**of** dependency would furnish matter for painful feelings and irritating words : the youthful husband, whose mind would be expanding as rapidly as the leaves and blossoms of spring-time in polar latitudes, would soon come to appreci­ate the sort of wiles by which he had been caught. The female mind is quick, and almost gifted with the power of witchcraft, to decipher what is passing in the thoughts of familiar companions. Silent and forbearing as William Shakspeare might be, Anne, his staid wife, would read his secret reproaches ; ill would she dissemble her wrath, and the less so from the consciousness of having deserved them. It is no uncommon case for women to feel anger in connection with one subject, and to express it in connec­tion with another ; which other, perhaps (except as a ser­viceable mask), would have been a matter of indifference to their feelings. Anne would therefore reply to those inevitable reproaches which her own sense must presume to be lurking in her husband’s heart, by others equally stinging, on his inability to support his family, and on his obligations to her father’s purse. Shakspeare, »e may be sure, would be ruminating every hour on the means of his deliverance from so painful a dependency ; and at length, after four years’ conjugal discord, he would resolve upon that plan of solitary emigration to the metropolis, which, at the same time that it released him from the humiliation of domestic feuds, succeeded so splendidly for his worldly prosperity, and with a train of consequences so vast for all future ages.

Such, we are persuaded, was the real course of Shak- speare’s transition from school-boy pursuits to his public career : and upon the known temperament of Shakspeare, his genial disposition to enjoy life without, disturbing his enjoyment by fretting anxieties, we build the conclusion, that had his friends furnished him with ampler funds, and had his marriage been well assorted or happy, we—the world of posterity—should have lost the whole benefit and delight which we have since reaped from his matchless fa­culties. The motives which drove him *from* Stratford are clear enough ; but what motives determined his course *to* London, and especially to the stage, still remains to be ex­plained. Stratford-upon-Avon, lying in the high rood from London through Oxford to Birmingham (or more gene­rally to the north), had been continually visited by some of the best comedians during Shakspeare’s childhood. One or two of the most respectable metropolitan actors were natives of Stratford. These would be well known to the elder Shakspeare. But, apart from that accident, it is no­torious that mere legal necessity and usage would compel all companies of actors, upon coming into any town, to seek, in the first place, from the chief magistrate, a license for opening a theatre, and next, over and above this public sanction, to seek his personal favour and patronage. As an alderman, therefore, but still more whilst clothed with the official powers of chief magistrate, the poet’s father would have opportunities of doing essential services to many per­sons connected with the London stage. The conversation of comedians acquainted with books, fresh from the keen and sparkling circles of the metropolis, and filled with racy anecdotes of the court, as well as of public life generally,

could not but have been fascinating, by comparison with the stagnant society of Stratford. Hospitalities on a liberal scale would be offered to these men : not impossibly this fact might be one principal key to those dilapidations which the family estate had suffered. These actors, on *their* part, would retain a grateful sense of the kindness they had received, and would seek to repay it to John Shakspeare, now that he was depressed in his fortunes, as opportunities might offer. His eldest son, growing up a handsome young man, and beyond all doubt from his earliest days of most splendid colloquial powers (for assuredly of *him* it may be taken for granted, Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre),

would be often reproached in a friendly way for burying himself in a country life. These overtures, prompted alike by gratitude to the father, and a real selfish interest in the talents of the son, would at length take a definite shape ; and, upon some clear understanding as to the terms of such an arrangement, William Shakspeare would at length (about 1586, according to the received account, that is, in the fifth year of his married life, and the twenty-third or twen­ty-fourth of his age), unaccompanied by wife or children, translate himself to London. Later than 1586 it could not well be ; for already in 1589 it has been recently ascertain­ed that he held a share in the property of a leading theatre.

We must here stop to notice, and the reader will allow us to notice with summary indignation, the slanderous and idle tale which represents Shakspeare as having fled to London in the character of a criminal, from the persecu­tions of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecot. This tale has long been propagated under two separate impulses : chiefly, per­haps, under the vulgar love of pointed and glaring contrasts ; the splendour of the man was in this instance brought into a sort of epigrammatic antithesis with the humility of his fortunes ; secondly, under a baser impulse, the malicious pleasure of seeing a great man degraded. Accordingly, as in the case of Milton,@@1 it has been affirmed that Shakspeare had suffered corporal chastisement, in fact (we abhor to utter such words), that he had been judicially whipped. Now, first of all, let us mark the inconsistency of this tale : the poet was whipped, that is, he was punished most disproportionately, and yet he fled to avoid punishment. Next, we are informed that his offence was deer-stealing, and from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy. And it has been well ascertained that Sir Thomas had no deer, and had no park. Moreover, deer-stealing was regarded by our ancestors exactly as poaching is regarded by us. Deer ran wild in all the great forests ; and no offence was look­ed upon as so venial, none so compatible with a noble Ro­bin-Hood style of character, as this very trespass upon what were regarded as *feræ natures,* and not at all as do­mestic property. But had it been otherwise, a trespass was not punishable with whipping ; nor had Sir Thomas Lucy the power to irritate a whole community like Strat­ford-upon-Avon, by branding with permanent disgrace a young man so closely connected with three at least of the best families in the neighbourhood. Besides, had Shak­speare suffered any dishonour of that kind, the scandal would infallibly have pursued him at his very heels to Lon-

@@@, In a little memoir of Milton, which the author of this article drew up some years ago for a public society, and which is printed in an abridged shape, he took occasion to remark, that Dr Johnson, who was meanly anxious to revive this slander against Milton, as well as some others, had supposed Milton himself to have this flagellation in bis mind, and indirectly to confess it, in one of his Latin poems, where, speaking of Cambridge, and declaring that he has no longer any pleasure in the thoughts of revisiting that university, he says,

“ Nec duri libet usque minos perferre magistri,

Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.”

This last line the malicious critic would translate—“ And other things insufferable to a man of my tcmper.” But, as we then observ­ed, *ingenium* is properly expressive of the *intellectual* constitution, whilst it is the *moral* constitution that suffers degradation from perso­nal chastisement—the sense of honour, of personal dignity, of justice, &c. *Indoles* is the proper term for this latter idea; and in using the word *ingenium*, there cannot be a doubt that Milton alluded to the dry scholastic disputations, which were shocking and odious to his fine poetical genius. If, therefore, the vile story is still to be kept up in order to dishonour a great man, at any rate let it not in future be pretended that any countenance to such a slander can be drawn from the confessions of the poet himself.