been natives of Stratford or the immediate neighbourhood. And the poet’s father being, as we have seen, so great a friend of the players, and during his most prosperous years in constant communication with them, his son would have every facility for studying their art. Curiosity and in­terest and the like would prompt him to find out all he could about the use of the stage “ books,” the distribution of the parts, the cues and exits, the management of voice and gesture, the graduated passion and controlled power of the leading actors in the play, the just subordination of the less important parts, and the measure and finish of each on which the success of the whole so largely depended. It is not improbable, too, that in connexion with some of the companies Shakespeare may have tried his hand both as poet and actor even before leaving Stratford. His poetical powers could hardly be unknown, and he may have written scenes and passages to fill out an imperfect or complete a defective play ; and from his known interest in their work he may have been pressed by the actors to appear in some secondary part on the stage. In any case he would be acquainted with some of the leading players in the best companies, so that when he decided to adopt their profession he might reasonably hope on going to London to find occupation amongst them without much difficulty or delay.

Shakespeare received the technical part or scholastic elements of his education in the grammar school of his native town. The school was an old foundation dating from the second half of the 15th century and connected with the guild of the Holy Cross. But, having shared the fate of the guild at the suppression of religious houses, it was restored by Edward VI. in 1553, a few weeks before his death. The “King’s New School,” as it was now called, thus represented the fresh impulse given to educa­tion throughout the kingdom during the reign of Henry VIII.’s earnest-minded son, and well sustained under the enlightened rule of his sister, the learned virgin queen. What the course of instruction was in these country schools during the second half of the 16th century has recently been ascertained by special research, @@1 and may be stated, at least in outline, with some degree of certainty and precision. As might have been expected, Latin was the chief scholastic drill, the thorough teaching of the Roman tongue being, as the name implies, the very purpose for which the grammar schools were originally founded. The regular teaching of Greek was indeed hardly introduced into the country schools until a somewhat later period. But the knowledge of Latin, as the language of all the learned professions, still largely used in literature, was regarded as quite indispensable. Whatever else might be neglected, the business of “ gerund-grinding ” was vigorously carried on, and the methods of teaching, the expedients and helps devised for enabling the pupils to read, write, and talk Latin, if rather complex and operose, were at the same time ingenious and effective. As a rule the pupil entered the grammar school at seven years old, having already acquired either at home or at the petty school the rudiments of reading and writing. During the first year the pupils were occupied with the elements of Latin grammar, the accidence, and lists of common words which were committed to memory and repeated two or three times a week, as well as further impressed upon their minds by varied exercises. In the second year the grammar was fully mastered, and the boys were drilled in short phrase-books, such as the *Sententias Pueriles,* to increase their familiarity with the structure and idioms of the language. In the third year the books used were Æsop’s *Fables,* Cato’s *Maxims,* and some good manual of

school conversation, such as the *Confabulationes Pueriles.* The most popular of these manuals in Shakespeare’s day was that by the eminent scholar and still more eminent teacher Corderius. His celebrated *Colloquies* were prob­ably used in almost every school in the kingdom ; and Hoole, writing in 1652, says that the worth of the book had been proved “ by scores if not hundreds of impressions in this and foreign countries.” Bayle, indeed, says that from its universal use in the schools the editions of the book might be counted by thousands. This helps to illustrate the colloquial use of Latin, which was so essential a feature of grammar school discipline in the 16th and 17th centuries. The evidence of Brinsley, who was Shakespeare’s contemporary, conclusively proves that the constant speaking of Latin by all the boys of the more advanced forms was indispensable even in the smallest and poorest of the country grammar schools. The same holds true of letter-writing in Latin ; and this, as we know from the result, was diligently and successfully practised in the Stratford grammar school. During his school days, there­fore, Shakespeare would be thoroughly trained in the conversational and epistolary use of Latin, and several well- known passages in his dramas show that he did not forget this early experience, but that like everything else he acquired it turned to fruitful uses in his hands. The books read in the more advanced forms of the school were the *Eclogues* of Mantuanus, the *Tristia* and *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, Cicero’s *Offices, Orations,* and *Epistles,* the *Georgics* and *Æneid* of Virgil, and in the highest form parts of Juvenal, of the comedies of Terence and Plautus, and of the tragedies of Seneca. Shakespeare, having remained at school for at least six years, must have gone through a greater part of this course, and, being a pupil of unusual quickness and ability, endowed with rare strength of mental grip and firmness of moral purpose, he must during those years have acquired a fair mastery of Latin, both colloquial and classical. After the difficulties of the grammar had been overcome, his early intellectual cravings and poetic sensibilities would be alike quickened and gratified by the new world of heroic life and adventure opened to him in reading such authors as Ovid and Virgil. Unless the teaching at Stratford was very exceptionally poor he must have become so far familiar with the favourite school authors, such as Ovid, Tully, and Virgil, as to read them intelligently and with comparative ease.

And there is no reason whatever for supposing that the instruc­tion at the Stratford grammar school was less efficient than in the grammar schools of other provincial towns of about the same size. There is abundant evidence to show that, with the fresh impulse given to education under energetic Protestant auspices in the second half of the 16th century, the teaching even in the country grammar schools was as a rule painstaking, intelligent, and fruitful. Brinsley himself was for many years an eminent and successful teacher in the grammar school of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, a small town on the borders of Warwickshire, only a few miles indeed from Coventry ; and in his *Lucius Literarius,* referring to a book of exercises on the Latin accidence and grammar he had prepared, he says that he had chiefly followed the order of the questions “ of that ancient schoolmaster Master Brunsword of Maxfield (Maccles­field) in Cheshire, so much commended for his order and schollers ; who, of all other, commeth therein the neerest unto the marke.” Another provincial schoolmaster, Mr Robert Doughty, a contem­porary of Shakespeare, who was for nearly fifty years at the head of the Wakefield grammar school, is celebrated by Hoole, not only as an eminent teacher who had constantly sent out good scholars, but as one who had produced a class of teachers emulating his own educational zeal and intelligence. The masters of the Stratford grammar school in Shakespeare’s time seem to have been men of a similar stamp. One of them, John Brunsword, who held the post for three years during the poet’s childhood, was almost certainly a relative, probably a son, of the eminent Macclesfield master whoso character and work Brinsley praises so highly. At least, Bruns­word being an uncommon name, when we find it borne by two grammar-school masters in neighbouring counties who flourished either together or in close succession to each other, it is natural to conclude that there must have been some relationship between

@@@1 “What Shakespeare learnt at School,” *Fraser's Magazine,* Nov. 1879, Jan. and May, 1880.