would be able to hand on the distinction to his son, whose pro­fession prevented him at the time from gaining it on his own account. John Shakespeare died in 1601, having through the affectionate care of his son spent the last years of his life in the ease and comfort befitting one who had not only been a prosperous burgess, but chief alderman and mayor of Stratford.

Of Mary Arden, the poet’s mother, we know little, hardly anything directly indeed ; but the little known is wholly in her favour. From the provisions of her father’s will it is clear that of his seven daughters she was his favour­ite; and the links of evidence are now complete connecting her father Robert Arden with the great Warwickshire family of Arden, whose members had more than once filled the posts of high-sheriff and lord-lieutenant of the county. She was thus descended from an old county family, the oldest in Warwickshire, and had inherited the traditions of gentle birth and good breeding. Her ancestors are traced back, not only to Norman, but to Anglo-Saxon times, Alwin, an early representative of the family, and himself connected with the royal house of Athelstane, having been *vice-comes* or sheriff of Warwickshire in the time of Edward the Confessor. His son Turchill retained his extensive possessions under the Conqueror ; and, when they were divided on the marriage of his daughter Margaret to a Norman noble created by William Rufus earl of Warwick, Turchill betook himself to his numerous lordships in the Arden district of the county, and assumed the name of De Ardern or Arden. His descendants, who retained the name, multiplied in the shire, and were united in marriage from time to time with the best Norman blood of the kingdom. The family of Arden thus represented the union, under somewhat rare conditions of original distinction and equality, of the two great race elements that have gone to the making of the typical modern Englishman. The immediate ancestors of Mary Shakespeare were the Ardens of Parkhall, near Aston in the north-western part of the shire. During the Wars of the Roses Robert Arden of Parkhall, being at the outset of the quarrel a devoted Yorkist, was seized by the Lancastrians, attached for high treason, and executed at Ludlow in 1452. He left an only son, Walter Arden, who was restored by Edward IV. to his position in the country, and received back his hereditary lordships and lands. At his death in 1502 he was buried with great state in Aston church, where three separate monuments were erected to his memory. He had married Eleanor, second daughter of John Hampden of Bucks, and by her had eight children, six sons and two daughters. The eldest son, Sir John Arden of Parkhall, having been for some years esquire of the body of Henry VII., was knighted and rewarded by that monarch. Sir John was the great-uncle of Mary Shakespeare,—his brother Thomas, the second son of Walter Arden, being her grandfather. Thomas Arden is found residing at Aston Cantlowe during the first half of the 16th century, and in the year 1501 he united with his son Robert Arden, Mary Shakespeare’s father, in the purchase of the Snitterfield estate. Mary Shakespeare was thus directly connected by birth and lineage with those who had taken, and were to take, a foremost part in the great conflicts which constitute turning- points in the history of the country. On her father’s side she was related to Robert Arden, who in the 15th century lost his life while engaged in rallying local forces on behalf of the White Rose, and on her mother’s side to John Hampden, who took a still more distinguished part in the momentous civil struggles of the 17th century.

A very needless and abortive attempt has been made to call in question Robert Arden’s social and family position on the ground that in a contemporary deed he is called a husbandman *(agricola),—*the assumption being that a husbandman is simply a farm-labourer. But the term husbandman was often used in Shakespeare’s day to desig­

nate a landed proprietor who farmed one of his own estates. The fact of his being spoken of in official documents as a husbandman does not therefore in the least affect Robert Arden’s social position, or his relation to the great house of Arden, which is now established on the clearest evidence. He was, however, a younger member of the house, and would naturally share in the diminished fortune and obscurer career of such a position. But, even as a cadet of so old and distinguished a family, he would tenaciously preserve the generous traditions of birth and breeding he had inherited. Mary Arden was thus a gentlewoman in the truest sense of the term, and she would bring into her husband’s household elements of character and culture that would be of priceless value to the family, and espe­cially to the eldest son, who naturally had the first place in her care and love. A good mother is to an imagina­tive boy his earliest ideal of womanhood, and in her for him are gathered up, in all their vital fulness, the ten­derness, sympathy, and truth, the infinite love, patient watchfulness, and self-abnegation of the whole sex. And the experience of his mother’s bearing and example during the vicissitudes of their home life must have been for the future dramatist a vivid revelation of the more sprightly and gracious, as well as of the profounder elements, of female character. In the earlier and prosperous days at Stratford, when all within the home circle was bright and happy, and in her intercourse with her boy Mary Shake­speare could freely unfold the attractive qualities that had so endeared her to her father’s heart, the delightful image of the young mother would melt unconsciously into the boy’s mind, fill his imagination, and become a storehouse whence in after years he would draw some of the finest lines in his matchless portraiture of women. In the darker days that followed he would learn something of the vast possibilities of suffering, personal and sympathetic, be­longing to a deep and sensitive nature, and as the troubles made head he would gain some insight into the quiet courage and self-possession, the unwearied fortitude, sweet­ness, and dignity which such a nature reveals when stirred to its depths by adversity, and rallying all its resources to meet the inevitable storms of fate. These storms were not simply the ever-deepening pecuniary embarrassments and consequent loss of social position. In the very crisis of the troubles, in the spring of 1579, death entered the straitened household, carrying off Ann, the younger of the only two remaining daughters of John and Mary Shake­speare. A characteristic trait of the father’s grief and pride is afforded by the entry in the church books that a somewhat excessive sum was paid on this occasion for the tolling of the bell. Even with ruin staring him in the face John Shakespeare would forego no point of customary respect nor abate one jot of the ceremonial usage proper to the family of an eminent burgess, although the observ­ance might involve a very needless outlay. In passing through these chequered domestic scenes and vividly realizing the alternations of grief and hope, the eldest son, even in his early years, would gain a fund of memorable experiences. From his native sensibility and strong family affection he would passionately sympathize with his parents in their apparently hopeless struggle against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Above all he would cherish the memory of his mother’s noble bear­ing alike under serene and clouded skies, and learn to estimate at their true worth the refined strength of inherited courage, the dignified grace and silent helpful­ness of inherited courtesy and genuine kindness of heart. These recollections were vitalized in the sprightly intelli­gence, quick sympathy, and loving truthfulness belonging to the female characters of his early comedies, as well as in the profounder notes of womanly grief and suffering,