intellectual potentates who have recommended themselves by gracious manners, could so soon and so utterly have been obliterated ?

Malone, with childish irreflection, ascribes the loss of such memorials to the want of enthusiasm in his admirers. Local researches into private history had not then com­menced. Such a taste, often petty enough in its manage­ment was the growth of after-ages. Else how came Spen­ser’s life and fortunes to be so utterly overwhelmed in ob­livion ? No poet of a high order could be more popular.

The answer we believe to be this : Twenty-six years after Shakspeare’s death commenced the great parliamentary war : this it was, and the local feuds arising to divide family from family, brother from brother, upon which we must charge the extinction of traditions and memorials, doubtless abun­dant up to that era. The parliamentary contest it will be said, did not last above three years ; the king’s standard having been first raised at Nottingham in August 1642, and the battle of Naseby (which terminated the open war­fare) having been fought in June 1645. Or even if we ex­tend its duration to the surrender of the last garrison, that war terminated in the spring of 1646. And the brief explo­sions of insurrection or of Scottish invasion which occurred on subsequent occasions were all locally confined ; and none came near to Warwickshire, except the battle of Worcester, more than five years after. This is true ; but a short war will do much to efface recent and merely personal memorials. And the following circumstances of the war were even more important than the general fact.

First of all, the very mansion founded by Shakspeare be­came the military head-quarters for the queen in 1644, when marching from the eastern coast of England to join the king in Oxford ; and one such special visitation would be likely to do more serious mischief in the way of extinction, than many years of general warfare. Secondly, as a fact perhaps, equally important Birmingham, the chief town of Warwick­shire, and the adjacent district the seat of our hardware ma­nufactures, was the very focus of disaffection towards the royal cause. Not only, therefore, would this whole region suffer more from internal and spontaneous agitation, but it would be the more frequently traversed vindictively from without and harassed by flying parties from Oxford, or others of the king’s garrisons. Thirdly, even apart from the political aspects of Warwickshire, this county happens to be the central one of England, as regards the roads between the north and south ; and Birmingham has long been the great central axis,@@1 in which all the radii from the four angles of England proper meet and intersect Mere acci­dent, therefore, of local position, much more when united with that avowed inveteracy of malignant feeling, which was bitter enough to rouse a re-action of bitterness in the mind of Lord Clarendon, would go far to account for the wreck of many memorials relating to Shakspeare, as well as for the subversion of that quiet and security for humble life, in which the traditional memory finds its best *nidus.* Thus we obtain one solution, and perhaps the main one, of the otherwise mysterious oblivion which had swept away all traces of the mighty poet by the time when those quiet days revolved upon England, in which again the so­litary agent of learned research might roam in security from house to house, gleaning those personal remembran­ces which, even in the fury of civil strife, might long have lingered by the chimney corner. But the fierce furnace of war had probably, by its *local* ravages, scorched this field of natural tradition, and thinned the gleaner’s inheri­tance by three parts out of four. This, we repeat may be one part of the solution to this difficult problem.

And if another is still demanded, possibly it may be found in the fact hostile to the perfect consecration of Shakspeare’s memory, that after all he was a player. Many a coarse-mind­ed country gentleman, or village pastor, who would have held his town glorified by the distinction of having sent forth a great judge or an eminent bishop, might disdain to cherish the personal recollections which surrounded one whom cus­tom regarded as little above a mountebank, and the illiberal law as a vagabond. The same degrading appreciation at­tached both to the actor in plays and to their author. The contemptuous appellation of “ play book,” served as readily to degrade the mighty volume which contained Lear and Hamlet, as that of “ play-actor,” or “ player-man,” has al­ways served with the illiberal or the fanatical to dishonour the persons of Roscius or of Garrick, of Talma or of Sid- dons. Nobody, indeed, was better aware of this than the noble-minded Shakspeare ; and feelingly he has breathed forth in his sonnets this conscious oppression under which he lay of public opinion, unfavourable by a double title to his own pretensions ; for, being both dramatic author and dramatic performer, he found himself heir to a two-fold op­probrium, and at an era of English society when the weight of that opprobrium was heaviest. In reality, there was at this period a collision of forces acting in opposite directions upon the estimation of the stage and scenical art and there­fore of all the ministers in its equipage. Puritanism frowned upon these pursuits, as ruinous to public morals ; on the oilier hand, loyalty could not but tolerate what was patro­nized by the sovereign ; and it happened that Elizabeth, James, and Charles I., were all alike lovers and promoters of theatrical amusements, which were indeed more indis­pensable to the relief of court ceremony, and the monotony of aulic pomp, than in any other region of life. This royal support, and the consciousness that any brilliant success in these arts implied an unusual share of natural endowments, did something in mitigation of a scorn which must else have been intolerable to all generous natures.

But whatever prejudice might thus operate against the perfect sanctity of Shakspeare’s posthumous reputation, it is certain that the splendour of his worldly success must have done much to obliterate that effect ; his admirable col­loquial talents a good deal, and his gracious affability still more. The wonder therefore w ill still remain, that Better- ton, in less than a century from his death, should have been able to glean so little. And for the solution of this wonder we must throw ourselves chiefly upon the expla­nations we have made as to the parliamentary war, and the local ravages of its progress in the very district of the very town, and the very house.

If further arguments are still wanted to explain this mys­terious abolition, we may refer the reader to the following succession of disastrous events, by which it should seem that a perfect malice of misfortune pursued the vestiges of the mighty poet’s steps. In 1613, the Globe theatre, with which he had been so long connected, was burned to the ground. Soon afterwards a great fire occurred in Stratford ; and next (without counting upon the fire of London, just fifty years after his death, which, however, would consume many an important record from periods far more remote), the house of Ben Jonson, in which probably, as Mr Camp­bell suggests, might be parts of his correspondence, was also burned. Finally, there was an old tradition that Lady Barnard, the sole grand-daughter of Shakspeare, had carried off many of his papers from Stratford ; and these papers have never since been traced.

In many of the elder lives it has been asserted, that John Shakspeare, the father of the poet, was a butcher,

@@@1 In fact, by way of representing to himself the system or scheme of the English roads, the reader has only to imagine one great letter X, or a St Andrew's cross, laid down from north to south, and decussating at Birmingham. Even Coventry, which makes a slight variation for one or two roads, and so far disturbs this decussation, by shifting it eastwards, is still in Warwickshire.