To the memory of my beloved, The AUTHOR

MR. VVILLIAM SHAKESPEARE :

AND

what he hath left us.

T *O draw no envy (*Shakespeare) *on thy name,*
Am I thus ample to thy Booke, and Fame:
While I confesse thy writings to be such,
As neither Man, *nor* Muse, *can praise too much.*
'Tis true, and all mens suffrage. But these wayes
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise:
For seeliest Ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but eccho's right;
Or blinde Affection, which doth ne're advance
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty Malice, might pretend this praise,
And thinke to ruine, where it seem'd to raise.
These are, as some infamous Baud, or whore,
Should praise a Matron. What could hurt her more?
But thou art proofe against them, and indeed
Above th'ill fortune of them, or the need.
I, therefore will begin. Soule of the Age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
My Shakespeare*, rise; I will not lodge thee by*
Chaucer, *or* Spenser, *or bid* Beaumont *lye*
A little further, to make thee a roome:
Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,
And art alive still, while thy Booke doth live,
And we have wits to read, and prayse to give.
That I not mixe thee so, my braine excuses ;
I mean with great, but disproportion'd Muses:
For, if I thought my judgement were of yeeres,
I should commit thee furely with thy peeres,
And tell, how farre thou [*didstst*] *our* Lily *out-shine,*
Or sporting Kid, *or* Marlowes *mighty line.*
And though thou hadst small Latine, *and lesse* Greeke,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seeke
For names; but call forth thund'ring AEschilus,
Euripides, *and* Sophocles *to us,*
Paccuvius, Accius, *him of* Cordova *dead,*
To life againe, to heare thy Buskin tread,
And shake a Stage: Or, when thy Sockes were on,
Leave thee alone, for the comparison

Of

Of all that insolent Greece*, or haughtie* Rome
  sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britaine, *thou hast one to showe,*
  To whom all Scenes of Europe *homage owe.*
He was not of an age, but for all time!
  And all the Muses *still were in their prime,*
When like Apollo *he came forth to warme*
  Our eares, or like a Mercury *to charme!*
Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
  And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines!
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
  As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.
The merry Greeke, *tart* Aristophanes,
  Neat Terence, *witty* Plautus, *now not please;*
But antiquated, and deserted lye
  As they were not of Natures family.
Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art,
  My gentle Shakespeare, *must enjoy a part.*
For though the Poets *matter, Nature be,*
  His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
  (such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses *anvile : turne the same,*
  (And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame;
Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
  For a good Poet's *made, as well as borne,*
And such wert thou. Looke how the fathers face
  Lives in his issue, even so, the race
Of Shakespeares *minde, and manners brightly shines*
  In his well torned, and true filed lines:
In each of which, he seemes to shake a Lance,
  As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! *what a sight it were*
  To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
And make those flights upon the bankes of Thames,
  That so did take Eliza, *and our* James!
But stay, I see thee in the Hemisphere
  Advanc'd, and made a Constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets*, and with rage,*
  Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage;
Which, since thy flight frō hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And despaires day, but for thy Volumes light.

BEN: JONSON.