father, it may be assumed, had applied to the heralds’ college for the grant at the instance and by the help of his son. In this document, the draft of which is still preserved, the grounds on which the arms are given are stated as two :—(1) because John Shakespeare’s ancestors had rendered valuable services to Henry VII.; and (2) that he had married Mary, daughter and one of the heirs of Robert Arden of Wilmcote, in the said county, gentle­man. In the legal conveyances of property to Shake­speare himself after the grant of arms he is uniformly described as “ William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon- Avon, gentleman.” He is so described in the midst of his London career, and this sufficiently indicates that Stratford was even then regarded as his permanent resid­ence or home. In the following year another important step was taken towards establishing the position of the family. This was an application by John and Mary Shakespeare to the Court of Chancery for the recovery of the estate of the Asbies, which, under the pressure of family difficulties, had been mortgaged in 1578 to Edward Lambert. The issue of the suit is not known, but, as we have seen, the pleadings on either side occupy a consider­able space and show how resolutely John Shakespeare was bent on recovering his wife’s family estate.

Turning to the poet himself, we have the significant fact that during the next ten years he continued, with steady persistency, to build up the family fortunes by investing all his savings in real property,—in houses and land at Stratford. While many of his associates and partners in the Blackfriars company remained on in London, living and dying there, Shakespeare seems to have early realized his theatrical property for the sake of increasing the acreage of his arable and pasture land in the neighbourhood of Strat­ford. In 1598, the year after the purchase of New Place, his family are not only settled there, but he is publicly ranked among the most prosperous and well-to-do citizens of Stratford. In that year, there being some anticipation of a scarcity of corn, an official statement was drawn up as to the amount of wheat in the town. From the list con­tained in this document of the chief householders in Chapel Ward, where New Place was situated, we find that out of twenty holders of corn enumerated only two have more in stock than William Shakespeare. Other facts belonging to the same year, such as the successful appeal of a fellow-townsman for important pecuniary help, and the suggestion from an alderman of the borough that, for the sake of securing certain private and public benefits, he should be encouraged to complete a contemplated purchase of land at Shottery, show that Shakespeare was now recognized as a local proprietor of wealth and influence, and that he had so far realized his early desire of taking a good position in the town and neighbourhood. It will be noted, too, that all the leading provisions of Shakespeare’s will embody the same cherished family purpose. Instead of dividing his property between his two daughters, he left, as we have seen, the whole of his estate, the whole of his real property indeed, to his eldest daughter Mrs Susanna Hall, with a strict entail to the heirs of her body. This indicates in the strongest manner the fixed desire of his heart to take a permanent position in the locality, and, if possible, strike the family roots deeply into their native soil. That this purpose was realized in his own case seems clear from the special respect paid to his memory. He was buried, as we have seen, in the chancel of the parish church, where as a rule only persons of family and position could be interred. His monument, one of the most considerable in the church, holds a place of honour on the north wall of the chancel, just above the altar railing. While this tribute of marked official respect may be due in part, as the epitaph intimates, to his

eminence as a poet, it was no doubt, in a country district like Stratford, due still more to his local importance as a landed proprietor of wealth and position. Indeed, as a holder of the great tithes he was by custom and courtesy entitled to burial in the chancel.

If there is truth in the early tradition that Shakespeare originally left Stratford in consequence of the sharp prose­cution of Sir Thomas Lucy, who resented with narrow bitterness and pride the presumption and audacity of the high-spirited youth found trespassing on his grounds, the victim of his petty wrath was in the end amply avenged. After a career of unexampled success in London Shake­speare returned to his native town crowned with wealth and honours, and, having spent the last years of his life in cordial intercourse with his old friends and fellow towns­men, was followed to the grave with the affectionate respect and regret of the whole Stratford community. This feeling was indeed, we may justly assume, fully shared by all who had ever known the great poet. His con­temporaries and associates unanimously bear witness to Shakespeare’s frank, honourable, loving nature. Perhaps the most striking expression of this common feeling comes from one who in character, disposition, and culture was so different from Shakespeare as his friend and fellow- dramatist Ben Jonson. Even his rough and cynical temper could not resist the charm of Shakespeare’s genial character and gracious ways. “I loved the man,” he says, “and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions.” As the genius of Shakespeare united the most opposite gifts, so amongst his friends are found the widest diversity of character, endowment, and disposition. This is only another way of indicating the breadth of his sympathies, the variety of his interests, the largeness and exuberant vitality of his whole nature. He touched life at so many points, and responded so in­stinctively to every movement in the complex web of its throbbing activities, that nothing affecting humanity was alien either to his heart or brain. To one so gifted with the power of looking below the surface of custom and con­vention, and perceiving, not only the deeper elements of rapture and anguish to which ordinary eyes are blind, but the picturesque, humorous, or pathetic varieties of the common lot, every form of human experience, every type of character, would have an attraction of its own. In the view of such a mind nothing would be common or unclean. To Shakespeare all aspects of life, even the humblest, had points of contact with his own. He could talk simply and naturally without a touch of patronage or condescen­sion to a hodman on his ladder, a costermonger at his stall, the tailor on his board, the cobbler in his combe, the hen-wife in her poultry-yard, the ploughman in his furrow, or the base mechanicals at the wayside country inn. He could watch with full and humorous appreciation the various forms of brief authority and petty officialism, the bovine stolidity and empty consequence of the local Dogberries and Shallows, the strange oaths and martial swagger of a Pistol, a Bardolph, or a Parolles, the pedantic talk of a Holofernes, the pragmatical saws of a Polonius, or the solemn absurdities of a self-conceited Malvolio. On the other hand he could seize from the inner side by links of vital affinity every form of higher character, pas­sionate, reflective, or executive,—lover and prince, duke and captain, legislator and judge, counsellor and king,— and portray with almost equal ease and with vivid truth­fulness men and women of distant ages, of different races, and widely sundered nationalities.

As in his dramatic world he embraces the widest variety of human experience, so in his personal character he may