who like his brother became an actor, in 1607; Richard in 1613. Tradition has it that one of Shakespeare’s brothers used to visit London in the 17th century as quite an old man. If so, this can only have been Gilbert.

During the years that followed his marriage, John Shakespeare became prominent in Stratford life. In 1565 he was chosen as an alderman, and in 1568 he held the chief municipal office, that of high bailiff. This carried with it the dignity of justice of the peace. John Shakespeare seems to have assumed arms, and thenceforward was always entered in corporation documents as “ Mr ” Shakespeare, whereby he may be distinguished from another John Shakespeare, a “ corviser ” or shoemaker, who dwelt in Stratford about 1584-1592. In 1571 as an ex-bailiff he began another year of office as chief alderman.

One may think, therefore, of Shakespeare in his boyhood as the son of one of the leading citizens of a not unimportant provincial market-town, with a vigorous life of its own, which in spite of the dunghills was probably not much unlike the life of a similar town to-day, and with constant reminders of its past in the shape of the stately buildings formerly belonging to its college and its gild, both of which had been suppressed at the Reformation. Stratford stands on the Avon, in the midst of an agricultural country, throughout which in those days enclosed orchards and meadows alternated with open fields for tillage, and not far from the wilder and wooded district known as the Forest of Arden. The middle ages had left it an heritage in the shape of a free grammar-school, and here it is natural to suppose that William Shakespeare obtained a sound enough education,@@1 with a working knowledge of “ Mantuan”@@2 and Ovid in the original, even though to such a thorough scholar as Ben Jonson it might seem no more\* than “ small Latin and less Greek.” In 1577, when Shakespeare was about thirteen, his father’s fortunes began to take a turn for the worse. He became irregular in his contributions to town levies, and had to give a mortgage on his wife’s property of Asbies as security for a loan from her brother-in-law, Edmund Lambert. Money was raised to pay this off, partly by the sale of a small interest in land at Snitterfield which had come to Mary Shakespeare from her sisters, partly perhaps by that of the Greenhill Street house and other property in Stratford outside Henley Street, none of which seems to have ever come into William Shake­speare’s hands. Lambert, however, refused to surrender the mortgage on the plea of older debts, and an attempt to recover Asbies by litigation proved ineffectual. John Shakespeare’s difficulties increased. An action for debt was sustained against him in the local court, but no personal property could be found on which to distrain. He had long ceased to attend the meetings of the corporation, and as a consequence he was removed in 1586 from the list of aldermen. In this state of domestic affairs it is not likely that Shakespeare’s school life was unduly prolonged. The chances are that he was apprenticed to some local trade. Aubrey says that he killed calves for his father, and “ would do

it in a high style, and make a speech.”

Whatever his circumstances, they did not deter him at the early age of eighteen from the adventure of marriage. Rowe recorded the name of Shakespeare’s wife as Hathaway, and Joseph Greene succeeded in tracing her to a family of that name dwelling in Shottery, one of the hamlets of Stratford. Her monument gives her first name as Anne, and her age as sixty-seven in 1623. She must, therefore, have been about eight years older than Shakespeare. Various small trains of evidence point to her identification with the daughter Agnes mentioned in the will of a Richard Hathaway of Shottery, who died in 1581, being then in possession of the farm-house now known as “ Anne Hathaway’s Cottage.” Agnes was legally a distinct name from Anne, but there can.be no doubt that ordinary custom treated them as identical. The principal record of the

marriage is a bond dated on November 28, 1582, and executed by Fulk Sandells and John Richardson, two yeomen of Stratford who also figure in Richard Hathaway’s will, as a security to the bishop for the issue of a licence for the marriage of William Shakespeare and “ Anne Hathwey of Stratford,” upon the consent of her friends, with one asking of the banns. There is no reason to suppose, as has been suggested, that the procedure adopted was due to dislike of the marriage on the part of John Shakespeare, since, the bridegroom being a minor, it would not have been in accordance with the practice of the bishop’s officials to issue the licence without evidence of the father’s consent. The explanation probably lies in the fact that Anne was already with child, and in the near neighbourhood of Advent within which marriages were prohibited, so that the ordinary procedure by banns would have entailed a delay until after Christmas. A kindly sentiment has suggested that some form of civil marriage, or at least contract of espousals, had already taken place, so that a canonical marriage was really only required in order to enable Anne to secure the legacy left her by her father “ at the day of her marriage.” But such a theory is not rigidly required by the facts. It is singular that, upon the day before that on which the bond was executed, an entry was made in the bishop’s register of the issue of a licence for a marriage between William Shakespeare and “ Annam Whateley de Temple Grafton.” Of this it can only be said that the bond, as an original document, is infinitely the better authority, and that a scribal error of “ Whateley ” for “ Hathaway ” is quite a possible solution. Temple Grafton may have been the nominal place of marriage indicated in the licence, which was not always the actual place of residence of either bride or bridegroom. There are no contemporary registers for Temple Grafton, and there is no entry of the marriage in those for Stratford-upon- Avon. There is a tradition that such a record was seen during the 19th century in the registers for Luddington, a chapelry within the parish, which are now destroyed. Shakespeare’s first child, Susanna, was baptized on the 26th of May 1583, and was followed on the 2nd of February 1585 by twins Hamnet and Judith.

In or after 1584 Shakespeare’s career in Stratford seems to have come to a tempestuous close. An 18th-century story of a drinking-bout in a neighbouring village is of no importance, except as indicating a local impression that a distinguished citizen had had a wildish youth.

But there is a tradition which comes from a double source and which there is no reason to reject in substance, to the effect that Shakespeare got into trouble through poaching on the estates of a considerable Warwickshire magnate, Sir Thomas Lucy, and found it necessary to leave Stratford in order to escape the results of his misdemeanour. It is added that he afterwards took his revenge ori Lucy by satirizing him as the Juátice Shallow, with the dozen white louses in his old coat, of *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* From this event until he emerges as an actor and rising playwright in 1592 his history is a blank, and it is impossible to say what experience may not have helped to fill it. Much might indeed be done in eight years of crowded Elizabethan life. Conjecture has not been idle, and has assigned him in turns during this or some other period to the occupations of a scrivener, an apothecary, a dyer, a printer, a soldier, and the like. The suggestion that he saw military service rests largely on a confusion with another William Shake­speare of Rowington. Aubrey had heard that “ he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country.” The mention in *Henry IV.* of certain obscure yeomen families. Visor of Woncote and Perkes of Stinchcombe HilI, near Dursley in Gloucestershire, has been thought to suggest a sojourn in that district, where indeed Shakespeares were to be found from an early date. Ultimately, of course, he drifted to London and the theatre, where, according to the stage tradition, he found employment in a menial capacity, perhaps even as a holder of horses at the doors, before he was admitted into a company as an actor and so found his way to his true vocation as a writer of plays. Malone thought that he might have left

@@@1 It is worth noting that Walter Roche, who in 1558 became fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was master of the school in 1570-1572, so that its standard must have been good.

@@@2 Baptista Mantuanus (1448-1516), whose Latin Eclogues were translated by Turberville in 1567.