author is laughing at us. Such a suspicion might occur, were the ridicule expressed in a tone of seriousness. But it is obviously directed at Dr. Pinch and at the undeserving Adriana.

As to the attaining of tragic effect through the same method, the most elaborate instance is to be found in King Lear. In the frightful storm-scene, we almost forget that "Tom o' Bedlam" is the perfectly sane Edgar; his crazed fear of the foul fiends contributes largely to the atmosphere of terror that enshrouds the picture of the wild action on the heath; under the unsettling circumstances the demon presences are very real to the actors; the Fool shudderingly cries, "This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen"; Kent is so shaken by the agony and terror of the situation, by the necessity of preserving his own sanity and that of the half-

1 Pages 15, 26.

mad Lear, that he is brought eventually to the untimely death that he hints at in the closing lines of the play. Edgar's seeming lack of control and Lear's actual insanity so heighten the suspense of the audience that they are prepared for the otherwise unbearable scene of the inhuman crime of Cornwall and Regan upon Gloucester.

Here we have a timely opportunity of indicating the importance to the subject of Shakespeare's treatment of his mad people. In this treatment we see that he was fully aware of the strong hold of superstition on the feelings of people--even those reared in a cultured atmosphere. When mental control is snatched away, the unleashed emotions of these mad people revert to that ingrained obsession of superstition. "The madman," declares Theseus, "sees more devils than vast hell can hold".[1] Consider Shakespeare's two outstanding instances of insanity--Ophelia and Lear. Ophelia continuously rambles in snatches of legend--"They say the owl was a baker's daughter"--in floral superstitions; in old songs that bear on death.[2] Of these songs we shall have more to say later. In Lear, the immediate attraction to Edgar is too obvious and apparently unmotivated to be overlooked. It could not have been the charm of novelty, for these Bedlam beggars, Edgar tells us, were common.[3] Edgar pours out a flood of disconnected scraps

1 "Midsummer Night's Dream", Act V, Scene 1.
2 "Hamlet", Act IV, Scene 5.
3 "King Lear", Act II, Scene 3.

of folklore--evil spirits, witches, bits of legend and old song, "star-blasting", "taking", fiendish tempters to suicide, and so on. Lear immediately gives expression to an affection for Edgar unequalled even by his fondness for his Fool. He snatches at Edgar's cue with relish, and longs to have a thousand demons, "with red, burning spits come hissing in upon" his daughters. [1]

Then there is Macbeth, upon whose uncontrol fewer critics have dwelt. Bucknill, in his "Mad Folk of Shakespeare", is convincing in his portrayal of Macbeth's mental condition. Early in the play we see the "extreme excitability of his imagination"[2] in that "suggestion

"Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair

"And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,

"Against the use of nature";[3]

in the illusion of the bloody dagger;[4] in the imaginary voice crying, "Sleep no more;

"Macbeth doth murder sleep", etc.[5]

Constant subsequent introspection, and "terrible dreams that shake us nightly"[6] at length produce definite signs of unsettlement, appearing in the murder of the family of Macduff, a deed whose only motivation is an uncontrolled and indefinable passion; the ghost of Banquo, too, is, in the opinion of Bucknill, an hallucination, and therefore a further evidence of Macbeth's wandering of mind.

1 Act III, Scenes 4, 6.
2"Mad Folk of Shakespeare", page 13.
3 Act I, Scene 3.
4 Act II, Scene 1.
5 Act II, Scene 2.
6 Act III, Scene 2.

Bucknill calls attention to the fact that Banquo, alone among Shakespeare's ghosts utters not a word, that he is seen by none but Macbeth, and has associated with him none of the conventional superstitions attaching to the other ghosts. He also notes that, contrary to the instance of the vision of the dagger, Macbeth never suspects that it may be a creation of his mind; he accepts it as reality.[1] He saves himself from actual insanity by rushing from his reflections into feverish action; he was, however, in a state of semi-uncontrol. People doubt his sanity--"Some say he's mad".[2] He is never shaken in his conviction that it was an actual ghost that appeared to him; he ponders on the supernatural--"Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;

"Augurs and understood relations have

"By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth

"The secret'st man of blood."[3];

he flies to the witches for counsel, and from this point he puts all his faith in their words; they dominate not only his thoughts, but his actions as well.

As for Hamlet, if he was at all mad, it was merely the disease of melancholia, not implying loss of mental control, and thus he has no place in this part of our subject. His only ob-

1 "Mad Folk of Shakespeare", pp. 26, 27.
2 Act V, Scene 2.
3 Act III, Scene 4.

session with the supernatural is in his constant brooding upon death, from the famous soliloquy on the afterlife, to his reflections over Yorick's skull in the graveyard.

Somewhat related to the exorcist is the soothsayer, who demands some attention before we pass on to other things. In two conspicuous places, the soothsayer plays an effective role, though a brief one. That twice-repeated cry, "Beware the Ides of March !", in Julius Caesar, is filled with foreboding; it penetrates deeply into the minds of the audience, and excites them. A sense of ominousness and awed expectancy fills their minds, enhanced by Caesar's careless dismissal of the matter. Caesar, being Caesar, scorned the prophecy of a "dreamer", but, being human, he could not quite forget it.[1] In the second scene of Antony and Cleopatra, the soothsayer plays a similar part; the sense of foreboding is here more subtle, a mere delicate suggestion of coming ill. The effect is emphasized by the contrast of the soothsayer's brief, stern sentences--"Your fortunes are alike", "You have seen and proved a fairer former fortune "Than that which is to approach"--
his scornful refusal to enlarge; and the persistent light-heartedness of the other actors. So, in the later scene between the soothsayer and Antony.[2] His certainty of his visions, his passion-

1 Act III, Scene 1.
2 Act II, Scene 4.

ate pleas--"O Antony, stay not by his side . . . . near him thy angel
"Becomes a fear, as being o'erpowered",
"If thou dost play with him at any game,
"Thou art sure to lose"--
and his desperate sincerity, fill the atmosphere with fear.

Pericles, another of the plays in which folklore plays a part in the plot, was, according to Professor Herford, surpassed by few of Shakespeare's most authentic plays in popularityl--"The name of Pericles became a by-word for good fortune, and Boult seems, like Pandarus, to have given a new soubriquet to his class." It is a badly-constructed play--Ben Jonson spoke of it savagely as a "mouldy tale"; Dryden, a "ridiculous incoherent story which in one play many times took up the business of an age."[1] It is generally agreed that Shakespeare's part in it is limited; much of the dialogue is stiff and unnatural, or jingling; and the Elizabethan public, as we have noted, are reported to have had an appreciation of good poetry and good rhetoric. How are we, then, to explain this popularity? The picturesque and extravagant events of this play would be satisfying to the soaring imaginations of his public. There is, first of all, the age-old fairy story of

1 "The Works of Shakespeare", Eversley Edition, vol. 4, pages 13, 14. ed. by C. C. Herford.

the beautiful princess whose hand and heart depend on the solution of a riddle at the hazard of life; there is the miraculous reclamation of the apparently lifeless Thaisa; the murder by a jealous mother; a pirate ship; the miracle of Marina's deliverance from the brothel; the romance of great men in disguise, and so on. But this, again, is merely an outer attractive framework. The deeper note, essential to continued popularity, is struck by the appeal to superstition, such as the attribution of supernatural power to Marina--"She conjures: away with her ! She's born to undo us."[1]; the miraculous death of Antiochus and his daughter[2]; such slight references as "The music of the spheres"[3]; and, lastly, the superstitious dread of the sailors, necessitating the disposal of Thaisa's corpse, which determines the succeeding events.[4]

One of the most effective instruments with which Shakespeare plays upon the emotions of his audience, is the supposed relationship between natural phenomena and human life. Says Kent, "It is the stars,

"The stars above us, govern our conditions"[5]; and Ulysses,

"when the planets

"In evil mixture, to disorder wander,

1 Act IV, Scene 6.
2 Act II, Scene 4.
3 Act V, Scene 1.
4 Act III, Scene 1.
5 "King Lear", Act IV, Scene 3.

"What plagues and what portents ! what mutiny !
"What raging of the sea ! shaking of earth !
"Commotion in the winds ! frights, changes, horrors,
"Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
"The unity and married calm of states
"Quite from their fixture."[1]

In this way Ulysses most effectively illustrates his argument that men, just as the universe, must have government. Chaos among men, the Elizabethans believed, brings answering chaos in the elements; and eruption in the latter portends human calamity; there are two outstanding instances of this superstition in Shakespearian drama, and a number of others less conspicuous. In each case, nature turns against nature both in response to human outrage, and as a portent of further calamity. In Macbeth we cannot feel that even deliberate murder, and that of a king, alone justifies a reversal of nature--day becoming night, and Duncan's horses, "minions of their race . . . Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
"War with mankind",
devouring each other.[2] There is a premonition of still more dreadful events, suggested by nature so turned against herself. Oppression and terror, nation-wide slaughter, and the moral ruin of a great man--these things are no more than the portent of that

1 "Troilus and Cressida", Act I, Scene 3.
2 Act II, Scene 4.

day of maddened nature. In Julius Caesar, the "tempest dropping fire", the flaming, unscorched hand, the "gliding ghosts",[1] set the pulses beating; the excitement is sustained in the audience by continued allusions--"the exhalations whizzing in the air"[2], Calpurnia's account of the night, of yawning graves yielding up their dead, of fiery warriors fighting upon the clouds, and of her dream of Caesar's statue[3]; these things portend the death of Caesar, and also all that it carried with it--revolution and war and wholesale proscription. But there was still another, perhaps a more important purpose in this heavenly chaos; it proved, as nothing else could, the deep sincerity of Brutus' and Cassius' motives; far from being cowed by those portents that were able to impress even the fearless Caesar, they were barely aware of them, so engrossed were they in their cause; Cassius, though it may be that he "did what he did in envy of great Caesar"[4], in this scene, at least, gives an effect of passionate sincerity. Allusions to this relation between nature and human nature are, as I said, numerous. When Henry IV lay dying, his attendants noted that "The seasons change their manners", "The river hath twice flow'd, no ebb between"[5]. Othello, just after Desdemona's death, when he allows himself for a

1 Act I, Scene 3.
2 Act II, Scene 1.
3 Act II, Scene 2.
4 Act V, Scene 5.
5 "Henry IV", Part 2, Act IV, Scene 4.

moment to realize what he has done, cries in agony,

"Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse

"Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe

"Should yawn at alteration."[1]

We can well imagine the difficulty of giving adequate expression to Othello's feelings throughout this scene, where it is interesting to note how frequently Othello's words revolve on folklore. There is the already quoted reference to the devil's cloven feet,

"I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable:

"If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee."[2];

he calls Desdemona, "O ill-starr'd wench"[3]; when he learns the whole truth, he cries, "Whip me, ye devils,

"From the possession of this heavenly sight !

"Blow me about in winds ! roast me in sulphur !

"Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire !"[4]

Omens were commonly fancied in the manifestations of the sun and moon: "Alack," cries Antony, "Our terrene moon

"Is now eclipsed; and it portends alone

"The fall of Antony !"[5]

The sun, in Richard III, "should have braved the east an hour ago:

"A black day will it be to somebody";[6]

in Richard II, "Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,

"Witnessing storms to come, woe and unrest";[7]

1, 2, 3, 4, Act V, Scene 2.
5 "Antony and Cleopatra", Act III, Scene 13.
6 Act V, Scene 3.
7 Act II, Scene 4.

in Henry IV, "Worse than the sun in March,

"This praise doth nourish agues".[1]

Planets are divided into two groups, portending good or ill: Hermione patiently broods, "There's some ill planet reigns"[2]; Richard III vows, "Be opposite all planets of good luck

"To my proceedings, if, with pure heart's love . . .

"I tender not thy beauteous princely daughter".[3]

This brings us to the little elemental spirits of "The Tempest". It is unfortunate that many critics view this play as an elaborate Morality. As someone has said, we like our fairy stories to be fairy stories. They are spoiled for us when we are forced to interpret them as moral allegories. We feel cheated. The supernatural beings of this play have an added charm over those of the Midsummer Night's Dream, in novelty. None of them can be fitted into the familiar categories; they are something new. Ariel is neither goblin nor spirit nor elf; similarly there is no species that can claim Caliban; nor does Prospero quite fit in with the familiar conception of the magician, though much of it he suggests. We are unable even to define exactly the relationship between Prospero and his servant Ariel; all we are aware of is the spoken command; we know not whose power carries out these commands. In fact, the only

1 Part I, Act IV, Scene 1.
2 "Winter's Tale", Act II, Scene 1.
3 Act IV, Scene 4.

properly mythological character connected with the play is Sycorax,the "blue-eyed hag"[1]who could control the moon[2], who imprisoned Ariel in a cloven pine[3], but whom we know only by hearsay. Nevertheless much of folklore is woven into these characters, or suggested by them. The emphasis on the element of mystery conforms to the character of the story. Prospero and his servants are sometimes magicians in the ordinary sense: Prospero charms human beings from moving;[4]he and his followers can render themselves invisible[5]; by the aid of his servants he is able to "bedim

"The noontide sun, call forth the mutinous winds,

"And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault

"Set roaring war",

shake the "strong-based promontory", pluck up the pine and cedar, cause graves to ope and let forth their sleepers;[6]he tells us that his servants are fairies--"the elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves", the demi-puppets that

"By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,

"Whereof the ewe not bites";[7]

his power, too, by his own admission, depends on his magic wand and his magic book.[8] All these are characteristics of the tra-

1, 3, 4, Act I, Scene 2.
2 Act V, Scene 1.
5 Act IV, Scene 1.
6, 7, 8, Act V, Scene 1.

itional magician. Ariel and his subordinates are able to take any shape;[1] by dividing into several flaming parts, Ariel was able to simulate Jove's lightnings;[2] he could penetrate "the veins of the earth;[3] yet he could be controlled by witches and magicians. His little song, "Where the bee sucks, there suck I, "In a cowslip's bell I lie,"[4] indicates a relationship to the kingdom of Oberon. It is clear, then, why we feel ourselves in the familiar old world of folklore, just as did the shipwrecked travellers--"Now I will believe

"That there are unicorns, that in Arabia

"There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix,

"At this hour reigning there."[5];

Ferdinand leaps into the sea, crying, "Hell is empty,

"And all the devils are here"[6].

The use of enchantment gives the play its pulsing excitement, heightens, largely through its manifestation in Caliban, its reality. Caliban, that missing link who has fascinated many scholars, while flickering occasionally with the beginnings of reason, is guided altogether by animal instincts. As one would expect, all that he has been able to learn, from his contact with human beings and with the

1 Act III, Scene 3.
2, 3, Act I, Scene 2.
4 Act V, Scene 1.
5 Act III, Scene 3.
6 Act I, Scene 2.

semi-human being, Sycorax, is superstition. He is quick to believe that Stephano is the man in the moon;[1] there is a superstition in almost every speech--he makes his initial entrance with the curse,

"As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd
"With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
"Drop on you both ! A south-west blow on ye
"And blister you all o'er !";[2]

and later,

"All the infections that the sun sucks up
"From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall".[3]

These superstitious outbursts, constantly reiterated, render this strange being more strange, emphasize his individuality, and account to some degree for his never-failing monopoly of the play. He brings it down to earth, prevents it resolving into an unreal and airy fantasy. Ariel, who gives it its light and vivid movement, is just as truly an individual, a gentle, joyous being of infinite power and intelligence--if one may call it so--and resourcefulness, set off more clearly by little weaknesses--his love of flattery, showing itself in a childish inclination to brag, and his equally childish forgetfulness. On Prospero I shall not dwell; he is too great and too faultless ever to seem very near us.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" is the first of his comedies in which he seriously employs folklore for his effects. To this Quiller-

1 Act I, Scene 2.
2 Act II, Scene 2.

Couch attributes its superiority over the plays that had gone before; owing to this, it was here that he first found scope for his two greatest gifts, poetry and humour.[1] Let us define humour in general, and Shakespeare's humour in particular, with John Weiss, as the combination of "a broad imagination and a sweet and tolerant moral sense that is devoid of malice and all uncharitableness, and at peace with all mankind".[2] This is the spirit of the play--the spirit of Puck, of Theseus too, especially in his attitude towards the amateur players.[3] Shakespeare, familiar with the fairy world of his time, and sure of its hold on people, here found himself free to travel wherever his broad imagination led him. As he adapted all things to his purposes, however, so he adapted, and to some degree, altered, the English fairies. Minor White Latham, in his "Elizabethan Fairies", makes a study of Shakespeare's alteration in the general conception of the fairies by his contemporaries, and the effects of this alteration. The chief change is the removal of the stigma of wickedness attached to them by common belief. By tradition they were beings to be feared, whereas in Shakespeare's portrayal of them, they are kindly-disposed little beings.[4] It is Shakespeare, too, who for the first time pictures

1 "Shakespeare's Workmanship", pp. 73-75.
2 "Wit, Humor, and Shakspeare", page 61.
3 Act V, Scene 1.
4 "Elizabethan Fairies", pp. 181, 182.

them as diminutive in size, a characteristic which has clung to them ever since.[1] Latham attributes their disappearance as credible entities to the influence of Shakespeare's treatment of them in this play.[2] So much more lifelike were Shakespeare's fairies than their traditional counterparts even in the firm belief of the folk, that by about 1600 they began to attract the fancy of other literary men, and by 1651 the Shakespearian fairies were firmly established in literature as the English fairies.[3] "Not only in plays and poems, however, was the influence of the Shakespearean fairies, especially the feature of their smallness, felt. In popular belief, also, the fairies of tradition tended, it would seem, to become contaminated by the fairies of A Midsummer Night's Dream."[4] Once they ceased to be creatures of terror, they soon lost their hold on the ignorant people. Sufficient of their characteristics were retained by Shakespeare, to make them easily recognizable, however; and, partly, it seems, for the sake of realism, and partly that they might serve the purposes of folklore, the character of Robin Goodfellow, or Puck, except for the change of surroundings, was retained complete. Although, except that he was not a fairy, his race and origin have never been satisfactorily specified, he was quite the most popular of the supernatural beings

1 "Elizabethan Fairies", pp. 187, 188.
2 Page 193.
3 Page 213.
4 Page 215.

that haunted England. It is a mere device of Shakespeare's that places him in fairyland, and it is carefully indicated that he is not in his native surroundings.[1] His kindliness and boisterousness, his rusticity, even his propensity for match-making, are here retained. The purpose of this adaptation of fairyland is easily seen. It was necessary that he colour his fairy world with the glamour of mythology and aristocracy, for the ignorant beliefs of the peasantry wouldn't harmonize with the court life of Theseus and Hippolyta. In order to do so, he must dispel the association of roughness and burliness of appearance; accordingly he changed their proportions altogether. The wickedness and malice, attributed to them commonly, failed to fit in with either the plot or the atmosphere, and thus he was forced to change their character. As his fancy led him he added touches of his own, such as his association of the fairies with flowers. The result is a picture of fairyland so vivid and so entrancing that it has been the basis of all succeeding fairy literature.

Even here he had apparently not yet realised the effect of the subtle superstitious allusion which he later scattered through all his plays, thus producing emphasis and realism wherever desired. This device he gradually developed to a very high degree, and it has continued effective, to a limited degree at least,

1 Act II, Scene 1.

down to our own time. I have already alluded to the invulnerability of superstition, and it is interesting to note the number of Shakespeare's superstitions that are firmly believed by many moderately educated people today; we still cling to the belief in omens, especially in the form of dreams, as well as in all sorts of miscellaneous forms connected with birds, and numbers, etc. Shakespeare's characters frequently allude to warnings of death, sometimes in the form of noises, as the "bird of night" hooting and shrieking at noon-day upon the market-place on the night before Caesar's death, and the "strange screams of death" on the night of Duncan's murder. A modern form of this superstition is the presage of death attached to a dog's howling, and such stories as the tapping of the willow wand in "Adam Bede", which leaves few people unimpressed. Romeo exclaims,

"How oft when men are at the point of death,

"Have they been merry !"[1]

This is suggestive of our frequent distrust of extreme happiness. We need say nothing of the prophetic nature of dreams--of Shakespeare's allusions to this, I need only mention the agitation that Calpurnia's dream caused her and even Caesar himself; we are almost as affected by a strange or terrible dream today as were the Elizabethans. Again, some of us still keep horse-shoes and rab-

1 Act V, Scene 3.

bits'-feet for charms against evil. Brabantio refers to this belief in charms when he asks,

"Is there not charms,

"By which the property of youth and maidhood

"May be abus'd?";[1]

and La Pucelle,

"Now help, ye charming spells and periapts".[2]

Unlucky days in our time have narrowed down to one, and so with unlucky numbers; in Shakespeare's time numbers of days were set forth in the calendar as lucky or unlucky--Constance cries,

"What hath this day deserv'd? what hath it done,

"That it in golden letters should be set

"Among the high tides in the calendar?"[3];

and, as to numbers, Falstaff says, "They say there is divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death".[4] There are relics of customs and superstitions today that have lost their original meaning; the Provost in Measure for Measure alludes to the curfew bell[5], and so does Prospero, whose elves "rejoice to hear the solemn curfew"[6]; at that time it was the signal for the appearance of ghosts and fairies[7]; we still have the curfew, without this sig-

1 "Othello", Act I, Scene 1.
2 "Henry VI", Part I, Act V, Scene 3.
3 "King John", Act III, Scene 1.
4 "Merry Wives of Windsor", Act V, Scene 2.
5 Act IV, Scene 2.
6 Act V, Scene 1.
7 "Folk-lore of Shakespeare", page 521.

nificance.

To indicate Shakespeare's use of occasional miscellaneous superstition, it is sufficient to consider one of his maturer plays from this point of view. Let us take, then, the "Winter's Tale", in which folklore plays no large or obvious part. In the first place, as a relic of savage belief that attributed godlike power to the sun and moon and stars, fortune and misfortune, to these people, were dependant on planetary influence; thus the force of Leontes' first suspicion, is emphasized by the figure of the "bawdy planet that will strike,

"Where 'tis predominant";[1]

Camillo, too, when faced by loss of fortune and the risk of death as the only alternative to murder, and foreseeing, perhaps, much of the agony that must follow the insane fury of Leontes, cries, "Happy star reign now !"[2]; later Hermione expresses all the depth of her misery in her resigned philosophy, "There's some ill planet reigns:

"I must be patient till the heavens look

"With an aspect more favorable.";

and similarly later, "My third comfort,

"Starr'd most unluckily".[3]

When Camillo speaks in riddles, hesitant in his desire to confide to the agitated Polixenes his danger, the latter gives force to his very

1 Act I, Scene 2.
2 Act I, Scene 2.
3 Act III, Scene 2.

natural exasperation by his cry,

"Make me not sighted like the basilisk !" [1]

Probably the most effective bit of folklore in the play is the response of Leontes to the news of Polixenes' flight, when he says,

"There may be in the cup
"A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,
"And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
"Is not infected: but if one present
"The abhorr'd ingredient to his eye, make known
"How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
"With violent hefts. I have drunk and seen the spider."[2]

There is much in this figure. We see his revulsion at the very thought of Hermione's supposed crime, in his calling up of horrible pictures to drive out his own mental visions; we see his fury, his sorrow, all emphasized by the touch of folklore; to us, the superstition is forceful--we can imagine what it would have been to an audience that believed it. Further on, Leontes' half-crazed passion expresses itself towards Paulinus by his terming her a "mankind witch"[3]; similarly Polixenes expresses his feelings towards Perdita --"Thou fresh piece of excellent witchcraft".[4] Antigonus' ominous dream on shipboard, in which Hermione appears to him, serves both

1 Act I, Scene 2.
2 Act II, Scene 1.
3 Act II, Scene 3.
4 Act IV, Scene 4.

to place Perdita in Bohemia, and to prepare us for Antigonus' death.[1] The difficulty of doing justice to the awe of the shepherd at sight of the forsaken, richly-clad baby is met by the use of superstition, which is particularly strong among the peasantry always--"It was told me I should be rich by the fairies . . . .This is fairy gold, boy . . We are lucky, boy; and to be so still requires nothing but secrecy"[2]; this superstition accounts, too, we see, for the long silence regarding the origin of Perdita.

Up to this point I have ignored all allusions to Classical Mythology. Through continual appearance in literature, its predominating facts had become familiar to the average person--almost all of Shakespeare's characters show a general careless knowledge of it, a sense of its distant beauty that means nothing more to them than beauty and a vague appreciation of the culture that produced it. It obviously meant little more than this to Shakespeare. One country cannot give reality in literature to the mythology of another; any attempt to do so is sure to be artificial. Shakespeare probably realized this, and his scraps of foreign folklore are but a part of his poetry, or a part of a mythological setting, as in the "Winter's Tale". They were not intended to rouse the emotions of the audience, as do his witches and omens and devils. The lore of his country was very near to Homer; he could draw from life and a

1 Act III, Scene 3.
2 Act III, Scene 3.

depth of knowledge. So it was with Grimm, who gathered the half-forgotten legends of Germany, with universal success. And so it was with Shakespeare. There are constants in human nature that cause the duplication in every religion, obsolete or extant, of certain factors--this never-failing duplication determines that they are the prominent factors. When the recipient of his heritage of folklore proceeds to give it immortality through his pen, these predominant forces naturally find their proper place. It is not the beauty of the lids of Juno's eyes, Diana's "smooth and rubious lip", the appealing infidelities of Jove, Cupid's delicate arrow, the terrifying grandeur of Mars, the tears of Niobe, that find a responsive chord in the average breast. These catch the fanciful eye of the poet, and flatter--let us say, an educated Elizabethan class who pride themselves on their culture; but they don't touch the raw end of a deep-set instinct. To do this, it takes enchantment and augury, the communication of living men and departed spirits, the wrathful punishments of the gods, imaginary supernatural monsters such as the dragon of the fairy tale, Scylla, the Sirens, the Furies, the sinister atmosphere of fate. Such elements as these are to be found in the myths of every land.

Among the survivals of superstition in every country are to be found customs of various sorts, in most cases of forgotten or-

igin, and so ingrained by very long habit or perhaps by a half-for gotten sense of a once vital significance that they continue to ex ist with very little change from generation to generation. Prob- ably the most conspicuous of these in Shakespeare's time and today are those attaching to marriage and funeral customs. The exchange of rings[1], and the custom of troth-plighting[2], associated with the wedding ceremony; the chanting of hymns[3], the decorating of the corpse[4], and the feeding of the "lamp and flames of love"[5], relating to burial; and the association of flowers with both[6] exist still, though not always in the same force as in Shakespeare's day Similarly we still have in parts of the country festivals analagous to the sheep-shearing festival of the "Winter's Tale"; just as Fluellen wore a leek on St. David's day, Irishmen still wear a shamrock on St. Patrick's day; St. Valentine's day has yet a little of the significance it had in Shakespeare's day[7]; Mercutio alludes to the custom still prevalent of wearing new clothes on Easter Sunday[8]; Shakespeare's "rite of May"[9] remains with us in our May-pole dance. Such customs form a part of the very minimum amount of realism that Shakespeare used--combined with the rest of his folklore it could almost be called a realism of all time.

1 "The Merchant of Venice", Act III, Scene 2.
2 "Winter's Tale", Act IV, Scene 4.
3 "Cymbeline", Act IV, Scene 2.
4 "Romeo and Juliet", Act IV, Scene 5.
5 "Troilus and Cressida", Act III, Scene 2.
6 "Hamlet", Act V, Scene 1.
7 "Midsummer Night's Dream", Act IV, Scene 1.
8 "Romeo and Juliet", Act III, Scene 1.
9 "Midsummer Night's Dream", Act IV, Scene 1.

Let us return again to an age before writing grew common. It is an established fact that rhythm is an instinct with us. It is even to be distinguished in the cries of animals--in the songs of birds, the crowing of a rooster, the neigh of a horse. When we whistle to a dog, and when we call to one another, there is always rhythm. Primitive men--we have proof in tribes still existing--indulged this instinct more zestfully than we, in music, instrumental or vocal. At some indeterminable point in the tribal history of every country, narrative gradually crept into song, and the art of oral composition grew very popular. George Lyman Kittredge, in his introduction to "English and Scottish Popular Ballads", pictures a tribal gathering assembled under very simple conditions of life "for the purpose of celebrating some occasion of common interest--a successful hunt, or the return from a prosperous foray, or the repulse of a band of marauding strangers. The object of the meeting is known to all; the deeds which are to be sung, the dance which is to accompany and illustrate the singing, are likewise familiar to every one. There is no such diversity of intellectual interests as characterizes even the smallest group of civilized men. There is unity of feeling and a common stock, however slender, of ideas and traditions. The dancing and singing, in which all share, are so closely related as to be practically complementary parts of a single festal act.....a

singing, dancing throng subjected as a unit to a mental and emotional stimulus which is not only favorable to the production of poetry, but is almost certain to result in such production..... Different members of the throng, one after another, may chant each his verse, composed on the spur of the moment, and the sum of these various contributions makes a song. This is communal composition.. ...The folk is its author."[1]

Such a picture may not be accurate; certain elements of it, however, we are quite sure are true, from the evidence of scattered song compositions that have come down orally from early times. The characteristic mark of these songs, which are known to us as "popular ballads", is their utter impersonality, the absence of all indication of authorship. Whether the authorship was individual or communal, the result must be the same, for no sooner was the song composed than it became the possession of the people as a whole, by reason of its dependence on oral tradition for existence. In its passage of memory from one generation to another, any traces of authorship that once might have existed became lost. Devoid as they were forced to be of the localization of realism, of moral consciousness, or of subjectivity of any sort, these ballads depended on natural vigour and human interest, for life. Such vigour, as Scott points out, is more likely to be found in

1 Page 19, Introduction.

the earliest poets who are free and original in the absence of predecessors to bias them, or to provide the danger of plagiarism.[1] This, and their simplicity and their natural rhythm stamp many of them as pure poetry. They are filled, too, with human truths. The Wife of Usher's Well, with the instinctive female consideration for male comfort, no sooner saw her sons than she proceeded to feed them, and to prepare her most comfortable bed for them.[2] Fair Annet just had to gloat over the nut-brown maid.[3] The nobility of Patrick Spens' truly Scotch nature came out in action rather than heroic oratory; he covered up his feelings with laughter.[4] They reflect, too, countless numbers of the superstitions and customs of the people who produced them, and of those through whose hands they passed. This predominance of folklore in them, added to the fact that they have sprung from the very spirit of our ancestors, and to the fact of their indeterminable antiquity which makes them as exciting an object of study as a bottomless pool, give them a value as an instrument in the hands of Shakespeare, similar to that of folklore--a greater value, indeed, for the power over the human feelings of song in general is unmatched, appealing, as it does, to the instinct for harmony, to which Aristotle gives great prominence.[5] Just as with folk-

1 "Scott's Poetical Works", page 537.
2 "English and Scottish Popular Ballads", page 168.
3 page 153.
4 page 104.
5 "The Poetics of Aristotle", page 15.

lore, too, there is a universality in the ballad. In many cases different versions of the same song appear in several countries. Kittredge tells us that there are versions of "The Maid and the Palmer" in Danish, in Faröe, in Norwegian, in Swedish, and in Finnish, as well as in English. "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight" exists among all the nations of Europe; Kittredge quotes Professor Child, who says that it is nearly as well known to the southern as to the northern countries.[1]

The fact that balladry is an oral literature strengthens its power, for only those songs which hold the seeds of immortality could live at all. And it is not only the ignorant folk, into whose hands the ballad has fallen, that feel its appeal. We have the tributes of great literary men to the beauty and emotional power of the ballad. Kittredge quotes Goldsmith, "The music of the finest singer is dissonance to what I felt when our old dairymaid sung me into tears with Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night, or the Cruelty of Barbara Allen";[2] and Scott quotes Sir Philip Sidney, "Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness; I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet".[3]

In Shakespeare's time the ballad was exceedingly popular; we have a suggestion of this in his own work, in the scene in which

1 Page 15, Introduction.
2 Page 23, Introduction.
3 "Scott's Poetical Works", Page 555.

Autolycus acts the ballad-monger.[1] Limited as is his use of the ballad, in comparison with that of folklore, it plays a vital part in his work. It is interesting to note that, with a very few exceptions, his use of familiar song was confined to the ballad. Consider, first of all, the two ballads in Othello. The first of these is sung by Iago, at perhaps the most critical point in the drama, to assist him in playing that first stroke upon which his whole plot depended, the discharge of Cassio.[2] Once he succeeds in getting the prudent Cassio drunk, his plan promises to run smoothly. Ingeniously, then, he proceeds to work on the feelings of his already slightly heated victim--just enough affected to be in a vulnerable condition. The suspense of the scene is heightened by the incongruity of Iago's temporary part--it is quite unnatural to him. It reflects his own suppressed excitement and anxiety, for there is apparently nothing gay and dashing in Iago's personality, up to this point. He is calculating and controlled and brooding; his natural reserve is shown in the fact that no person in the play, not even his wife, really knows him. Aware, however, of the emotional power of music, he bursts forth into a rollicking drinking song. Cassio's attention is captured. Iago sustains the atmosphere he has created, by lauding, in tones of veneration, the drinking capacity of the Englishman. Cassio drinks. To crown his effect,

1 "Winter's Tale", Act IV, Scene 4.
2 Act II, Scene 3.

Iago rolls out some verses of the ballad of King Stephen, and Cassio is a lost man; a few moments later he is talking drunken nonsense. The ballad serves to intensify the effect of the scene; the audience already know the devilish plot of Iago; as they tensely watch Cassio tumbling into the trap prepared for him, they become aware of the strain of a very familiar song of a type whose power over the feelings is unmatched; their emotional stress is brought to a height which never slackens through the following exhaustive action to the final scene whose breath-taking passion crowns the play.

To pass on to Desdemona's famous song of willow, the ballad that haunted her the night of her death: for a few pathetic minutes there is an ominous lull in the heavily charged atmosphere, like the lull before a storm. The scene is filled with foreboding: the wind knocking at the door; chance remarks of Desdemona's--"If I do die before thee, prithee, shroud me

"In one of those same sheets";

and later, "Mine eyes do itch;

"Doth that bode weeping?";

the reversion of her thoughts to the past; but, most of all, the sad old song, with its tragic associations, haunting her thoughts, and at length making its way forth, in spite of the efforts to quell it by distractive words. This familiar ballad must have

moved the Elizabethan audiences strongly at this point; indeed, it need not be familiar to do so. Any audience, at the close of this scene, is both slightly relaxed by the pause in the action, and at the same time prepared for anything that may follow. The use of the ballad, besides creating an atmosphere of foreboding, renders the pause unnoticeable, and intensifies the pathos.

In his earlier comedies original songs occur much more frequently than familiar ones. Occasionally in them, however, snatches of ballads are brought in. The first of these appear in "The Taming of the Shrew"; they were excellently fitted to Petruchio's temperament. His gay and irresistible wooing is enhanced immeasurably with his careless scraps of old song--"We will have rings and things and fine array;

"And kiss me, Kate, we will be married o' Sunday"[1];

and,

"It was the friar of orders gray,

"As he forth walked on his way".[2]

Nothing could so tantalize his shrewish victim; nothing could so emphasize for his audience the charm of his happy nonchalance.

In these comedies the allusions to well-known ballads help greatly to establish the atmosphere of fun. Benedick gives force to his vow of eternal bachelorhood, with an allusion to the ballad of Adam Bell, "If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot

1 Act II, Scene 1.
2 Act IV, Scene 1.

at me; and he that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder and called Adam".[1] This is extreme fun for the audience who never doubt, I am sure, what the outcome is to be. The lively and very endearing Mercutio drops such allusions as,"Young Adam Cupid, he that shot so trim,

"When King Cophetua loved the beggar-maid"[2], referring to one of the best-known ballads of the time. Later he makes an impudent exit, singing to Juliet's nurse a bit of the ballad of Susanna.[3] Falstaff, now and again, mingles lines of ballads with his jests-"When Arthur first in court,

"And was a worthy king",[4]

and,

"Your brooches, pearls and ouches".[5]

In the comedies, the most successful ballad effects are probably those of Sir Toby and Feste in "Twelfth Night". The joyousness of the drinking scene seems almost to reach out and include the audience, when the snatches of popular song teem forth, of which such lines as, "There dwelt a man in Babylon, lady, lady",[6] and "O, the twelfth day of December",[7] are ballad quotations. Feste's

"Hey, Robin, jolly Robin,

"Tell me how thy lady does"[8]

1 Act I, Scene 1.
2 "Romeo and Juliet", Act II, Scene 2.
3 Act II, Scene 4.
4 "Henry IV,"Part 2, Act II, Scene 4.
5 Act II, Scene 4.
6, 7, Act II, Scene 3.
8 Act IV, Scene 2.

expresses his pure delight, and suppressed gloating over Malvolio. The two provide a forceful contrast--Malvolio, deadly earnest, grovelling, and light-hearted, light-footed Feste.

To return to the tragic, we have already dealt with Edgar in the section on folklore. His fragments of ballads--

"Child Rowland to the dark tower came,

"His word was still 'Fie, foh, and fum,

"I smell the blood of a British man'"[1],

and,

"Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?

"Thy sheep be in the corn;

"And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,

"Thy sheep shall take no harm"[2],

are but a part of the effect already described.

Probably the most difficult spectacle to render effective on the stage is a mad person. Shakespeare never harrows us unnecessarily. Lear in his madness would do so, if it were not that our sympathy and interest in this scene are divided--Edgar claims much of it, and Kent, and the fool who has gained such attention from commentators. For this reason Shakespeare is able to give a complete picture of Lear's insanity--it is necessary, since he is the centre of the play--we even see the gradual approach of madness.

1 "King Lear", Act III, Scene 4.
2 Act III, Scene 6.

Emphasis is placed, however, in such a way that the effect is one of grandeur and awe rather than of horror. It is different with Ophelia; too much emphasis must not be placed upon her. A complete realistic picture of a mad woman would be revelting, and also disproportionate, for Ophelia is not a major character. Shakespeare makes her a thing of tragic beauty, and to bring this rather indefinite portrayal close to the heart of the audience, he has recourse to snatches of balladry and folklore. The scraps of familiar song are cleverly merged into Ophelia's babbling, the trend of which medical men, I think, usually admit to be, as far as it goes, psychologically correct. The songs she sings all dwell, though without sense or connectedness, on death and unfortunate love, the two instruments which probably produced the shock that unsettled her mind.

The tiniest superstitious allusions, Shakespeare seems to have weighed with infinite precision, as to their emotional effect. His bolder strokes--the ghosts and witches and elemental disturbances--fit consistently into their position of subordination. How could he foresee the exact degree of the effect of King Hamlet's ghost on the audience? And little of it is lost today. It is an increase in the spread of education that has caused the power of superstition somewhat to wane, and only among the educated has it done so. The possibility of supernatural occurrences is still real am-

ong the ignorant, as it was among the Elizabethan ignorant. The increased numbers of the educated, as did the Elizabethan educated, see the ghost through Hamlet's eyes, and the effect on him affects them. The ballad has lost none of its unique appeal, except its familiarity. It has unfortunately been forgotten almost altogether, but its tang still wins us. In this aspect of Shakespeare's genius, more than in any other, we stand astonished at the man's amazing insight into people. It was truly a magic web that the magician Shakespeare wove about his audiences--for three centuries and more it has gone on hypnotizing us, with a force little weakened.

CHAPTER III

FOLKLORE AND BALLADRY AND LITERATURE

Shakespeare's art was an art for everybody, delighting alike Queen Elizabeth and her humblest servant. How very incongruous seems any other sort of literature ! Most artists will argue that they have something to say--something important; it seems a weakness, then, a shirking of responsibility, to direct it only to those who may most easily appreciate it. Anything else than an art for all is a left-over of class distinction in a democratic age; it is inharmonious. It is almost better that it should be directed only towards the unenlightened, for much of our energy today--too much, some people think--is expended in the attempt to satisfy the needs of helpless or misguided individuals. We call it Christian brotherhood. Many would carry this brotherhood farther; with class barriers now demolished, or at least started on the way, they would break down the barriers of nationality, of religion, of race. It is a large issue; habits of thousands of years' formation, and instincts, must first be dispensed with. The ideal is surely a noble one; one may perhaps venture to question the judgment of those who would have the work complete in a

day. Modern men of action tend to scorn the conservative-minded, to whom the only successful change is the gradual change. Probably with a backward eye on the French and Russian revolutions, some of us are wary of acting on impulse. The League of Nations, our symbol of this ideal of brotherhood, has fallen into deep disrepute, because its trial of several years' duration has not been conspicuously successful. Between races, nothing more than a distant friendliness is possible, because society will not sanction intermarriage. Yet many people expect this nodding acquaintance to bind them together. This is possible for those individuals whose ideals rule their lives. Under given conditions the majority of men will respond to such ideals, I am sure--as Stevenson says, the worst and most trampled of us have our vague aspirations.[1] But our present life is one overflowing with distractions--there is at least one for every moment; and thus our minds are not free to fan these dim aspirations into a perpetual, functioning blaze. A continual stimulus from without is needed.

God, for some reason, gave us an instinct which responds to beauty--beauty of sound, of sight, of smell, or, in the best of us, of idea. Our response to beauty has in some of us taken the form of artistic creation. The plastic arts are especially characterized by visual beauty; literature and music claim especially beauty of sound; and the best and most lasting of all art attempts to

1 "Pulvis et Umbra", in "Essays", page 319.

produce the new, or reproduce an old and valuable, idea. Literature and music, since their mediums are understood by the greatest number of people, are, of all the arts, most quickly responded to by the majority. The combination of these two arts, then, found in poetry and song, should have a particularly strong appeal; and it is easily seen that this is so. Song, in which sound has an especially prominent place, is the only art which is by nature social; it is furthermore the first art which is practised by savage peoples. The simplest individual feels the large place that it fills in his life. Goethe indicates in his Pedagogical Utopia the importance of it--"Song is the first step in education; all the rest are connected with it, and attained by it. The simplest enjoyment, as well as the simplest instruction, we enliven and impress by song; nay, even what religious and moral principles we lay before our children, are communicated in the way of song."[1] The French habitants used to sing at their work, some do still; shantymen, too--from them we have a highly-prized store of ballads; fishermen; spinners and weavers, before the industrial revolution; soldiers marching to war. It is an established fact that soldiers can march longer and more swiftly to the accompaniment of song. Poetry has a deeper value than song; it is the idea that has the prominent place here. Sometimes, however, it is allowed to deteriorate into nothing more than song--and not

[1] "Wilhelm Meister", Vol. 2, page 211.

even a high order of song. Such poetry comes down to the ordinary individual, without the higher purpose of raising him to a better level. Undoubtedly people can be educated to enjoy the best art. The fact that the German people as a whole have a finer appreciation for good music than we have cannot be due to a God-given gift that we lack, for we come from the same stock. The only alternative is that the instinct is better nurtured in them than in us.

Poetry seems, then, the best adapted of the arts for the effective conveyance of the idea--it has the appeal to the senses, familiarity of medium, and a natural relationship to thought. Thus it has a responsibility to fulfill. Matthew Arnold said, "We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses , and called to higher destinies than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more, mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us."[1] What better instrument, then, can we find, than poetry, to fan that highest of our ideals, that of Christian brotherhood, into a resolute purpose? Seldom do we find a truly great artist who lacks great ideals; all their sensibilities, including the ethical, are finer than the ordinary man's. Consider

1 "Century Readings in English Literature", page 773.
ed. by J. W. Cunliffe.

this conception of interclass and international brotherhood; consider how many poets dreamed this dream long before it was thought of by the average man of action. In England alone, in the Romantic Age, such a conception is seen in the bud, in such poets as Shelley, Byron, very clearly in Burns, until in Tennyson it works up to a clear, concrete conviction, a prophecy.

Much earlier than this had man felt the universal nature of poetry. We may go back at least to Longinus, to whom one important criterion of worth in literature is the popular and lasting appeal[1]; then there were such men as Moliere, Addison, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and in our own day, Tolstoi. But neither of these two groups of thinkers had thought of applying the fact of the universal nature of poetry to the realization of the ideal of general brotherhood. It was a foreign nation that conceived this. The ideal of brotherhood permeated both the life and the art of Goethe; he felt that its realization was the duty of the artist; he so familiarized himself with the art, especially the poetic art, of every country to which intellectual access was possible for him, that he stands out far above his brother artists as an international figure. He endeavoured to awaken a generous sympathy and understanding among the literary men of different nations--in this he needed the cooperation of the critic, but not until his very old age did he find such allies, in Sainte-Beuve and his group of brother cri-

1 "On the Sublime", Section 7.

tics. It was purely among the literary men themselves that he endeavoured to arouse international understanding; although Goethe's art was not by any means an art for the intellectual few alone, he did not seem to realize that, through art, and especially poetry, international understanding might be awakened in the mass. There is more conscious effort today, I think, to find an audience in the more common individual. Such men as Kipling in some of his poems, Sir Henry Newbolt in his patriotic ballads, Carl Sandburg with his use of the idiom of the streets, Vachel Lindsay who is called the "William Blake of our modern industrial age"[1], John Weaver who, H.L. Mencken says, "opens the way for a ballad literature in America"[2]--these seek to touch a responsive chord in the ordinary man of little education; but most of these in doing so, lose the interest of the more intellectual. In this, perhaps Tennyson is the most successful of the moderns, but he lacks the international influence. There is in his language a localization that hampers it. If we are to have a world literature, there must be a minimum of localization of any sort, whether of place and people, or of time. The best poetry, as we see in the classics, consists in the representation of indestructable human truths--this is what has given our greatest writers permanence. The Da-

1 "Twentieth Century Poetry", page 346; ed. by J. Drinkwater.
2 "Twentieth Century Poetry", page 502.

nish code of revenge, as revealed in "Hamlet", and the Spanish code of honour, as revealed in Calderon's "The Painter of His Own Shame", are not modern conceptions of right, but the mental struggle to know what is right, and the struggle of Hamlet and Don Juan to comply with what is believed right are universal, eternal truths. So with the character development of Faust and Lear through suffering. Dr. Ulrici writes that "Shakespeare's characters are so full of Catholic human nature that every one recognizes their type in his own bosom, and cannot help but view the represented action relatively to himself".[1]

If the highest human truths are going to find an audience, and if localizing realism is banned, there must be some means of making a play real to an audience, something very close to his thoughts, by which the recipient may recognize himself. Again let us refer to Shakespeare; there is a minimum of realism in his work--his plays are not primarily English plays of the Elizabethan age, as are those of his contemporaries. In fact there is practically nothing in them to date them. I

As long as we are in some ignorance of invisible power, there will be a certain amount of superstition in every one of us. It is the most widespread of human truths, and has always and everywhere sought to express itself in a concrete form, as we see in the myth-

1 "Shakespeare's Dramatic Art", page 506.

ologies of every nation. Though these personified symbols of superstition may to a certain extent fade, and lose some of their reality, they do not change with changing civilization, with our changing manifestations of ourselves; and they continue to exist, though sometimes in a dormant state, ready to be awakened into reality by a slight stimulus. Practically the only realism Shakespeare used was that of superstition, by its nature not a temporary realism but one of all time. But we have a better model then Shakespeare, in the Bible; it proves the possibility of a universal literature; it is an answer, too to those that hold that a poem suffers hopelessly in translation. We all know that the Bible is full of folklore and balladry , and that it has become the victim of superstitions. It is interesting to note the unsettling of faith that followed the fairly recent attempt to rake out the superstition in it and associated with it--it will probably be some time before the less happy effects of this upheaval have disappeared. There is the same prevalence of superstition in Dante's "Divine Comedy", which bears perhaps more relationship to Shakespeare's works than any of the classics--Dean Church writes of him, "All that a man of society, of travel, of science, of learning, the politician, the moralist, could gather, is used at will in the great poetic structure; but all converges to the purpose"[1]; in Shakespeare there is the

1 "Dante and Other Essays", page 84.

same unbounded variety of matter. As we have already noted, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, are all filled with a superstition that appeals to our own time. So with Greek drama. Probably no phase of literature has more strongly the universal appeal than the fairy tale; the Grimm brothers' fairy tales are as well known to us as to their own nation. Similarly the most international of songs is the ballad; Goethe's ballad of the Erl King is to many, I am sure, the most winning of his songs. Scott's popularity owes much to folklore and balladry; he was acknowledged on the continent when Wordsworth was ignored, although most people will admit that the latter is by far the finer poet. Of Byron, Saintsbury says, "No English poet, perhaps no English writer except Scott, has ever equalled him in popularity at home; and no English writer, with Richardson and Scott again as seconds, and those not very close ones, has equalled him in contemporary popularity abroad.....abroad he simply took possession of the Continent of Europe and kept it."[1] His poems are, many of them, great in thought, and rich in folklore--"Manfred" and "Cain" are fair examples of his work. In "Werner", too, there are references to witchcraft, and the "black art", and the "horrid dreams" of Werner on the night of the murder of Stralenheim. [2] We cannot ignore our great international figure, Goethe; the demonology of "Faust", his most generally admired work, assuredly had some part in its wide

1 "Nineteenth Century Literature", page 78.
2 Act III, Scene 1, and Act V, Scene 1.

influence, and long life. "Faust" is practically free of realism of the localizing sort. To approach more modern times, we have Ibsen, who in his delightful "Peer Gynt" has used a fantastic form to give his ideas force. There is less localization in "Peer Gynt" than in any of his other plays, which were avowedly written with his own country in mind. But Shakespeare is the most universal of our artists; in his own country he is still a best seller, and in other countries his plays are still performed with success. He is the worthy model for the promoters of a world literature. The attempt for greater universality in literature is going to draw to it the man of few intellectual interests--and not only will it draw him to the literature of his own nation, but, gradually, to that of others. Were such universality of appeal brought near the point of perfection, an extraordinary bond of sympathy and understanding could be achieved. We countries distrust one another, because we do not know one another.

While we labour, and while we dream, the one truly universal branch of art that is ours--the world's oral literature--is slipping through our fingers. We have lost irretrievably the conditions necessary to create and perpetuate it in the old way; our worship of the printed page, on which we have come to rely rather than on our memories, is gradually depriving us of what is left; and only through literature may we rescue the last fragments of

this treasure-trove, whose charm has never, can never, be duplicated. We have already dealt with its usefulness. Let us, then, follow the ancients, and immortalize it with our pen.

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