lated wrongs, or plunged in overwhelming calamities. As the result, we learn that there is something infinitely more precious in life than social ease or worldly success—noble­ness of soul, fidelity to truth and honour, human love and loyalty, strength and tenderness, and trust to the very end. In the most tragic experiences this fidelity to all that is best in life is only possible through the loss of life itself. But when Desdemona expires with a sigh and Cordelia’s loving eyes are closed, when Hamlet no more draws his breath in pain and the tempest-tossed Lear is at last liberated from the rack of this tough world, we feel that, death having set his sacred seal on their great sorrows and greater love, they remain with us as possessions for ever. In the three dramas belonging to Shakespeare’s last period, or rather which may be said to close his dramatic career, the same feeling of severe but consolatory calm is still more apparent. If the deeper discords of life are not finally resolved, the virtues which soothe their perplexities and give us courage and endurance to wait, as well as confidence to trust the final issues,—the virtues of forgive­ness and generosity, of forbearance and self-control,—are largely illustrated. This is a characteristic feature in each of these closing dramas, in the *Winter’s Tale, Cymbeline,* and the *Tempest.* The *Tempest* is supposed, on tolerably good grounds, to be Shakespeare’s last work, and in it we see the great magician, having gained by the wonderful experience of life, and the no less wonderful practice of his art, serene wisdom, clear and enlarged vision, and beneficent self-control, break his magical wand and retire from the scene of his triumphs to the home he had chosen amidst the woods and meadows of the Avon, and surrounded by the family and friends he loved.

We must now briefly summarize the few remaining facts of the poet’s personal history. The year 1596 was marked by considerable family losses. In August Shake­speare’s only son Hamnet died in the twelfth year of his age. With his strong domestic affections and cherished hopes of founding a family, the early death of his only boy must have been for his father a severe blow. It was followed in December by the death of Shakespeare’s uncle Henry, the friend of his childhood and youth, the protector and encourager of his boyish sports and enterprises at Bearley, Snitterfield, and Fulbroke. A few months later the Shake­speare household at Snitterfield, so intimately associated for more than half a century with the family in Henley Street, was finally broken up by the death of the poet’s aunt Margaret, his uncle Henry’s widow. Although the death of his son and heir had diminished the poet’s hope of founding a family, he did not in any way relax his efforts to secure a permanent and comfortable home for his wife and daughters at Stratford. As early as 1597, when he had pursued his London career for little more than ten years, he had saved enough to purchase the considerable dwelling- house in New Place, Stratford, to which he afterwards retired. This house, originally built by Sir Hugh Clopton and called the “ Great House,” was one of the largest mansions in the town, and the fact of Shakespeare having acquired such a place as his family residence would at once increase his local importance. From time to time he made additional purchases of land about the house and in the neighbourhood. In 1602 he largely increased the property by acquiring 107 acres of arable land, and later on he added to this 20 acres of pasture land, with a convenient cottage and garden in Chapel Lane, oppo­site the lower grounds of the house. Within a few years his property thus comprised a substantial dwelling-house with large garden and extensive outbuildings, a cottage fronting the lower road, and about 137 acres of arable and pasture land. During these years Shakespeare made another important purchase that added considerably to his

income. From the letter of a Stratford burgess to a friend in London, it appears that as early as 1597 Shakespeare had been making inquiry about the purchase of tithes in the town and neighbourhood. And in 1605 he bought the unexpired lease of tithes, great and small, in Stratford and two adjoining hamlets, the lease having still thirty years to run. This purchase yielded him an annual income of <£38 a year, equal to upwards of £350 a year of our present money. The last purchase of property made by Shakespeare of which we have any definite record is at once so interesting and so perplexing as to have stimulated various conjectures on the part of his biographers. This purchase carries us away from Stratford back to London, to the immediate neighbourhood of Shakespeare’s dramatic labours and triumphs. It seems that in March 1613 he bought a house with a piece of ground attached to it a little to the south-west of St Paul’s cathedral, and not far from the Blackfriars theatre. The purchase of this house in London after he had been for some years settled at Stratford has led some critics to suppose that Shakespeare had not given up all thought of returning to the metropolis, or at least of spending part of the year there with his family in the neighbourhood he best knew and where he was best known. The ground of this supposition is, however, a good deal destroyed by the fact that soon after acquiring this town house Shakespeare let it for a lease of ten years. He may possibly have bought the property as a convenience to some of his old friends who were associated with him in the purchase. In view of future contingencies it would obviously be an advantage to have a substantial dwelling so near the theatre in the hands of a friend. It was indeed by means of a similar purchase that James Burbage had originally started and established the Blackfriars theatre.

The year 1607-8 would be noted in Shakespeare’s family calendar as one of vivid and chequered domestic experiences. On the 5th of June his eldest daughter Susanna, who seems to have inherited something of her father’s genius, was married to Dr John Hall, a medical man of more than average knowledge and ability, who had a considerable practice in the neighbourhood of Stratford, and who was deservedly held in high repute. The newly married couple settled in one of the picturesque houses of the wooded suburb between the town and the church known as Old Stratford. But before the end of the year the midsummer marriage bells had changed to sadder music. In December Shakespeare lost his youngest brother, Edmund, at the early age of twenty-seven. He had become an actor, most probably through his brother’s help and influence, and was, at the time of his death, living in London. He was buried at Southwark on the last day of the year. Two months later there was family rejoicing in Dr Hall’s house at the birth of a daughter. christened Elizabeth, the only offspring of the union, and the only grandchild Shakespeare lived to see. The rejoicing at this event would be fully shared by the house­hold in New Place, and especially by Shakespeare himself, whose cherished family hopes would thus be strengthened and renewed. Six months later in this eventful year, fortune again turned her wheel. Early in September Shakespeare’s mother, Mary Arden of the Asbies, died, having lived long enough to see and welcome her great-grandchild as a fresh bond of family life. She was buried at Stratford on the 9th of September, having survived her husband, who was buried on the 8th of September 1601, exactly seven years. Mary Shakespeare died full of years and honour and coveted rewards. For more than a decade she had witnessed and shared the growing pro­sperity of her eldest son, and felt the mother’s thrill of joy and pride in the success that had crowned his brilliant