

were not long in stumbling upon the site of Shakspeare's own house, and the spot where he died. A hundred years ago the vandal owner of the estate, being annoyed by the number of visitors to the spot, cut down the mulberry tree which Shakspeare had planted with his own hand, and still later pulled down the house itself, out of spite, because he was obliged to pay higher taxes upon it than he thought just; but Shakspeare's granddaughter lived in a house next door to his, which is known to have been almost precisely like it, and this, together with his grounds at the back, is exhibited by the custodian having the place in charge.

This gentleman, whose name we learned was Salmon, was a most loving and devoted guardian of what few reminiscences of the poet relentless fate had spared. The principal museum of Shakspearean relics is, of course, the cottage at the other end of the town, where he was born, but there was quite a collection of interesting things even here. The house stood on a corner opposite the Gothic Guildhall, which, excepting the church, must have been the handsomest building in Stratford, so that Shakspeare's estate was quite the most desirable in the place. The foundations of the house still exist, and there we saw them, protected by wire nettings, and also the foundation of his *own study bow-window*, which was at the back of the house and looked out upon his lawn, garden and orchard. He had a view from it also down to the river, as he had leased all the intervening land and kept it open, just as Mr Longfellow in Cambridge keeps open his view of the Charles. Shakspeare was evidently a burgher of great consideration in his later years, and so his bust in the church and also the "Stratford" portrait represent him. Indeed, the "poet" in them is painfully conspicuous by its absence; but I dare say that painters and sculptors of that day were much more likely to be impressed by the scarlet robe and general good-dinner prosperity of their sitter than by the *mighty* imagination that spun and wove its glittering webs behind those dreamy eyes. —But nobody but Raphael or Leonardo da Vinci *could* have painted Shakspeare!

From the house we found our way into the rooms where at seven years old he was sent to school—dear little fascinating pet that he must have been! They are over the Guild-room,

three in number, very roughly finished, and with open roofs showing the beams, like a church, so that the ventilation, as my companion remarked, must have been excellent. The rooms probably look much as they did in Shakspeare's day. There were no backs to the seats, and the furniture was far more primitive than with us. I peeped into one of "Johnnie Rose's" text-books, and they were refreshing—being brief, rational and to the point, instead of embodying the pedagogy run-to-seed with which American children are too often afflicted. In the vestibule an old desk, far ruder than the plain wooden ones in the school-rooms, is preserved as possibly being one of those in use in Shakspeare's time. The present set was all cut up, boy-fashion, and as I like to see them, for I believe that this pervading "hard finish" of our school-rooms and the accompanying rigid mechanism of our school routine have destroyed the spontaneity and originality and self-poise of our last two generations at least. If the American public school system develops high personal honor, force of character, dauntless moral courage, marked and diverse intellectual gifts, I only ask "Where are they?" Our most striking national trait to-day is this existing dead level of "universal intelligence," that lays hold on nothing and goes to the bottom of nothing. We see no strength, no greatness. Nobody towers above anybody else, and I believe that even the mighty pennons of a Shakspeare would have been dwarfed or broken had they been subjected for eight tender years to the vice-like cramp of a system which, for fear of being "sectarian," refuses to teach the children daily that there is a God to Whom they are directly responsible; and, instead of bestowing the only high *internal* motive which at once stimulates and restrains, has for fifty years bent every effort of an omnipotent organization toward making every boy as *precisely* like every other boy *externally* as possible. Of course, individuality, the most precious attribute of the human soul, is being as effectually extirpated as though we lived under a despotism!

From the rooms where Shakspeare went to school our nearest point was the church where he is buried, which is a little way from the town, picturesquely built on the bank of the Avon. It is large, gothic and very beautiful; bright and cheerful inside, with brilliant stained glass