

youth he was a curious and diligent observer of the manners and characters, not only of his young associates, but of all around him; a study in which, unquestionably, he took great delight, and pursued with avidity during the whole course of his future life.

That his father was compelled by the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his son's assistance at home, to withdraw him from school, at least before the year 1578, to which period I suppose him to have remained there, though it is asserted by Mr. Rowe, no sufficient proof has been produced. At the free school of Stratford he was entitled to a gratuitous education; and he certainly could be of no great use to his father, before he had attained the fourteenth year of his age.³⁶

As usual, Malone has summed up the case soundly; and his conclusions can not be shaken. It should now appear that the best Shakspeare scholars of Dr. Farmer's day no more agreed with his extremes than they had with those of his victims.

Many years later in an essay quite worthy of Dr. Farmer himself, William Maginn³⁷ in 1839 examined Farmer's arguments to an essentially just conclusion, though not justly phrased.

He has proved, what no one of common sense ever doubted,—that Shakspeare in his classical plays did not look beyond the English translation of Plutarch, or in his historical plays beyond the popular annalist, Holinshed; and that, having made such a resolution, he adhered to their text, without further research . . . Nothing is proved of the want of learning of Shakspeare.³⁸

I do not understand how any one who has followed the arguments in this controversy could say of Maginn that "after hitting out and about at the *Essay* for three months he left it much as he found it,"³⁹ especially when the critic himself arrives at essentially the same conclusions concerning the actual contributions of the *Essay* as does Maginn. A juster judgment on Maginn is that of Baynes,

Dr. Maginn pierced the pedantic and inflated "Essay" of Farmer into hopeless collapse . . . Dr. Maginn has abundantly exposed the illogical character and false conclusions of Farmer's reasoning on the subject. His position is indeed as extreme on one side as that of the critics he attacked is on the other.⁴⁰

Hunter also in 1845 pointed out much more urbanely than had Maginn and in less detail the fundamental weakness of Farmer's positions.⁴¹

³⁶ Malone, *Variorum* (1821), Vol. II, pp. 102-106.

³⁷ *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XX, pp. 253-273; 476-490; 647-666.

³⁸ *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XX, p. 663. ³⁹ Smith, *Essays*, p. xxvii.

⁴⁰ Baynes, T. S., *Shakespeare Studies* (1894), pp. 151-153 from *Fraser's Magazine*, 1879-80; cf. Anders, H. R. D., *Shakespeare's Books*, pp. 7-9.

⁴¹ Hunter, J., *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakspeare*, Vol. II, pp. 313 ff.