

03 AT SHAKESPEARE'S GRAVE

One autumn day, when hedges yet were green,
And thick-branched trees diffused a leafy-gloom,
hard by where Avon rolls its silvery tide,
I stood in silent thought by Shakspeare's tomb.

O happy church, beneath whose marble floor
His ashes lie who so enriched mankind;
The many-sided Shakspeare, rare of soul,
And dowered with an all-embracing mind.

Through the stained windows rays of sunshine fall
In softened glory on the chancel floor;
While I, a pilgrim from across the sea,
Stand with bare head in reverential awe.

Churches there are within whose gloomy vaults
Repose the bones of those that once were kings;
Their power has passed, and what remains but clay?
While in his grave our Shakspeare lives and sings.

Kings were his puppets, kingdoms but his stage, --
Faint shadows they without his plastic art, --
He waves his wand, and lo! they live again,
And in his world perform their mimic part.

Born in the purple, his imperial soul
Sits crowned and sceptered in the realms of mind.
Kingdoms may fall, and crumble to decay,
Time but confirms his empire o'er mankind.

Sources:

Boston Transcript, April 23, 1864.