bourhoods it still remains true that adventures are to the adventurous. That this dictum was verified in Shake­speare’s experience seems clear alike from the internal evidence of his writings and the concurrent testimony of local tradition. In its modern form the story of the Bidford challenge exploit may indeed be little better than a myth. But in substance it is by no means incredible, and if we knew all about the incident we should probably find there were other points to be tested between the rival companies besides strength of head to resist the effects of the well-known Bidford beer. The prompt re­fusal to return with his companions and renew the contest on the following day,—a decision playfully ex­pressed and emphasized in the well-known doggrel lines,— implies that in Shakespeare’s view such forms of good fellowship were to be accepted on social not self-indulgent grounds, that they were not to be resorted to for the sake of the lower accessories only, or allowed to grow into evil habits from being unduly repeated or prolonged. It is clear that this general principle of recreative and adventur­ous enterprise, announced more than once in his writings, guided his own conduct even in the excitable and impulsive season of youth and early manhood. If he let himself go, as he no doubt sometimes did, it was only as a good rider on coming to the turf gives the horse his head in order to enjoy the exhilaration of a gallop, having the bridle well in hand the while, and able to rein in the excited steed at a moment’s notice. It may be said of Shakespeare at such seasons, as of his own Prince Hal, that he—

“ Obscur’d his contemplation Under the veil of wildness ; which, no doubt,

Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,

Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.”

The deer-stealing tradition illustrates the same point ; and though belonging perhaps to a rather later period it may be conveniently noticed here. This fragment of Shakespeare’s personal history rests on a much surer basis than the Bidford incident, being supported not only by early multiplied and constant traditions, but by evidence which the poet himself has supplied. Rowe’s somewhat formal version of the narrative is to the effect that Shake­speare in his youth was guilty of an extravagance which, though unfortunate at the time, had the happy result of helping to develop his dramatic genius. This misfortune was that of being engaged with some of his companions more than once in robbing a park belonging to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote. Sir Thomas, it is said, prosecuted him sharply for the offence, and in retaliation he wrote a satirical ballad upon him, which so incensed the baronet that Shakespeare thought it prudent to leave Stratford and join his old friends and associates the players in London. Other versions of the tradition exist giving fresh details, some of which are on the face of them later additions of a fictitious and fanciful kind. But it would be useless to discuss the accretions incident to any narrative, however true, orally transmitted through two or three generations before being reduced to a written shape. All that can be required or expected of such traditions is that they should contain a kernel of biographical fact, and be true in substance although possibly not in form. And tried by this test the tradition in question must certainly be accepted as a genuine contribution to our knowledge of the poet’s early years. Indeed it could hardly have been repeated again and again by inhabitants of Stratford within a few years of Shakespeare’s death if it did not embody a characteristic feature of his early life which was well known in the town. This feature was no doubt the poet’s love of woodland life, and the woodland sports through which it is realized in the most animated and vigorous form.

The neighbourhood of Stratford in Shakespeare’s day afforded considerable scope for this kind of healthy recreation. There was the remnant of the old Λrden forest, which, though still nominally a royal domain, was virtually free for many kinds of sport. Indeed, the observance of the forest laws had fallen into such neglect in the early years of Elizabeth’s reign that even unlicensed deer­hunting in the royal domains was common enough. And hardly any attempt was made to prevent the pursuit of the smaller game belonging to the warren and the chase. Then, three or four miles to the east of Stratford, between the Warwick road and the river, stretched the romantic park of Fulbroke, which, as the property of an attainted exile, sequestered though not seized by the crown, was virtually open to all comers. There can be little doubt that when Shakespeare and his companions wished a day’s outing in the woods they usually resorted to some part of the Arden forest still available for sporting purposes. But sometimes, probably on account of its greater convenience, they seem to have changed the venue to Fulbroke Park, and there they might easily come into collision with Sir Thomas Lucy’s keepers. There has been a good deal of discussion as to the scene of the traditional adventure, but the probabilities of the case are strongly in favour of Fulbroke. When Sir Walter Scott visited Sir Thomas Lucy at Charlecote in 1828, Sir Thomas told him that the park from which Shakespeare stole the deer was not Charlecote, but one belonging to a mansion at some distance, the context indicating Fulbroke as the scene of the exploit. And Mr Bracebridge, in his interesting pamphlet *Shakespeare no Deer-Stealer,* has thrown fresh light on the sub­ject, and made the whole incident more intelligible by marshalling the reasons in favour of this view. The park had, it seems, been held by the Lucys under the crown in the time of Henry V1II., but was afterwards granted by Queen Mary to one of her privy council­lors,—Sir Francis Engeliield. Being a devoted Romanist, he fled to Spain on the accession of Elizabeth and was subsequently ad­judged a traitor, the Fulbroke estate being sequestered though not administered by the crown. The park being thus without a legal custodian for more than a quarter of a century became disparked, the palings having fallen into decay and the fences being in many places broken down. The deer with which it abounded were thus left without any legal protection, and might be hunted at will by enterprising sportsmen. The only person likely to check this freedom or to attempt to do so was Sir Thomas Lucy, whose own park of Charlecote ran for a mile along the other side of the river just below Fulbroke. As the nearest large landed proprietor, having a direct interest in the state of the neighbouring park, he might naturally think himself entitled to act as a kind of *ad interim* custodian of Fulbroke. And with his aristocratic feeling, his severe and exacting temper, he would be likely enough to push his temporary guardianship of custom or courtesy into an exclusive right, at least so far as the venison of the park was concerned. In any case Sir Thomas’s keepers would occasionally perambulate Fulbroke Park as a protection to Charlecote, and in doing so they probably came upon Shakespeare and his companions after they had brought down a buck and were about to break it up for removal. Or the hunted deer may have crossed the river at the shallow ford between the two parks, and, pursued by the eager sportsmen, have been brought down within the Charlecote grounds. In either case the keepers would denounce the trespass, and possibly with menacing and abusive words demand the buck for their master. On being treated in this insulting way, Shake­speare, who had pride and personal dignity as well as courage, would deny any intentional or actual trespass, refuse to give up the venison, and plainly tell the keepers that they might report the matter to Sir Thomas Lucy and he would answer for himself and his companions. On finding what had happened, Sir Thomas would be all the more incensed and indignant from the conscious­ness that he had pushed his claims beyond the point at which they could legally be enforced. And, being to some extent in a false position, he would be proportionately wrathful and vindictive against the youthful sportsmen, and especially against their leader who had dared to resist and defy his authority. Sir Thomas was the great man of Stratford, who came periodically to the town on magistrate’s business, was appealed to as arbitrator in special cases, and entertained by the corporation during his visits. In character he seems to have combined aristocratic pride and narrowness with the harshness and severity of the Puritan temper. As a landed proprietor and local magnate he was exacting and exclusive, looking with a kind of Puritanical sourness on all youthful frolics, merri­ment, and recreation. He would thus have a natural antipathy to young Shakespeare’s free, generous, and enjoying nature, and would resent as an unpardonable outrage his high-spirited conduct in attempting to resist any claims he chose to make. Sir Thomas would no doubt vent his indignation to the authorities at Strat­ford, and try to set the law in motion, and failing in this might have threatened, as Justice Shallow does, to make a Star-Chamber matter of it. This was the kind of extreme course which a man in his position might take where there was no available local redress for any wrong he imagined himself to have suffered. And