voice of Prospero, issues that magnificent prophecy of the total destruction which should one day swallow up

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,

Yea all which it inherit.

And this prophecy is followed immediately by a most pro­found ejaculation, gathering into one pathetic abstraction the total philosophy of life :

We are such stuff

As dreams are mode of ; and our little life Is rounded by a sleep;

that is, in effect, our life is a little tract of feverish vigils, surrounded and islanded by a shoreless ocean of sleep— sleep before birth, sleep after death.

These remarkable passages were probably not unde­signed ; but if we suppose them to have been thrown off without conscious notice of their tendencies, then, accord­ing to the superstition of the ancient Grecians, they would have been regarded as prefiguring words, prompted by the secret genius that accompanies every man, such as insure along with them their own accomplishment. With or without intention, however, it is believed that Shakspeare wrote nothing more after this exquisite romantic drama. with respect to the remainder of his personal history, Dr Drake and others have supposed, that during the twenty years from 1591 to 1611, he visited Stratford often, and latterly once a year.

In 1589 he had possessed some share in a theatre ; in 1596 he had a considerable share. Through Lord South­ampton, as a surviving friend of Lord Essex, who was viewed as the martyr to his Scottish politics, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare had acquired the favour of James I. ; and accordingly, on the 29th of May 1603, about two months after the king’s accession to the throne of England, a patent was granted to the company of players who possessed the Globe theatre ; in which patent Shakspeare’s name stands second. This patent raised the company to the rank of his majesty’s servants, whereas previously they arc sup­posed to have been simply the servants of the Lord Cham­berlain. Perhaps it was in grateful acknowledgment of this royal favour that Shakspeare afterwards, in 1606, paid that sublime compliment to the house of Stuart which is involved in the vision shown to Macbeth. This vision is managed with exquisite skill : it was impossible to display the whole series of princes from Macbeth to James I. ; but he beholds the posterity of Banquo, one “ gold-bound brow” succeeding to another, until he comes to an eighth appari­tion of a Scottish king,

Who bears a glass

Which shows him many more ; and some he sees Who *twofold* balls and *treble* sceptres carry ;

thus bringing down without tedium the long succession to the very person of James I. by the symbolic image of the two crowns united on one head.

About the beginning of the century Shakspeare had

become rich enough to purchase the best house in Stratford, called *The Great House,* which name he altered to *New Place ;* and in 1602 he bought 107 acres adjacent to this house for a sum (L.320) corresponding to about 1500 gui­neas of modern money. Malone thinks that he purchased the house as early as 1597 ; and it is certain that about that time he was able to assist his father in obtaining a renewed grant of arms from the Heralds’ College, and there­fore, of course, to re-establish his father’s fortunes. Ten years of well-directed industry, viz. from 1591 to 1601, and the prosperity of the theatre in which he was a proprietor, had raised him to affluence ; and after another ten years, improved with the same success, he was able to retire with an income of L.300, or (according to the customary com­putations) in modem money of L.1500, per annum. Shak­speare was in fact the first man of letters, Pope the second, and Sir Walter Scott the third, who, in Great Britain, has ever realized a large fortune by literature ; or in Christen­dom, if we except Voltaire, and two dubious cases in Italy. The four or five latter years of his life Shakspeare passed in dignified ease, in profound meditation, we may be sure, and in universal respect, at his native town **of** Stratford ; and there he died, on the 23d of April 1616.@@1

His daughter Susanna had been married on the 5th of June of the year 1607, to Dr John Hall,@@“ a physician in Stratford. The doctor died in November 1635, aged sixty; his wife, at the age of sixty-six, on July 11, 1640. They had one child, a daughter, named Elizabeth, born in 1608, married April 22, 1626, to Thomas Nashe, Esq. left a widow in 1647, and subsequently remarried to Sir John Barnard ; but this Lady Barnard, the sole grand-daughter of the poet, had no children by either marriage. The other daughter Ju­dith, on February 10, 1616 (about ten weeks before her father’s death) married Mr Thomas Quiney of Stratford, by whom she had three sons, Shakspeare, Richard, and Tho­mas. Judith was about thirty-one years old at the time of her marriage ; and living just forty-six years afterwards, she died in February 1662, at the age of seventy-seven. Her three sons died without issue ; and thus, in the direct lineal descent, it is certain that no representative has survived of this transcendent poet, the most august amongst created intellects.

After this review of Shakspeare’s life, it becomes our duty to take a summary survey of his works, of his intellectual powers, and of his station in literature, a station which is now irrevocably settled, not so much (which happens in other cases) by a vast overbalance of favourable suffrages, as by acclamation ; not so much by the *voices* of those who admire him up to the verge of idolatry, as by the *acts* of those who everywhere seek for his works among the pri­mal necessities of life, demand them, and crave them as they do their daily bread ; not so much by eulogy open­ly proclaiming itself, as by the silent homage recorded in the endless multiplication of what he has bequeathed us ; not so much by his own compatriots, who, with regard to almost every other author,@@3 compose the total amount of his

@@@5 “ I have heard that Mr Shakspeare was a natural wit, without any art at all. Hee frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Startford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for itt had an allowance so large, that he spent at the rate of 1,000/. a-year, as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted.’’ (Diary of the Rev. John Ward, A. M. Vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon, extending from 1648 to 1679, p. 183. Lond. 1839, 8vo.)

@@@\* It is naturally to be supposed that Dr Hall would attend the sick-bed of his father-in-law ; and the discovery of this gentle­man’s medical diary promised some gratification to our curiosity as to the cause of Shakspeare’s death. Unfortunately, it does not commence until the year 1617.

@@@3 An exception ought perhaps to be made for Sir Walter Scott and for Cervantes; but with regard to all other writers, Dante, suppose, or Ariosto amongst Italians, Camoens amongst those of Portugal, Schiller amongst Germans, however ably they may have been naturalized in foreign languages, as all of those here mentioned (excepting only Ariosto) have in one part of their works been most powerfully naturalized in English, it still remains true (and the very sale of the books is proof sufficient) that an alien author never does take root in the general sympathies out of his own country ; he takes his station in libraries, he is read by the man of learned leisure, he is known and valued by the refined and the elegant, but he is not (what Shakspeare is for Germany and America) in any proper sense a *popular* favourite.