

“On Posthumous Fame”, *The Round Table* n. 7 (originally *The Examiner*, 22 May 1814)

Spenser, who was a man of learning, had a high opinion of the regard due to “famous poets’ wit”; and Lord Bacon, whose vanity is as well known as his excessive adulation of that of others, asks, in a tone of proud exultation, “Have not the poems of Homer lasted five- and-twenty hundred years, and not a syllable of them is lost?” Chaucer seems to have derived his notions of fame more immediately from the reputation acquired by the Italian poets, his contemporaries, which had at that time spread itself over Europe; while the latter, who were the first to unlock the springs of ancient learning, and who slaked their thirst of knowledge at that pure fountain-head, would naturally imbibe the same feeling from its highest source. Thus, Dante has conveyed the finest image that can perhaps be conceived of the power of this principle over the human mind, when he describes the heroes and celebrated men of antiquity as ‘serene and smiling,’ though in the shades of death,

*‘Because on earth their names  
In Fame’s eternal volume shine for aye.’*

But it is not so in Shakspeare.