God, Love, and Immortality
in
Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists.

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by
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Conception of God, Love and Immortality as found in Shakespeare, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher and the lesser dramatists.

For any one to say anything of Shakespeare that has not already been said is as difficult as it would be for a poet to sing a new song about the sun. Our old impressions are reanimated by rearrangement; each reflects the light, giving a gleam here or a flash there, and when the position of this or that is altered, nothing seems to remain quite the same: we have given our camera a turn. For this we may value the close study of an author's words, of late pursued so injudiciously, and thus quicken our dulled impressions. Let us see whether we can feel the old immortal beauty in some degree afresh, and reason ourselves into supposing that we are making some discoveries about the conception of God, Love, and Immortality as found in Shakespeare and some of his contemporaries by glancing over their works. Every great original writer gives the world an absolutely new thing, and that new thing is his own personality—, with its unique mode of envisaging life or nature; and in
each of us he creates a new thing; a new conception of life, of immortality, or a new thrill of emotion. No reader of Shakespeare can be ignorant that he wrote whole scenes and created whole characters to raise a laugh from the coarsest sort of those who frequented the theatre, and that in passages where we should little expect it are doubles entendres and questionable allusions. But we do not naturally seek to discover these, and perhaps the reading of a passage such as we have described can alone make the vast amount of indecency which exists in Shakespeare fully apparent. It is especially marked in the use of certain words which were current then, now not used and almost wholly forgotten. But this does not explain all. It is quite clear that Shakespeare, like Rabelais, or Swift, or Sterne, or Fielding had a real delight in broad humour. Unlike some writers of his own day, and still those of the Restoration, he never employed indecency with a vicious intent. It is for pure amusement and there is nothing about it corrupting, or in its essence in...
Shakespeare is a true representative of the Elizabethan Era. He stood at the converging line of two great epochs of history. The age of the Renaissance was passing into the age of Puritanism. Riffs were still perceptibly widening, and threatening destruction to the structure of Church and State which the Tudors had built up. A new political world was being born; a world healthier, more really national, but less picturesque, less wraught in the mystery and brilliance in which poets delight. Great as were the faults of Puritanism, it may be justly said to be the first political system which recognized the innate grandeur of the people as a whole. Over the spiritual sympathies of men was passing a great change. Plain Protestantism was invigorating and ennobling; life by its moral evidence, its earnestness, its intense conviction of God. But while the invigorating and ennobling life it was at the same time undergoing a hardening and narrowing process.
Plutarch was being superseded by the Bible. The obdurate questionings which recently had assailed the people of the Renaissance were being engirded in the theological formulas of the Puritan. Men were being annihilated by a sense of divine omnipotence. The consciousness of evil doing and the craving to order man's life aright before God was superseding the "doing" which turned the English into a people of adventures, the feeling of inexhaustible resources, the exuberance of youth, the intoxicating sense of beauty, and joy, which made a Marlowe, Sidney and Blake. In this new world of thought and feeling Shakespeare did not take part. Let others speculate as they would on theology, man and man's nature proved to him an inexhaustible source of interest. In Shakespeare it is impossible to ascertain whether his religious sympathies were with the Protestants or Catholics. Indeed, from the religious phrases sparingly scattered through his works it is difficult
to say whether he had any religious belief or not. The direct moral influence of Shakespeare is absolute by nothing; and we may rest assured that no moral purpose influenced his writings. The presentation of life was his sole object; and according to our will and capacity does the world which he shows us, like the world in which we live, teach us moral lessons. Our inability to follow or comprehend the working of an author’s mind in no way diminishes our capacity of apprehending or appreciating its creations. Because there is in man some divine capacity, he conceives or receives the very idea of God; and that which he worships is always the measure of his world and intellectual elevation. This is an axiom of general application. But especially in his appreciation of so lofty and universal an intelligence as Shakespeare’s does a man show the elevation or the inferiority, the wealth or poverty, the purity or loathsome nnees of his own soul.

Those who come on the stage at one point are all
found to be related to each other. There are certain ideas in the air. All are impressionable, but some more than others, and these first express them. The curious contemporaneousness of inventions and discoveries is thus explained. The truth is in the air and the most impressionable are those who will announce it first, though all announce it a little later.

Of the chief themes with which literature is conversant, God, external nature, humanity, we may inquire how an author has dealt with each of these. We may inquire what is his theology or his philosophy of the universe? By which we mean not the abstract creed or doctrine, but the tides and currents of feeling and of faith as well as the tendencies and conclusions of the intellect. Under what aspect has this state of affairs revealed itself to him? How does he regard and interpret man's life? Many subordinate topics are included under each of these themes. In this we shall gain double results if we examine a writer's works carefully and so become
familia with the growth and development of his powers, with the widening and deepening of his relations with man, with external nature, and with that Supreme Power, unknown yet well known, which nation and man are the manifestations. The study of an artist's technical qualities, by virtue of the fact that he is an artist, is of capital importance, and it may frequently be associated with the study of that which his technique is employed to express and render the characteristics of his mind, and of the vision which he had attained of the external universe of humanity and of God. Moral truth is not always proclaimed by direct teaching, but by living, acting, impulses, by illustration and example. The moral sensibilities are the most delicate part of the constitution; and as such require to be handled with the utmost care, or better not to be handled at all, and the persistent thrusting of instruction upon them has a tendency to dull and deaden, not to animate and strengthen them. True discriminative power is on
inspiration, not a catechism; and the truly noble
moral teacher is he who, possessing the honest and
true enthusiasm of moral beauty, insinuates the maxims
of others without or before they are aware of it.
The author of "Essays" tells us, and truly, that
"no heart is pure that is not passionate, no virtue
safe that is not enthusiastic." One noble impulse
will accomplish more towards economizing men than
volumes of ethical precepts; and the safest way to
uproot a bad passion is by planting a good one.
Set the soul on fire with moral beauty, that is the
best way to eradicate the evils which exist therein.

There is no hesitancy in affirming that Shakespeare's
poetry will stand the test of these principles better than
any other writing outside of the Bible. In every way he
is as deserving to be our teacher and guide in what is
morally just and noble and right as in what is artistically
beautiful and true. One to change the expression, the
moral element of what is beautiful not only has a
place, but the right place — by the right place we
to mean the place to act most effectually on the main-springs of life, or as an inspiration of good thoughts and desires.

Taine speaks of Shakespeare as a "natura poética, immoral, inspired," also as "void of will and reason." While this description might apply to Marlowe and some of the other dramatists, these objections, we think, cannot be so grouped, and each retain its full force. To be immoral is to lack in part, in one direction at least, poetical inspiration; for the noblest creations of character would thereby be shut out from the vision of the soul. What is the relation of Shakespeare to morality? He is not certainly a religionist; he is not a moralist. He neither attempts to inculcate precepts, nor makes it his business to directly or indirectly enforce them. Is he therefore immoral? Then is nature immoral, human history and the record of daily life; for it is these that he reproduces.
lost. The light which the sun poured upon the earth for hundreds of generations past, still exists in some form and still gladdens and cheers the world. It was converted into beds of coal which give us fuel and light for our homes. It was incorporated into the mammoth trees of the forests with which our houses are built and furnished. Why do we notice this? In order that we may use it as a simile; for what is true of physical light is also true of moral and spiritual light. The light which the great dramatists of the past shed still exists; having passed into principles that are throbbing and activating human society. It is the embodiment of all the grand institutions which are blessing the world. It has been transmitted from one generation to another; from one century to another. If we are able to comprehend spiritual causes and effects as we are with material causes and effects, we should find that the existing spiritual power of one century were born of the Holy Spirit in the
men of past centuries. It has been asserted that the forms of religion decay, and that scepticism is ruining the world. The cure is not in theologic modifications, still less in theologic discipline. False theology is best cured by another kind. At all times of the world's existence, forgetful of books and traditions, and the obsequy of moral perceptions, of which all must have some, though often latent and much oftener perplexed, will restore an equilibrium. That is signified by the words "moral" and "spiritual" is a lasting essence, and, with whatever digressions may be made, will certainly bring back the words, century after century, to their original meaning. Though not long words, yet each comprises whole commonwealths in itself. In trying to define spiritual we describe it as invisible. How spiritual means something real; a law sufficient unto itself, which works without means and which cannot be considered as tangible. In the character of Henry the Fifth
we find Shakespeare exhibiting more of his own moral soul. He delivers him both as Prince Hal and as King in such a way, that we cannot but feel he has a most warm and hearty personal admiration of the man; he even discovers an intense moral enthusiasm about him. Here, then, we have a true glimpse of the Poet's moral principle; here we are left in no doubt as to what moral traits of character he in heart approved, whether his own moral character exemplified them or not. Now full of religious enthusiasm, how liberal in his piety, with a tear for pity, and a hand open as day for melting charity; these virtues seem to grow genuinely and unaffectedly in him.

The omnipresence is found in every atom of nature. This can best be illustrated by those reactions with which every part of nature replies to the purpose of the actor,--beneficently to the good, personally to the bad. Let us replace realism and seek to discover those simple and true
We have, which, seen or unseen, prevail and go on. There is always some religion, some hope and fear extended into the invisible. But religion can never rise above the state of the rotary. Heaven always has and always will bear a certain relation to the earth. In glancing over history we find extraordinary prophetic souls who seem to be brought into existence before their time, and who seem to be related to the world's system rather than to their own particular age and locality. With whatever reverence the announcement of absolute truths which these proclaim, they are speedily dragged down into a garish interpretation. The religion of the early English poets is anomalous, so devout and so blasphemous in the same breath. The aesthetic study, whether consciously or unconsciously aesthetic, involved in working ones one of the great dramatist's masterpieces, especially one of Shakespeare's, is for many students a most valuable moral lesson. Even
when, as in King Lear, wrong seems to triumph,
the "terror and pity" of the scene leave no well-bal-
canced mind in doubt as to the true moral of
the tragic action; and when, as in the case of
Prince Hal, the poet seems indifferent to the
right or wrong in his eager pursuit of Falstaff
and amusement, we have only to turn to
Prince Hal as King Henry the Fifth, all arian
with the highest and purest Christian ethics, as
Mr. Hudson so aptly points out, in order to see
how firmly the real conviction of Shakespeare, as
poet and man, is based upon moral and funda-
mental principles. But that Shakespeare is a
teacher of cant, nor of sanctimoniousness, nor
even of creed. There is as true religion in the
filial prays of deep-souled Cordelia,
O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
The untuned and jarring senses, I wind up
Of this child-changed father! as is found in
The awe-stricken ejaculation of Banquo:

"Fear and scruple shake us;"

In the great hand of God I stand—many persons would probably need to read and reread these passages before being able to distinguish between the heathen and the Christian in these two passages. While we may reason ourselves into believing that Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare had the true end of life as their aim, especially as far as their accuracy in delineating character went, they do not lead us to believe that they were inaccessible to the temptations of the senses, heart, and imagination. We can hardly conceive of the frailty that accompanied such strength; the risks attendant upon such powers. At this time the springs of faith and hope seemed lost to view; but they were recovering themselves not by flying from reality and life, but by driving their shafts deeper toward the centre of things. Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Peele, did not possess nor seek after the
ideal purity as portrayed in Milton. This ideal purity is the firmament, the more one searches it, the more stars are seen; it is like the sea, the more one views it, the more boundless it appears. While Beaumont and Fletcher exaggerated the principle of divine right, Shakespeare has nowhere testified his adherence to any fixed principles, and defies any such narrow classification. Troilus and Cressida, it has been asserted, is a kind of prophetic protest in the name of religion and morality against the abuse one day to be made of the virtues of antiquity. Whatever men may think of Christianity, they cannot ignore its existence and its power. In churches it may be ostensibly professed, by the clergy more formally expressed, but it is really in the street as much as in the temple. To where you will you cannot escape it. Listen to what Ben Jonson says, "Worshipful sir, I beseech you, respect the estate of a poor soldier. I am asked of this base course of life—God be my comfort..."
but extremity provoked me to?" — and again, "Oh, God's pity, was it so, sir?" So we find even in these lines the tendency of the age. The principles and doctrines of Christianity constitute the fibrous system of civilized humanity. He who will not believe in the God whom he cannot understand—let him inquire what he understands of himself. Is he not here also like a child, who can ask more questions than can be answered? Born but as yesterday, he knows not whence, existing, he knows not how; feeling a life within him, which he can neither prolong nor protect from danger, nor even know, but in its effects he may imagine himself, if he will, to be an empty bubble on the ocean of unbounded Being, and may fancy the winds of that ocean to be the heavy breath of unfeeling, un pitying fate. But in all ignorance which is common to man, in all arrogance of theories, he never doubts that he exists, nor hesitates to regard himself as a personal Being—
The world of phenomena convinces him of this truth; let him look again to that world, and study it; for it tells him no less clearly—there is a living personal God.

The earth rolls on but the sin of life is never hushed. The unities, the fictions of the piece, to break it would be an impertinence. Long, long is the chapter of fictions. Great is paint says God is the painter; and one rightly accuses the critic destroying too many illusions. Still we are not sure but that the more distant view is the more accurate. The nearer view only shows more clearly the earthly imperfections. Man, says Shakespeare, fears God, although it may not appear in him by the large jets he delights in spouting. Again, are we to serve Heaven with less respect than we minister to our gross bodies? The soul which feels, though it can neither reason nor calculate, may be moved by the beauties of nature, or it may gaze with awe on the sublimities of the stellar sky; and...
in these feelings, which are the revelations of God in man, may find the conviction to be spontaneous and inevitable. This material universe is the garment by which God is seen, it is the veil which hides him from sight. In this we see a ruling passion grand and powerful, striding through history and life, dragging the mightiest and most prosperous as a sacrifice to her altar, as the victims of their own inward nature and destiny.

The still small voice of the Creator may be heard within the soul, though formal proofs may be unknown. Deeper than logic, and prior to it is the truth that God exists—the assurance that the Lord of creation is the universal Parent—of mankind, that to the devout and guiltless soul he is the Friend of life, the Protector in death, the hope and happiness of the long, long hereafter. Shakespeare's religious belief if we may call it such, consisted not in a series of abstract statements of truth, but in the idea of concrete impulses, tendencies and habits.
We can not ascertain the spirit of his faith by
ruling the sentences as uttered by this or that-
dramatic person. Such a method would probably
prove him an actor. The way to find the faith
by which he lived is best discovered by a careful con-
sideration of the total issue and resultant of his
care in fostering and sustaining certain types
of character.
In the sonnets,
three things may be recognized, that Shakespeare
was capable of great personal devotion; that he
was exceedingly sensitive, peculiarly sensitive
to every diminution or alteration of that love
for which his heart so intensely craved; and that,
when wronged, he had the highest of Christian vici-
tues, he could forgive a personal injury. Chapman,
somewhere has expressed this thought, that a life
of great energy, enthusiasm, and passion, which
forever stands upon the edge of uttermost danger,
and yet remains in absolute security — the pos-
sition of love was the principle chance for the
writers of the Elizabethan era, as it has been ever since. Shakespeare is the best representative among the sixteenth century poets; his works have been more thoroughly studied for this as well as for many other topics. This passion of love is most fully and profoundly revealed. The human heart has never been broken or blessed by him but he has searched and traced it into its most hidden recesses. He spurs it on, into its very essence, and pierces to the very centre, noting its ecstacy or its agony, viewing the workings of the moral and vital forces, that grow into peace and happiness, or that shatter every hope. All the forms in which love effects the mind or manifests itself, are here shown us in his poems—the innocence, sanctity, and gentleness of love. Then, too, we have the depths and the heights of love. Love has love depicted in its pride, strength, grief, deepest passions, deep despair and impassioned anguish. But whether in joy or in sorrow, nature is first in love, and Shakespeare is a careful delineator of nature.
Love, the true earnest love of woman is exhibited by Shakespeare as no light emotion. It is not a seed snatched in twain by a passing blast. It may be as constant and strong as the tides, as dark and destructive as a thunderstorm. It has certainly its bright side as well as its dark. In its happiness it seeks of friendship with all the joyousness found in nature. Or it may be as a deluge which bears destruction through out its path. Such was Shakespeare's description of Love. Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, and the later dramatists talk of the Romance of love, the Sentiment, the Poetry, the Emotion, the Tragedy of love, but they did not treat of the Ethics of love. No thought is more vital to the well-being and very salvation of society than that which they indicate. The world will continue to be a sink of ignobility until wisdom and virtue rule the springs of feeling and action, and the relation which is first of all others as cause and consequence is regarded in its dignity, and comes within its
jurisdiction of morals and religion. It would be a paradox were it not sober reality, that the defect of human passions rises gladly into the highest of loyalties, and not prudential foresight only, but de
tenable love, asks that solemn vows be taken in
to the majestic rule of God over the uncertain
day of human passions. Impulse, mere passion, is in a low plane, the plane of mere nature, and allies humans with animals, and with idiots or naturals to whose irrational desire is the imperative law. The idiot only becomes human when he rises from impulse to reason, and learns to connect his individual feelings and desires with the laws of society and religion, so that he becomes a social being, integrated and made whole by liv
ing in the family, the nation, the church. He is not a rational and moral creature, a true man, until he completes himself by ruling his impulses and passions in reason and conscience, and living not for himself alone, but for his neighbor.
humanity, and God. No matter what the impulse may be, whether it is honor of water, or a longing to jump into the river, to eat dirt, or to drink poison, or to run crazy with love, so long as the impulse of itself rules him, he is not a whole man, not truly human. We do not content with impulse as such, but we deny it the supreme honor, and allow it no worth apart from the rule of reason and conscience. We do not say that a man must be a poet, or a philosopher to be in love, but once it is that the highest qualities instead of preventing deeper the experience, and he who is the most of a man can most appreciate the best gifts of God, human and divine. Shakespeare in one of his sonnets aptly illustrates this point, which thought runs something like this, my love is as fast which still longs for what continually nourishes the disorder it feeds on what all preserve it. The physician of my love, my reason, becoming angered because his prescriptions are not better
observed, will not more advise me, and I growing
extra as glad to have him go. Here is death, which
the physician's art did evert. Alas! I am past cure,
for now my reason has forsaken me, and this contin-
nual unrest has made me frantic. Like a madman's
are my thoughts and discourse, as truth from the
trump is mainly expressed. Each writer endeavors
to put as much love in rhyme as could be crammed
on a sheet of paper, written on both sides, and even
the margins, mainly attempting to place a seal
on Cupid's name. In note, the progress of love
from humility through hope to conquest. In
Achelphil and Stella we have the story of passion
struggling with adversity yet by resolve of high determination
conquering at last. In Parnassophil and Parnasophil
the story is of a new love supplanting an old, if hot
and cold fuses of imagined attempt to outdo the
affections of his cruel lady love. By magic art,
Marlowe makes one of his characters say,
Then I seek to gratify your love,
And cause the soldiers that thus honor me
To triumph o'er many provinces.

Again, Marlowe says, "The very loved who loved not at first,
Lies in Beaumont and Fletcher's words,"
With all the facts which lead to woman's love, pity
In the straightest; "In Jago and Emilia there certainly
Is not the bond of affection which we would expect
to find between husband and wife. Jago uses Emilia
Simply as a means; he cares for her only so far as she
Can be of use to him. Jago has neither the desire
nor the ability to love anything or anybody, while
Emilia's love for Jago is a kind of passionate devotion,
something of the constancy of a mother's love for
a wayward son. Her sole aim seems to be to please
her husband and is plainly seen in her theft of the
handkerchief from Belmont and her words at the time:"

"I'll have the worst to in out,"

And give it Jago; what he will do with it

Heaven knows, not I."
nothing but to please his phantasy.

This constancy of love, even towards an unworthy object, is certainly a redeeming feature in Emilia's character and lifts her morally far above Iago. Iago was totally incapacitated to love anything or anybody but himself. For in love according to Shakespeare the heart and soul must be in it as an end and not simply as a means. However, prudence may influence his plans, love must preside over the execution, and here as elsewhere:

"Love's not love
when it's mingled with respects that stand
aloof from the entire point."

Emilia's love for Desdemona is perhaps the finest of her feelings. Lorenzo and Jessica, the runaway lovers, are in a typical state of mind. Both are glowing with love and beauty. Regarding Lorenzo and Jessica, it could be justly said, that the instrument must be delicately chiselled and well tuned to give force to such tones, as it handles with the finest of touchers.

It is just one of the dramatists that I saw, and
love only is the loan of love. kindness may accomplish much, may even defeat life, but neveruant—true pure love. We will pass from this phase of our subject by reproducing in part one of Shake-

peare's sonnets.

"Let not the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds;
As lovers with the remover to remove;
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken.
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth is unknown, although his
height be taken,

Love's not time's fool—

Love alters not with his brief hour and weeks
But wears it out even to the cage of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,

I never writ, nor ever can write love.
and superior to disappointment and weariness. Its work is in time, but its aim is in the infinite beyond. Nothing is truly good but what is eternal in its tendencies. Truth, justice, honor, mercy—these stand in close relation to the eternal attributes of the Highest, and look to a destiny beyond the finite and perishable. The Elizabethan drama gives us direct teaching but the vision of life. Though death and all—beauty and force, purity, sin, love, anguish and joy exist; and therefore life cannot be an empty existence. In Beaumont and Fletcher we see that man is his own star, and the spirit that can make an honest and perfect man, can command all light, all influence, all fate. To him, nothing comes too early or too late. Our deeds or angels are, for good or ill, the fatal shadows that ever walk with us.

Let us look for some of the proofs of immortality so that we can apply them to the authors we are studying. We can not humiliate the condition of our being to the narrow cares of life; immortality is seen in
every aspiration of man. The proof of the great fact, that man should live beyond the grave, must depend upon the irresistible authority of Scripture. Immortality can be proclaimed by inspiration alone. But, its corroborative evidence is seen in every power, impulse and imagination of human nature. We cannot bring ourselves to conceive that the intellect which measures the courses of the stars which weighs the globe, which resolves the fine texture of light, and which reveals the structure of the earth, can have been given only to heighten the moral of our decay; that the faculties which have controlled the lightning, have ruled the winds and waves, and have guided us over the ocean through light and storm, were given but to tantalize the brevity of human aspirations; that the latent which covers the canvas with life, sculpts the stone into beauty, and creates the grandeur of architecture, all should vanish, like the floating atoms seen only by a passing ray of sunshine. Above all, that
the genius of the poet, the preacher, the philosopher, and
the statesman—those fountains of thought flowing
for all mankind, and for all time—those pinnacle
on the great palace of intellectual empire, which
catch the first light of nations and retain the last—
those minds, whose very dreams are of immortality
whose words descend upon posterity with the im-
press of an inspiration, and whose memories re-
main, like altars on mountain-tops, fixing the
eyes, and directing the worship of all below, that
all these should be compressed into a clad of the
valley! Impossible! no; we must not belie the
wisdom or the benevolence of the great being.
Man was not sent here only for a glimpse of those
splendours which he was never to share—to find for
that intellectual banquet from which, at its first
light, he was to be snatched away—to feel his heart
filled and his spirit exalted by that majesty of crea-
tion, from whose worship he was to be banished at
the first sound of his name! The society of human
existence, and even the precariousness of that existence, are arguments for its higher destiny. If a touch, the breaking of a fiber, too minute to be visible, the sting of an insect, may extinguish forever the finest imaginations of the poet, the profoundest thought of the philosopher, and the noblest purposes of the statesman, where do we find such waste in nature? not a dying leaf is thrown away, not a drop of water is lost, not a particle of earth but changes into new forms. And is a man to be the only instance of this contemptuous prodigality of creation? The whole analogy of nature compels me to believe, that the great purpose of Providence in this world is, to train both our moral and intellectual faculties for a perpetuity of progress, in another, to exercise our mental virtue for the conquest of perpetual difficulty, rewarded by a perpetual increase of power, and that power given only to render us capable of the knowledge of a higher sphere, to prepare our intelle...
lectal eyes for the expanding of glories, and to
enlivenate the spirit of man for the mighty myste-
rics of Providence.
All we can say with any confidence of immortality
without God is, that no one knows more than an
infinitesimal fragment of the endless life of
any one individual of the human race. We do
know that mighty physical works are sometimes
in a state of conflagration; that our own world
was once a desert, and will some day become a
desert again; and that if what is called spiritual-
ism can be trusted to give us means of the in-
visible, there is enough torpor and pellucidity in
the world of spirits to make rational beings gape
at the thought of the new stimulus which disembod-
iment may give to lying and crafty and analy-
mant character, and the new licence which it may
confer on chattering gossip, when once rid of body
head and heart. And this, apart from our faith in
God, is nearly all we do know—there is absolutely
nothing apart from that failure to show that whole tribe and assemblage of immortal spirits may not be condemned through some obstruction or knot, as it were, in a limping law of evolution, to live forever in that condition of permanent and hopeless melancholy into which we too often see even the best amongst the aged sink, as the vital forces fail and the time of bodily dissolution draws near. If evolution be not the form of God's government, but rather the germ of the best substitute for God of which he can find any trace, then we have absolutely no reason to expect the evolution of immortal man, good and happy beings, than of immortal beings, good and unhappy beings. Apart from faith in God, immortal life should be the most fearful of horrors to us all, should be what Shelley poetic Beatrice Cenci conceives as the gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world, in which we might meet any destiny however fearful, because a destiny controlled neither by wisdom nor love. It is terrible.
enough to think of a lifetime without God; but to think of eternity passed not only without God, but subject to the caprice of laws of the origin and end of which we know nothing, except that they will yield me, in all probability, no escape from our conscious existence, no such possibility, even as death, is a conception of too great a horror to be permanently consistent with the reason of man-kind. The conception of God, love and immortality is shown in the intimacy of divinity in the atoms.

Marlowe's Faustus is a witty, grotesque, and full of a mad thirst for pleasure, but it was the first dramatic attempt to touch the problem of the relations of man to the unseen world. Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher and the lesser dramatists were usually well content to describe in their past by the emotions and complex relations of human life as found here in this world, not trying to pass stride farther than they could see.
God, who takes care of the light coming from the sun,
giving it permanency, also cares for the moral in
fluence and the spiritual light of every soul and gives
to each immortality. This is shown in Shakespeare's
play, in the high moral spirit which controls the
complications of fate and the results of human ac-
tions, and in the spirit which shows us that high
order in poetry required by Bacon, indicating the
eternal and simple justice in human things, the
hand of a Supreme Being, which we with our nar-
rowed vision can not see in reality. On the deeper
grounds of religious faith Shakespeare's silence is
significant. And the doubt of Hamlet about the
afterworld only deepens his silence. To die, it may
be was to him as it was to Claudius, to go we know
not whether. As often as his questioning turn to
the problem of life and death, he turns away
leaving it still unsolved, and without heeding
the theological solutions about him. He are
such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little
life is rounded with a sleep. In the further amplification of the subject we shall take for granted that the old sophism of holding Shakespeare responsible for what is said or done by one of his characters is completely exploded; though it is not so very long since a great writer asserted that he was a denier of immortality, because, in 'The Winter's Tale' the royal Autolycus is made to say, 'For the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it.' This is either so pusserse or ignorant way of criticising, that it would be a waste of time to comment at length upon it either by refuting or explaining it. Thus it is in Shakespeare. Of immortality, the soul, when well employed, is indifferent. As it is well, it thinks, if it thinks of immortality at all — that it always will be well. Its question is asked of the Supreme Power. The question, higher than that of duration, that of deserving, did not concern him. Immortality comes for such as one fit
for it, and he who would be a great soul for all eternity must be a great soul now.
At the last day men shall weep
On their heads the dust,
As ensign and as ornament
Of their lowly trust."
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