

own employment. Now the ten children did not in fact exist. As has long been known, Rowe has donated the three children of another Shakspeare to our John.<sup>3</sup> Besides, several of the children of our John died young. It is thus clear that this statement is a pure inference on the part of Rowe from a false premise. In other words, Rowe is merely guessing, as all scholars, good and bad, must do. He then uses the narrow circumstances which he had thus inferred for this poor wool dealer John Shakspeare with ten children to explain William's removal from school. The narrow circumstances which he has thus inferred for John Shakspeare did not in fact exist while Shakspeare should have been in grammar school—if indeed they ever existed.<sup>4</sup>

Then finally we arrive at what all this chain of inferred fictions was invented to explain. In school Shakspeare had acquired "that little *Latine* he was Master of," but was forced out by circumstances before he acquired more. All Rowe has to start with, as his phraseology shows, is Jonson's statement about Shakspeare's "small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*," which had now become traditionally "little Latin." So he must account for "that little Latin" Shakspeare was master of. If Shakspeare had little Latin, as Jonson says, he must presumably have been removed from school early. Rowe thus looks for some reason which would have forced Shakspeare out of school. He gets ten children charged up to William's father, has heard that the father dealt in wool, and so states his inferences from these things as facts. As a wool dealer, the father would be a rather humble farmer-tradesman, to whom ten children would be a great burden, forcing him to withdraw his oldest son prematurely from school. The calf-killing tradition which we have examined above would also indicate humble circumstances for Shakspeare's family. Thus the whole business of Shakspeare's premature withdrawal from school is entirely an inference on the part of Rowe from erroneous information, and can be of no authority whatever. All Rowe has to go on is the traditional statement attributed to Jonson that Shakspeare had little Latin; he blinks the Greek. The remainder is pure inference from wholly erroneous facts to account for the assumed little Latin. There is thus no evidence whatever that Shakspeare did not complete grammar school, unless we could show that Jonson would not have considered a grammar school graduate as having "small *Latine*." But that is exactly

<sup>3</sup> Chambers, *Shakespeare*, Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Fripp, E. I., *Shakespeare Studies*, pp. 88 ff.