

Shakespeare's Medical Son-in-Law.

By MRS. CARMICHAEL STOPES.

In these days of crude theories based upon suppositions that "Shakespeare could not know" the things he treats of, it is advisable occasionally to dwell upon indisputable facts. Among these is the fact that one of the most distinguished physicians of his time, certainly the most distinguished in his county, married Shakespeare's daughter. They were probably friends long before, but we do not hear anything of Dr. John Hall before June 5th, 1607, the day on which he married the poet's elder daughter Susanna.

It is strange that there should have been a second Dr. John Hall so much resembling the Dr. John Hall of Maidstone, about whom I wrote a short paper in the issue of this journal of February 27th. Some writers have taken him to be the same, and many have thought him to be the son of the other. But dates act as a powerful check on fanciful pedigrees. Dr. John Hall, of Maidstone, died ten years before the birth of his namesake of Stratford-on-Avon, who seems to have been of Warwickshire extraction, though his family and birthplace have not yet been discovered. Neither has his name been preserved in the registers of any English college. Yet he states that he had taken his degree. We know that he had travelled much; he may, therefore, have graduated in some foreign college, such as Leyden. He becomes interesting to Shakespeareans through his relations to his illustrious son-in-law, but he is also interesting through his patients and his methods of treating them, which have come down to us. He was the owner of "a study of books," had evidently been a faithful student, was a man of high-toned moral and religious character, and must have been a refreshing and instructive companion for the poet. He, and Susanna his wife, had only one daughter, Elizabeth, born February 21st, 1608, the only grandchild Shakespeare lived to see, as his daughter Judith did not marry until the year of her father's death. Hall's name appears in the Town Records as supporting a Bill for a new highway in 1611, but we do not hear much of him until after Shakespeare's death, when he and his wife were left residuary legatees, and he proved the poet's will in London in June, 1616. He removed from his house in Old Town to New Place, the poet's residence, where apparently the poet's widow was in delicate health, requiring care during the remainder of her life. She died in 1623, just the year that the first collected edition of the poet's plays were brought out. The touching ideas of her epitaph were doubtless his wife's, put into Dr. Hall's Latin. They go far to repel the unpleasant suggestions so many writers on Shakespeare have made concerning the love of Shakespeare's youth, Anne Hathaway. "Thou, my mother, gave me life, thy breast and milk; alas! for such great bounty to me shall I give thee a stone. How much rather I would entreat the good angel to move the stone, so that thy figure might come forth, as did the body of Christ. But my prayers are unavailing. Come quickly, O Christ! My mother lies closed in the tomb, she will rise again and mount to the stars." Hall gave the church a costly new pulpit, became churchwarden, was called to take his part in municipal matters, but was too

much occupied with his professional engagements to be able to spare the time, and he offended his fellow-townsmen. He died on November 25th, 1635, and was described on his tombstone as a most distinguished physician. The epitaph states in Latin: "Here is the dust of Hall, most famed in medical art. Worthy was he to have surpassed Nestor in well-earned years, in every land, but impartial time has snatched him away," &c.

He made an oral will, and, among other things, he left "his study of books" to his son-in-law, Mr. Nash. He would have left his manuscripts to Mr. Boles, had he been present; but, as it was, he left them to his son-in-law, to burn or keep as he pleased. Shakespearean students often wonder whether Shakespeare's manuscripts were included, and whether they were burned or kept, or whether they were only Hall's own papers. Two of these latter did come to light in a strange way, and shed much light into the medical knowledge of the time, for they were the little notebooks in which Dr. Hall recorded the cases that he had cured. Because he unfortunately failed in his attendance on his illustrious father-in-law, we do not know anything of the course of Shakespeare's illness. One bit of tradition we have had concerning the cause of Shakespeare's death was that he "drank too hard at a merry meeting with Drayton and Ben Jonson." But the curious thing is that Dr. John Hall attended the poet Drayton, and cured him, at some undated time; but it might very well have been the same time, for he did not live in Stratford-on-Avon. The doctor merely notes "Mr. Drayton, an excellent Poet, labouring of a Tertian ague, was cured by an Emetic, and the treatment of syrup of Violets." The way in which the book was published is remarkable. A certain Dr. James Cooke was medical attendant to some regiments who kept the pass at the Bridge of Stratford-on-Avon at the time of the civil war, and had with him a partner, related in some way to Hall. This friend, whose name he did not give, invited Dr. Cooke to go with him and see Dr. Hall's books, which he did. Mrs. Hall showed them also the two notebooks, which she thought had been left by a travelling scholar for money. It was hardly remarkable that she did not know her husband's handwriting, for these were not in his English hand, but in small, crabbed letters, with Latin contractions and apothecaries' symbols. Cooke, however, made them out, took them to London, expanded one of them, and printed it in 1652. He gives a long and interesting introduction, from which many facts may be gleaned. He says:—"Dr. John Hall had the happiness (if I may so style it) to lead the way to that practice, almost generally used now by the most knowing, of mixing scorbutics with most remedies. It was then, and I know for some time after, thought so strange that it was cast as a reproach upon him by those most famous in the profession." The "Observations" record the symptoms, treatment and cure in each interesting case. We may notice (even in him, thought to be mild in his day) severity of treatment, complexity of ingredients, and the use of such horrors as worms and spiders! External applications were even more revolting. We only hear the stories of those who are saved, and feel inclined to echo the old question; "Where are they that he drowned?" The book commences with the significant remark, "Health is from the Lord." It gives accounts of the diseases of many of the residents in Stratford-on-Avon and its surround-

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