don ; and in that case Greene, who has left on record, in a posthumous work of 1592, his malicious feelings towards Shakspeare, could not have failed to notice it. For, be it remembered, that a judicial flagellation contains a twofold ignominy : flagellation is ignominious in its own nature, even though unjustly inflicted, and by a ruffian ; secondly, any judicial punishment is ignominious, even though not wear­ing a shade of personal degradation. Now a judicial flagel­lation includes both features of dishonour. And is it to be imagined that an enemy, searching with the diligence of malice for matter against Shakspeare, should have failed, six years after the event, to hear of that very memorable disgrace which had exiled him from Stratford, and was the very occasion of his first resorting to London; or that a leading company of players in the metropolis, *one of whom,* and a chief one, *was his own townsman,* should cheerfully adopt into their society, as an honoured partner, a young man yet flagrant from the lash of the executioner or the beadle ?

This tale is fabulous, and rotten to its core ; yet even this does less dishonour to Shakspeare’s memory than the sequel attached to it. A sort of scurrilous rondeau, consisting of nine lines, so loathsome in its brutal stupidity, and so vul­gar in its expression, that we shall not pollute our pages by transcribing it, has been imputed to Shakspeare ever since the days of the credulous Rowe. The total point of this idiot’s drivel consists in calling Sir Thomas “ an asse and well it justifies the poet’s own remark, “ Let there be gall enough in thy ink, no matter though thou write with a goose pen.” Our own belief is, that these lines were a pro­duction of Charles II.’s reign, and applied to a Sir Thomas Lucy, not very far removed, if at all, from the age of him who first picked up the precious filth : the phrase “ parlia­ment *member!'* we believe to be quite unknown in the col­loquial use of Queen Elizabeth’s reign.

But, that we may rid ourselves once and for ever of this outrageous calumny upon Shakspeare’s memory, we shall pursue the story to its final stage. Even Malone has been thoughtless enough to accredit this closing chapter, which contains, in fact, such a superfetation of folly as the annals of human dulness do not exceed. Let us recapitulate the points of the story. A baronet, who has no deer and no park, is supposed to persecute a poet for stealing these aerial deer out of this aerial park, both lying in *nephelοcoccygia.* The poet sleeps upon this wrong for eighteen years ; but at length, hearing that his persecutor is dead and buried, he conceives bloody thoughts of revenge. And this revenge he purposes to execute by picking a hole in his dead enemy’s coat-of-arms. Is this coat-of-arms, then, Sir Thomas Lucy’s ? Why, no : Malone admits that it is not. For the poet, suddenly recollecting that this ridi­cule would settle upon the son of his enemy, selects ano­ther coat-of-arras, with which his dead enemy never had any connection, and he spends his thunder and lightning upon this irrelevant object ; and, after all, the ridicule itself lies in a Welchman's mispronouncing one single heraldic term—a Welchman who mispronounces all words. The last act of the poet’s malice recalls to us a sort of jest-book story of an Irishman, the vulgarity of which the reader will pardon in consideration of its relevancy. The Irishman having lost a pair of silk stockings, mentions to a friend that he has taken steps for recovering them by an adver­tisement, offering a reward to the finder. His friend ob­jects that the costs of advertising, and the reward, would eat out the full value of the silk stockings. But to this the Irishman replies, with a knowing air, that he is not so green as to have overlooked *that ;* and that, to keep down the reward, he had advertised the stockings as worsted. Not at all less flagrant is the bull ascribed to Shakspeare, when he is made to punish a dead man by personalities meant for his exclusive ear, through his coat-of-arms, but

at the same time, with the express purpose of blunting and defeating the edge of his own scurrility, is made to substi­tute for the real arms some others which had no more re­lation to the dead enemy than they had to the poet him­self. This is the very sublime of folly, beyond which hu­man dotage cannot advance.

It is painful, indeed, and dishonourable to human nature, that whenever men of vulgar habits and of poor education wish to impress us with a feeling of respect for a man’s ta­lents, they are sure to cite, by way of evidence, some gross instance of malignity. Power, in their minds, is best illus­trated by malice or by the infliction of pain. To this un­welcome fact we have some evidence in the wretched tale which we have just dismissed ; and there is another of the same description to be found in all lives of Shakspeare, which we will expose to the contempt of the reader whilst we are in this field of discussion, that we may not after­wards have to resume so disgusting a subject.

This poet, who was a model of gracious benignity in his manners, and of whom, amidst our general ignorance, thus much is perfectly established, that the term *gentle* was al­most as generally and by prescriptive right associated with his name as the affix of *venerable* with Bede, or *judicious* with Hooker, is alleged to have insulted a friend by an imaginary epitaph beginning “ *Ten in the Hundred,”* and supposing him to be damned, yet without wit enough (which surely the Stratford bellman could have furnished) for devising any, even fanciful, reason for such a supposi­tion ; upon which the comment of some foolish critic is, “ The *sharpness of the satire* is said to have stung the man so much that he never forgave it.” We have heard of the sting in the tail atoning for the brainless head ; but in this doggerel the tail is surely as stingless as the head is brain­less. For, 1*st*, *Ten in the Hundred* could be no reproach in Shakspeare’s time, any more than to call a man *Three- and-α-half-per-cent.* in this present year 1838 ; except, in­deed, amongst those foolish persons who built their mora­lity upon the Jewish ceremonial law. Shakspeare himself took ten per cent. *2dly,* It happens that John Combe, so far from being the object of the poet’s scurrility, or viewing the poet as an object of implacable resentment, was a Strat­ford friend ; that one of his family was affectionately remem­bered in Shakspeare’s will by the bequest of his sword ; and that John Combe himself recorded his perfect charity with Shakspeare by leaving him a legacy of L.5 sterling. And in this lies the key to the whole story. For, *idly,* the four lines were written and printed before Shakspeare was born. The name Combe is a common one ; and some stu­pid fellow, who had seen the name in Shakspeare’s will, and happened also to have seen the lines in a collection of epigrams, chose to connect the cases by attributing an identity to the two John Combes, though at war with chro­nology.

Finally, there is another specimen of doggerel attributed to Shakspeare, which is not equally unworthy of him, be­cause not equally malignant, but otherwise equally below his intellect, no less than his scholarship; we mean the in­scription on his grave-stone. This, as a sort of *siste viator* appeal to future sextons, is worthy of the grave-digger or the parish-clerk, who was probably its author. Or it may have been an antique formula, like the vulgar record of ownership in books—

Anthony Timothy Dolthead’s bock,

God give him grace therein to look.

Thus far the matter is of little importance ; and it might have been supposed that malignity itself could hardly have imputed such trash to Shakspeare. But when we find, even in this short compass, scarcely wider than the posy of a ring, room found for traducing the poet’s memory, it be­comes important to say, that the leading sentiment, the