"He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak; 'tis charity to show!"

Mr. Editor:—
A writer in the Magazine has already awaked to the
fact that Shakespeare is not what he is cracked up to
be, and proclaims himself a reformer accordingly. But
his business will be no very difficult task, if undertaken
with characteristic modesty; for few of us either love or
read the works of Shakespeare much. As for the Iliad
and Odyssey, they have long been detested by Juniors
and Freshmen generally, and the Vedas are now held up
by professors to be laughed at by students. Yet these
three have been considered the sublimest poems out of the
Bible. Does all this show that the delicacies of Tennyson
and Browning, or else the inevitable progress of the
mind, have given us a distaste for the rudeness and meagreness
of these old poets? No. At no time since Shakespeare's day, at least at no time since Nicholas Rowe,
have they been so well appreciated. Johnson and Pope, for
example, had no kindred feeling with either the Greek or
the English poet. This will hardly be questioned, but I
will support it by an example or two. Johnson never could
wade through Homer, although he was well read on most
other branches of Greek literature. He has the following
criticism on Cymbeline:

"This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and
some pleasing scenes; but they are obtained at the expense of much
incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the
conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times,
and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to
waste criticism upon irresistible imbecility, upon faults too evident
for detection and too gross for aggravation."

Pope's perversion of the Homeric spirit in his translation
of the Iliad is well known; while the absurdity of many of
his emendations of Shakespeare, as proved by Theobald,
shows that he had no appreciation of that poet.

Compare such critics with Goethe, Schlegel, Coleridge,
Hazlitt, Wilson, Douce, Knight, Collier, White, and Wolf,
Lachmann, Mure, Tyler, and Gladstone. All of these sit
rather as disciples than judges of the authors they criticise; all recognize their unvarying truth. It is not, then,
to the age of the world, but to the age of the critics, that
we must ascribe a distaste for Homer and Shakespeare in
College.

Some devout writer says that almost every healthy mind
must be an atheist in one stage of its progress; and it is at
least true, that there is a time when we must either apply
ourselves to imbibing trustfully the spirit of sublime minds,
or rest content with being scoffers. This time comes to
most of us in College. If we adopt the latter course, we
must turn round; if the other, we are already on the right
track. A young man feels sure he sees something unrea
sonable in Milton or Bacon, or else in the study of
natural science in general, or of the dead languages in gen
eral, and he is tempted to admire too much his own imitation
of the pig's squeal. This ought to be a sign to him
that he does not comprehend the author or the science, and
he should throw himself into the study of him or it with the
more abandon.

The argument of the critic of the Taming of the Shrew
is this:

Shakespeare makes a radical change occur in the charac
ter of one of his heroines.
Radical changes of character never do occur in real life.

Ergo, Shakespeare is not true to nature.

He then suggests to Mr. Shakespeare how he was led
into so great a blunder, wherein it lies, and how he might
have avoided it.

First, for the origin of the error, he says: "We shall find,
I think, that this truly artistic design, so clearly shown in
vol. iv. — no. iii.
the afterpart of the drama, was an afterthought, irreconcilable
with Katharina's conduct in the earlier scenes."

Then for the error itself: "Violent she might have been,
easily roused to any burst of passion, but there should be
no unprovoked outbreak. But listen to her, and judge if
Shakespeare has not so far overstepped the line, there can
be no consistent return," &c.

Then for the means of avoiding it: "It is the true, masterly,
central idea of the play. But was it Shakespeare's
idea? It should have been, that is clear. If, however, we
refuse to believe that it was, because it ought to have been,
his design," &c. That is, if the readers of the Magazine will
refuse to believe that it was clear to Shakespeare because
it is clear to this critic, he is in a condition to proceed with
his argument. The wonder is that a masterly idea oc-
curred, even as an afterthought, to so stupid a block as
Shakespeare is represented to be.

But it is useless to quote all this. I deny his major prem-
ise. Radical changes of character are certainly improbable,
but it is unnatural for improbabilities never to occur.
They are extraordinary, but a play in which there are no
extraordinary workings of character is simply commonplace.
Every one of Shakespeare's plays contains something im-
probable or extraordinary. The delineation of Hamlet's
character, which your critic seems to approve, is so extra-
ordinary, that its meaning is not now settled.

I cannot think why he selected so insignificant a field for
the exhibition of this great principle of ethics,—that noth-
ing can change the character,—which is unexpressed in-
deed, and which perhaps suggested itself as an afterthought
to the critic, but which is, in fact, the true, masterly, central
idea of his article. His argument would have applied very
well to the parable of the Prodigal Son. He might say:
"Disclaiming all affected singularity, I feel called upon to
present a minority report on one of the parables ascribed to
our Lord. A bad man never can turn round and become
good. Thus Paul by his own account, even before his
conversion, still acted according to his ideal of right, and,
as he thought, to the glory of God. The prodigal son,
therefore, ought to be represented as acting under a mis-
taken notion that it was his duty to travel; that is clear.
But if we refuse to believe that it was, because it ought
to have been the Evangelist's account, and critically ex-
amine, requiring the parable to prove its own excellence,
instead of resting on its reputation, we shall find, I think,
that this truthful design, so clearly shown in the after-part
of the story, was an afterthought, irreconcilable with the
prodigal's conduct in the earlier scenes. Zealous he might
have been, but there should be no wickedness. But listen,
and judge if Luke has not made him so far overstep the
line of propriety, that there could be no consistent return.
If so, it is proved that the parable never came from the lips
of our Saviour."

Now, if Shakespeare brought about an extraordinary
result, "he also used extraordinary means; namely, the
power of love, which has worked a miracle with every
Christian.

We condemn the writer's verbal criticisms as much as
his general one. People who like grumpy poems had better
shelve Shakespeare, and take up Alexander Smith, the
Brognings, and Tennyson. And I am afraid they will be
disgusted to find that even these poets, except the first, try
to avoid showiness, and have a real sympathy with Homer
and Shakespeare and the Vedas.

If your critic has a different reason for not admiring cer-
tain passages and plays, we suggest that he publish a new
and improved edition of Shakespeare,—since he hints he
could sometimes do better than he. Those admired pas-
sages of which he "ventures to say the sapient critic" (who
is this?) "might do as well himself," should be rewritten,
and as for the "Taming of the Shrew," let that be made
over again, according to its true, masterly, central idea.
The thing has already been attempted by Dryden and others, but it has never succeeded, and we should rapturously hail a really improved Shakespeare.

We are not afraid to meet the critic's arguments, but even if we could not, they are not worth answering. It is an important lesson that must some time be learnt, that our reason must govern, sometimes curb itself. Now our business here in College is not, it is true, to stop originating, for thus we should lose the faculty, but to learn from master-spirits and originate with them, not to controvert them and originate against them. We are not yet men, and are not to arrogate the office of men. A contrary spirit is not one of progress. Thus, a young man thinks he ought to have no model, under the impression that, if he does, he never will have an ideal of his own. A chemist might as well resolve that he never would read a chemistry, in order that he might bring a fresh mind into the department.

When the writer has acquired some understanding of Shakespeare, we shall be happy to discuss the question of whether Shakespeare had a plan, of whether Mrs. Clarke understands Katharina, or of whether Shakespeare's images are commendable. At present, this is all we shall say on the subject.

THE NORMAL MAN.

P. S. (Afterthought.) After all is said, I must confess your critic's argument is plausible, and if his theory can really be established, as I must say I think it needs to be, it will shed much light on Shakespeare's mode of writing and of living. It is well known that Shakespeare founded his play upon an old comedy, called the Taming of the Shrew, published in 1594 (again in 1607, and again by Stevens in his "Six Old Plays"). This also represents the Shrew as reduced to entire subjection, so that, since this idea presented itself to Shakespeare as an afterthought,

we have come at once upon the astonishing fact that Shakespeare began to rewrite plays before he had once read them, seen them played, or knew the plot.

This will lower the authority of Shakespeare, which the writer truly represents as an unfair advantage which Shakespeare has over himself. His quasi claim rests, not, as the writer says, on his reputation, but upon his accuracy. But if he wrote plays so that an afterthought so important could occur to him, his accuracy amounts to nothing. Authority, however, is at best an unfair advantage, and it is but charitable to be a little inaccurate.

HARVARD AND HEIDELBERG.

"The Must ferments in heat and form, Before the noble Wine can come." — FAUST.

Let us compare German Student Life with our own, taking a University nearly the equal of ours in the number of students and the size of the city of which it forms quite as important a part. The exterior aspects are widely different. In the middle of the busy, crowded, little Heidelberg, stands a huge, plain, old-fashioned building. The roof is peaked, and the sides are covered with faded, rusty-colored plaster. Crowds of animated, healthy-looking young men, equipped with light canes and portfolios, and dressed in every variety of costume, from the secdiest to the most dashy, their clothes as well as their long and shaggy hair full of tobacco-smoke, hurry up and down the well-worn stone steps, or lounge under the grated windows. This building contains the various lecture-rooms and offices of the University, and the inside is as plain and old-fashioned as the exterior. Though very different in appearance, it