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THE SHAKESPEARE  
PROBLEM RESTATED



*The Earliest Presentment of the Stratford Bust.  
as it was seen by Sir William Dugdale about 1636.  
(see p. 246)*



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# THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED

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SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLL. CAMB.  
WITH A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

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## NOTICE TO THE READER

**I**N this work I have followed the convenient practice of writing "Shakespeare" where I am speaking of the author of the *Plays and Poems*, and "Shakspere" where I refer to William Shakspere of Stratford (whether he was or was not the author in question), except in quotations, where I, of course, follow the originals.

I have also employed the word "Stratfordian" as a compendious term to indicate one who holds the commonly received opinion that Shakspere and Shakespeare are identical, or as an epithet denoting such belief, as in "Stratfordian faith."

My references to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines* (sometimes cited as "H.-P.") are to the sixth edition, 1886.

My references to Mr. Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare* (sometimes cited as "S. L.") are to the Illustrated Library edition, 1899.

My references to Malone's *Shakespeare* are to the "Third Variorum" edition, by James Boswell, 1821.



## PREFACE

**I**N a letter published in *The Times* of December 20th, 1901, Mr. Sidney Lee emptied all the vials of his wrath upon the heads of the unfortunate "Baconians." He assailed them with a wealth of derisive and denunciatory epithets which was really quite startling. Their theory was characterised as "foolish craze," "morbid psychology," "madhouse chatter." They were suffering from "epidemic disease" and were "unworthy of serious attention from any but professed students of intellectual aberration," etc., etc. This language, be it observed, was addressed not only to the propounders of cryptograms and ciphers, but to all believers in the Baconian theory, in any degree and in any form. Well, it is no part of my plan or intention to defend that theory, and Mr. Sidney Lee is certainly entitled to hold, and to express, his own opinion upon it. But, as friend Sneer would say, "Why so warm, Sir Fretful?" Upon a purely literary question such a nice "derangement of epitaphs" seems quite uncalled for; more especially when we bear in mind the names of some of those who are included in this indiscriminate vilification. For instance, those of the past generation who knew Sir James Plaisted Wilde at the Bar, and on the Bench as first Baron Penzance, and who, therefore, were familiar with his high reputation, his fine intelligence, his clear and logical mind, his great power of marshalling facts, and his remarkable grasp of legal principles, would, I think, have hesitated long, unless, indeed, prompted by what the lawyers would call "actual malice," before applying such language to one of the most

distinguished of our judges. It is easy to throw mud pie at great men, but, in such cases, it is not infrequently worse for the assailant than the assailed. Again, h  
Honour Judge Webb, Regius Professor of Laws and Public Orator in the University of Dublin, and sometime Fellow of Trinity College, was a man not undistinguished either in literary, scholastic, or legal circles. Is it wise is it good taste, does it help the Shakespearean cause, to speak of such a man in terms of unmitigated contempt and to dismiss him as "unworthy of serious attention from any but professed students of intellectual aberration just because he happens to disagree with you about the authorship of the Shakespearean plays and poems? Judge Holmes, too, once Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of the State of Missouri, and Professor of Law at Harvard University, might be entitled, as one would think, to better treatment at the hands of a literary critic. And there are not a few other distinguished disciples of the Baconian faith whose names I might mention were it worth while to do so—all misguided it may be, but all, surely, entitled to some measure of courtesy at the hands even of Mr. Sidney Lee.

To Mr. Lee *proxime accessit*, in the matter of strong language, Mr. Churton Collins. Adopting, but without acknowledgment, the expression previously employed by Mr. Lee, he speaks of the Baconian theory as fit only for "the student of morbid psychology." It is a "ridiculous epidemic" with "many of the characteristics of the dancing mania of the Middle Ages." The Baconians are indiscriminately charged with "ignorance and vanity," "impudent fictions," and "prodigious ignorance of the very rudiments of the literature with which they are concerned."

<sup>1</sup> See *Studies in Shakespeare*, chap. IX, pp. 333, 334, 368, 369, and *passim*. Apparently it does not always follow that

"ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes  
Emollit mores!"

"Absurd," "palpably absurd" are the epithets which Mr. Collins is most fond of applying to those who are so unfortunate as to disagree with him, and without even that humanising *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ* which does so much to soften the asperities of unqualified assertion, and to preserve the amenities of discussion.

But the keynote of this writer's controversial style is struck in a letter which he addressed on March 6th, 1904, to Mr. Robert M. Theobald. That "far-advanced septuagenarian," as he describes himself in the course of the correspondence, having been bitterly assailed by Mr. Collins, and conceiving that he had been most unjustly treated and altogether misrepresented, writes to his assailant, offering him a presentation copy of the work which was the subject of controversy, in order that he may satisfy himself as to the injustice of which he had been guilty. Whereupon Mr. Collins declines the gift, because "this whole subject is so distasteful and repulsive to me that it would not be a kindness to send me the work!"<sup>1</sup>

Here we have, frankly stated, the explanation of that bitter tone and unreasoning violence which too often characterise the writings of our modern Stratfordian critics. It is that petulant spirit which cannot examine an argument with calmness, or discuss it with moderation of language, because "the whole subject is so distasteful and repulsive"!

In a similar spirit Professor Collins scorns to read Dr. Schröder's work on *Titus Andronicus*. "I abominate German academic monographs, and indulge myself in the luxury of avoiding them, wherever it is possible to do so, being moreover insular enough to think that, on the question of the authenticity of an Elizabethan drama, an English scholar can dispense with German lights." Whereupon Mr. J. M. Robertson comments: "The trouble is

<sup>1</sup> See *The Ethics of Criticism*, by Robert M. Theobald, M.A. (Watts and Co.), a very edifying little pamphlet.



that Professor Collins dispenses with all lights. On the one hand he dismisses the German critics as unreadable, though his special thesis may be said to have been 'made in Germany'; on the other hand the whole line of English critics who are against him are dismissed by him, without argument, as paradoxers, iconoclasts, and illegitimate practitioners."<sup>1</sup>

In view of these and other incidents of the controversy I have often thought that a close parallel might be drawn between Shakespearean and Theological disputation. On the one side we have the strictly orthodox doctors of the old Stratfordian faith; on the other the sceptics, the rationalisers, and the "higher critics." Let me hasten to add that I do not for a moment presume to say on which side the truth must be taken so far as the theological

<sup>1</sup> See *Studies in Shakespeare*, Preface, p. xii, and *Did Shakespeare Write "Titus Andronicus"?*, by J. M. Robertson (Watts and Co.), p. 241. Messrs. Sidney Lee and Churton Collins are, of course, distinguished in the realm of literature and criticism, and I trust I shall always write of them with becoming respect. They speak, it seems, with authority, and not as the scribe, and no doubt feel that they are entitled to hurl thunderbolts from their high altitudes on the heads of lowlier mortals who are so presumptuous as to disagree with them, although they not infrequently disagree as between themselves. It is not unnatural to inquire who those are who take upon themselves to chastise us with scorpions, and the historian of criticism will note of these "duo fulmina belli" that they are both men of Balliol, and, by a rather curious coincidence, both took a Second Class Degree in Modern History. Mr. Collins in 1872, and Mr. Lee, just ten years afterwards. To be strictly accurate Mr. J. C. Collins, as we learn by the Oxford Calendar of 1872 (p. 148), took his B.A. degree, in 1872, with a Second Class "In Jurisprudentia et Historia Moderna," i.e. in "Law and Modern History"; while Mr. Lee, as appears from the Calendar of 1883 (p. 54), took his B.A., in 1882, with a Second Class "In Historia Moderna," Jurisprudence having by that time been separated from Modern History. In the Calendar of 1880 he is mentioned for the first time as Minor Exhibitioner of Balliol College. For the benefit of the puzzled investigator (and such, at first, was I) it may be mentioned that he there appears under a slightly different form of appellation, and that by which he is now familiar to us, not having at that date discarded two Biblical *praenomina* in order to assume the more Saxon name of Sidney. I cannot help thinking, by the way, that Mr. Sidney Lee might be rather more tolerant of those who imagine that some great man in Elizabethan times might have seen advantages in the assumption of a pseudonym.



controversy is concerned ; still less do I assume any sort of superiority for any section of the anti-Stratfordian school by comparing them with the "higher critics" of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. On the contrary, it seemed to me that Judge Webb made an unfortunate mistake when he applied that "awe-inspiring title," as Professor Dowden calls it, to the work of those who have had the hardihood to question the generally received tenets of the Shakespearean religion.<sup>1</sup> But having thus premised, I trust I may without offence pursue the analogy a little further. The late Professor Huxley used to say that the theologians apparently considered that they had a prescriptive right to make use of strong language, and we find that the High Priests of the Stratfordian shrine are entirely disposed to emulate their example in this respect. Then, too, the theologians are, unfortunately, very much divided among themselves, and the same is true of the defenders of the Stratfordian faith. There are, for example—a matter which I have discussed at some length further on—two schools of Stratfordian belief with regard to the learning of Shakespeare. There is, first, the traditional school which places reliance upon the "ancient witnesses," such as Thomas Fuller, who has told us that "his learning was very little," and which cites Jonson to the effect that the immortal bard had "small Latin and less Greek." For these Farmer's famous essay has settled the question "for all time." Accordingly we find Canon Beeching asserting that "*every literary critic knows* that the Shaksperian plays reveal precisely that small Latin and less Greek which Jonson, who did know his classics, attributed to

<sup>1</sup> See "Shakespeare as a Man of Science," by Professor Dowden, in the *National Review* of July, 1902. At the same time we must remember that the adjective "higher," as applied to the criticism of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* and other works, "has reference simply to the higher and more difficult class of problems, with which, as opposed to textual criticism, the 'higher' criticism has to deal." See Preface to *The Higher Criticism*, by S. R. Driver, D.D., and A. F. Kirkpatrick, D.D.

Shakespeare ;”<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Andrew Lang writing to Mr. Edwin Reed, “I am indeed surprised that you should think the author of the Plays was a scholar. The reverse is patent, I think, to any one acquainted with classical literature.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand are those who, relying on “the works themselves” and all that they there find, assert with equal confidence that Shakespeare, if not indeed a “scholar” in the modern sense of that term, had, at any rate, a very extensive knowledge of the classical authors. Of the latter school the most recent and the most distinguished exponent is Mr. Churton Collins, who has written three very able and very illuminating articles in the *Fortnightly Review*, under the title “Had Shakespeare read the Greek Tragedies?”<sup>3</sup> in which he claims to have demonstrated that Shakespeare “could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French, that with some at least of the principal Latin classics he was intimately acquainted, that in the Latin original he most certainly read Plautus, Ovid, and Seneca,” and, further, “that through the Latin language he had access to the Greek classics, and that of the Greek classics in the Latin versions he had, in all probability, a remarkably extensive knowledge.” Moreover, Mr. Collins not obscurely hints that, in his opinion, Shakespeare could probably have studied the Greek authors also in their original language.

But this is but one example of the manner in which the pundits of the Stratfordian temple are at loggerheads among themselves. Upon such questions, for instance, as the authorship of *Titus Andronicus*, the trilogy of *Henry VI*, or the old plays of *The Troublesome Reign of*

<sup>1</sup> *The Guardian*, January 8th, 1902, p. 47. My italics.

<sup>2</sup> *Noteworthy Opinions, Pro and Con*, by Edwin Reed, A.M., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, April, May, and July, 1903. These articles have been since republished in Mr. Collins’s *Studies in Shakespeare*, under the title of “Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar.” I refer to them at length further on.

*King John* and *The Taming of a Shrew*, they are hopelessly at variance.<sup>1</sup> In fact, to do justice to these various and multifarious differences of opinion I should require to devote a whole volume to the subject. When, therefore, the "heretics" are assailed by the "orthodox" with such extraordinary exuberance of epithet; when they are told that they are fit subjects for "the student of morbid psychology," and bidden to seek shelter in a lunatic asylum; the words which the late Sir Leslie Stephen addressed to the theologians always come back to my mind: "Gentlemen, wait till you have some show of agreement amongst yourselves!"<sup>2</sup>

But although I had long ago been struck by this analogy between Shakespearean and Theological controversy, I had never realised its full application till I read the late Mr. Bellyse Baildon's Introduction to *Titus Andronicus* in the "Arden" Edition of Shakespeare (pp. xx, xxi). Mr. Baildon, as Mr. J. M. Robertson observes,<sup>3</sup> has a somewhat "high *priori* way" of disposing of hostile views. He sees fit to describe as "anti-Shakespeareans" those who do not think *Titus* to be Shakespeare's, brackets them with the "Baconians," and passes judgment on all together in this fashion: "I have never seen it remarked, though the fact seems obvious enough, that the scepticism with regard to Shakespeare's authorship of the works at one time universally attributed to him, is part of that general sceptical movement or wave which has landed us first in the so-called 'Higher Criticism' in matters of Re-

<sup>1</sup> Professor Courthope, for example, has recently contended, in opposition to the great preponderance of "authority," that not only was "Shakespeare" the author of *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI*, but that he also wrote *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, and further, the old plays of *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* and *The Taming of a Shrew* (*Hist. of English Poetry*, Vol. IV, Appendix). The Baconians have, of course, welcomed this contention, and so should I if I could believe it to be true, for it immensely strengthens the anti-Stratfordian case.

<sup>2</sup> *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Did Shakespeare Write "Titus Andronicus"?*, p. 6.

ligion and finally in Agnosticism itself. The Baconian and the anti-Shakespearean, whether they know it or no, are merely particular cases of critical 'Agnosticism.' . . . All so-called scepticism has always been based on a kind of conceit, and is the work of persons with whom wisdom was born. Surely the world might by this time accept Kant's great proof of the futility of Pure Reason! It is, at any rate, the use of an almost *a priori* form of reasoning which leads to the sceptical, or, if you like, 'higher critical' views on the Bible, Shakespeare, or any other subject whatever. The position of the man who declines to believe that the Stratford Shakespeare wrote the works attributed to him is precisely the same as that of Hume on 'Miracles.'"

I confess that I am mightily amused at finding my friend, Mr. J. M. Robertson, an Agnostic of Agnostics, or, rather, a Rationalist of Rationalists, but, at the same time, a quite orthodox Shakespearean—albeit he *does* deny the Shakespearean authorship of *Titus*—confronted with such a pronouncement as this. He finds himself in the unusual position of having to defend himself against a charge of heresy! *Qua Titus Andronicus* he is, at least in Mr. Baildon's eyes, on the slippery slope of Infidelity. He would be the last to combat the proposition that his position as regards "Miracles" is very much the same "as that of Hume"; yet he is called upon to vindicate his faith as an orthodox member of the Stratfordian congregation, though, in regard to *Titus*, he has to plead guilty of heresy and schism, or what Mr. Bellyse Baildon, speaking *ex cathedra* from the heights of irreproachable orthodoxy, stigmatises as such. Here is a delightful topsy-turvy kind of comedy, quite in the Gilbertian style! And Mr. Robertson is, truly, "in a parlous state." He has begun with scepticism—nay, with actual unbelief—as to *Titus*. Who shall secure him against an entire collapse of his Stratfordian faith? Let us hear him on his defence. "Doubtless Mr. Baildon's line of approach



will secure him some respectable suffrages, on the quality of which he is to be congratulated; but inasmuch as some other respectable persons are likely to be caused some painful perturbation by the hint that if they deny *Titus* to be the work of Shakespeare they will end in denying miracles with Hume, it is only humane to explain to them that Johnson and Hallam, Malone and Coleridge were really not Agnostics; while, on the other hand, Mr. W. Watkiss Lloyd,<sup>1</sup> who was very much of Mr. Baildon's opinion, incurred much suspicion of heresy by his work on *Christianity in the Catacombs*."

All this is really delightful, and we may be grateful to Mr. Bellyse Baildon for having, at any rate, added to the gaiety of some few of his readers. But here is another terrible example of internecine strife among the orthodox Shakespeareans!

I might pursue the analogy still further, and speak of the great demands made on our faith by the High Priests of the Shrine; of the spurious documents that have been put forward; of the subtlety, more ingenious than ingenuous, of certain Stratfordian harmonists; of the assumption that Player Shakspeare wrote, as it were, by "plenary inspiration." I might quote Coleridge: "What, are we to have miracles in sport?" or James Russell Lowell: "Nobody believes any longer that immediate inspiration is possible in modern times . . . and yet everybody seems to take it for granted of this one man Shakspeare." But I fear that the reader has already murmured, in the words of Hamlet, "Something too much of this"; so I now pass on to other considerations.

As I have already said, I hold no brief for the Baconians, though, like Mr. Gladstone, "I have always regarded their discussion as one perfectly serious and to be respected."

But I am quite free to admit that some of the extreme advocates of that "heresy" have done much harm by

<sup>1</sup> Author of *Critical Essays on the Plays of Shakespeare*.

putting forward wild, ridiculous, and fantastic theories. It has been truly said that the worst enemies of good causes are those who try to support them by bad arguments, and thus it is that the way of the rational doubt as to the Stratfordian authorship is blocked by quite unnecessary obstacles. He is classed with "cranks" and "fanatics," and finds himself involved, quite unjustly, in the cloud of prejudice and ridicule which attaches to ciphers that failed and cryptograms that will not bear light. But I beg the reader of "candid and open mind" to put aside all such prejudice, and to bestow upon the question the fair consideration which is due from every honest and impartial inquirer.

I will now state my own position. I have long found it impossible to believe that the Stratford Player was the author of the *Plays and Poems* of Shakespeare. The Shakespeare, whoever he was, did not write a very large portion of the thirty-six dramas which were published as his in the Folio of 1623 is now generally admitted. "It may surprise some of my hearers," said Dr. Garne in the course of a lecture to the London Shakespeare Society, "to be told that so considerable a part of the work which passes under Shakespeare's name is probably not from his hand."<sup>1</sup> The first thing to do, therefore, is to make up our minds, so far as we can, as to how much of the *Plays and Poems* published under Shakespeare's name are, in reality, Shakespeare's work. Otherwise we shall be founding arguments with regard to Shakespeare's learning, or opinions, or experiences, or other kindred matters upon plays, or parts of plays, in the writing of which Shakespeare had no part.

Now there is very good authority for saying, and I think the truth is so, that at least two of the plays published among the works of Shakespeare are not his at all; that

<sup>1</sup> Published as a Preface to *At Shakespeare's Shrine*, by Chas. F. Forster LL.D. This lecture was delivered in April, 1904.

least three others contain very little, if any, of his writing ; and that of the remainder, many contain long passages that are non-Shakespearean. But when we have submitted them all to the crucible of criticism we have a magnificent residuum of the purest gold.<sup>1</sup> Here is the true Shakespeare ; here is the great magician who, by a wave of his wand, could transmute brass into gold, or make dry bones live and move and have immortal being. Who was this great magician—this mighty dramatist who was “not of an age, but for all time”? Who was the writer of *Venus* and *Lucrece* and the *Sonnets* and *Lear* and *Hamlet*? Was it William Shakspeare of Stratford, the Player? So it is generally believed, and that hypothesis I had accepted in unquestioning faith till my love of the works naturally led me to an examination of the life of the supposed author of them. Then I found that as I read my faith melted away “into thin air.” It was not, certainly, that I had (nor have I now) any wish to disbelieve. I was, and I am, altogether willing to accept the Player as the immortal poet if only my reason would allow me to do so. Why not? There, thank Heaven, in my bookcase, are the Plays—there are *Hamlet* and *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, and *Lear*, and *Henry IV*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*, and *Cymbeline*, and the *Winter's Tale*, and the *Dream*, and the rest. They are “a joy for ever,” and among the most precious of human possessions, whoever

<sup>1</sup> I do not mean, of course, that *all* that is Shakespeare's is pure gold, still less do I mean that all that is not Shakespeare's is base metal. For example, there are few nobler lines in all the Folio than Buckingham's speech on his way to execution, *Henry VIII* (Act II, Sc. 1, 55). Yet the critics tell us that these are not Shakespeare's, but probably by Fletcher. Again, no collection of “The Beauties of Shakespeare” is complete without Wolsey's speech on his fall in the same play (Act III, Sc. 2), yet this also we are told by Spedding, Lee, and others is non-Shakespearean. A very large part of Shakespearean criticism is vitiated by the assumption tacitly made by so many critics that the whole of the First Folio, and *Pericles* as well, is the work of Shakespeare.

wrote them. But the question of authorship is, nevertheless, a most fascinating one. If it be true, as the Rev. Leonard Bacon wrote, that "The great world do not care sixpence who wrote *Hamlet*," the great world must, at the same time, be a very small world, and many of us must be content to be outside it. Having given then, the best attention I was able to give to the question, and more time, I fear, than I ought to have devoted to it, I was brought to the conclusion, as many others have been, that the man who is, truly enough, designated by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse as a "Stratford rustic" is not the true Shakespeare. I do not think (*pace* some of the pundits of literature) that this is the judgment of a fool or a fanatic. I venture to believe (*pace* Mr. L. and Mr. Collins) that I am really quite sane; nay, more, that I have even some powers of weighing evidence—powers which, I trust, have not become atrophied after more than half a century of life, and not inconsiderable professional experience. And it is just as a matter of evidence and reasonable probabilities that I have considered, and should desire the reader to consider, the question. I have then, in the following chapters, made an endeavour to set forth the evidence, and the arguments, or rather some of the evidence and arguments (for they might be extended almost *ad infinitum*), which seem to me to make in favour of the negative proposition, viz. that Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author of the *Plays and Poems*. I have endeavoured to avoid all fantastic theories, and although of course, a certain amount of hypothesis is unavoidable (Is not every Life of Shakespeare for the most part built upon hypothesis, and rather a work of imagination than of true biography?), my wish has been to depart as little as possible from the realm of fact, so far as we can ascertain it, and of legitimate argument founded thereon. I have made no attempt to deal with the positive side of

<sup>1</sup> *English Literature. An Illustrated Record*, Vol. II, pp. 199, 200.



the question. I leave it to others to say, if they can, who the great magician really was.

I will take this opportunity of dealing with an argument which has been advanced by a very distinguished Baconian scholar, and frequently (but, I think, thoughtlessly) repeated by supporters of the orthodox Stratfordian faith.

Sir Theodore Martin, in his essay *Shakespeare or Bacon?* (p. 17), quotes Mr. Spedding as having written to Judge Holmes in the following terms:—"That the author of *Pickwick* was Charles Dickens I know upon no better authority than that upon which I know that the author of *Hamlet* was a man called William Shakespeare." Now we must all have unfeigned respect for Mr. Spedding as an authority where Bacon is concerned, but if it were my desire to depreciate the value of his judgment I think I should quote the above deliverance as frequently as possible. For what is the meaning of it? It is, I presume, that Mr. Spedding knew Charles Dickens to be the author of *Pickwick* by reputation only, and that similarly he knows William Shakespeare (i.e. Shakspeare) to be the author of *Hamlet*, because that work was published under that name, and because Shakspeare is and always has been the reputed author thereof. A very little consideration is sufficient to show the worthlessness of this argument. Mr. Spedding was a contemporary of Charles Dickens, being his senior by two years only. He had seen Dickens in the flesh. I do not know if he had ever seen him writing at his works, but he might have done so. He had seen, or could have seen, if he had chosen, Dickens's manuscripts, and there would have been no difficulty in getting the handwriting identified by those who knew it. At this day there would be no difficulty whatever in getting direct evidence from living persons who knew Dickens, who knew his writings, and who could identify his manuscripts. Mr. Spedding knew that Dickens professed to be the author of *Pickwick*, and had put his name to it, and that

no suggestion was ever made that he was not the writer of it. Now, in a case of this sort, where no doubt is raised and where there is not the slightest ground for suspicion we are, of course, quite justified in accepting as true that which nobody has disputed. It would be absurd to do otherwise. It is for this reason that I unhesitatingly hold the belief that Miss Marian Evans was the author of *Adam Bede*. But if somebody were to assert the contrary to give reasons in support of the assertion, and to make something of a *prima facie* case for doubting the identity of Miss Evans with George Eliot, then we should at once be put upon investigation, and it would be futile to refuse even to consider the alleged reasons for doubt, because, up to that date, Miss Evans had always been the reputed author of the work. Nay, if Mr. Spedding's reason hold good, it holds for any work published in Shakspeare's time and under the name of Shakespeare. Then must we hold that not only are *Pericles*, and *Titus*, and *Henry VI* Part I,<sup>1</sup> by "Shakspeare," but that various other works published in the name of Shakespeare and in his lifetime and without protest on his part, were written by him also. Here, then, is a ready answer to the "Higher Critics." That the author of *Pickwick* was Charles Dickens I know upon no better authority than that upon which I know that the author of *Genesis* was a man called Moses, or the author of the fourth gospel a man called John, or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews a man called Paul of Tarsus and so forth ; which, indeed, would be an easy method of settling vexed questions without the trouble and annoyance of investigation.

To these remarks I will only add here that how far the Player William Shakspeare of Stratford was the reputed author of *Hamlet* when the quarto edition of that play

<sup>1</sup> *Pericles* was published in 1609 as "By William Shakespeare." The two other plays mentioned were, as we all know, included in the Folio of 1623.

appeared in 1603, under the name of "William Shakespeare," is a matter of very great doubt. So far as we know William Shakspeare never exercised any "acts of ownership" over, or asserted any claim to, the various works published under that modification of his name which became famous in literature, but which he himself never appears to have made use of. And just as little did he protest against, or in any way endeavour to prevent, the publication of other works which bore that name on the title-page, but which certainly were not by him.<sup>1</sup>

"There are certain traditions," writes Mr. Collins,<sup>2</sup> "which the world appears to have made up its mind to accept without inquiry. Their source or sources may be suspicious, their intrinsic improbability may be great, but no one dreams of seriously questioning them. Whatever else becomes the subject of dispute, of doubt, or of dissent, a strange superstition seems to exempt them even from debate. If here and there a note of scepticism should be struck it finds no response." Mr. Collins applies these remarks to the tradition that Shakespeare had no knowledge of Greek and Latin. I venture to apply them to the tradition that *Lear* and *Hamlet* and *Othello* were written by William Shakspeare of Stratford. They are not quite accurate as applied to either tradition, for both have been the subject of much questioning and much debate. They might, equally well, have been applied, some fifty years ago, to the Homeric question. When I was a boy we were taught to believe that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and the *Hymns* were all written by one man, "blind Melesigenes, thence Homer called." I have now my old Eton Homer, edited by the Rev. William Trollope,

<sup>1</sup> We must not forget that "Shakespeare," whoever he was, "after *The Rape of Lucrece*, so far as we can tell, published no more, neither poem nor drama" (Professor Raleigh in "Englishmen of Letters" series, p. 85). "Shakespeare," therefore, so far as we know, published two poems with dedications bearing that name upon them, and published no more.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 1.

who tells us in his Preface that "Homer must have written his two great poems before the return of the Heraclidæ." "Among the ancients," writes Mr. T. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> "none appear to have doubted that Homer was a real personage, and that he was the author of the most wonderful poems [the writer might have said "poems"] of antiquity." To the ancients he was, as Ovid styles him, the unrivalled Maeonides,

a quo, ceu fonte perenni,  
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

There did, indeed, arise about the time of the Christian era, or a little before that date, an heretical school, called *χωρίζοντες*, or "Separators," who denied that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were the productions of the same author; but modern scholars and critics had allowed that question to go to sleep till, in 1795, F. A. Wolf startled the world by his celebrated *Prolegomena*. Then arose a battle royal around "the Homeric question," and much passion was aroused, and many epithets—e.g. "fools" and "fanatics"—were scattered abroad, and it was, doubtless, said that we have just as much reason to believe Homer to have been the author of the poems traditionally ascribed to him as to believe that Virgil was the author of the *Æneid*, or Fielding the author of *Tom Jones*. But I do not think that many scholars at the present day will contend that a man called Homer wrote (or composed) both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. At any rate, one is no longer styled a fool and fanatic, or threatened with a lunatic asylum, for asserting the belief that "tradition," in this case, has been blown to the winds by modern criticism.

The question, then, is, as a matter of evidence and reasonable probability, Was Shakspeare the Player identical with Shakespeare the Poet? It seems to me that that question must, on full consideration of the whole matter, be answered in the negative, and in this work I have endeavored to show that it is so.

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Biography and Mythology*. I cite from the book of reference that lies nearest to my hand.



deavoured to state some of the reasons which, as it seems to me, make for that conclusion. I am quite aware that by many it will be thought to be time and labour wasted. The High Priests of Literature will treat it with frigid and contemptuous silence. The College of Stratfordian Cardinals will at once put it on the Index. The Grand Inquisitors—or Inquisitress!—of the Temple by Avon's sacred stream will decree that it shall be burnt (metaphorically, at any rate) by the common hangman, and "The brilliant Young Man," who has, perhaps, bestowed half an hour to the subject, and therefore understands it in every detail, will, if he should condescend to notice it at all, see in it a grand opportunity for once more convulsing the world with his side-splitting original joke about "gammon of Bacon," or his famous paradox that "There is no Learning but Ignorance." Meanwhile, from the Professors of "Morbid Psychology," those of them, at least, who are interested in homes for feeble-minded patients, I shall, no doubt, receive offers, on very reasonable terms, of board and lodging for the rest of my natural life. Yet am I sanguine enough to hope that by some open-minded and impartial readers the following chapters may be found to be not altogether devoid of interest, nor, possibly, of instruction. To such a reader, then, I venture to offer this work. "Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti," and by "honesti" I mean one who is fair and honourable, and does not allow his reason and his judgment to be obscured by prejudice—still less by petulance and ill-temper. I think he will at least admit that there is such a thing as a "Shakespeare Problem."<sup>1</sup>

G. G. G.

<sup>1</sup> As I have said above, every "Life of Shakespeare" is, for the most part, built upon hypothesis, and rather a work of imagination than of true biography. Unfortunately many Shakespearean biographers and critics, not content with giving full rein to their imagination, resort to methods which in every other case than Shakespeare's would be condemned as inconsistent with the rules of common honesty. In this connection I wish particularly to direct attention to the misleading and disingenuous manner in which Chettle's supposed reference to Shaksper is habitually miscited in flagrant violation of all the canons of honest criticism. See chapter XI. p. 307 *et seq.*



## TABLE OF DATES

- 1564. April 23rd. Supposed date of birth of William Shakspere (baptized April 26th).
- 1574. Ben Jonson born (according to Gifford. See his *Memoirs of Jonson*, edited by Col. Cunningham, p. xxii. Prof. Herford in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* gives 1572-3 as the year of Jonson's birth).
- 1582. William Shakspere (*æt.* 18) marries Anne Hathaway (subsequently to November 28th).
- 1583. May 26th. Susanna, eldest child of William and Anne Shakspere, baptized.
- 1585. The twins Hamnet and Judith born (Shakspere *æt.* 21).
- 1586. Theatres closed in London on account of the plague. Bacon (*æt.* 25) becomes Bencher of Gray's Inn.
- 1587. Shakspere perhaps came to London. (So Mr. Fleay surmises. Mr. Lee postulates 1586 as the date of this *Hegira*. It is mere guesswork.)
- 1588. Destruction of the Spanish Armada.
- 1588-93. Between these years *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are supposed to have been composed.
- 1589. Lodge publishes his *Scilla's Metamorphosis*.
- 1589-93. Civil war in France.
- 1592. Publication of Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*. Henslowe opens the Rose Theatre on Bankside, under the management of Edward Alleyn.
- 1593. Publication of *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heire of my invention." Dedication signed "William Shakespeare."

1597. "William Shakespeare."  
*The Comedy of Errors* performed at Gray's Inn.
1597. Shakspeare enters into contract to purchase New Place (completed 1602).
1598. Publication of *King Richard the Second* by "William Shake-speare," *King Richard the Third* by "William Shake-speare," and *Love's Labour's Lost* by "W. Shakspeare."
- First appearance of Shakespeare's name on title-page. Meres's *Palladis Tamia*.
1599. Publication of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, containing two "Shake-speare's Sonnets."
- Richard and Cuthbert Burbage build the Globe Theatre on Bankside.
1601. Execution of Essex.  
 Publication of Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*; or *Rosalin's Complaint*, containing *The Phoenix and Turtle* "William Shake-speare."
- Twelfth Night* performed at the Middle Temple (Manningham's *Journal*).
1603. March 24th. Death of Queen Elizabeth.  
 July. Coronation of James I.  
 Publication of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*.
1604. Publication of the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*.
1605. Gunpowder Plot.
1607. Bacon becomes Solicitor-General.
1608. Two Quarto editions of *King Lear* published.
1609. Publication of "Shake-speare's Sonnets."
- 1610-11. About this date Shakspeare retires permanently to Stratford.
1613. Bacon becomes Attorney-General.  
 The Princess Elizabeth m. the Elector Palatine.  
 Burning of the Globe Theatre.
1616. Death of William Shakspeare at Stratford.  
 Publication of Vol. I of the First Folio of Ben Jonson's works.



1618. Bacon becomes Lord Chancellor. Created Baron Verulam.  
Between September, 1618, and January 19th, 1619,  
Jonson with Drummond of Hawthornden.
1621. January. Bacon created Viscount St. Alban. His fall  
the same year.
1622. First publication of *Othello*.
1623. Publication of the First Folio.
1625. Death of James I.
1626. Death of Bacon.  
Birth of John Aubrey.
1632. Publication of the Second Folio.
1637. Death of Ben Jonson.
1640. Publication of Vol. II of the First Folio of Ben Jonson's  
works, containing *Timber or Discoveries*.  
Publication of *Sonnets* (rearranged) "By Wil. Shakespeare,  
Gent."
1664. Publication of the Third Folio.



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THE SHAKESPEARE  
PROBLEM RESTATED



# THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED

## CHAPTER I

### • SHAKSPERE OF STRATFORD

**M**R. SIDNEY LEE, in a letter published in the *Times* of January 8th, 1902, delivers himself as follows concerning the Stratford Player whom, following the literary usage, he calls William Shakespeare, but whom, for the sake of convenience, I prefer to designate as William Shakspere, as he himself appears to have written the name. "Patient investigation which has been in progress for more than two hundred years has brought together a mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare."

Now if this is to be taken to mean (and I can assign no other reasonable significance to the words) that we know more about the life of Shakspere than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him, there is an audacity about the statement which borders on the sublime. So have I heard a counsel, "without a leg to stand upon," as they say in the Law Courts, asseverate to the jury that his case has been proved up to the hilt by irrefragable evidence; a form of bluff which is usually estimated at its true value when the judge proceeds to sum up. It is

quite true that around the name of Shakespeare there have been gathered together a mass of literature, of criticism, of illustration, of theory, of allusions (real or supposed) which is perfectly appalling in its extent and variety; notwithstanding that the whole world has been ransacked for evidence, and notwithstanding that lives have been devoted to the subject and an incredible amount of labour bestowed upon it, when we come to inquire what are the actual facts which we know concerning the life of William Shakspeare, we find it as true to-day as it was when the late J. R. Green published his *History of the English People*, that "of hardly any great poet do we know so little."<sup>1</sup>

Let us take Mr. Lee's own *Life of Shakespeare*, which some look upon as an epoch-making work, and see, apart from the wealth of critical and literary and historical illustration, what biographical facts are adduced—facts resting upon evidence, and not upon theory or imagination—and we shall find that such facts are meagre and unsatisfactory in the extreme. Having done this, let us turn to the biographies of the first "contemporary poet," whose name naturally occurs to us—I mean, of course, Ben Jonson—and let us mark the contrast. We shall find that "Rab Ben" stands out as a tangible, substantial human entity. We feel that we know him, that we are in personal touch with him. There is no room for doubt, no problem, no mystery. Can the same be said about "Shakespeare"? Why, it is just *because* everything is so uncertain here *because* there is so much doubt and so much mystery.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee's flamboyant assertion does not seem to have made much impression upon Mr. C. W. Crook, B.A., B.Sc., editor of many Shakespearean plays for educational use; for in his "Life of Shakespeare" prefixed to his edition of *The Tempest* (Ralph, Holland & Co., 1906), he writes, "Of the first two years of his life in which he played his part, the most careful research has discovered but a few meagre incidents." But he consoles himself with Hamlet-Well-Phillipps's dictum: "Fortunately, of Shakespeare all came from within. I mean from his soul and genius; circumstances and the externals contributed but slightly to his development!"



that all this mountainous literature has been accumulated around him. Yes, it is certainly a very remarkable statement this, for which Mr. Lee has made himself responsible.<sup>1</sup>

But now let us see, in as short compass as may be, what is really known concerning William Shakspeare.

William Shakspeare<sup>2</sup> was born at Stratford-on-Avon on April 22nd or 23rd, 1564.<sup>3</sup> We are accustomed to think

<sup>1</sup> This was written some years before the publication of *In a Nook with a Book*, by F. W. Macdonald (1907), from which I take the following: "Ben Jonson can never be to the world what Shakespeare is, but his personality is far easier to get at. After all that has been written about Shakespeare we do not know him, and it is pretty certain we never shall. What Matthew Arnold wrote of him is true.

'Others abide our question. Thou art free.  
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still  
Out-topping knowledge. . . .  
Thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,  
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honoured, self-secure,  
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so.'

It will scarcely be believed, but it is, nevertheless, the fact, and a highly characteristic one, that Mr. Lee writes (*Shakespeare and the Modern Stage*, p. 29)— "Others abide our *judgment* (*sic*!). Thou art free,"

telling us that this "is the first line of Arnold's *well-known* sonnet"! One is reminded of Byron's "just enough of learning to misquote."

Mr. Macdonald proceeds: "Other men you may arrive at through their writings, but not Shakespeare. As Coleridge says: 'His poetry is characterless, that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare, while John Milton himself is in every line of *Paradise Lost*.' This thought will bear further illustration. Read Dryden, or Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Tennyson, and you may say you know them. Read Shakespeare all your life and you cannot say that. You may know Hamlet, Lear, Iago, and a hundred men and women of his making, but he himself, though 'we ask and ask,' is 'free . . . out-topping knowledge.' 'How well we seem to know Chaucer,' says Coleridge again. 'How absolutely nothing do we know of Shakespeare!' But Ben Jonson 'abides our question.' None of the Elizabethans do we know better, few so well." As to Arnold's "self-school'd" I shall have a word to say later on.

<sup>2</sup> As to the name see note at end of this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Henry Davey writes: "William [Shakspeare] is conventionally said to have been born in Henley Street, and on April 23rd, 1564. There is no proof of either assertion. The 'Birthplace' was not bought by the Shakespeares till 1575." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 266.)

of Stratford as a delightful haunt of rural peace, "more nurse for a poetic child"; and fancy pictures have been drawn of a dreamy romantic boy wandering by the pellucid stream of the Avon, and communing with nature in "a populous solitude of bees and birds." Far different was the real historical Stratford. A dirty squalid place was the Mecca of Shakespearean pilgrims in the sixteenth century. "At this period," writes Mr. Halliwell-Phillips (the most industrious and not the least trustworthy of the many biographers of the Player and reputed Poet), "and for many generations afterwards, the sanitary condition of the thoroughfares of Stratford-on-Avon was, to our present notions, simply terrible." The "general humidity intensified the evils arising from the want of scavengers or other effective appliances for the preservation of cleanliness. House-slops were recklessly thrown into ill-kept channels that lined the sides of unmetalled roads; pigs and geese too often revelled in the puddles and runnels while here and there small middens were ever in the course of accumulation, the receptacles of offal and every species of nastiness. A regulation for the removal of these collections to certain specified localities interspersed through the borough, and known as common dung-hills, appears to have been the extent of the interference that the authorities ventured or cared to exercise in such matters. Sometimes, when the nuisance was thought to be sufficiently flagrant, they made a raid on the inhabitants who had suffered their refuse to accumulate largely in the highways. On one of these occasions, in April, 1552, John Shakespeare (the father of William) was amerced in the sum of twelve pence for having amassed what was no doubt a conspicuous *sterquinarium* [Anglo-Saxon muck-heap] before his house in Henley Street, and under these unsavoury circumstances does the history of the poet's father commence in the records of England. Even although there was little excuse for his negligence, or

of the public stores of filth being within a stone's throw of his residence, all that can be said to his disparagement is that he was not in advance of his neighbours in such matters, two of whom were coincidentally fined for the same offence."

Such was Stratford at that time, and such it long remained ; for Garrick, more than two hundred years later, described it as "the most dirty, unseemly, ill-paved, wretched-looking town in all Britain."

The inhabitants of this rural Paradise appear to have been as illiterate as they were dirty, though in neither respect need they be considered exceptional, for in the time of Shakspeare, as Dr. Johnson has told us, "to be able to read and write, outside of professed scholars, or men and women of high rank, was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity." I take the following quotation from Malone's *Prolegomena* (ed. 1821 by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 97):<sup>1</sup> "About the time of our poet's birth the majority of the Corporation of Stratford appear to have been entitled to the eulogy bestowed by Jack Cade upon those who 'do not use to write their names, but have a mark of their own, like honest plain-dealing men'; for out of nineteen persons who signed a paper relative to one of their body who had been elected bailiff, ten of whom were aldermen, and the rest burgesses, seven only<sup>2</sup> could write their names; and among the twelve marksmen is found John Shakspeare."

Here we are brought to the first point of controversy. Until Mr. Lee published his *Life* it was accepted history that neither the father nor the mother of William Shakspeare could read or write. "Both his parents," says Mr. Phillipps, "were absolutely illiterate." Charles Knight, indeed, in 1843, made a gallant attempt to prove that

<sup>1</sup> This is "Boswell's Malone," commonly known as "The Third Variorum."

<sup>2</sup> It seems that, really, six only of the nineteen could write their names.

the mark prefixed to John Shakspere's name in the document referred to was not in truth his mark, but that another signatory; but in a later edition he was constrained to give up the contention. "We were reluctant," he writes, "to yield our consent to Malone's assertion that Shakespeare's father had a mark to himself. The marks are not distinctly affixed to each name in this document. But subsequent discoveries establish the fact that he used two marks, one something like an open pair of compasses, the other the common cross."

Mr. Lee, however, professes to have made the discovery that Malone, Knight, Halliwell-Phillipps, and all the other critics and biographers were in the wrong. In the preface to the Illustrated Edition of his *Life of Shakespeare* (p. x) he writes as follows: "An unjustifiable scepticism has occasionally manifested itself respecting the identity of Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspere] the native of Stratford-on-Avon with Shakespeare the writer of plays. The sceptics base their destructive criticism on few grounds that merit respect. The only position with the smallest pretensions to consideration which they have hitherto held rests on the assumption that Shakespeare's father and near kinsmen and kinswomen were illiterate and brainless peasants."

With such thoughts in his mind Mr. Lee appears to have gone to Stratford to make a re-examination of the records, and there he professes to have discovered what he must have so ardently desired to discover, and what he had escaped the acute and practised eyes of Malone, Phillipps, and all others. So, he continues, "Good ground is here offered for the belief that the poet's father wielded the practised pen." And again (at p. 4 of the *Life*), "*What attesting documents* [my italics] he occasionally made use of

<sup>1</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps made an especial study of the documents connected with John Shakspere. See *Outlines*, II, 215-248, and his *Extracts from the Council Books*.



mark, but there is evidence in the Stratford archives that he could write with facility."

Now let us examine this very remarkable statement a little further. There are several other "mark-signatures" of John Shakspeare in existence. Thus at page 40 of H.-Phillipps's *Outlines* (Vol. I) we have facsimiles of the mark-signatures used by Shakspeare's parents in 1579, when they executed a deed conveying their interests in two houses in Snitterfield to one Robert Webb. Again, at page 13 of Vol. II we have a facsimile of John Shakspeare's mark-signature to a deed of conveyance of a slip of land to one George Badger in the year 1596-7. It is thus indisputable that John Shakspeare used a mark, not only "when attesting documents," but also when executing deeds. If, then, we are to credit Mr. Lee, we have this very remarkable fact, viz., that one who "could write with facility" nevertheless deliberately chose to appear as a marksman when executing a deed, the most solemn of all documents; that, too, in an age when to be able to write one's name was something to be proud of, at any rate in the class to which the Shakspeare family belonged. And what says Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps on the point? "There is no reasonable pretence for assuming that in the time of John Shakespeare, whatever might have been the case at earlier periods, it was the practice for marks to be used by those who were capable of signing their names. No instance of the kind has been discovered amongst the numerous records of his era that are preserved at Stratford-on-Avon, while even a few rare examples in other districts, if such are to be found, would be insufficient to countenance a theory that he was able to write. All the known evidences point in the opposite direction, and it should be observed that in common with many other of his illiterate contemporaries he did not always adhere to the same kind of symbol, at one time contenting himself with a rudely-shaped cross, and at another delineating a fairly good

representation of a pair of dividers, an instrument that is used in several trades for making circles, or setting off equal lengths in leather and other materials. Joan Lambert, the poet's aunt, and Edmund, her husband, used respectively, at least three and four differently formed marks, and the 'sign-manual' that George Whateley, bailiff of Stratford, penned in September, 1564, is very different from one that he adopted in 1579." (H.-P., Vol. II, p. 369 where an engraving is given of George Whateley's 1579 signature.)

Facsimiles of the signatures of the nineteen aldermen and burgesses of Stratford referred to by Malone are given in Mr. Phillipps's *Outlines* (Vol. I, p. 38), and in many other books on the "Shakespeare" question. It is to be noticed that in the second column the name "John" occurs five times, one being the baptismal name of John Shakspeare. All these Johns are "marksmen," and, judging from the facsimile, I should say that, in all the five cases, the name "John" was written by the same hand.<sup>1</sup>

I do not know if it will be contended that all the worthy burgesses (thirteen in number) who appear as "marksmen" in this interesting document (which was inspected by Malone and is referred to by him as the order of September 27th, 1564) could "write with facility" and were "marksmen" from choice only!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A learned Canon, who has himself the reputation of being a Shakespearean expert, writes to me: "The documents *signed* and *marked* [my italics] by John Shakespeare are in the Stratford Registry. Mr. Lee made an examination of them and convinced himself that some of the signatures were those of John Shakespeare himself." On this hypothesis John Shakspeare, though he could sign his own name, did not always do so, and, when he did, preferred to make his mark as well! If this is, really, all the "evidence" in the Stratford archives that he could write with facility," I venture to say it is not worth much consideration.

<sup>2</sup> We also learn from Malone that "on the 29th of January 1588-9 of 27 persons who signed a paper in the council-chamber of Stratford, 14 make their marks, and among the marksmen are found Mr. William Wilson the high-bailiff and four of the Aldermen." (See Malone's *Shakespeare*, edited by James Boswell (1821), Vol. II, pp. 97-8).



But however that may be, we are now asked to believe that John Shakspeare "wielded a practised pen" simply on the authority of Mr. Lee's statement that there is "evidence in the Stratford archives to that effect." I fancy, however, that "the sceptics" whom Mr. Lee is anxious to confute will adhere to the testimony of Malone and Knight and Halliwell-Phillipps, supported as it is by the evidence of their own eyes, until very clear proof is brought forward in support of this novel contention. "When attesting documents he *occasionally* made his mark," says Mr. Lee. This implies that *generally* he did not make his mark, or at least that there were occasions when he did not do so. Let us see, then, in original or facsimile, at least one authentic document undoubtedly "attested" by John Shakspeare with his autograph signature. Until this is produced the "sceptics" may well be content *stare super antiquas vias*. Meantime it may, perhaps, be well to bear in mind Mr. Phillipps's remark that the Shaksperes were formerly exceedingly numerous in Warwickshire, and "thus it has happened that more than one John Shakspeare has been erroneously identified with the father of the great dramatist."<sup>1</sup>

I have lingered some time over this point, because Mr. Lee brings forward his alleged discovery as a new and most important fact. It is indeed, so far as I know, the only new (alleged) fact adduced by him bearing on the personal life of Shakspeare. But it seems that here, too, as

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, in their *Illustrated English Literature*, are discreetly (or shall we say *politely*?) silent about John Shakspeare's facility of penmanship. John Shakspeare died in 1601. He left no will. Apparently he felt no temptation to demonstrate his facility of writing in testamentary dispositions! Mr. A. R. D. Anders writes: "Shakespeare's parents could not have taught him writing, as they could not even sign their names. To think of a modern mayor who could not write his name!" (*Shakespeare's Books*, p. 10, note 2.) As Mr. Anders's work, which has been highly commended by Dr. Garnett, was published in 1904, he does not seem to have been impressed by Mr. Lee's assertion!

so often, what is "new" is not "true." We may, therefore, now return to the point from which we started. William Shakspeare was born in the squalid surroundings of Stratford-on-Avon of "absolutely illiterate parents" and while on this part of the subject it may be well mention that he allowed his daughter Judith to grow in similar ignorance. He, the great poet and philosopher, the "myriad-minded man," who "was not of an age for all time," the wonder of all ages, he who wrote "there is no darkness but ignorance," did not even take the trouble to have his daughter taught to write her name. Here, at the outset, is surely food for reflection and much marvelling.

As to the worthy "marksman," John Shakspeare, we are told by Mr. Lee that he "set up as a trader in all manner of agricultural produce. Corn, wool, malt, meat, skins, and leather, were among the commodities in which he dealt. Documents of a somewhat later date often describe him as a glover. Aubrey, Shakespeare's first biographer, reported the tradition that he was a butcher." In the year 1557 he married Mary Arden, daughter of a wealthy farmer of Wilmecote, near Stratford. Of this lady, the mother of the reputed poet, Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps writes as follows: "There can be no doubt that the maiden with the pretentious name, she who has been so often represented as a nymph of the forest, communing with nothing less æsthetic than a nightingale or a waterfall, spent most of her time in the homeliest of rustic employments, and it is not at all improbable that, in common with many other farmer's daughters of the period, she occasionally assisted in the more robust occupations of the field." And thus as to the manner of living of the class to which Shakspeare's parents belonged. "Existence was passed in her father's house in some respects, we should now say, rather after the manner of pigs than of that of human beings. Many of the articles that are considered necessities in the humblest of modes

cottages were not to be seen—there were no table knives, no forks, no crockery. . . the means of ablution were lamentably defective, if, indeed, they were not limited to what could have been supplied by an insulated pail of water, for what were called towels were merely used for wiping the hands after a meal, and there was not a single wash-hand basin in the establishment. As for the inmate and other labourers it was seldom indeed, if ever, that they either washed their hands or combed their hair, nor is there the least reason for suspecting that those accomplishments were in liberal requisition in the dwellings of their employers.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lee has not contended that Mary Arden, though a “markswoman,” could “write with facility.” He is, perforce, content to write, “although she was well provided with worldly goods, she was apparently without education, several extant documents bear her mark, and there is no proof that she could sign her name.”

With such parents and amid such surroundings, what sort of education are we justified in assuming for the young William Shakspeare? Well, there was a Free Grammar School at Stratford, and undoubtedly the boy may have been sent there. Tradition says that he went there, and we may, perhaps, be content to follow tradition in this matter. But beyond tradition there is no evidence of the fact. There are no school records showing the name of William Shakspeare, or Shakespeare, or Shaxper, or Shaky-sper (there were very many varieties of spelling) as that of one of the free scholars; there is no contemporary letter or document of any sort referring to the boy’s attendance at the school, notwithstanding the “mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare”! Here, again, what a contrast to the case of Ben Jonson, whom we can follow first to his preparatory school at St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields, and thence to Westminster, “that noble nursery of

<sup>1</sup> H.-P., Vol. I, p. 28.

English youth," as John Addington Symonds so justly styled it !

Camden ! Most reverend head, to whom I owe  
All that I am in arts, all that I know.

So wrote Ben Jonson of the great antiquary who was during his time Second Master, and subsequently Head Master, of Westminster School, where he absorbed, as Mr. Symonds says, "all the new learning of the Greeks and Romans which England had derived from Italian humanism." But to the master of Stratford Free School who instructed the mighty dramatist, the poet of all time, the "myriad-minded man" (if such indeed were William Shakspeare, of Stratford), there is no tribute paid by his supposed scholar either in prose or in verse. Of this as of all other personal matters connected with the life of "Shakespeare," there is a silence that can be felt.

Assuming, however, that Shakspeare was sent to the Free School, at what age did he go there? This, in the absence of all evidence, is entirely a matter of guesswork. It is usually assumed that he entered the school at the age of seven. To place him at school as early as possible is obviously, of some importance, since, as we shall presently see, all tradition agrees that he was removed from school at the age of thirteen. Five or six years schooling, then, is the utmost that can be allowed for him, and, so far as we know, he may not have entered the school (if, indeed, he did enter it) till his ninth or tenth year. A contemporary poet, Joshua Sylvester (1563-1618. Shakspeare *b.* 1562 *d.* 1616), who was also taken from school at the age of thirteen, entered the renowned school at Southampton in his ninth year.

Let us see, however, what our biographers tell us of Shakspeare's going to school. Mr. Halliwell-Phillips writes: "Although both his parents were absolutely



illiterate, they had the sagacity to appreciate the importance of an education for their son, and the poet, somehow or other, was taught to read and write, the necessary preliminaries to admission into the Free School.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee, however, says nothing of the ability to read and write as the condition precedent to entry at the Free School. He assumes that the boy was taught to write at the school. “Happily,” he says, “John Shakespeare was at no expense for the education of his four sons. They were entitled to free tuition at the Grammar School of Stratford, which was reconstituted on a mediæval foundation by Edward VI. The eldest son, William, probably entered the school in 1571, when Walter Roche was master, and perhaps he knew something of Thomas Hunt, who succeeded Roche in 1577.”<sup>2</sup> As was customary in provincial schools, he was taught to write the ‘Old English’ character, which resembles that still in vogue in Germany. He was never taught the Italian script, which at the time was rapidly winning its way in fashionable cultured society and is now universal among Englishmen. Until his death Shakespeare’s ‘Old English’ handwriting testified to his provincial education.”

On this it may be observed (1) that no evidence can be given to support the adverb “probably” (“*probably* entered the school in 1571”), but we are told that it was usual, or at any rate not unusual, for boys at that time to enter a Grammar School at the early age of seven;<sup>3</sup> (2) it is assumed that Shakspeare might have entered the school

<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. F. Leach says the same. To the Grammar School, he tells us, “boys were not admitted until they had learnt their accidence.” They learnt to write in the Song School, or Writing School. *English Schools at the Reformation*, p. 105. Query—who taught the boy Shakspeare to write?

<sup>2</sup> These dates appear to be erroneous. See note at p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps writes: “Although there is no certain information on the subject it may perhaps be assumed that at this time boys usually entered the Free School at the age of seven, according to the custom followed at a later period.”

without being able to write, and (3) that he was taught the school to write in the "Old English," i.e. German fashion.

That he did write in this old-fashioned style is more painfully apparent when we examine the hopeless scrawl that do duty for his signatures, so different from Ben Jonson's clear and excellent "Italian" handwriting, or the equally admirable writing, in the same style, of Joshua Sylvester, as presented to us in Mr. Grosart's edition of his works (Vol. I, p. 16). It is, indeed, hardly possible to conceive that the *Poems* and *Plays* were written in William Shakspeare's illegible illiterate scrawl.<sup>1</sup>

But here I have to consider a brand new theory as to Shakspeare's handwriting. I had fondly thought that the limits of preposterous assumption had been long since reached by the Stratfordians, but it has been left to the "incomparable paire of brethren" Messrs. Garnett and Gosse to supply the *ne plus ultra*. "A word may be added," write these great men of literature, "respecting Shakespeare's handwriting, which has been made an argument against his authorship of the works ascribed to him. All the undoubted autographs of Shakespeare appear on legal documents and are written in the hand *appropriate to business matters*. This affords no proof that he could not write the Italian script if he thought fit." This is delightfully characteristic of the methods of modern Shakspearean criticism!

According to Mr. Lee, John Shakspeare, although he "could write with facility," yet deliberately preferred to appear as a marksman when executing or witnessing "legal documents." The "sign of the cross" appeared to him most "appropriate to business matters." *Now* w

<sup>1</sup> We have it on Mr. Lee's authority that Shakspeare wrote illegibly. See *infra*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> *English Literature: An Illustrated Record*, Vol. II, p. 195.



have the theory started that one who could write the Italian script "with facility" considered the "Old English" handwriting to be the hand appropriate to such matters. Here I should like to put one or two interrogatories to Messrs. Garnett<sup>1</sup> and Gosse such as the following: Can they supply us with another example of a man *temp.* Elizabeth or James I who could write Italian script "with facility," and who habitually made use of it for his ordinary correspondence, but who, nevertheless, preferred, or thought it incumbent on him, to sign his name to a conveyance, or, more especially, to his *will*, in old English characters?<sup>2</sup> And can they tell us why the old English should be more "appropriate to business matters" than the Italian hand? Mr. Lee, I may remark, tells us just the contrary. He says that those who wrote *both* hands used the "Italian" when they signed their names. "In Shakespeare's day *highly educated men who were graduates of the Universities and had travelled abroad in youth* [my italics] were capable of writing both the old 'English' and the 'Italian' character with equal facility. As a rule they employed the 'English' character in their ordinary correspondence, but *signed their names in the 'Italian' hand.* Shakespeare's use of the 'English' script exclusively was doubtless a result of his provincial education. He learnt only the 'English' character at school at Stratford-on-Avon, and he never troubled to exchange it

<sup>1</sup> This was written before Dr. Garnett's lamented death.

<sup>2</sup> I am informed by those who have studied the records of the period that no such example can be produced. It is, *primâ facie*, extremely improbable that any such practice should have existed. Shakspeare, we may be sure, could not have said with Malvolio, "I think we do know the sweet Roman hand"! (*Twelfth Night*, III, iv, 30.) Here I cannot forbear to mention that Mr. Robert Bridges, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare* (Vol. X, p. 334), has been guilty of a criticism on Malvolio's remark when he picks up Maria's letter (II, v, 95), which, I fear, has caused the profane to laugh consumedly, though in truth they ought to envy the critic who has succeeded in keeping himself so unspotted from the world. But the answer to Sir Andrew's question must be sought in Messrs. Farmer and Henley's Slang Dictionary.

for the more fashionable Italian character in later life (p. 231).

Three of the five Shakespearean autographs which have come down to us are signatures to his will. Now it is a great mistake to suppose that in Shakspeare's time a will was a "legal document" for the signature of which solemn formalities were required. So far was this from being the case that a will in those days was not even required to be signed at all. A will of personalty might even have been verbal (or nuncupative as it was called) if made by a testator *in extremis* before witnesses and afterwards reduced to writing.<sup>1</sup> For written wills of personalty no witnesses were required, and if the will was written in the testator's hand, though neither signed nor sealed, and though there were no witnesses present, it was good on proof of the handwriting. Even if the will were in another man's hand and not signed by the testator, it was good on proof that the writing was according to the testator's instructions and approved by him. As to wills of lands they were required, by 32 Henry VIII, c. 1, and 34 Henry VIII, c. 1, to be in writing, but it was sufficient if the will was put in writing by the testator, or another with his privity and direction, without any other execution. So, too, if notes or instructions were taken by the testator for his will, and it was reduced into form pursuant to such instructions during the life of the testator, though it was never read or shown to him, it was sufficient. No particular form was required for a will. Thus notes or memoranda written from the testator's mouth by a physician or scrivener were good afterwards executed.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that it was not really necessary that Shakspeare's will should have been signed at all. Why it should have been signed in the Old English

<sup>1</sup> Such a will was made by John Hall, Shakspeare's son-in-law. (See Hall's Will, II, 61.)

<sup>2</sup> See among many authorities, Comyn's Digest, *Estates by Devise*, E.

hand instead of the Italian, if Shakspeare was really in the habit of using the Italian script, I am at a loss to conceive.<sup>1</sup>

Those who deny the Stratfordian authorship are frequently charged with fanaticism. What is fanaticism? It is the madness which seizes upon the worshipper at the shrine. Such it appears to me is the mental aberration of those Shakespearialaters who shrink from no hypothesis, however preposterous, in order to maintain the worship of their idol. The old gospel harmonists must really look to their laurels. They are being beaten, in their own line, by the Stratfordian apologists of to-day.

And, now that we are upon this part of the subject, let us here stop to ponder on a fact that may well give us pause. There is not a letter, not a note, not a scrap of writing from the pen of Shakspeare which has come down to us, except five signatures—two to deeds and three to his will.<sup>2</sup> All these five signatures appear to differ. Almost illegible as they must have been when written, except to expert decipherers of hieroglyphics, they are doubly so now on account of the fading of the ink. Modern biographers, therefore, reading through the spectacles of their own prepossessions, have made valiant attempts to read the name "Shakespeare"—the literary name—in one or two instances. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that the earlier and less prejudiced critics, who had no particular theory to support or combat in this matter, were correct in reading "Shakspeare." I do not wish to delay over this question

<sup>1</sup> The words "by me" in Shakspeare's third will signature, of which Mr. Lee gives a facsimile, are, as we are told, also in the testator's handwriting. If he had habitually used the "Italian script" why should he not have employed it here? (See Lee's *Life*, p. 233.)

<sup>2</sup> See as to this p. 52. I would point out here that the negative evidence against the Stratfordian authorship is cumulative. It must be judged as a whole. A very small strain is sufficient to break one horse-hair, but a large number of horse-hairs combined together to form a rope will support a very heavy weight.

here, so I need, perhaps, only make appeal to Mr. Spedding, whom orthodox Shakespearians cite as infallible when it suits their purpose to do so. In no known case writes Mr. Spedding, did the reputed poet ever write his name as "Shakespeare."<sup>1</sup> "The name of Shakespeare spelt [viz. in the MS. referred to] in every case as it was always printed in those days, and not as he himself in any known case ever wrote it." I will add, however, the testimony of Malone, perhaps the acutest of Shakespearean critics, who had the advantage of inspecting the signatures when they were much less faded than they are now. "In the signature of his name subscribed to his Will certainly the letter *a* is not to be found in the second syllable." Further, "I suspect that what was formerly supposed to be the letter *a* over his autograph was only a coarse and broad mark of a contraction."<sup>2</sup>

Let us now return to Shakspeare's assumed education at the Stratford Free School. Whether he went there at the age of seven, or at a later age, it is at least agreed on all hands that he was removed at the age of thirteen, if not earlier. Let us first turn to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps. "The defective classical education of the poet is not, however, to be attributed to the conductors of the local seminary, for enough of Latin was taught to enable the most advanced pupils to display familiar correspondence in that language. It was really owing to his being removed from school long before the usual age, his father requiring his assistance in one of the branches of the Henley Street business. . . . John Shakespeare's circumstances had begun to decline in the year 1577, and, in all probability, removed the future dramatist from school when the latter was about thirteen, allowing Gilbert, then between ten and eleven, to continue his studies." To the same effect writes Mr. Lee. "His father's financial difficulties grew steadily

<sup>1</sup> See Spedding's preface to *A Conference of Pleasure*.

<sup>2</sup> As to the spelling of the name see note at end of this chapter.



and they caused his removal from school at an unusually early age. Probably in 1577, when he was thirteen, he was enlisted by his father in an effort to restore his decaying fortunes."<sup>1</sup> Aubrey, who at Shakspeare's death was ten years old, wrote: "His father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he killed a calf he would do it in high style, and make a speech." "It is possible," comments Mr. Lee, "that John's ill luck at the period compelled him to confine himself to this occupation, which in happier days formed only one branch of his industry." "All that can prudently be said," writes Mr. H.-Phillipps, "is that the inclination of the testimonies leans towards the belief that John Shakspeare, following the ordinary usage of the tradesmen of the locality in binding their children to special occupations, eventually apprenticed his eldest son to a butcher. That appellation was sometimes given to persons who, without keeping meat shops, killed cattle and pigs for others, and as there is no telling how many adjuncts the worthy glover had to his legitimate business, it is very possible that the lad may have served his articles under his own father. . . . It is scarcely possible that he (Aubrey) would have given the story about the calf if he had not been told that the poet himself had followed the occupation." Moreover we have the testimony of one Dowdall who visited Stratford in 1693. "The clarke that showd me this church is above eighty years old, he says that Shake-

<sup>1</sup> "What cannot be doubted," writes Professor Dowden, "is that his father had passed from wealth to comparative poverty. In 1578 he effected a large mortgage on the estate of Asbies; when he tendered payment in the following year it was refused until other sums due had been repaid; the money designed for the redemption of Asbies had been obtained by the sale of his wife's reversionary interest in the Snitterfield property. His taxes were lightened, nor was he always able to pay those which were still claimed . . . he fell into debt and was tormented with legal proceedings." In 1586 a distress was issued against his goods, but none were found. Later he was reported as one of those "who come not to church for fear of debt."

peare was formerly in this towne bound apprentice to butcher, but that he ran from his master to London and there was received into the playhouse as a serviture, and by this meanes had an opportunity to be what he afterward prov'd." Finally the story is accepted as true by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, who find that "the Stratford tradition preserved by Aubrey that Shakespeare assisted his father in this business (of a butcher) is confirmed by minute detail. 'When he killed a calf,' says Aubrey. 'The lad would not yet be old enough to slaughter an ox, but would be fully up to a calf'!" After this brilliant bit of criticism who can possibly doubt the veracity of the calf-killing tradition?<sup>1</sup>

Assuming, then, in accordance with tradition, that William Shakspeare was sent to the Free School, it appears that he could only have enjoyed such advantages as it might be supposed to have provided for a period of five or six years at the outside. He was then withdrawn and, as it seems, put to calf-slaughtering. How otherwise he occupied himself between that time and his marriage at the age of eighteen we have not the remotest idea. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps appears to think it extremely fortunate that no more school education was provided for him. "Although the information at present accessible does not enable us to determine the exact natures of Shakespeare's occupations from his fourteenth to his eighteenth years, that is to say, from 1577 to 1582, there can be no hesitation in concluding that during that animated and receptive period of life he was mercifully released from what, to a spirit like his, must have been the deleterious monotony of a school education. *Whether he passed those years as a butcher or a wool-dealer does not greatly matter.*"

<sup>1</sup> "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there." We should be told that this is, "doubtless," a reminiscence of the poet's early days. (Since this note was in print I find that Mr. Henry Davey finds reminiscences of Shakspeare's "slaughter-house experiences" in *Lucrece*, stanza 250. See the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 277.)



am tempted to add here the note of admiration which Mr. Phillipps has omitted, but it is sufficient to say that here again there is abundant food for marvel and meditation.

I have hitherto said nothing of what Shakspeare may be supposed to have learnt during those five or six supposed years at the Free School in the little squalid town of Stratford. But this is such an important matter that I must reserve its consideration for the next chapter. Meantime we may briefly continue the narrative of his life at Stratford so far as we can collect it from the extremely meagre records that have come down to us.

It appears that there was in Shottery (a hamlet in the parish of Old Stratford) a "husbandman" of the name of Richard Hathaway, who died in 1582 (his will was proved July 9th, 1582) possessed of house and land "two and a half virgates," and who by his will left, *inter alia*, the sum of £6 13s. 4d. (representing probably about £50 of our money at the present day) to his eldest daughter Agnes, "to be paid at the day of her marriage." Agnes and Anne, we are told, were in the sixteenth century alternative spellings of the same Christian name, and, says Mr. Lee, "there is little doubt that the daughter 'Agnes' of Richard Hathaway's will became, within a few months of Richard Hathaway's death, Shakespeare's [i.e. Shakspeare's] wife." The bridegroom was little more than eighteen and a half years old; the bride was his senior by eight years. There was, it appears, good cause for hastening the marriage ceremony, for within six months a daughter was born, who, on May 26th, 1583, was baptized at Stratford Parish Church in the name of Susanna.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee's *Life* may be consulted on the subject of Shakspeare's marriage. It is a curious fact that according to an entry in the Bishop of Worcester's registry a licence was issued on November 27th (the day before the signing of what is known as "the bond against impediments," executed to guarantee the Bishop against all liability should a lawful impediment to Shakspeare's hurried marriage be subsequently disclosed) authorising the marriage of William Shakespeare with one Anne Whateley, of Temple Grafton, so

"Anne Hathaway's greater burden of years," writes Mr. Lee, "and the likelihood that the poet was forced into marrying her by her friends, were not circumstances of happy augury. To both these unpromising features was added, in the poet's case, the absence of a means of livelihood, and his course of life in the years that immediately followed implies that he bore his domestic ties with impatience. Early in 1585 twins were born to him, a son (Hamnet) and a daughter (Judith); both were baptized on February 2nd. All the evidence points to the conclusion (which the fact that he had no more children confirms) that in the later months of the year (1585) he left Stratford and that, although he was never wholly estranged from his family, he saw little of wife or children for eleven years."

Whether, then, it was his wife's age or her temper or her too opulent fecundity which drove Shakspeare from his native town it is impossible to say. Another reason has been found in his alleged prosecution by Sir Thomas Lucy for killing deer in his park. That old poaching story is accepted by Mr. Lee as "a credible tradition" and is thus related by Nicholas Rowe, the first who attempted to write a Life of "Shakespeare."

that, if this be another William Shakespeare, it seems that two persons of the name were on two successive days not only arranging with the Bishop's officials to marry, but also engaged, as Mr. Lee says, "in more elaborate and expensive forms of procedure than were habitual to the humble ranks of contemporary society." He adds, however, that "the Worcester diocese was honeycombed with Shakespeares of all degrees of gentility," and concludes that the husband of Anne Whateley was "another of the numerous William Shakespeares who abounded in the diocese." A curious coincidence this. Mr. G. C. Bompas, after noting the fact that "to hurry on his marriage with Anne Hathaway, two friends of her father (who had lately died) took the unusual step of giving a bond in the Worcester registry on the 28th November 1582, which enabled the marriage to take place immediately, with only one publication of banns," writes as to Anne Whateley's licence, "the coincidence of time, and the sudden and unusual pressing on of Anne Hathaway's marriage, leave little room for doubt that, but for her friends' interference, Shakespeare would have deserted Anne Hathaway and married another woman; nor does this disagree with his after conduct to his wife."—*The Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 10.

"He had by a misfortune common enough to young fellows fallen into ill company, and, among them, some, that made a frequent practice of deer stealing, engaged him with them more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought somewhat too severely, and in order to avenge that ill-usage he made a ballad upon him, and though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire and shelter himself in London."

Whether this story be true or false seems to me to be a matter of much indifference. It has found favour with the Stratfordians because, by assuming that Shakspeare subsequently turned Sir Thomas Lucy into Mr. Justice Shallow, they get that great *desideratum* a supposed connection between Player Shakspeare and the author of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Slender, it will be remembered, says of his Cousin Shallow's claim to write himself *armigero*, "all his successors gone before him have done it, and all his ancestors that come after him may; they may give the dozen white luses in their coat." Shallow observes, "It is an old coat"; upon which Sir Hugh Evans remarks, "The dozen white louses do become an old coat well. It agrees well, passant, it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love." Whereupon Shallow makes the enigmatical comment, "The luce is the fresh fish, the salt fish is an old coat."<sup>1</sup> Now inasmuch as we learn of Geffray Lord Lucy that "he did bear gules three lucies hauriant argent," it has been assumed that in Justice Shallow "Shakespeare" had a hit at some member of the Lucy family. It may,

<sup>1</sup> Possibly this means that the "old coat" had "a very ancient and fish-like smell"! Perhaps there is a pun on "coat" and "goat." The old coat *olet hircum*!

possible, be so, but if the fact be granted it can hardly be said to raise a presumption in favour of the truth of the poaching story; indeed, as several critics have pointed out it is quite possible that the tradition itself grew out of the scene in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

There is, however, one great objection to the story which is that the Charlecote deer park was of late date than the sixteenth century. Mr. Lee makes light of this, for, says he, "Sir Thomas Lucy was an extensive game-preserver, and owned at Charlecote a warren in which a few harts or does<sup>1</sup> doubtless found an occasion

<sup>1</sup> This is a mistake. It should be either "bucks or does" (fallow deer), "harts (or stags) or hinds" (red deer). A hart is a stag from its fifth year, or, as Amoretto says in *The Returne from Parnassus* (in a passage with which Mr. Lee is doubtless familiar): "Your Hart is the first year a Calver, the second year a Brochet, the third year a Spade, the fourth yeare a Stagge, the fift yeare a great Stagge, the sixth yeare a Hart." But if Shakspeare stole any deer it was "doubtless" (to use Mr. Lee's adverb) a buck. (See *Malone*, Vol. II, pp. 145-7.) It seems clear that Sir T. Lucy never had a deer at all at Charlecote. And what does Mr. Lee mean by "a warren"? In popular language a warren is merely an enclosed place for the breeding of hares or rabbits. But what the law calls a *Free Warren* is a very different thing. It is a right, which need not be associated with the ownership of the soil (being what the law calls an "incorporeal hereditament"), to pursue and take "beasts and birds of warren" on the lands subject to this franchise. This right must be claimed by grant from the Crown, or by prescription from which a lost grant may be presumed. I am not aware that there is any evidence to show that Sir Thomas Lucy had a right of Free Warren, nor do I see how it affects the case if it was so. Deer, except roe deer, were not "beasts of warren." Those who wish to read about forests, chases, parks, and warrens in *Plantagenet times* should consult *Select Pleas of the Forest*, edited for the Selden Society by G. J. Turner, of Lincoln's Inn, barrister-at-law. I believe I have correctly stated the law as it stood in the time of Elizabeth. "The word 'park'," as Mr. Turner tells us, "was applied to a district of land enclosed with a paling" (p. 115), and in a note we are informed that "the word 'imparcare' means to impound or to put in an enclosure," but that "as a general rule 'a park' was used of an enclosure expressly made for deer" (p. 116). As to certain mistakes made by Manwood in his *Treatise on the Forest Laws* (1598), and as to roe deer being made beasts of the warren, see p. 10 *et seq.* Manwood, by the way, tells us that where the Hart and the Hind were "beasts of the forest," Bucks and Does were "beasts of the chase." Mr. Lee has married a "beast of the forest" to a "beast of the chase," and appears to think that both are "beasts of warren."



home. "Doubtless" is, as we shall see, Mr. Lee's favourite adverb. But let us examine this statement about the "few harts or does" a little further. Mr. Lee prays in aid "the independent testimony of Archdeacon Davies," who was vicar of Saperton, Gloucester, late in the seventeenth century, to the effect that Shakspeare "was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits, particularly from Sir Thomas Lucy, who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country to his great advancement." Mr. Lee then tells us that "the law of Shakespeare's day (5 Elizabeth, c. 21) punished deer stealers with three months' imprisonment and the payment of thrice the amount of the damage done" (p. 25).

This, however, is an inaccurate statement and suggests that the writer's well-known industry had not extended to the careful perusal of the statute in question. The Act, 5 Elizabeth, c. 21, after reciting that "The Queen's Majesty and her most noble Progenitors as also the Noblemen Gentlemen and divers other persons of great dominions, Lordships, Manors and Possessions within this realm, have of ancient and longtime . . . imparked, invironed and inclosed many parcels of their said demans, soils, grounds, and possessions for the breeding cherishing and increase as well of red as fallow deer within their several parks and inclosures," proceeds to enact (Section 3) "that if any person or persons at any time by night or by day wrongfully or unlawfully break or enter into any *Park impaled or any other several ground closed with wall, pale, or hedge, and used for the keeping, breeding, and cherishing of deer*, and so wrongfully hunt, drive or chase out, or take, kill, or slay any deer *within such impaled Park or closed ground with wall pale or other inclosure, and used for deer as aforesaid*, and thereof be lawfully convicted at the suit of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, or the party grieved, as is aforesaid, shall suffer imprisonment of his or

their bodies by the space of three months, and shall yield and pay to the party grieved his treble damages, and after the said three months expired, shall find sufficient surety for his or their good abearing for the space of seven years after."

By Section 4 it is provided "that this act or anything therein contained extend not to any Park or inclosed ground hereafter to be made and used for deer without the grant or licence of our Sovereign Lady the Queen her heirs etc."

It is clear, therefore, that this statute applied only to hunting or killing deer within an impaled park used for the keeping and breeding of deer, and as it is admitted that there was no such park at Charlecote in Shakspeare's time, it is obvious that these provisions could not apply to his supposed case.

Even in later times it is clear from Section 4 that the Act had no application except in the case of a deer-park enclosed by licence of the Queen. "If, after all, it shall be said," writes Malone, "that Sir Thomas Lucy though he had no park at Charlecote might yet without any royal leave, have had some deer in his ground, and that still our poet may have been guilty of the trespass which has been imputed to him, the objector must be told that no such grounds were protected by the common law, every one having right to kill therein all beasts of chase as *ferae naturae*, and that as the penalties of the statute of Elizabeth, already mentioned, as well as preceding statutes on this subject, extended only to offences committed in a legal park, our author, had he been guilty of the act imputed to him, would not have fallen within the peril of the law. He might, indeed, have been proceeded against by an action of trespass, but it never has been alleged that any civil suit was instituted against Shakspeare on this ground. In truth, the objection which I have now stated is scarcely worth considering, for



keeping deer in unenclosed grounds no example can be produced." (Vol. II, p. 14.)<sup>1</sup>

So much for the "few harts and does"! But what of Archdeacon Davies with his stories of frequent whippings? Well, in the first place, as Malone points out, all this must have happened, if at all, some years after Shakspeare's marriage, and after his wife had borne him three children. Moreover, there is very good evidence to show that there had been no quarrel with Sir Thomas Lucy up to January, 1583-4, at any rate (Malone, ed. Boswell, Vol. II, p. 121). "From Mr. Davies's account of this transaction, it should seem that he either thought the trespass which, according to him, consisted in purloining not only venison but rabbits, was committed at so early a period of life, that Sir Thomas Lucy could, with propriety, punish the youthful trespassers by corporal chastisement, or, supposing them to have been adult, that

<sup>1</sup> It has sometimes been said that deer were the subject of larceny at common law, but this is a mistake. Deer were and are animals *ferae naturae* in which the common law recognises no right of property, and where there is no property there can be no larceny. It is true that where deer were in a forest, or the "purlieu" of a forest, they belonged to the owner of the forest, but if they escaped out of the forest the first finder might capture them. The law as to this is thus stated in Coke's *Institutes* (Bk. IV, chap. LXXIII). "When the king's game of the forest do range out of the forest (and purlieu if any be) they belong not to the king, but are at their natural liberty *et occupanti conceduntur*," i.e. as Mr. Justice Ridley explained, in the case of *Threlkeld v. Smith* (1901, 2 K.B. 531), "the person who found them might make himself owner of them." The general effect of the law on this subject was thus stated by the same learned judge. "A person who killed one of the animals outside the forest did not break the laws of the forest; he may have broken the civil law by taking something which did not belong to him, but he was not liable to criminal proceedings. Within the forest the owner's right was absolute; within the purlieu if he caught the animals he might kill them, but he was not entitled to hunt them; outside the purlieu he had no rights at all as owner of the forest." Accordingly it was held in the recent case above cited that a person who kills and carries away a deer usually kept in a forest when it is outside the limits of the forest and upon the land of a third person cannot be convicted, under Section 14 of the Larceny Act, of being in unlawful possession thereof. Had deer, even on enclosed land, been the subject of larceny at the common law, there would have been no

the law inflicted such a punishment. The former of these suppositions I have already shown to be highly improbable [he might have said "impossible"] and the other is equally erroneous." (*Ibid.*, p. 135.)

Finally, we ask who was this Archdeacon Davies? Well, it appears that a Mr. William Fulman had made some scrappy notes ("little more than the dates of birth and death") on Shakspeare, and at his death in 1616 he bequeathed his papers to this Mr. Richard Davies, rector of Saperton in Gloucestershire, who seems to have added certain further notes to this effect: "Much given all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits particular from Sir . . . Lucy [Mr. Lee has inserted "Thomas," but as Malone says, he (Davies) did not even know the knight's Christian name], who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly from his native country to his great advancement, but his reven-

need of the series of statutes passed from time to time to make it criminal to take deer in "impaled Parks," etc. (see 13 Rich. II, st. 1, 13; 19 Henry V, c. 11; 5 Elizabeth, c. 21 (above cited); 3 James I, c. 13; and 7 James I, c. 13). It will have been seen that the statute of Elizabeth did not apply to any parks, etc., inclosed after the passing of the Act without the licence of the sovereign. By 3 James I, c. 13, all then existing deer-parks were brought under similar provisions, but by a proviso apparently added at the last moment, the Act was only to apply to offences committed by night and there was a similar proviso to that of the Act of Elizabeth except that parks thereafter to be made without royal licence. 7 James I, c. 13 repealed the proviso restricting the former Act to offences by night. To prevent misunderstanding I may add that if deer were closely confined, as in a paddock (e.g.), so that they might be taken at any time, they might, of course, be the subject of larceny at common law; for, as Blackstone lays it down, "It is felony by the common law to steal those animals *ferae naturae* which being fit for the food or service of man, are either tame and known by name, or are so confined that the owner can take them whenever he pleases." But this does not affect Shakspeare's case. It is curious that Professor Dowden falls into the same error about the law of deer-stealing when he writes that though Sir Thomas Lucy had no park at Charlecote, "he may have had deer there"! Then he suggests, as an alternative, that the deer stealing may have been from Fulbroke Park some miles away from Charlecote, but Mr. Lee (p. 25) shows that this explanation of the story is a "pure invention." I quote from Professor Dowden's *Introduction to Shakspeare* (p. 13

was so great that he is his Justice Clodpate, and calls him a great man, and that in allusion to his name bore three lowses rampant for his arms." The annotator adds, "he died a papist."<sup>1</sup> All this is just a little mixed. It appears to have been written some time between 1690 and 1708, that is, seventy-five or eighty-five years after Shakspeare's death.

It seems to me, then, that Malone, who had no heretical theories of authorship to contend against and desired only to discover the truth (though like other "Shakespeare" biographers when facts were wanting he drew copiously upon his own imagination), has effectually disposed of this poaching story, which I fancy most of the Stratfordians would have abandoned also, were it not for the imaginary "missing link" supplied by identifying Sir Thomas Lucy with Mr. Justice Shallow. For it can hardly be agreeable to them to suppose that the great poet of the world's admiration was an habitual stealer of deer and rabbits, and that he was frequently in prison and oft whipt at the age of twenty and twenty-one. We may, however, be well content to leave them to fight this matter out among themselves.

As to the lampoon which Shakspeare is said to have composed against Sir Thomas Lucy "in revenge," here, too, there is some little difficulty. "Thinking he was prosecuted too severely," says Rowe, "he revenged himself on his prosecutor by making a ballad on him." But, says Malone, "if he was indicted<sup>2</sup> this certainly was not a likely mode to conciliate the Knight of Charlecote, and to induce him to release the recognisance for good behaviour, to which the law entitled him. [See the provisions of the Act.] On the other hand, if he was only threatened with

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by H.-P., Vol. II, p. 71. See *post*, ch. vii, on "The Traditional Shakspeare."

<sup>2</sup> But if indicted it must have been under 5 Elizabeth, c. 21, and this, as I have shown, is really out of the question.

a prosecution, a lampoon would not contribute to mitigate his adversary's wrath, or to defend the criminal from its effects. We are therefore compelled to suppose that the poet did not choose to abide the consequences of the prosecution (which is hardly consistent with thinking he was prosecuted too severely), and before it could be commenced fled from his native country, leaving it to some friend to affix his verses on the *park gate* of the Lord "Charlecote," for such is the tale which has been transmitted.

With regard to the lampoon itself, there are some very low lines beginning "A parliament member, a justice of peace" which have really as much claim to be accepted as Shakspeare's as the poaching story has to be accepted as true; the authority being an old man who lived near Stratford and died in 1703, i.e. before Rowe's *Life of Shakespeare* was published. They make merry over the theme that "Lucy is lousy," and are such as might well have been written by a poaching butcher's apprentice in such a place as Stratford-on-Avon then was, but, inasmuch as they could hardly have been penned by the great bard who was not of an age but for all time, they have naturally not been accepted as the work of "Shakespeare."

<sup>1</sup> They will be found in *Malone's Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. i. p. 565. But the real truth of the matter seems to be that, as Mrs. Stowe writes, "Shallow was not intended to represent Sir Thomas Lucy . . . that the whole story was built upon a misreading of Shakespeare's plays as a misunderstanding of his art" (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, ch. ii, and *Fortnightly Review*, Feb. 1903. See also an article on "John Shallow," by Mr. John Hutchinson, in *Baconiana*, Jan. 1908).



## NOTE TO CHAPTER I

## THE NAMES "SHAKSPERE" AND "SHAKE-SPEARE"

The dedicatory pages of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594) were subscribed "William Shakespeare." The title-page of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598) bore the name of "W. Shake-spere." This is exhibited by Mr. Sidney Lee as "the earliest title-page bearing Shakespeare's name." But in the same year appeared editions of *Richard II* and *Richard III* by "William Shake-speare," and subsequently the plays were published under the name of "Shakespeare," and very frequently with the hyphen "Shake-speare." So, too, the *Sonnets* were published (1609) as *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, and that curious poem *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (1601) was subscribed "William Shake-speare."<sup>1</sup>

Now, the family of William Shaksper of Stratford wrote their name in many different ways—some sixty, I believe, have been noted, such as Shaksper, Shakysper, Shaxper, Shaxpur, Shaxysper, Shacksper, Shaxpere, Shaksper, Shaksbere, Shakspear, etc. etc., but the form "Shakespeare" seems never to have been employed by them. As Mr. Spedding truly says in his essay on *The Conference of Pleasure*, Shaksper of Stratford never so wrote his name "in any known case." In 1573, when his father John was witness to a conveyance, the name was spelt by Walter Roche, ex-master of the Stratford Grammar School, as "Shaxbere."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the forty-one title-pages exhibited by Judge Willis I find Shake-speare with the hyphen eighteen times. Judge Willis thinks the hyphen "only an accident—a fancy of the printer"!

<sup>2</sup> Richard Quiney, writing to Shaksper, calls him "Mr Wm. Shackspere" (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 151), while his brother-in-law, Abraham Sturley, writing to him on January 24th, 1597-8, speaks of "our countriman, Mr. Shaksper." (H.-P., Vol. II, p. 57.) "Countryman," I take it, refers to the fact that they were of the same *county*. Thomas Whittington, of Shottery, from whom Anne Shaksper borrowed money, writes the name "Shaxpere." (H.-P., Vol. II, p. 186.) The marriage bond of Nov. 28th, 1582, is made between William Shagspere and Anne Hathwey.



(H.-P., Vol. II, p. 232.) Roche was an educated man, and ought to have known, if anybody did, how the name was spelt. How lamentable it is, we may reflect in passing, that neither he nor Hunt, both of whom may have had William Shakspeare under them at the Free Grammar School, has left us a single word concerning their highly distinguished pupil!

In the extracts from the accounts of the revels at Court in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I, published by the Shakespeare Society in 1842, are statements to the effect that on St. Stephen's night, December 26th, 1604, "a play called Mesur for Mesur" was acted at Whitehall, and on Innocents' night, December 28th, *The Plaie of Errors*, and in each case, under the title of "the Poets which mayd the plaies," is given the name "Shaxberd." On Shrove Sunday, 1605, we are told that "a play of the Merchant of Venis," also by "Shaxberd," was acted, and repeated at the King's command on Shrove Tuesday. But no confidence can be placed in these documents, which, at any rate in their present form, appear to be undoubted forgeries.<sup>1</sup> It is a remarkable fact that Shakespeare's name does not appear elsewhere, in any form, in the accounts of the revels, nor at all in the Stationers' Registry. Philip Henslowe, the theatrical manager, who built the Rose Theatre on the Bankside, kept a diary which has been preserved, and contains minute information respecting the history and condition of the English drama from 1591 to 1609, and the names of many dramatists employed by him, and the names of plays identical with or very similar to the titles of Shakespeare's plays. Yet it nowhere mentions Shakespeare's name.<sup>2</sup> The player himself appears to have spelt his name "Shakspeare." Malone says (Boswell's edition, 1821, Vol. II, p. 1, note): "That he himself wrote his name without the middle *e* (i.e. Shakspeare, not Shakespeare) appears from his autograph, of which a facsimile will be found in a subsequent page. With respect to the last syllable of his name, the people of Stratford appear to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. E. A. Bond, Keeper of the MS. Department of the British Museum, saw serious reason for doubting their genuineness, and they are evidently rejected by Mr. Gollancz, since he writes in his preface to *Measure for Measure*, "No direct reference to the play has been found anterior to its publication in 1623, nor is there any record of its performance before the Restoration." See further H.-P., Vol. II, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> See *post*, chap. xii, "The Silence of Philip Henslowe."

have generally written the name *Shakspere* or *Shackspere*, and I have now great doubts whether he did not frequently write the final syllable so himself, for I suspect that what was formerly supposed to be the letter *a* over his autograph above mentioned was only a coarse and broad mark of contraction, and *in the signature of his name subscribed to his will* (as a very ingenious anonymous correspondent observes to me) certainly the letter 'a' is not to be found in the second syllable. It should be remembered that in all words in which *per* occurred in old English writing, this contraction (p<sup>r</sup>) was generally substituted. . . . In some of the writings of the borough I have found the name written at length *Shaksp<sup>r</sup>*, which was probably the vulgar pronunciation." Mr. Sidney Lee writes (p. 233): "The ink of the first signature which Shakespeare appended to his will has now faded almost beyond recognition, but that it was 'Shakspere' may be inferred from the facsimile made by George Steevens in 1776." He wishes us to believe, however, that the third signature is "Shakespeare"; but apart from the fact that, even in that age of uncertain nomenclature, a testator would probably have adhered to the same form for his three will signatures, we must remember that Malone inspected the signatures about a hundred years before Mr. Lee examined them, when the ink had not, as now, "faded almost beyond recognition," and, moreover, that not having any particular bias in favour of "Shakspeare" or "Shakespeare," he was not so likely to allow his imagination to decide according to his preconceptions.<sup>1</sup> How difficult it is to read the will signatures at the present day may be inferred from the fact that, as Mr. Lee tells us, the second and third signatures "have been variously read as 'Shakspere,' 'Shakspeare,' and 'Shakespeare,'" truly a fine latitude of choice! However, there seems to be no doubt that the signature to the purchase-deed of March 10, 1612-13, is "William Shakspere." I think the same may be said of the mortgage-deed of the following day, March 11, 1612-13, and the signatures are so given by Mr. H.-Phillipps (Vol. II, pp. 34 and 36), though here again some would "inter-

<sup>1</sup> Ireland, the clever forger, was careful to write the name "Shakspere," which is the form that appears in the entries of the baptism of William Shakspere's children.

pret" (to use Mr. Lee's expression) "Shakspeare" rather than "Shakspere." But it really seems to be doing scant justice to William of Stratford to make him thus vary his signature from day to day, to say nothing of his supposed "ringing the changes" on the same day in his three will signatures. It will, of course, be remembered that these five signatures and, perhaps, the words "by me" in the will are the only specimens of Shakspeare's handwriting that have come down to us. Mr. William H. Edwards thinks that the name of the Stratford player was written "Shak-sper," pointing out that "the German *r* carries a flourish that has sometimes been taken for an *e*"; and with this may be compared what Malone writes as to the usual contraction "where *per* occurred." "The use of the German *r*," we are told, "was common among scriveners during the reigns of Elizabeth and James; but that it was also used half a century later can be seen in the facsimile of John Milton's contract with Samuel Symons for the sale of the manuscript of *Paradise Lost*, given in Pickering's edition of Milton's works, Vol. I. In this the German *r* repeatedly occurs in such words as 'whereby,' 'whereof,' and 'were,' followed by a distinct *e* of the same species as the one which precedes the *r*, in these same words. Inasmuch as nearly, if not quite, all the mentions of John Shaksper's name occur in the records, and were therefore written by scriveners, the larger part of them undoubtedly ending in *r*, it is to be presumed that these sprawling characters spoken of were intended for *r* also," for (as the writer had already observed) "a German *r*, when made separately, naturally carries a flourish at the extremity, as seen in Malone's figure of that letter accompanying his facsimile of Shaksper's signature to the deed of 1612." (See *Shaksper not Shakespeare*, by W. H. Edwards, chap. 1, and the facsimiles there given and in chap. xv).<sup>1</sup> However, whether the Stratford player wrote his name "Shaksper" or "Shakspere" does not seem very material. It is more important to observe that he did not write it "Shakespeare," and still less "Shake-speare."

At the same time we must bear in mind that the name which

<sup>1</sup> The scribe who wrote John Shakspeare's signature for him, against the mark of "a pair of dividers," seems to have written "Shaksper." See facsimile, Lee, p. 5.

appears in the body of the conveyance and of the mortgage bearing his signature is "Shakespeare," while "Shackspeare" appears in the will, prepared, as we must presume, by or under the directions of Francis Collyns, the Stratford solicitor, who was one of the witnesses thereto. The legal usage, however, was not altogether uniform, for in the case of the conveyance of January, 1596-7, from John Shakspeare to George Badger, we have "Johannes Shakespere" in the body of the deed, and William and John Combe convey land in 1602 to William Shakespere of Stratford-on-Avon. Still we may readily admit that the form "Shakespeare" has the sanction of "legal," and certainly of "literary" use which Mr. Lee claims for it (p. 234); indeed, if we may include the law with literature, we may perhaps say with Mr. Edwin Reed that "literature had an absolute monopoly of it."

The forger of the signature in the copy of Florio's translation of *Montaigne's Essays*, which "was purchased for a large sum by the trustees of the British Museum" (as Knight tells us), certainly thought that the (supposed) poet wrote "Shakspere." (See the facsimile prefixed by Charles Knight to Vol. I of the *Comedies*.) Knight, both here (p. 3) and afterwards (p. 78), calls this "Shakspeare's *undoubted* autograph." Mr. Lee writes (p. 233): "The genuineness of that signature is disputable." When in 1904 Mr. Tree brought out the *Tempest* at His Majesty's Theatre, he had prepared, as is his wont, for the instruction of the audience, a booklet giving a sketch of the play and its history. The compiler (a not unknown journalist, as I understand) here took occasion to inform us "that Shakespeare was acquainted with these essays [of Montaigne] we may be certain, for a copy of the book with *his name attached* is now in the British Museum." Knowing Mr. Tree's scrupulous regard for accuracy, I wrote to him to point out that this statement was altogether indefensible, since the "Florio" signature was evidently a forgery. This caused inquiries to be made at the British Museum, with the result that Sir Edward Maunde Thompson wrote (30 November, 1904): "There is no doubt that the Shakespeare signature to which you refer is a forgery." Such are the humours of Shakespearean controversy. A signature which an eminent critic of the last generation pronounced "an undoubted autograph," and upon which a fine



superstructure of argument has been built, is dismissed by one of the highest authorities of to-day as an undoubted forgery. But, in truth, it did not want an expert to tell us this. One might safely come to Sir Maunde Thompson's conclusion by an inspection of the facsimile only. Still, I cannot help thinking that had the "Florio" signature been written "Shakespeare" there would have been a struggle on the part of the Stratfordian critics to maintain its authenticity!<sup>1</sup>

And now a word upon the name "Shakespeare." That in this form, and more especially with a hyphen, "Shake-speare," the word makes an excellent *nom de plume* is obvious. As old Thomas Fuller remarks, the name suggests *Martial* in its warlike sound, "*Hasti-vibrans* or *Shake-speare*." It is, of course, further suggestive of Pallas Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, for Pallas also was a spear-shaker (Pallas ἀπὸ τοῦ πάλλειν τὸ δόρυ), and all will remember Ben Jonson's verses prefixed to the First Folio, in which he speaks of Shake-speare's "well tornéd and true filéd lines,"

In each of which he seems to shake a lance,  
As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.

"The earliest allusion to Shakespeare by *name*," writes Mr. Israel Gollancz in his preface to *The Rape of Lucrece* (Temple Shakespeare Edition, p. vi.), "occurs in connection with a reference to his *Lucrece* in the commencing verses of a laudatory address prefixed to 'Willobie his Avisas,' 1594." The lines are:—

Yet Tarquyne pluckt his glistering grape,  
And Shake-speare paints poor Lucrece rape.

So that Shakespeare is first introduced to us in his spear-shaking and hyphenated form! These lines, be it observed, are of the same date as the publication of *Lucrece*, which was in the year following that which saw "the first heir of my invention" (*Venus and Adonis*) given to the public.

Pallas, the *hasti-vibrans*, who sprang fully armed from the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Israel Gollancz, in his preface to *The Tempest* ("Temple Classics" edition), actually states that "Shakespeare's own copy of this work, with his autograph, is among the treasures of the British Museum"!



head of Jove, brings to our minds Francis Mere's *Palladis Tamia*, or *Wit's Treasury*, the *Palladis Palatium* of William Wrednot, etc. It has been suggested that Jonson's "Crispinus or Crispinas" may be an allusion to "Shake-speare," for *crispo* means to brandish (a spear, e.g.), as in Virgil (*Æneid*, XII, 165):—

*Bina manu lato crispans hastilia ferro.*

Nor do I think this suggestion in any way negatived by the fact that Jonson puts the hyphen after the three first letters of the name so as to make "a face crying in chief . . . between three thorns *pungent*." That was part of "the humour of it."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As to this see chap. xv. p. 460.

## CHAPTER II

### • THE SCHOOLING OF SHAKSPERE

**T**HAT Shakspeare attended the Free School at Stratford is, as I have said, an assumption only, though by no means an improbable one ; but at what age he went there and how long he stayed are mere matters of guess-work. He may have attended the school for two or three years only. That he was there for more than five years, at the outside, is very unlikely. Assuming, however, that he was at the school for a short time, what was he likely to have learnt there ?

Here we are brought face to face with a great diversity of opinion among the Stratfordians. Like the members of the various churches they unite in pouring contempt upon the infidel, but they are hopelessly divided in the matter of their own faith.

There are two distinct schools with regard to Shakspeare's supposed education. The elder, clinging to tradition and citing Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek," postulate a man of little or no education, but of prodigious genius, writing as it were by plenary inspiration. The other school appeals to the poems and plays themselves as showing that their author must have been a man of wide reading and almost universal culture, and, therefore, brushing aside the testimony of all the earlier writers, they make all assumptions necessary for providing William Shakspeare of Stratford with such education as their theory requires.

Let us, first, see what Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who until

Mr. Lee published his recent work, was generally looked upon as the greatest of Shakespearean authorities, has to tell us of the education likely to be provided at the Stratford Grammar School. "The best authorities unite in telling us that the poet imbibed a certain amount of Latin at school, but that his acquaintance with that language was, throughout his life, of a very limited character. It is not probable that scholastic learning was ever congenial to his tastes, and it should be recollected that books in most parts of the country were then of very rare occurrence. *Lily's Grammar* and a few classical works, chained to the desks of the free schools, were probably the only volumes of the kind to be found at Stratford-on-Avon. Exclusive of Bibles, Church Services, Psalters, and education manuals, there were certainly not more than two or three dozen books, if so many, in the whole town."<sup>1</sup>

Now this account certainly harmonises not only with what we know as to the illiteracy of the inhabitants of Stratford, but also with all the early traditions concerning Shakspeare's schooling. Thus Rowe, to whom I have already referred, writes: "His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that, though he was his eldest son, he could give him no better education than his own employment. He had bred him, 'tis true, for some time at a free-school, where 'tis probable he acquired that little Latin he was master of; but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language."

So, too, Fuller, in his *History of the Worthies of England* (1662). "He was an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, *poeta non fit sed nascitur*, one is not made but born a poet. Indeed, his learning was very little, so that, as

<sup>1</sup> On this matter see note to chap. III. p. 55.

Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so nature itself was all the art which was used upon him."

All the old tradition is to the same effect,<sup>1</sup> and most important of all, of course, is Jonson's well-known line, "And, though thou had'st small Latin, and less Greek." Jonson, at any rate, was in a position to speak from personal knowledge, and if this testimony is to be explained away as not seriously written, then are we justified in applying the same methods of interpretation to his other utterances as published in the Folio of 1623. But I shall have more to say as to that further on.<sup>2</sup>

Let us now turn to Mr. Sidney Lee on the matter of Shakspeare's education. Here we come to the more modern teaching with regard to the "learning of Shakspeare." It is seen that Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's very meagre assumptions "won't do," and that it is really making too large a demand upon human credulity (extensive though it be) to ask us to suppose that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* had no more learning than that to be obtained from "*Lily's Grammar* and a few classical works chained to the desks" of the school. Harken, therefore, unto Mr. Lee: "The general instruction that he received was mainly confined to the Latin language and literature. From the Latin accidence, boys of the period, at schools of the type of that at Stratford, were led through conversation books like the '*Sententiae Pueriles*' and *Lily's Grammar*, to the perusal of such authors as Seneca, Terence, Cicero, Virgil, Plautus, Ovid, and Horace.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Sir John Denham in 1668: "Old mother wit and nature gave Shakspeare and Fletcher all they have." Chetwood in 1684: "Shakspeare said all that *Nature* could impart." Winstanley, in the same year: "Without learning" and "Never any scholar, as our Shakspeare if alive would confess." Gerard Langbaine in 1691: "He was as much a stranger to French as to Latin." See chap. VII. on "The Traditional Shakspeare."

<sup>2</sup> For the very latest interpretation of these well-known words see p. 475 n.

The eclogues of the popular renaissance poet, Mantuanus, were often preferred to Virgil's for beginners." Here it will be seen that we have given tradition and Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps the go-by altogether. Mr. Lee does not, indeed, tell us if we are to believe that the youthful Shakspeare studied *all* the authors he mentions between the ages of, say, eight and thirteen, during which we are to assume that he was at the Free School, but the passage I have quoted seems to make that demand upon our faith. I think it will be admitted that it is a pretty good assumption to make for a school of the period at such a squalid, stagnant, illiterate village as we know that Stratford was. With such an education in their midst, to be had for nothing, it is indeed sad to think of the Master Bailiff and the aldermen and burgesses who could not even write their names. But what is the evidence on which we are required to believe that this extensive Latin education was provided at the Stratford school?

Here let us turn to the latest champion of the learning of Shakspeare the Stratfordian Player. Mr. Churton Collins has published three articles in the *Fortnightly Review* (April, May and July, 1903)<sup>1</sup> under title "Had Shakespeare read the Greek Tragedies?" in which he has produced some very cogent evidence in favour of the contention that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have had a very extensive knowledge of the classics, not merely derived from translations, but from the study of the original works. Naturally, therefore, he has to give consideration to the question of Shakspeare's education at the Free School. As to this the late Mr. Spencer Baynes made some prodigious and very absurd assumptions. He took Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius* (1611) and Hoole's *New Discoverie of the Old Arte of Teaching Schoole* (1636) and calmly assumed that the methods and courses of study

<sup>1</sup> Now republished in *Studies in Shakespeare*. See Essay I, "Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar."



therein described were those also of the little Stratford Free School. Hoole's book, written twenty years after Shakspeare's death, "abounds with references to the course of instruction in the Wakefield Grammar School," so, of course, "we may accept them as a guide to the course of instruction at Stratford"! This, indeed, is quite characteristic of the ordinary style of "Shakespeare biography"; but, as Mr. Collins says, "What was prescribed by professed educational reformers, about 1611 and 1636, is hardly likely to be exactly analogous to what actually obtained in a provincial grammar school in or about 1571." No, indeed, *hardly likely to be exactly analogous!* But what is Mr. Collins's own method of procedure? "I shall therefore substitute for the curriculum prescribed by them the curriculum drawn up for Ipswich Grammar School in 1528." This, he says, "may fairly be taken as typical of the instruction provided in the best schools of Shakespeare's time." Yes; but what right has he to assume that the Stratford school was one of the "best schools" of the time? For all he knows it may have been one of the worst. And what possible right has he to select Wolsey's celebrated foundation for comparison? Can we for a moment entertain the assumption that the school at the very unimportant and, as we know, very illiterate Stratford was a school of similar character to one of the very best schools of the time? "Until his death," says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare's 'Old English' handwriting testified to his provincial education." If this "provincial education" was on a par with that provided by the best schools of the time it seems strange that its "curriculum" did not include that "Italian script" which at the time was rapidly winning its way in cultured society, and which men like Ben Jonson and Joshua Sylvester "wrote with facility"!<sup>1</sup> But, says Mr. Collins, "that

<sup>1</sup> Writing was, of course, taught in the song school, or writing school, where such existed, a very different thing from the Grammar School, "*to which*," according to Mr. Leach, "*boys were not admitted until they had learnt*

the instruction at Stratford School was of a superior kind and included Greek is very probable. *The headmaster when Shakespeare entered the school was Walter Roche.* Roche was, or had been, a Fellow of Corpus College, Oxford, and Corpus in Roche's time—he was elected Fellow in 1558—was in point of learning and intellectual activity pre-eminent in Oxford."

Mark the words I have italicised. Mr. Collins had shortly before this written: "It may be safely assumed, *though we have no proof*, that Shakespeare received his education at the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School." He now commits himself to the unqualified statement that "the headmaster when Shakespeare entered the school was Walter Roche." Seeing that Walter Roche was succeeded in 1571 or 1572 by Thomas Hunt,<sup>1</sup> and that we have nothing to guide us as to the age at which Shakspeare went to school, the statement is a mere assumption and ought to have been so put. Mr. Collins himself says, "He would enter the school sometime between his eighth and ninth year." This at once brings us to 1572. Nothing is

*their accident.*" (*English Schools at the Reformation*, by A. F. Leach, page 105.) The masters at the grammar schools, of course, wrote the "Italian script." Thus at Chigwell, Essex, the second master was required to "write fair secretary and Roman hands." Anders, *Shakespeare's Books*, p. 10, note 2, citing Lupton's letter in the *Athenæum*, October 7th, 1876.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee says (p. 12) that Hunt succeeded Roche in 1577. This seems to be an error. Malone (Vol. II, p. 100) says that Jenkins succeeded Hunt about 1577. So, too, Spencer Baynes, who writes: "No fewer than three [masters] held the post during the decade from 1570 to 1580. In the first two years Walter Roche, for the next five, the most important in Shakespeare's school history, Thomas Hunt, and during the last three years Thomas Jenkins were headmasters in the school." Therefore *if* Shakspeare went to the school in 1571, aged seven, he might just have seen Roche, and if he left in 1577, at the age of thirteen, he could not have seen much of Jenkins. Mrs. Stopes (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 243) gives the dates as follows: Roche 1569-70, Hunt 1571, and says, "Jenkins became master about 1577." It is very possible, therefore, and indeed probable, that Shakspeare, if he went to the Free School, saw nothing at all of Roche. This worthy was "Lanc. Fellow" in 1558. Neither he nor Hunt took an M.A. degree. About Jenkins nothing seems to be known.

known of Thomas Hunt or Thomas Jenkins who succeeded him about 1577, but Mr. Collins tells us we "may safely assume that as scholars they were not inferior to their predecessor." Well, it seems that anything may be "safely assumed" when Shakspeare's life is in question, but why on earth we should make this assumption as to the scholarship of Hunt or Jenkins, or why we should imagine that the little Stratford school was a first-class one, even if they *were* good scholars, I am at a loss to conceive! I think it would be quite as rational to assume that Roche left the school in the prime of life because he was disgusted with the place.

And now what is the curriculum complacently assumed by Mr. Collins for the Stratford Free School? "After passing out of the hands of the A.B.C.-darius, who would teach him his alphabet, he would at once begin Latin, which he would learn as we now commonly learn, for practical purposes, modern languages, that is, colloquially through questions and answers in the language itself, and by getting phrases and sentences by heart; in other words, through what is prescribed in the curricula of those times as *Sententiæ Pueriles*, *Pueriles Confabulationculæ*, and Corderius's *Colloquia*. He would at the same time be thoroughly drilled in Lily's Latin Grammar (*Brevissima Institutio seu Ratio Grammatices cognoscendæ ad omnium puerorum utilitatem præscripta*) prescribed by royal proclamation in each reign for use in every grammar school, and in construing and parsing the sentences learnt. . . . He would then proceed to such books as Erasmus's Colloquies, Mantuan's Eclogues (see *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, 2), and Cato's *Disticha*, on to such books as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Heroides*, and *Tristia*, Virgil's *Æneid* and *Georgics*, selected comedies of Plautus and Terence, and portions of Cæsar, Sallust, Cicero, and Livy."

"Pro-digious"! as the Dominie would exclaim, and the Stratford Dominie more than all others, could he only read

that passage. Many a man who has taken his "First" in classics and been a scholar of his college has not had anything like such a good grounding in Latinity as this. But it is certainly none too little if Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the *Plays* and *Poems*, as Mr. Collins himself subsequently demonstrates. Mr. Collins, however, has made one little omission. He assumes that Shakspeare entered the school between his eighth and ninth year, but he has forgotten to mention that he was taken away at the age of twelve or thirteen. I know that the Stratfordians have the habit of accepting tradition when it tends to support their theories and rejecting it when it does not, but as the only authority for saying that Shakspeare ever went to school at all rests upon tradition, and as tradition is unanimous in saying that he was withdrawn at an early age, the biographers have not felt at liberty to reject this portion of it. Mr. Lee is no exception to the rule. "His father's financial difficulties," he writes, "grew steadily and they caused his removal from school at an unusually early age." "In Ipswich Grammar School," says Mr. Collins, "there were eight classes," and I suppose he would presume that there were the same number at Stratford. Possibly; but where was poor Shakspeare when he was taken from school "at an unusually early age"? How much of this imaginary "curriculum" is he to be assumed to have gone through, I wonder!<sup>1</sup> I maintain, therefore, that to assume

<sup>1</sup> Professor Spencer Baynes gave us a list, quite to his own satisfaction, of the various books which Shakspeare must have studied in his first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth year at school respectively. Mr. H. R. D. Anders, in quoting this (*Shakespeare's Books*, p. 16) not unwisely appends a note saying, "The word 'year' used in the following sentences *should not be taken too literally* [!] At any rate Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Seneca are mentioned by Hoole and Brinsley (Baynes's authorities) as works read in the highest class, the boys of which were about fifteen years of age, or in their eighth school-year. If we suppose that Shakespeare left school at an earlier date he could scarcely have been familiar with these authors." But then, says Mr. Anders, "there is no cogent reason" for supposing that Shakspeare left school early. This is characteristic of Stratfordian style. Tradition says that Shakspeare



this elaborate Latin curriculum in the little Stratford Free School is absolutely unwarranted.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence of anything of the kind, and it is in the highest degree improbable. Even had it existed Shakspeare was not long enough at the school to have profited by any instruction except in the lower classes, and there is nothing to make us think that he was an industrious boy. On the contrary, his traditionary character leads us to the very opposite conclusion. The hypothesis is necessary in order to square facts to theories—and that is all that can be said for it.

"Of his school days," says Malone (Vol. II, p. 101), unfortunately no account whatsoever has come down to us; we are therefore unable to mark his gradual advancement or to point out the early presages of future renown which his extraordinary parts must have afforded; for as it has been observed by a great writer of our own time, all whose remarks on human life are sagacious and profound, 'there is no instance of any man whose history has been minutely related that it did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour.'<sup>2</sup> Were our poet's early history accurately known it would

went to the Stratford Free School. Let us accept that as most cogent and indisputable evidence. Tradition also says that he was taken away at an unusually early age, because his father had need of his services. But this is highly inconvenient because we have to cram him with classical knowledge. Therefore a fig for tradition !

<sup>1</sup> Ipswich school was an exceptional institution. Previously to 1483 it had been a fee-paying school. In 1483 it was endowed as a Free Grammar School by Richard Felder, and in 1528 it was made part of "Cardinal's College." It then became a school "of the new learning." It may be noticed that a boy would not study Horace or Ovid till he arrived at the seventh class, the highest but one. See *English Schools at the Reformation*, by Arthur F. Leach, who contrasts Wolsey's advanced provisions with the far less liberal intellectual menu provided by Colet for St. Paul's School. Mr. Leach has, by the way, much contempt for "Baptista Mantuanus (save the mark !), a Carmelite friar, who died in 1516, and composed Eclogues." I may add that it is one thing for an enthusiastic founder, or educational reformer, to prescribe a very advanced curriculum, and quite another thing to secure that such curriculum shall be adhered to in practice.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson.



unquestionably furnish us with many proofs of the truth of this observation ; of his acuteness, facility, and fluency ; of the playfulness of his fancy, and his love of pleasantry and humour ; of his curiosity, discernment, candour, and liberality ; of all those qualities, in a word, which afterwards rendered him the admiration of the age in which he lived." All this is natural enough of the boyhood of the man who wrote the *Plays* and *Poems*, but if Shakspeare was that man, how comes it that in all the early tradition there is not a word about such things? If he learnt all that Mr. Collins assumes that he learnt at school (as to which more anon), how is it that the old writers, those who talked with "ancient witnesses," and were nearest to contemporary tradition—say just the contrary?<sup>1</sup> Why are we to accept traditional belief in Shakspeare as dramatist, and to reject tradition when it tells us of a poaching butcher's apprentice, of scanty education, who made a speech when he killed a calf?<sup>2</sup> It is, indeed, passing wonderful.

Ah, "Camden most reverend head"! What a thousand pities it is that Shakspeare never wrote an ode to Walter Roche or Thomas Hunt; that he never in all his (supposed) writings makes mention of the Stratford school, or of its master!

Granting then, as by no means improbable, the assumption that Shakspeare attended for a short time the Stratford Free School, I cannot but believe that Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps is quite right in thinking, in accordance with all tradition, that he could have learnt but little there. No doubt boys at Elizabethan grammar schools, if they remained long enough, had a good deal of Latin driven

<sup>1</sup> "If he had been an enthusiastic student, and by some extraordinary means had acquired many languages and much learning, his contemporaries must surely have known it; but the impression he produced on them was the contrary." Bompas, *The Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> This trait, by the way, is suggestive of the embryo player rather than of the embryo poet.

into them. Latin indeed was the one subject that *was* taught, and an industrious boy who had gone through the course and attained to the higher classes would generally be able to write fair Latin prose. But he would learn very little else. What we now call "culture" certainly did not enter into the "curriculum." English, at any rate, formed no part of the studies of the young Shakspeare at the Stratford Free School, for the teaching of the vernacular was not known to the Elizabethan grammar schools. Equally out of the question is it to suppose that he was taught either French, or Italian, or Spanish, or studied literature, whether of his own or any other country.

The much-debated question of "the learning of Shakspeare" (which has been so ably dealt with by Mr. Collins in the work to which I have referred) I will consider later on.<sup>1</sup> Let us now return to the meagre story of Shakspeare's life. Meagre indeed it is; in fact, except for some evidence that in 1587 he gave his assent to his father's proposal to sell some mortgaged property (John Shakspeare's affairs being in a very bad way), the life of William Shakspeare from the time when he is supposed to have left Stratford is for many years an absolute blank. Mr. Lee, indeed, jogs along merrily with his convenient adverb. "To London Shakespeare naturally drifted, *doubtless* trudging thither on foot during 1586, by way of Oxford and High Wycombe" (p. 28). "When Shakespeare became a member of the company [the Lord Chamberlain's] it was *doubtless* performing at the theatre, the play-house in Shoreditch" (p. 34). "The Rose Theatre was *doubtless* the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist." Adverbs, however, are not evidence, and as Mr. Phillipps writes (Vol. I, p. 83), "There is not a single particle of evidence respecting his career during the next five years, that is to say, from the

<sup>1</sup> See chap. IV.

time of the Lambert negotiation in 1587 until he is discovered as a rising actor and dramatist in 1592." Whether he was then discovered as a "dramatist" we will consider later, but the rest of Mr. Phillipps's statement is unquestionably correct.

We have, however, some credible traditions concerning Shakspeare's early life in London. Assuming that he "trudged" thither in 1586, as Mr. Lee conjectures, he was then in his twenty-second year.<sup>1</sup> "That he was also nearly, if not quite, moneyless is to be inferred from tradition, the latter supported by the ascertained fact of the adverse circumstances of his father at the time rendering it impossible for him to have received effectual assistance from his parents; nor is there reason for believing that he was likely to have obtained substantial aid from the relatives of his wife [whom he had practically deserted]. Johnson no doubt accurately reported the tradition of his day when in 1765 he stated that Shakespeare came to London a needy adventurer, and lived for a time by very mean employments." (H.-P., Vol. I, pp. 67, 68.) Tradition, which both Mr. Phillipps and Mr. Lee think credible, says that his first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready at the close of the performance. That this tradition "was originally related by Sir William Davenant [who was proud of being considered Shak-

<sup>1</sup> It seems, however, much more probable that he did not leave Stratford till 1587. There is some evidence that he was in Stratford in that year, since he joined with his father and mother in a formal assent given at that date to an abortive proposal to confer on John Lambert, son of the deceased mortgagee of Asbies, an absolute title to the estate on condition of his canceling the mortgage and paying £20. (H.-P. I, 78.) In the same year several companies of players visited Stratford. At that time John Shakspeare's fortunes were at the lowest possible ebb. What more likely than that William should have gone to town with the returning players? In 1586 the plague prevailed in London to such an extent that the theatres were closed. "It was not, then, during this year," says Mr. Fleay, "that Shakespeare held horses at stage-doors, or obtained employment in London theatres" (p. 94).

spere's natural son], and belongs in some form to the earlier half of the seventeenth century, cannot reasonably be doubted," says Mr. Phillipps, who points out that the anecdote being founded upon the practice of gentlemen riding to the theatres, which custom became obsolete after the Restoration, is sufficient to establish the antiquity of the story. "It is important to observe that all the early traditions to which any value can be attached, concur in the belief that Shakespeare did not leave his native town with histrionic intention." (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 71.) It is said, however, that he was promoted from the position of horseholder to that of "call-boy" in the theatre, and so subsequently gained a footing on the boards. "The best authority on this point," says Mr. H.-Phillipps, "is one William Castle, who was the parish clerk of Stratford-on-Avon during nearly all the latter part of the seventeenth century,<sup>1</sup> and used to tell visitors that the poet 'was received into the playhouse as a serviture,' in other words, an attendant on the performers. A later account is somewhat more explicit. We are informed by Malone, writing in 1780, that there was 'a stage tradition that his first office in the theatre was that of prompter's attendant, whose employment it is to give the performers notice to be ready to enter as often as the business of the play requires their appearance on the stage' [a delightful periphrasis for "call-boy"]; nor can the future eminence of Shakespeare be considered to be opposed to the reception of the tradition." (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 74.)

"In the interval between the end of 1587, when the young countryman disappeared from Stratford, and the end of 1592, when he reappeared in London, some half-dozen Shakespearean dramas had been written. Accord-

<sup>1</sup> But this seems to be a mistake, for, as Mr. Elton has pointed out, William Castle was born in 1628, and therefore could not have been the clerk "above 80 years old" who showed the church to Dowdall. See chap. VII on "The Traditional Shakspeare."



ing to that eminent Shakesperean expert Dr. Furnivall *Love's Labour's Lost* was composed in 1588-9; *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-1; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1590-1; and *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3. *Hamlet* was well known in 1589; *Titus Andronicus* must have been written before 1590; *King John* was printed in 1591; the Three Plays that composed the Trilogy of *Henry Sixth* must have been studied, completed, and performed before 1592; and *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was published in 1594, and had been 'sundry times acted,' must have been written before Shakespeare, who, like a wild mallard, had plunged into the pond, had finally emerged to view." So writes Judge Webb (*The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 40). Some of the dates are disputable,<sup>1</sup> and for reasons to be explained later on I would omit *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* from this list, and possibly also *The Taming of the Shrew*. The reference to *Hamlet* also is, as I have elsewhere shown, of very doubtful force. But even so we have sufficient to "give us pause," especially when we remember *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention," published in 1593, but presumably composed earlier than any of the above-mentioned dramas.

The learned judge continues as follows: "According to a tradition traced to Davenant, who was his godson and was anxious to be regarded as his son, his [Shakspeare's] first employment in London was that of a horseboy, and according to the tradition which has descended to us from a Parish Clerk of his native place, his first connexion with the theatre was in the capacity of a servitor or servant. It is not likely he rose from a horseboy to a servitor at a

<sup>1</sup> *The Comedy of Errors*, says Mr. Gollancz, "may safely be dated 1589-1." The same authority gives 1591 as the date of the composition of *Romeo and Juliet*—"at least in its first form." The *Dream* is generally dated 1591-2, but many critics refer the composition to an earlier date; and to *Love's Labour's Lost* Mr. Lee assigns "priority in point of time of all Shakspeare's dramatic productions." *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* may be safely dated at 1590-2.



bound; and it is certain that he could not have been raised from a servitor to an actor by a stroke of magic. The histrionic art, as Mr. Phillipps observes, is not learnt in a day, but requires a severe preliminary training (H.-P., I, 68), and the facts agree with this conclusion. It is not till September 1592 that we hear of him as an actor, as late as May 1593 his name is not included in the official list of players (H.-P., II, 329); and the first record of his acting which we possess is that which informs us that in Christmas 1594 he had attained sufficient excellence in his profession to play before the Queen (H.-P., I, 107)."

Shakspeare, says Mr. Lee, "remained a prominent member of the actor's profession till near the end of his life." Though "prominent," it would not seem that he was exactly "eminent," as Mr. Phillipps suggests, if credence is to be given to Rowe's story that his "top performance" was the ghost in *Hamlet*; but it is, of course, possible that Shakspeare reached a somewhat higher histrionic level than this.

And now a word more as to Shakspeare's handwriting. I have already alluded to the very remarkable fact that no scrap of that handwriting has come down to us except his five signatures (*Ante*, p. 17). What says Mr. Lee as to this? "As in the case of Edmund Spenser, and of almost all the great authors who were contemporary with Shakspeare, no fragment of Shakespeare's handwriting outside his signatures—no letter nor any scrap of his literary work—is known to be in existence" (p. 231). This citation of Spenser is curious. Is it true, then, that we have no scrap of *his* handwriting? Why, we read in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, above the initials "S. L.," as well as those of Professor Hales, that "eight documents among the Irish State Papers, dating between 1581 and 1589, bear Spenser's signature, and one . . . is a holograph." Nay, Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, in their *Illustrated History of English Literature* (Vol. 2, p. 121), are so kind as to

provide us with a facsimile of a "document in the handwriting of Edmund Spenser." How should we rejoice if only we could have something of the kind in Shakspeare's case! Meantime Mr. Lee's remarkable statement seems to call for some explanation. But to what an instructive comparison are we led by this allusion to Spenser! Here is a poet who predeceased Shakspeare by seventeen years, yet how much better do we know him than we know the Stratford player! We read of his education at the Merchant Taylors School, and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. We see him with his friends, Gabriel Harvey, Edward Kirke, and others. We have not to assume, or invent, for him an intimacy with the great people of his time, for we find him closely associated with men like Leicester, and Raleigh, and Philip Sidney, and Sir Edward Dyer, the two last-named being members of the literary society which he formed, and called "the Areopagus." If we have not very much of his manuscript we have at least in print numbers of letters written by him and to him. His portraits are not suspect as are those of "Shakespeare"; and when he died we are told by Camden that contemporary poets thronged to his funeral and cast their elegies and the pens that wrote them into the tomb. Look upon this picture—and on *that*! What a contrast!

## CHAPTER III

### SHAKSPERE AND "GENIUS"

LET us now consider the result to which our investigations have carried us. So-called biographers of Shakspeare, evolving out of their imagination fancy portraits of what the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* ought to have been, have presented us with the vision of a romantic boy wandering, Nature's votary, by the sweet stream of Avon, and learning his "native wood-notes wild" from the song of birds, the whisper of leaves, the murmur of bees. What is the reality to which, if we discard theories and prepossessions and seek for truth alone as it is revealed by evidence, we are inexorably brought? A boy born of illiterate parents in a squalid commonplace provincial town, passing his early years among commonplace illiterate people, possibly for a short time at a Free School, withdrawn thence at an exceptionally early age; a butcher's apprentice, according to the best evidence that we have, a draper's apprentice, if you will; "fallen into ill company" and a confirmed deer poacher, if we are to believe Rowe's narrative; frequently whipt and imprisoned, if we are to accept the story told by the Rev. Davies; one who has been drawn at the age of eighteen into an improvident and uncongenial marriage, and who flies from (surely "deserts" would not be too strong a word) wife and children about the age of two-and-twenty, coming to London "a needy adventurer," and living for a time "by very mean employments." "Removed prematurely from school, residing with illiter-

ate relatives in a bookless neighbourhood,<sup>1</sup> thrown into the midst of occupations adverse to scholastic progress—it is difficult to believe that when he first left Stratford he was not all but destitute of polished accomplishments. He could not, at all events, under the circumstances in which

<sup>1</sup> Exception has been taken to this phrase, "a bookless neighbourhood" (see articles by Mrs. Stopes and Mr. Sidney Lee in the *Athenæum* of February 23rd and March 2nd, 1907), and it must be admitted that it is one of those general propositions which it is very dangerous to advance, inasmuch as, in the words of Mrs. Stopes, they are "liable to be proved untrue by a very limited opposite." That this description of the "neighbourhood" of Stratford is not literally true, and stands in need of considerable qualification, is obvious on the face of it. It is equally obvious that all Mr. Phillipps meant was that the possession of books among the good people of that place was a very exceptional distinction indeed; and this is fully borne out by the fact that so many of the townsmen, "aldermen and burgesses" included, are shown to have been illiterate. It is to no purpose to show that certain distinguished persons (peers and baronets are cited amongst others) were the owners of books, and, in some cases, of fine libraries, for nobody has ever denied it. It is interesting, for instance, to know, on the authority of Mr. Lee, that George Carew, afterwards Earl of Totnes, owned John Florio's *World of Wordes* and passed it on to his son; but I fear these "grand possessors" did little to enlighten the honest "marksmen" of Stratford-on-Avon. Among the clergy, too, we naturally expect to find books, for they were always taught at least two of "the three R's"; indeed, if a man could read and write he might, when confronted with a criminal charge, claim "the benefit of clergy," for if not actually in holy orders he was at least qualified to become "a learned clerk." Mrs. Stopes instances the case of one John Marshall, curate of Bishopton, who died, in 1607, possessed of a large number of books of sorts, whereof an inventory is set forth; so that if we are to include Bishopton in Mr. Phillipps's "neighbourhood," evidently it was not literally "bookless" in the fourth year of James I. All which we may admit with equanimity. But that the great majority of the good people of Stratford, in Shakspeare's time, were altogether illiterate may be (and doubtless is) perfectly true nevertheless. It is indisputable too that "the attorneys would have their law books, the doctors their medical books." Mrs. Stopes cites the case of John Hall, Shakspeare's son-in-law, to which I have alluded elsewhere. She specially calls attention to the fact that Doctor Hall made mention of his books by his will. So too the Rev. John Marshall made specific bequests of some of his books by his will. Sir Thomas Lucy's library also was "remembered in his will." But Shakspeare made a will, and a long one, prepared by the local attorney, in which he made mention of many things, but no mention whatever of books. Apparently there was no library at New Place, Stratford-on-Avon. Yet surely *Shakspeare* was not "bookless"! That is a much more important question than whether or not Mr. Phillipps was guilty of "a terminological inexactitude."



he had then so long been placed, have had the opportunity for acquiring a refined style of composition." Such is the opinion of Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps.

It is not to be accepted merely on Mr. Phillipps's authority, but is it not the conclusion to which all the evidence inevitably forces us? Is it not the only conclusion which reason and common sense will allow us to form?

There is another consideration which must here be taken into account. "It was only in London," says Mr. Grant White, "that those plays could have been written. London had but just before Shakespeare's day made its metropolitan supremacy felt as well as acknowledged throughout England. As long as two hundred years after that time the county of each Member of Parliament was betrayed by his tongue." Yes, and at the present day, as we all know, Northumberland, Lancashire, Cornwall, Devon, Sussex, Hampshire (to give a few examples) have each its own peculiar, well-marked dialect and pronunciation, and not even the cultivated man of the upper classes will be entirely free from its influence if he receives his education and passes his life in his own county. That the young Shakspeare when he came to London spoke the Warwickshire dialect or *patois* is, then, as certain as anything can be that is incapable of mathematical proof. "His language," says Mr. Grant White, "would have been a dialect which must needs have been translated to be understood by modern English ears."

At this point I would ask the thinking reader who does not take his opinions, on literary or historical questions, ready-made from the *ex-cathedra* pronouncement of some *soi-disant* infallible High Pontiff of Literature, to consider a few facts and dates. The twins Hamnet and Judith were baptised at Stratford-on-Avon on February 2nd, 1585, and it is conjectured by Mr. Phillipps and Mr. Lee that Shakspeare shortly after this took his departure for London. Whether it was *propter hoc* as well as *post hoc*



we do not know, but unless he was obliged to fly his native village, it would not seem that he was a very affectionate father. It is possible, however, that this *Hegira* was somewhat later. Mr. Fleay, well known for his great labours in the Shakespearean field, puts it in 1587. For all we know it may have been even later than that. Now, as already mentioned, according to Dr. Furnivall and others, *Love's Labour's Lost* was composed in 1588-9; *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-91; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1590-1; *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3; and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1590-2. These dates are, of course, more or less hypothetical,<sup>1</sup> like everything else in the life of Shakespeare, but, at any rate, as Mr. Lee says, "his first essays have been with confidence allotted to 1591," and there is cogent evidence for an earlier date than that. And in 1593 was published that wonderful poem *Venus and Adonis*, which the poet described as "the first heir of my invention."

Let us take the poem first. It opens with a dedicatory address, signed "William Shakespeare," to Henry Wriothlesley, Earl of Southampton, a young gallant then in his twentieth year, a man of vast possessions, in the front ranks of society, and reckoned the handsomest man at Court. No little audacity this on the part of Player Shakspeare! Actors at that time were classed with rogues and vagabonds, unless they had obtained a licence from some great personage. "It must be borne in mind," says Mr. Phillipps, "that actors occupied an inferior position in society, and that even the vocation of a dramatic author was considered scarcely respectable." "At this day," writes Dr. Ingleby, "we can scarcely realize the scorn which was thrown on all sides upon those who made acting a means of livelihood." Yet here is Player Shakspeare dedicating "the first heir of his invention" to one of the greatest and most fashionable nobles at the great

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 51, and *post*, p. 515.

Queen's Court! To the Earl of Southampton, says Mr. Grant White, Shakspeare dedicated his *Venus and Adonis*, "although he had not asked permission to do so, as the dedication shows, and in those days and long after, without some knowledge of his man, and some opportunity of judging how he would receive the compliment, a player would not have ventured to take such a liberty with the name of a nobleman." Have we, then, any evidence that Shakspeare, the actor, was intimate with Southampton, or patronised by him? Not a scrap of such evidence exists. We only know that "Shakespeare" dedicated his poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to this great personage.

On the title-page of *Venus and Adonis* appear these lines from Ovid's *Amores* :—

Vilia miretur vulgus : mihi flavus Apollo  
Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ,

i.e., "Let the common herd admire common things, so long as to *me* Apollo's self hands goblets brimming with the waters of Castaly." Of a truth the young Player, at his first literary venture, was not troubled with any superfluous modesty! Two years afterwards Sir Philip Sidney published his *Apology for Poetry*, and inscribed upon the title-page a similar haughty motto :—

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.

In Sidney's case this sort of thing seems natural enough; but we should hardly have expected it in a young unknown provincial, *nullis majoribus ortus*! <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The tone of its dedication to the Earl of Southampton, if somewhat egotistical, is that of one well-bred man addressing another. Besides taking for granted that it was in his power to 'honour' his noble friend, the author (who is commonly supposed to have begun and ended his earthly career as one of the bourgeoisie of a petty market town in the Midlands) goes out of his way to proclaim his aversion to vulgar ideals, for he adopts as his motto the verses of Ovid," quoted above. Jonson in his *Poetaster* translates these as follows :—

"Kneel hinds to trash—me let bright Phœbus swell  
With cups full flowing from the Muses' well."

(See "Shakespeare-Bacon." An Essay by E. W. S.)

We now turn to the poem itself, and our wonder increases at every step. Here is the young Warwickshire provincial writing, "as his first essay in English composition, the most elegant verses the age produced, and which for polish and care surpass his very latest works."<sup>1</sup> Polished indeed, and scholarly, is this extraordinary poem, and, above all, it is impressed throughout with that which we now call *Culture*. It is, in fact, imbued with the spirit of the highest culture of the age in which it was written. The author, as Mr. Churton Collins tells us, "draws on Ovid, the material, profusely and superbly embroidered and expanded with original imagery and detail, being derived from the story as told in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, with much which is borrowed from the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the fourth book, and from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt in the eighth book." The *Metamorphoses*, indeed, had been translated by Golding, but Mr. Collins, for reasons to which I will allude later on, thinks it "just as likely that he followed the original as that he followed the translation." A courtly, scholarly poet, in fact, saturated with Ovid. Then for his description of "the ideal horse" he goes to Virgil as imitated and expanded by Du Bartas. Here he would seem to have followed Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's work, but if so he must apparently have seen it in manuscript, since Sylvester's translation of this part of the *Divine Weeks and Works* was not published till 1598.<sup>2</sup> The resemblance is so close that I will give Sylvester's lines, taken from "the second week":

With round high hollow smooth brown jetty hoof,  
With pasterns short, upright (but yet in mean),

<sup>1</sup> Appleton Morgan, *The Shakespearian Myth*, p. 219. "The *Venus and Adonis*," writes Mr. Morgan, "is the most carefully polished production that William Shakespeare's name was ever signed to, and, moreover, as polished, elegant, and sumptuous a piece of rhetoric as English letters have ever produced."

<sup>2</sup> See further as to this chap. XIV, p. 423.

Dry sinewy shanks, strong fleshless knees, and lean,  
 With Hart-like legs, broad breast and large behinde,  
 With body large, smooth flanks and double chin'd.  
 A crested neck bow'd like a half bent bow,  
 Whereon a long thin curled mane doth flow.  
 A firm full tail, touching the lowly ground,  
 With dock between two fair fat buttocks drown'd ;  
 A prickéd ear that rests as little space  
 As his light foot ; a lean, bare bonny face,  
 Thin joule and head, but of a middle size.  
 Full lively flaming quickly rowling eyes,  
 Great foaming mouth, hot fuming nostrils wide, etc.

The reader will find that nearly all these expressions are reproduced in Shakespeare's picture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We may thus tabulate the resemblances between Sylvester and Shakespeare in this description :—

## SYLVESTER'S "DU BARTAS."

## SHAKESPEARE

Round . . . hoof.

Round hoof'd.

Pasterns short.

Short-jointed.

Hart-like legs.

Straight legs and passing strong.

Broad breast.

Broad breast.

Long thin mane.

Thin mane.

Full tail.

Thick tail.

Fat buttocks.

Broad buttock.

Pricked ear.

Short ears.

Thin head.

Small head.

Full eyes.

Full eye.

Nostril wide.

Nostril wide.

A crested neck.

High crest.

In an earlier stanza Shakespeare has :—

"His ears up prick'd, his braided hanging mane  
 Upon his compass'd crest now stand on end ;  
 His nostrils drink the air, and forth again,  
 As from a furnace vapours he doth send."

With which we may compare Sylvester quoted above. ("Compass'd" of course=arch'd).

Ben Jonson in his *Bartholomew Fair* (Act IV, Scene 3) parodies this description of "the ideal horse" by making it applicable with some little change to the ideal woman ! "My delicate dark chestnut here, with the fine lean head, large forehead, round eyes," etc. I must refer the reader to the original for the rest of the quotation.

There is, by the way, a rather curious slip in the life of Joshua Sylvester in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where we read, "Ben Jonson in his



Then, too, the author of *Venus and Adonis* appears as a humanitarian, full of tender compassion for the poor hunted hare; as witness those beautiful lines commencing:—

By this poor Wat, far off upon a hill,  
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear.

We are reminded here of the melancholy Jacques, and his sympathy with "the poor dappled fools" of the forest. Mr. Lee (p. 66) seems to think that Shakespeare had read the *Ode de la Chasse* in Estienne Jodelle's *Ouvres et Meslanges Poétiques* (where, he says, there are "curious resemblances" to the "minute description" of the hare-hunt in *Venus and Adonis*), and it may well be so, for evidently the author of the poem was a wide reader both of the classics and of the literature of his day.

Then we have a curious and, it must be confessed, a very unpoetical legal allusion. "The Queen of Love proposes to 'sell herself' to the young Adonis, the consideration is to be a 'thousand kisses,' the number to be doubled in default of immediate payment: the deed is to be executed without delay, and the purchaser is to 'set his sign manual on her wax-red lips.'" (Judge Webb, *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 167.) Then exclaims Venus:—

Say, for non-payment, that the debt should double,  
Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?

conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden complained that 'Sylvester wrote his verses before he understood to confer,' referring apparently to the verbal inaccuracy of the rendering." What Jonson really said was, "that Sylvester's translation was not well done, and that he wrote his verses before it [i.e. prefixed to it] before he understood to confer," i.e. before he, Jonson, understood French sufficiently to judge of the merits of the translation. The epigram itself makes this quite clear.

"But as it is (the child of Ignorance  
And utter stranger to all air of France)  
How can I speak of thy great pains but err?  
Since they can only judge who can confer."



This is an allusion to the penalty for non-payment which, as every lawyer knows, formed the condition of a "common money-bond"—rather out of place, it must be admitted, in such a collocation.

Taking, then, all the circumstances together—the time of publication of this "first heir" of the poet's "invention," the dedication to the Earl of Southampton, the haughty claim advanced by the prefixed quotation from Ovid, and, above all, the character and contents of the poem, and all to which they bear witness; bearing in mind, also, that there is really no evidence identifying the Player with the Poet, or showing that he ever claimed the authorship of the poem, is it conceivable that this was the work of the Stratford Player of whom we know so little, yet of whom we know so much too much? If so, we have here a veritable sixteenth-century miracle. But on the assumption that miracles had ceased before that date the belief appears to me as preposterous as any of those illusions which, being consecrated by time, are dear to the credulity of the human heart.<sup>1</sup>

Yet there are to be found worshippers at the Stratford shrine infatuated enough to believe that this wonderful, polished, scholarly, and elaborate poem was composed by the young provincial while still consorting with the butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers of his native Stratford. Sir Theodore Martin is quite inclined to accept this absurd supposition. "It might be so," he says, "for Shakespeare

<sup>1</sup> *Venus and Adonis* was printed by Richard Field, and Field was a native of Stratford, but there is absolutely nothing to show that Field had any acquaintance with, or any knowledge of Shakspeare. Mrs. Stopes (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, ch. 1) has collected everything that can be found with reference to this printer, but there is no link to connect him with Shakspeare, except the assumption that "Shakespeare" of the dedication is Shakspeare of Stratford. Mrs. Stopes assumes that Shakspeare acquired his learning, classical and other (including, e.g., his knowledge of Giordano Bruno, whose influence so clearly appears in the Sonnets), by reading at Field's shop. Reason and probability seem to count for little in the Stratfordian creed.

was twenty-one when he was forced to leave Stratford, and weighted although the *Venus and Adonis* is with thought as well as passion, the genius which produced the dramas might even at that early age have conceived and written it"! This seems to me extravagant infatuation rather than critical judgment. Yet Mr. Churton Collins is quite prepared to fall into line. Confronted with Shakespeare's own assertion that the *Venus and Adonis* was the first heir of his invention, yet desirous of ascribing a much earlier date to some of the Shakespearean dramas, and particularly to *Titus Andronicus*, which he violently contends is Shakespeare's work, and composed between 1586 and 1591, Mr. Collins is driven to insist "either that *Venus and Adonis* was written long before it was printed . . . or that for some reason he did not regard his early dramas as heirs of his invention." "I do not wish to indulge in conjecture," says Mr. Collins, "but it seems to me highly probable that it [*V. and A.*] was composed at Stratford before he came up to London, as early perhaps as 1585."<sup>1</sup> This proves a little too much for such a highly-trained critic and powerful reasoner as Mr. J. M. Robertson, who thus comments upon the passage I have quoted: "It is thus put as equally highly probable that 'for some reason' Shakespeare thought his poems were his inventions, while his original plays were not; and that he had produced at Stratford an elaborate poem, carefully calculated for popularity, which he kept in manuscript through eight years of struggle for existence. Both propositions are improbable to the last degree. That Shakespeare wrote *Venus and Adonis* before he came to London is a hypothesis which would never have been broached but for the need of serving the presupposition that he wrote plays as early as 1589. What should have induced him to withhold from the press for all those years so readily saleable a poem, when he was actually in need of

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 108.

whatever money he could come by? The surmise will not bear a moment's investigation."<sup>1</sup> But this is not all. Mr. Collins tells us further (p. 120) that "*Venus and Adonis* is plainly modelled on Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*," forgetting, apparently, that Lodge's poem was not published till 1589. According to this critic, therefore, Shakspeare at Stratford, "as early perhaps as 1585," models the first heir of his invention on a poem by Lodge which did not see the light in print till four years afterwards! We shall be told next that Lodge visited the young provincial and invited him to peruse his manuscript! "Mr. Collins," says Mr. Robertson (p. 22), "has not even taken the trouble to reconcile his assertions—and this in an essay in which he imputes to his gainsayers perversity, paradox, sophistry, and illegitimate criticism!"<sup>2</sup>

Another consideration must not be omitted. Before

<sup>1</sup> *Did Shakespeare write 'Titus Andronicus'?* pp. 22, 23. The real absurdity, in my judgment, is in the belief that the "Stratford rustic" could have written such a poem at all. What are the probabilities of a butcher's or draper's apprentice at Stratford-on-Avon at the present time, born in illiterate surroundings, and brought up as Shakspeare was brought up, writing, say at the age of twenty-one, a polished, cultured, elaborate, and scholarly poem, such as *Venus and Adonis*, and of the same high degree of excellence? Should we not look upon it as an almost miraculous performance? In Shakspeare's time, and for a youth in Shakspeare's environment, it would have been a miracle of tenfold marvel. The truth is that we do not gather figs from thistles, nor can we make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Even "Genius" cannot do this.

<sup>2</sup> Some critics, including Charles Knight and Mr. Swinburne, have maintained that *Arden of Feversham*, published anonymously in 1592, was written by Shakespeare. How they could possibly have come to that conclusion is to me a mystery. The Rev. Ronald Bayne, who has recently edited the play for Messrs. Dent, finds difficulties in the way of the supposed authorship which are worth quoting as illustrating the kind of assumptions which have to be made in support of the Stratfordian theory: "Unless Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] wrote this play as soon as he reached London, and then for a year or two wrote nothing else, it is impossible to fit it into his work. And if he wrote the play as soon as he reached London and then took up the studies which resulted in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, would he have written *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Comedy of Errors* on his way back to work like *Arden*?" I must leave it to the Stratfordians to answer this and similar conundrums.

*Venus and Adonis* could be published a licence to that effect had to be obtained. The Stationers' Company's Charter of Philip and Mary, confirmed by Elizabeth in 1559, forbade anybody to print "any book or anything for sale or traffic," unless he were a member of the Company, or a royal licence had been granted to him. Elizabeth's Injunctions of 1559 provided that every book should be licensed by Her Majesty, or by six of the Privy Council, or perused and licensed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London, the Chancellors of both Universities, the Bishop being ordinary, and the Archdeacon also of the place where the book was to be printed, or by two of them, the ordinary of the place being always one; and the names of the allowing Commissioners were to be added at the end of the work. Pamphlets, plays, and ballads were to be licensed by any three of the Commissioners.<sup>1</sup>

Now *Venus and Adonis* is certainly not a Puritan's poem, being full of voluptuous images such as might well find favour with the young Earl of Southampton, who was well known as a gallant gay Lothario. It is somewhat surprising, then, to find, not only that the young actor has, apparently, no difficulty in obtaining a licence for his poem, but that one of the guarantors of its fitness for publication is Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury. I am aware that to mention the name of Bacon in this connection is to the Stratfordians as a red rag to a bull, but, nevertheless, it may here be recalled that Bacon and Southampton were intimate (they had been at Gray's Inn together) and that Whitgift had been Bacon's tutor. But *favete linguis*. I have no desire to embark upon the stormy sea of Baconian controversy.

Let us now turn to *Love's Labour's Lost*, to which, says Mr. Lee, p. 48, "may reasonably be assigned priority in

<sup>1</sup> See also the Decree of the Star Chamber, June 23, 1586, cited *infra*, p. 304.



point of time of all Shakespeare's dramatic productions." If *Venus and Adonis* is an extraordinary poem, so also is *Love's Labour's Lost* an extraordinary play. It is something *sui generis* among the Shakespearean dramas, and he would be a bold manager who should venture to put it upon a modern stage. But, besides containing some beautiful poetry, it coruscates with ingenious wit, and is full of quips and quiddities, quibbling, repartee, and word-play. Its author must have been not only a man of high intellectual culture, but one who was intimately acquainted with the ways of the Court, and the fashionable society of his time, as also with contemporary foreign politics. "The subject matter," writes Mr. Lee, "suggests that its author had already enjoyed extended opportunities of surveying London life and manners, such as were hardly open to him in the very first years of his settlement in the Metropolis. 'Love's Labour's Lost' embodies keen observation of contemporary life in many ranks of society, both in town and country, while the speeches of the hero Biron clothe much sound philosophy in masterly rhetoric. Its slender plot stands almost alone among Shakespeare's plots in that it is not known to have been borrowed, and stands quite alone in openly travestying known traits and incidents of current social and political life. The names of the chief characters are drawn from the leaders in the civil war in France, which was in progress between 1589 and 1594, and was anxiously watched by the English public. Contemporary projects of academies for disciplining young men; fashions of speech and dress current in fashionable circles; recent attempts on the part of Elizabeth's government to negotiate with the Tsar of Russia; the inefficiency of rural constables and the pedantry of village schoolmasters and curates are all satirised with good humour." "The hero is the King of Navarre, in whose dominions the scene is laid. The two chief lords in attendance on him in the play, Biron and Longaville,



bear the actual names of the two most strenuous supporters of the real King of Navarre. The name of the Lord Dumain is a common anglicised version of that Duc de Maine or Mayenne whose name was so frequently mentioned in popular accounts of French affairs in connection with Navarre's movements that Shakespeare was led to number him also among his supporters. Mothe or La Mothe, the name of the pretty ingenious page, was that of a French ambassador who was long popular in London," though he left England in 1583.

The case as to this very remarkable play is well summed up by the late Judge Webb in his *Mystery of William Shakespeare* (p. 44): "Ignoring the imperfect education, the sordid surroundings, the mean employments, and the wild adventures of the young man (Shakspeare), Mr. Coleridge is of opinion that the diction and allusions of the play afford a strong presumption that 'his habits had been scholastic.' The principal characters of the play, according to Mr. Marshall, were persons who had figured prominently in the recent politics of France. . . . The habits of the author could not have been more scholastic if, like Bacon, he had spent three years in the University of Cambridge; he could not have been more familiar with French politics if, like Bacon, he had spent three years in the train of an Ambassador to France; he could not have been more thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of fashionable life in London if, like Bacon, he had been the friend of Essex and Southampton; and he could not have been more familiar with all the gossip of the Court if, like Bacon, he had, from his earliest youth, been dancing attendance on the Virgin Queen. It may be added that he could not have shown a greater knowledge of Spanish and Italian proverbs if, like Bacon, he had formed a collection of them, and entered them in a common-place book such as *Promus*. Like Bacon, too, the author of the play must

have had a large command of books; he must have had his 'Horace,' his 'Ovidius Naso,' and his 'good old Mantuan.' He must have had access to the *Chronicles* of Monstrelet to know the conflicting claims of France and Navarre and Aquitaine. The style of narration, according to Mr. Coleridge, who thinks that the play was planned before Shakspeare had left Stratford, seems imitated from the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney [not published till 1590]. Sir Piercie Shafton could not have been better read in the *Euphues* of Lyly. The treatment of Don Armado and his boy, Moth, reminds Mr. Lee of Sir Thopas and his boy, Epiton, in Lyly's *Endymion*. It is not too much to say that the author of *Love's Labour's Lost* was the embodiment of all the accomplishments and all the culture of his age. In the purity and plenitude of his English he was unrivalled, in the 'elegance, facility, and golden cadence' of his verse, he was unsurpassed; he eclipsed Lyly; he outshone Sidney; his blank verse, in the opinion of Mr. Coleridge, has nothing equal to it but that of Milton; and Mr. Swinburne recognises in it 'the speech of Gods.' How the young countryman could have acquired the speech of Gods, when even country gentlemen, according to Macaulay, spoke the dialect of clowns; how he could have acquired the book-learning which is conspicuous in the play, when even the country clergy, according to Macaulay, found the utmost difficulty in procuring books; how he could have become acquainted with the fashions of speech and dress current in the fashionable circles of London while residing in a country town such as that described by Garrick—these are questions to which everyone would like to receive an answer, but they are questions which are left unanswered, nay, unasked, by Mr. Lee."

We have already seen<sup>1</sup> that, according to eminent Shakespearean experts, *Love's Labour's Lost* was com-

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 51, and see *post*, p. 515-6.

posed in 1588-9, *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-91, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1590-1, *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3, and *The Two Gentlemen* in 1590-2. We have seen, too, that *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention," was composed at any rate before 1593, and some critics (Professor Baynes among them) maintain that it had been written before Shakspeare left Stratford—an assumption in which Sir Theodore Martin sees no improbability.<sup>1</sup>

Now, putting aside for the moment the other plays above-mentioned, and fixing our attention only on *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Venus and Adonis* (which the reader who has not already done so should "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest"), how is it possible to conceive that these works, which proclaim in every line that their author was a cultured and courtly aristocrat, were composed by William Shakspeare of Stratford?

I know, of course, what the answer of the Stratfordian will be. He will ingeminate "Genius! Genius!" Has not Sir Theodore Martin written that the difficulty has arisen with "certain people to whom the ways of genius

<sup>1</sup> "It is extremely improbable," writes Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, "that an epic, so highly finished and so completely devoid of *patois*, could have been produced under the circumstances of his then domestic surroundings, while, moreover, the notion is opposed to the best and earliest traditional opinions." Yet Mr. Churton Collins (*Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 108) thinks it "highly probable" that the poem "was composed at Stratford before he [Shakspeare] came up to London"! As the epithet "absurd" is one of the mildest of those so plentifully showered by Mr. Collins on such as venture to disagree with him, I need not scruple to characterise the opinion that this extraordinary poem was written by "a Stratford rustic" (to use an expression now sanctioned by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse) as simply fatuous. This is the faith that removes mountains by swallowing them. It is quite in the nature of things that a high priest of this credulous order should rail at those who will not accept all the articles of his creed on account of "their indifference to evidence, to probability, to reason"! Being *omnium capax*, he is, like Habakkuk, *capable de tout*. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, it may be remarked, say that "the indebtedness of *Venus and Adonis* to Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla* proves that it cannot have been written before the publication of that poem, in the autumn of 1589." They would fix the date at 1590. There are many tabernacles in the Stratfordian camp!

are a stumbling-block"? Of Sir Theodore Martin I can only write in terms of unfeigned respect, and I regret that he should have entertained such contempt for those who would examine the claims of genius rather strictly when it is appealed to as a Thaumaturgus. It is as if he had written, "These poor people,—these poor dolts,—they cannot understand the ways of genius. 'But *we* are Spirits of another sort'!" Well, if by "Genius" is meant the Genius of the *Arabian Nights* who can bring into being an Aladdin's Palace by a mere word, then no doubt Genius can do all that these complacent critics claim for it. But if human genius be intended, then I venture to think that they have greatly misconceived the functions and potentialities of genius, and that, for all their fancied superiority, they will haply be found to be but wise in their own conceits. Genius may give the power of acquiring knowledge, but genius is not knowledge. Genius never taught a man to conjugate *τύπτω* who had never had a lesson in Greek nor seen a Greek grammar.<sup>1</sup> Many a "mute inglorious Milton" rests in many a country churchyard. And why? Because

Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll.

And though genius may prompt one to sing sweetly without much knowledge, it would require not genius but

<sup>1</sup> "Il y a des choses de métier que le genie ne revèle pas. Il faut les apprendre." Balzac, *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, p. 193. Take, for example, Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of law, with which I deal elsewhere (chap. XIII). As Mr. Castle, K.C., truly says, "Law is a comparatively dry subject, only to be acquired by a large amount of experience and trouble; there is no intuitive knowledge of the forms of pleading and the use of technical words and phrases, and therefore if these are to be found in some of the plays, we have a knowledge that must have been acquired." Ardent Shakesperiolaters, however, seem to think that Shakspeare might have acquired an accurate knowledge of the doctrine of Uses, (e.g.) by the mere force of *genius*. They would, in his case at all events, doubtless subscribe to Dogberry's *dictum* that "to write and read comes by nature!"



divine inspiration to enable a young provincial apprentice, who had passed through call-boy to play-actor, and who had but picked up a few crumbs of education at the Stratford Free School (where by the way he had, it would seem, given no indications of genius whatever)—in a word, Shakspeare as we know him to have been—not only to wake to ecstasy the living lyre, but to write of all things under heaven as never man wrote before or since. "All the commentators on Shakespeare," writes Mr. Ellacombe, "are agreed that he was the most wonderfully many-sided writer that the world has yet seen. Every art and science are more or less noticed by him so far as they were known in his day, every business and profession are more or less accurately described; and so it has come to pass that, though the main circumstances of his life are pretty well known, yet the students of every art and science, and the members of every business and profession, have delighted to claim him as their fellow-labourer. Books have been written at various times by various writers which have proved (to the complete satisfaction of the writers) that he was a soldier, a sailor, a lawyer, an astronomer, a physician, a divine, a printer, an actor, a courtier, a sportsman, an angler, and I know not what else beside." Mr. Ellacombe himself, quoting *Richard II*, Act III, scene 4, is almost tempted to say that he was "a gardener by profession." We know, too, that he is so accurate in his topographical details that books have been written to prove that he had visited not only Scotland but also Germany and Italy.

But genius alone cannot do all this. Genius is a gift of nature, but nature alone never yet gave knowledge and culture. The diamond is a natural product, but, however fine its quality, it will not sparkle like the Koh-i-nûr unless it be subjected to the process of cutting at the hands of a skilful artificer. No; the genius of Shakespeare was genius in conjunction with wide reading,<sup>1</sup> and the best

<sup>1</sup> He was "an omnivorous reader," says Anders. *Shakespeare's Books*.



culture that the age could provide. "Genius," writes Mr. Edwards, "will do wonders with material once gathered, but genius does not provide or originate facts on which to work. No man ever became learned out of his own consciousness. The verdict of mankind, based on all experience, is that knowledge comes neither by inspiration nor accident, and that there is no royal or other than the common road to learning." "Genius," says Macaulay, "will not furnish the poet with a vocabulary. . . . Information and experience are necessary, not for the purpose of strengthening the imagination, which is never so strong as in people incapable of reasoning—savages, children, etc.; but for the purpose of enabling the artist to communicate his conceptions to others. . . . Should a man, gifted by nature with all the genius of Canova, attempt to carve a statue without instruction as to the management of his chisel or attention to the anatomy of the human body, he would produce something compared with which the Highlander at the door of the snuff-shop would deserve admiration. If an uninitiated Raphael were to attempt a painting it would be a mere daub."

"Mr. Coleridge," as Judge Webb writes, "has endowed the young man who came up from Stratford with a superhuman genius, and undoubtedly, if we assume the young man to have been the author of the plays, we must grant him the possession of a genius which, making allowance for poetic licence, we may describe as superhuman. But, unfortunately, in the absence of evidence that the young man possessed a superhuman genius, we have no right to assume that he was the author of the plays, and most assuredly he had given no signs of the possession of a superhuman genius while he remained at Stratford. Enthusiasts more *ultrafidian* than Mr. Coleridge have carried the theory of superhuman genius into a theory of actual inspiration. Admitting his humble origin, his

defective education, his mean employments, and his want of all opportunities of culture, they have venerated him as a miraculous birth of time, to whom the whole world of being was revealed by a sort of apocalyptic vision, and who was endowed with the gift of tongues by a species of Pentecostal fire. This is Shakesperiolatry run mad. When we venerate Shakespeare, we venerate him not as a miracle, but as a man; and the ordinary laws of nature are not suspended in the case of extraordinary men. It is here that the difficulty of the Shakesperean lies. Though poetry, as Bacon says, is a plant that cometh of the lust of the earth, the intuitions of genius cannot supply a knowledge of material facts."

To the same effect Dr. Elze: "The poetic imagination may be ever so lively and creative, and the power of intuition ever so highly developed, one thing cannot be disputed, namely, that it bestows upon no one a knowledge of facts, but that such a knowledge can only be acquired either by experience or must be imparted by others.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson very correctly observes that 'Shakespeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned.'" The writer then goes on to speak of Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of certain "positive facts respecting Italy," to which I will refer later on.

Sir Theodore Martin, in order, I suppose, to assist those poor people to whom the ways of genius are a stumbling-block, cites certain cases which he appears to consider analogous to that of Shakespeare. "Kindred manifestations of genius in men as lowly born, and as little favoured in point of education as he, of which biographical records furnish countless instances." Among these he names "Leonardo da Vinci, the illegitimate son of a common notary; Marlowe, the son of a shoemaker; Ben Jonson, posthumous son of a clergyman, but brought up by a

<sup>1</sup> *Sic.*

bricklayer stepfather; Burns, the son of a small farmer; Keats, an apothecary's apprentice, and the son of a livery-stable keeper."

This really seems to me to display an *ignoratio elenchi* much greater than that of Dr. Johnson when he kicked a large stone in order to refute Berkeley. It shows, in my humble judgment, that the writer had not the faintest conception of the real difficulties of the problem which he affects to decide in such a light and airy manner. Let us briefly consider the examples which he would have us look upon as "kindred manifestations." We will take Marlowe first. "Marlowe, the son of a shoemaker," says Sir Theodore, as though that were quite sufficient to make the case analogous to that of Shakespeare. Yes, Marlowe's father was, certainly, a member of the Shoemakers' and Tanners' Guild of Canterbury. He was also clerk of St. Mary's, and married the daughter of the rector of St. Peter's. His son Christopher, the poet, was educated at the famous King's School, of Canterbury, where he gained an Exhibition. Thence he proceeded to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he graduated B.A. in 1583, and M.A. in 1587. He studied the classics with enthusiasm, and, amongst other things, it may be mentioned that he translated Ovid's *Amores* into English heroic verse, though the translation was not published till after his death. Would Sir Theodore, who is so familiar with the ways of genius, really have us think—does he himself think—that there is an analogy between this case and that of Shakspeare, if Shakspeare and Shakespeare are to be looked upon as identical? Where is the difficulty in reconciling Marlowe's works with his birth and education? There is, of course, none whatever.

Next take the case of Ben Jonson. On this I need not expatiate, because we have already considered his education at the best school that existed in England in his time, where he became, moreover, the special protégé

of the great and learned Camden. "During the years he spent at Westminster," wrote John Addington Symonds, "we must imagine him absorbing all the new learning of the Greeks and Romans which England had derived from Italian humanism, drinking in knowledge at every sense, and, after books were cast aside, indulging his leisure in studying the humours of the town which lay around him. . . . This raw observant boy, his head crammed with Tacitus and Livy, Aristophanes and Thucydides, sallied forth from the class-room, when the hours of study were over, into the slums of suburban London, lounged around the water-stairs of the Thames, threaded the purlieus of Cheapside and Smithfield, and drank with 'prentices and boxed with porters, learned the slang of the streets, and picked up insensibly that inexhaustible repertory of contemporary manners which makes his comedies our most prolific source of information on the life of London in the sixteenth century." Thus Westminster and London made him what he was, but it may be added that he "finished his education" by the military service which he saw and the experience which he gained in the Low Countries.

Here, again, where does the analogy come in? Sir Theodore would seem to find it in the fact that Jonson's mother married a master mason or bricklayer. Never was greater nonsense. Jonson's stepfather did his duty well by the poet that was to be, for "he put his little stepson Benjamin to school, providing for the first stage of a training which was destined to produce one of the wisest scholars and most learned poets whom English annals can boast." As to the stories of his working with a trowel in one hand and a *Horace* in the other, they are mere inventions. Mr. Symonds dismisses them with contempt. No; everything is plain in Jonson's case, as in Marlowe's. Jonson had just the kind of education and training which was calculated to give his genius the power to produce



those fruits which it did produce. Sir Theodore must try again.

Take, then, the case of Burns, "the son of a small farmer." Here is, indeed, an instructive comparison for our purpose. It will not much assist Sir Theodore, but none could be better to illustrate the argument. If ever man was born with poetic genius it was the Ayrshire ploughman, and scanty enough was the schooling he received. Happily, however, he was born in a land where there has long been an enthusiasm for education which the Southron would do well to imitate. So the young Burns was taught by his father, and taught at the Dalrymple parish school. Then he was handed over to John Murdoch, who gave him some training both in English and French. We hear of his reading, while still a boy, the *Life of Hannibal* and the *Life of Wallace*, Locke's famous *Essay*, Pope's *Homer*, the *Spectator*, Smollett, Allan Ramsay, Ferguson, and other works. In French he reads *Télémaque*, and picks up a little Latin. A little later he reads Thomson, Shenstone, *Tristram Shandy*, *The Man of Feeling*, Ossian, etc, and he studies surveying under the schoolmaster of Kirkoswald. Not a very great literary equipment certainly, but he is fortunate in his inheritance of a traditional lyric literature, which he makes the material of his immortal songs. And what was the poetic output? There is the point. The Ayrshire ploughman sings of the scenes in which he has been bred: of the burn and the heather, of the sweeping Nith and the banks and braes of bonny Doon. He sings of the Scotch peasantry, of their customs as in "Halloween," and, above all, of the sweet Scotch lassies, whom he loved not wisely but too well. And all this in his own homely dialect. The very genius of lyrical poetry speaks from his mouth, but speaks in that Scottish language for the interpretation of which the English reader requires a glossary. "He is only insipid when he tries to adopt the conventional English of



his time," says a writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. When he essayed to write in metropolitan English, says Principal Shairp, "he was seldom more than a third-rate—a common, clever versifier." Had Burns, say at the age of twenty-five, written highly polished and cultured English, abounding with classical allusions, showing intimate knowledge of Court life and fashionable society, and dealing in such a lifelike manner with foreign countries as to lead readers to suppose that he must have paid a visit to their shores; had he discussed divine philosophy for all the ages and for every phase of human life; had he held the mirror for mankind—had the Ayrshire ploughman done all this and a great deal more, then indeed there might have been some analogy between his case and that of Shakespeare.

"But in the case of Robert Burns, this heaven-born genius did not set him straightway on so lofty a pinnacle that he could circumspect the past and forecast the future, or guide his untaught pen to write of Troy and Egypt, of Athens and Cyprus, or to reproduce the very counterfeit civilizations and manners of nations born and buried and passed into history a thousand years before he had been begotten . . . of the most unusual and hidden details of forgotten politics and commercial customs, such as, for instance, the exceptional usage of a certain trade in Mitylene, the anomalous status of a Moorish mercenary in command of a Venetian army, of a savage queen of Britain led captive by Rome, or a thane of Scotland under one of its primitive kings,—matters of curious and occult research for antiquaries or dilettanti to dig out of old romances or treatises or statutes, rather than for historians to treat of or schools to teach! In the case of Robert Burns we are content not to ask too much even of genius. Let us be content if the genius of Robert Burns could glorify the goodwives' fables of his wonted fireside and set in aureole the homeliest cipher of his vicinage, until a

field-mouse became a poem or a milkmaid a Venus! It were unreasonable to demand that this genius, this fire from heaven, at once and on the instant invest a letterless peasant-lad with all the love and law which the ages behind him had shut up in clasped books and buried and forgotten,—with all the learning that the past had gathered into great tomes and piled away in libraries.”<sup>1</sup> And yet Shakespeare who did all this might with greater truth than Burns be described as a letterless peasant-lad—that is, if Shakspeare be Shakespeare!

What, then, of John Keats, whom Sir Theodore, in order to belittle his origin as much as possible, describes as an apothecary’s apprentice and the son of a livery-stable keeper? Well, it is true that his father did keep a livery-stable, but both his parents are known to have been, as they were described by one who knew them, “people of no everyday character.” At the age of eight John Keats was put to a school of excellent repute kept by John Clarke at Enfield, where he secured the friendship of the master’s son, John Cowden Clarke, not unknown to fame, who was usher in the school. After three or four years we learn that the boy Keats could hardly be torn from his books, that he won all the literature prizes at the school; and that during play hours he devoured all he could lay hands on of literary criticism and especially of classical mythology. He received a good education in Latin,<sup>2</sup> French,

<sup>1</sup> Morgan’s *Shakespearian Myth*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> A friend has pointed out to me, what has hitherto passed unnoticed, viz., that some of the ideas at the commencement of the “Ode to a Nightingale” are undoubtedly taken from Horace. Cf.

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains,  
One moment past, and Lethe-wards had sunk,”

with Epod. 14:—

“Mollis inertia cur tantam diffuderit imis  
Oblivionem sensibus,  
Pocula Letheos ut si ducentia somnos  
Arente fauce traxerim.”

and general history. He studied English literature, and especially the Elizabethan dramatists and poets under the excellent direction of John Cowden Clarke. He became intimate with many men of letters, he made the acquaintance of Shelley, he became the close friend of Leigh Hunt. He was, it is true, for a time articled to a surgeon, whom Sir Theodore Martin, for obvious reasons, prefers to call an apothecary, but unless we are to conclude that that fact constitutes an insuperable bar to poetic inspiration it is difficult to perceive its relevancy. It is true, also, that though he had not learned the Greek language, his genius enabled him to absorb the true Greek spirit from books about the old Hellenes, and from translations of their works such as Chapman's *Homer*. But to compare this possibility of genius with Shakespearean achievements (again supposing that Shakspere = Shakespeare) would be about as sensible as to compare a conjuring trick with a miracle.

One great name still remains to be considered. It is the name of one who may, indeed, be fitly compared with Shakespeare, for, if we are to believe Mr. Sidney Colvin,<sup>1</sup> he was "the man whose genius has the best right to be called universal of any that have ever lived"—one to whom a recent biographer has deservedly applied Coleridge's description of Shakespeare—"a myriad-minded man." Sir Theodore Martin, still pursuing his depreciatory tactics, calls him "the illegitimate son of a common notary." Well, Leonardo da Vinci was certainly not born in wedlock, but unless Sir Theodore, who is so familiar with "the ways of genius," can assure us that great intellectual powers are never to be found in association with "the bend sinister," he has obtruded the epithet to no purpose. Leonardo's father, the so-called "common notary," was notary to the Signory of Florence, a landed proprietor, a man in excellent circumstances, and no mean

<sup>1</sup> In the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

position of life. The son, to whom our perverse and pernicious conventions would affix the stigma of "illegitimacy," was at once acknowledged, and was brought up in his father's house. As a boy he was put to study under Andrea del Verrocchio, a "thoroughly capable and spirited craftsman alike as goldsmith, sculptor, and painter."<sup>1</sup> He was enrolled in the list of the Painters' Guild of Florence. Under Verrocchio he studied till his twenty-fifth year. Subsequently he was taken into the special favour of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and readers of Florentine history will not need to be told what this would mean, or the immense advantages which it would confer on a student of literature, science, and art. From his earliest days, we are told, Leonardo "flung himself into the study of nature with unprecedented delight and curiosity." He "toiled among bats and wasps and lizards, forgetful of rest and food." He worked hard at anatomy, geometry, and optics. He enlarged his experiences by travels to Egypt, Cyprus, Constantinople, Armenia, and the coast of Asia Minor. He was endowed by a genius so extraordinary and so universal that he seems, as it were by intuition, to have anticipated some of the greatest discoveries of later ages, and as such we render him the homage of our wonder, and our admiration. But there is no miracle here, no mystery, no irreconcilable *non sequitur*, such as make the alleged Shakspeare-Shakespeare identity something which seems to shock us as even monstrous because contrary to the whole world's experience. Richly gifted as was Leonardo, writes Mr. John Addington Symonds, he did not trust his natural facility. "His patience was no less marvellous than the quickness of his insight. He lived to illustrate the definition of genius as the capacity for taking infinite pains." What analogy is there here with the case of the unlettered provincial, Player Shakspeare, the easy-going, jovial boon-companion, writing *currente calamo*, by

<sup>1</sup> Verrocchio was a woodcarver and musician as well.



plenary inspiration, (according to the hypothesis), unblotted pages of immortal poetry and equally immortal philosophy, for the instruction, delight, and wonder of all time? No analogy at all, but a sharp and most instructive contrast for which our thanks are due to Sir Theodore Martin. No, truly, we may ransack history where we will, from the dawn of civilisation to the present time, in the vain search for a parallel, but no parallel can be found. Sir Theodore Martin's supposed analogies prove upon examination merely to illustrate and enforce our argument, and to bring into stronger light the obstinate prejudice of those blind leaders of the blind who can darken counsel by such futilities. Even the case of Charles Dickens has been cited as affording some analogy to that of the supposed Shakspeare-Shakespeare, because, forsooth, Dickens during his boyhood was for a time employed at a blacking factory! The unhappy writer, who, of course, lectured us on our want of imagination and our utter inability to comprehend "the ways of genius," forgot that it was just those experiences of childhood and boyhood which supplied to the genius of Dickens the very *pabulum* upon which it thrived, and which enabled him to create and immortalise the characters of Oliver Twist and David Copperfield. Thus this critic actually cites those very circumstances which genius was able to use to its advantage, in order to impress upon us the marvellous results which genius may produce though working under every possible disadvantage! He points to the tools which genius has used for its work in order to fortify his contention that genius may produce the most stupendous of works with no tools at all! If this be wisdom, I can only say *Malo cum Bacon e errare*!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was, I think, Buffon who said "Le génie c'est une longue patience." The saying, doubtless, contains a large measure of truth, but it is an incomplete statement. It is more true to say, as did Disraeli in *Contarini Fleming*, "Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius"; or, with Carlyle, "Genius



## NOTE TO CHAPTER III

### A WORD ON THE *SONNETS*

I have not embarked upon the tremendous question of the *Sonnets* generally, but I must take this opportunity of saying one word upon that vexed subject. Infinite labour and time without end has been bestowed upon them, but no Shakespearean critic has yet succeeded in explaining them satisfactorily, and I venture to say that such success will never be obtained on the assumption that they were written by Shakspeare of Stratford. The idea that Will Shakspeare, the young provincial, was, about the year 1593, or soon after that date, writing a succession of impassioned odes to the young Earl of Southampton, urging him to marry at once, and become a father "for love of me," appears to me, in the absence of anything like cogent evidence to that effect, simply preposterous. Mr. Gerald Massey has written, very ably, to show that these Sonnets were written at a time when there was a proposal on foot that Southampton should marry the granddaughter of his guardian, the great Lord Burleigh. But, as Mr. Begley well asks (p. 136), "What can Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare], who has only been in London three or four years, and has hardly yet shaken off his dialect or the manners of the stableyard—what can he possibly have to do with such matters of high statecraft and political influence? Why should he, of all possible people, write a series of elaborate 'Procreation Sonnets' in order to induce a young nobleman of high prospects to marry the granddaughter of the highest dignitary in the

means the transcendent capacity of taking trouble, first of all." (*Frederick the Great*, Bk. IV, chap. II.) Genius is a potentiality, and whether it will ever become an actuality, and what it will produce, depends upon the moral qualities with which it is associated, and the opportunities that are open to it—in a word, on the circumstances of its environment.

kingdom? What was Burghley to Will Shakespeare or he to Burghley? And how on earth could the Warwickshire husband of Anne Hathaway, as yet only a rising supernumerary among a company of actors, 'vagrants by law' and mostly out at elbows whether on the stage or off—how on earth, I say, could he *dare* to make love to such a blooming scion of the aristocracy, and dare to make such a seventeen-fold suggestion, that he should marry at once and get a child 'for love of *me*' (Sonnet X), the *me* being in so extremely different a social position?" Questions and comments of a similar character arise upon all the Sonnets from first to last. But there is nothing at all to connect Will Shakspeare, the young "Stratford rustic," with these extraordinary poems, unless the fact that, like so many other works, they were published in the name of "Shake-speare" be so regarded. *He*, certainly, had nothing to do with their publication by the adventurer "T. T.," nor did he ever lay claim to any right or title to them. The real problem of the *Sonnets* is to find out who "Shake-speare" was. That done, it might be possible to make the crooked straight and the rough places plane—but not till then. That he would be found among cultured Elizabethan courtiers of high position, I can entertain no doubt. (See further on the *Sonnets*, chap. XII, p. 369 n., and as to the last two Sonnets, which are versions of a Greek epigram, see p. 127.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Canon Beeching, adverting to the grotesque theory that the earlier sonnets were addressed to Southampton not as an adored friend but merely as a patron, very sensibly remarks: "If it is remembered that Shakespeare's patron, Lord Southampton, was one of the greatest peers in England, at a time when all social degrees, even that between peer and gentleman, were very clearly marked; and that Shakespeare belonged to a profession which, by public opinion, was held to be degrading, it will hardly need saying that such addresses from a player, however fashionable, to a patron, however complaisant, were simply impossible." I venture to think that from the player to the peer they were "simply impossible" in any case.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LEARNING OF "SHAKESPEARE"

WE have now seen how much learning we are warranted to assume for Shakspeare, and what probability there is that he could have written such poems as *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*, and such plays as *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Comedy of Errors*, to take as examples the two which are generally supposed to be earliest of those wondrous dramas.

But many Stratfordians solve all difficulties by a very simple expedient. They say "Shakspeare" wrote "Shakespeare"; therefore Shakspeare must, by some means or another, have acquired all the learning which was obviously possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*.

Let us consider, therefore, with as much brevity as may be, the vexed question of "the learning of Shakespeare."

Now, until quite recently this question was generally supposed to have been finally disposed of by Dr. Farmer's famous Essay, which able, learned, and ingenious production may be found in *Malone's Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II.<sup>1</sup> Farmer's contention was that Shakespeare had no classical knowledge at all, that "if he remembered enough of his schoolboy learning to put 'Hig, hag, hog' into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans, it was as far as he could go"; and that in all cases where he had drawn on the classics, imitated, or referred to them, he had had

<sup>1</sup> It has been reprinted in Mr. Nichol Smith's *Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare*.

recourse to English versions and second-hand information. And so completely was this matter supposed to be settled, that Canon Beeching, who is, I believe, reckoned one of our Shakespearean "experts," wrote in the *Guardian* (January 8th, 1902): "Every literary critic knows that the Shakespearian plays reveal precisely that small Latin and less Greek which Jonson, who did know his classics, attributed to Shakespeare." I smile with great content, and perhaps a little maliciously, as I read that sentence. "Every literary critic knows" is quite in the style of the Shakespearean expert. It implies, of course, that any one who does not know this has no claim to call himself a literary critic. Yet, little more than a year after that confident pronouncement was made, we find Mr. Churton Collins, a strong—nay, a violent Stratfordian, publishing three articles in the *Fortnightly Review* (April, May, and July, 1903) to prove that Shakespeare must have had a very large knowledge of Latin, and in all probability a considerable knowledge of Greek as well.<sup>1</sup>

Is not, then, Mr. Churton Collins entitled to call himself a "literary critic"? We may be well content to leave this question to be settled between these two doughty but contradictory Stratfordians. Far be it from me to attempt *tantas componere lites*!

But let us see how Mr. Collins makes out his case. The opening words of his first article are interesting and suggestive. "There are certain traditions which the world appears to have made up its mind to accept without

<sup>1</sup> As already mentioned, these and other articles have now been republished in Mr. Collins's *Studies in Shakespeare*. In the preface he states his argument to be "in favour of the extended hypothesis that the poet was not merely a fair Latin scholar, but that his knowledge of the classics both of Greece and Rome was remarkably extensive," and he speaks of the evidence which he has produced "as a proof, or at least a presumption, that Shakespeare was acquainted with the Greek dramas." Reading between the lines, I come to the conclusion that Mr. Collins himself believes that Shakespeare had a fair knowledge of Greek, as well as a very considerable knowledge of Latin—but hesitates to say so.

enquiry. Their source or sources may be suspicious, their intrinsic improbability may be great, but no one dreams of seriously questioning them. Whatever else becomes the subject of dispute, of doubt, or of dissent, a strange superstition seems to exempt them even from debate. If here and there a note of scepticism should be struck, it finds no response. A very striking illustration of this is the tradition that Shakespeare's knowledge of the Greek and Roman classics was confined to translations, that he had scarcely enough Latin to spell out a passage in *Virgil* or *Cicero*, and that in Greek it is doubtful whether he went beyond the alphabet."

I would suggest that a still more "striking illustration" of this obstinate acceptance of "a strange superstition" without questioning, in spite of its "intrinsic improbability," is the tradition that Shakspeare, the Stratford Player, wrote the play of *Hamlet*! But this only in passing. Mr. Collins goes on to formulate the propositions which he intends to prove. "I purpose to show, and I hope to prove, that so far from Shakespeare having no pretension to classical scholarship, he could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French, that with some at least of the principal Latin classics, he was intimately acquainted, that through the Latin language he had access to the Greek classics, and that of the Greek classics in the Latin versions he had, in all probability, a remarkably extensive knowledge."

Let us consider what this means. "Shakespeare," says Mr. Collins, "could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French," and he goes on to suggest that Shakespeare must have been able to read Latin authors "*ad sensum* with facility and pleasure." Now any one who has studied the classics will appreciate what a large knowledge of Latin is thus postulated for Shakespeare by Mr. Collins.



The genius of one modern European language is so much akin to that of another, that it is easy for an Englishman, with but a moderate turn for languages, to learn in a very short time a sufficient amount of French to read, say, Daudet and Maupassant, with facility. But with Latin it is quite different. Many a man who has taken a high classical degree at one of our Universities, after many years of schooling, finds himself unable to read "unseen passages" of Cicero, or Tacitus, or Virgil, or Ovid, or Plautus, "*ad sensum* with facility and pleasure," as he can read French authors after but a few months' application. In fact, to be able to read the classics in this way, shows quite an exceptional degree of scholarship. Yet this amount of learning is claimed by Mr. Collins for Shakespeare, and I think every impartial reader must admit that he conclusively makes out his case, at any rate to this extent, viz., that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have had a large knowledge of the Latin language and an extensive acquaintance with Latin authors.<sup>1</sup>

"Farmer," says Mr. Collins, "showed conclusively that in the Roman plays Shakespeare had followed North's *Plutarch* without consulting either the original, or the Latin version; that, for some of his Latin quotations, he had gone no further than Lilly's *Grammar*; that in the celebrated passage in the *Tempest*, 'Ye elves of hills, woods, standing lakes, etc.,' which had been cited as proof positive of his acquaintance with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he had followed not the Latin text but Golding's English version, and that many other allusions, parallels, and parodies, adduced as testimony of his classical scholarship, could be traced to works in his own language. But Farmer, though he demolished Upton and Whalley, is

<sup>1</sup> That Shakespeare's "knowledge of the classics both of Greece and Rome was remarkably extensive," (as Mr. Collins writes in his preface) is, I think, shown by his works, and must now, surely, be taken as proved.

very far from making out his own case. The really crucial tests in the question he either evades or defaces. Thus he makes no reference to the fact that the *Rape of Lucrece* is derived directly from the *Fasti* of Ovid, of which at that time there appears to have been no English version. He admits that the *Comedy of Errors* was modelled on the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, and that the author of it must have been minutely acquainted with the *Menaechmi*, but asserts that Shakespeare read it in Warner's English version, the publication of which was subsequent, and probably long subsequent, to the composition of the play. To the Latin lesson in the *Taming of the Shrew* he does not even refer. On almost all the classical parallels which are really worth considering, he is silent. Of the very few which he is obliged to notice he disposes by assuming that Shakespeare had been raking in Ronsard, mediæval homilies, and the uncouth Scotch jargon of Douglas's *Virgil*. That a sensible man like Farmer should not see that if Shakespeare recalls the *Æneid* and the *Fasti*, the balance of probability is much more in favour of his having gone to the Latin than of his having troubled himself to spell out mediæval homilies and archaic Scotch is indeed strange. But Farmer's essay was supposed to settle the question, to 'put an end for ever,' as Warton emphatically expressed it, to the dispute concerning the learning of Shakespeare. Colman, indeed, protested, and Johnson, Capell, and Malone faintly demurred, but all was of no avail, and Farmer carried the day. Ben Jonson's 'small Latin and less Greek,' and Farmer's corroborating conclusion became henceforth inseparable from Shakespeare's reputation. So matters rested till 1837, when Dr. Maginn, in two articles in *Blackwood's Magazine*, pleaded for some modification of Farmer's contentions. He pointed out the *a priori* improbability of Shakespeare having no curiosity about the classics, and

no desire to read them in the original. He drew attention to the evidence which Farmer had either ignored or misrepresented. He showed that if in the crucial passage from the *Tempest* Shakespeare had followed Golding's version, he followed it only so far as it suited his purpose, that he had the original in his hands or in his memory, and had introduced touches from it. But Maginn, who had neither leisure nor taste for minute investigation, went no further."

But here Mr. Collins takes the matter up again:—

"His familiarity with the Latin language is evident: first, from the fact that he has, with minute particularity of detail, based a poem and a play on a poem of Ovid and on a comedy of Plautus, which he must have read in the original, as no English translations, so far as we know, existed at the time; secondly, from the fact that he has adapted and borrowed many passages from the classics, which were almost certainly only accessible to him in the Latin language; and thirdly, from the fact that when he may have followed English translations, it is often quite evident that he had the original either by him or in his memory. Let us first take the case of the *Rape of Lucrece*. The story, as told by Shakespeare, follows the story as told by Ovid in the second book of the *Fasti* (*Fasti*, II, 721–852). It had also been told in English by four writers, who had likewise modelled their narratives on Ovid—by Chaucer in the *Legende of Goode Women*, by Lydgate in his *Falls of Princes*, by Gower in his *Confessio Amantis*, and, in prose, by Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure*; but a careful comparison of these narratives with Shakespeare's, which cannot be given in detail here, will conclusively show that Shakespeare has followed none of them. That Ovid and Ovid only is his original. The details given in Ovid, which neither Chaucer nor any of the other narrators reproduce, but which are reproduced

by Shakespeare, place this beyond question. Thus Shakespeare alone represents the

Nunc primum externâ pectora tacta manu (746) :

Her breasts, . . .

A pair of maiden worlds unconquered

Save of their lord, no bearing yoke they knew (407-9) ;

the fine touch

Quid, victor, gaudes ? haec te victoria perdet (811) ;

A captive victor that hath lost in gain (730).

Nor has the 'ter conata loqui, ter destitit' (823) been noticed by Chaucer or the others, though it is reproduced by Shakespeare. . . . In Ovid and Shakespeare, though not in Chaucer, or in the others, Lucretia's father and husband throw themselves on her corpse. . . . One touch, indeed, not only proves the scrupulous care with which Shakespeare follows Ovid, but his scholarship too—for the Latin is obscure and difficult. 'Brutus adest, tandemque animo sua nomina fallit,' that is stultifies his name (*brutus*, stupid) by the courage he shows. This Shakespeare *interprets* in the stanza beginning, 'Brutus, who plucked the knife,' etc. . . . In a word, a comparison of Chaucer's and Shakespeare's narratives will show that each represents an independent study of the Latin original, and that Shakespeare has followed Ovid with scrupulous care. When this poem was written there was no English translation of the *Fasti*, and Shakespeare must therefore have read it in the original. . . . In *Venus and Adonis* he again draws on Ovid, the material, profusely and superbly embroidered and expanded with original imagery and detail, being derived from the story as told in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, with much which is borrowed from the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the fourth book, and from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt, in the



eighth book.<sup>1</sup> But the *Metamorphoses* had been translated by Arthur Golding in 1575, and republished in a second edition in 1587. That Shakespeare was acquainted with Golding's translation is certain, and as he may possibly have followed Golding and not Ovid in *Venus and Adonis*, this poem cannot be cited as evidence of his Latin scholarship." But, says Mr. Collins, "it is just as likely that he followed the original, as that he followed the translation," and when he comes to deal with the celebrated passage in the *Tempest* (Act V, sc. 1): "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves," etc., Mr. Collins proves that Farmer was wrong in supposing that Shakespeare merely followed Golding's version without reference to the original (*Metamorphoses*, VII, 197-206.) Take, for instance, the lines of Ovid:—

ventos abigouque, vocouque :  
Vivaque saxa, suâ convulsaque robora terrâ,  
Et silvas moveo; jubeoque tremiscere montes,  
Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulcris.

Shakespeare has:—

. . . I have bedimmed  
The noon-tide sun, *call'd forth* the mutinous winds.  
. . . To the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire, and *ripped Jove's stout oak*  
*With his own bolt*: . . .  
. . . graves at my command  
Have wak'd their sleepers, *op'd and let them forth*.

Now, as Mr. Collins points out, Golding has not, as Shakespeare has, translated the words I have put in italics. "From this it will be clear that if Shakespeare used Golding's version—and this seems likely from the opening line—he used also the original. There is nothing in

<sup>1</sup> In a *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act IV, sc. 1) Hippolyta says, "I was with Hercules and Cadmus once, when in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear with hounds of Sparta." Here we have a reminiscence of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 208. "*Gnosius Ichnobates Spartana gente Malampus*." These were two of Actæon's hounds, one of Crete the other of Sparta. Actæon was the grandson of Cadmus.



Golding corresponding to the original in 'suâ convulsaque robora terrâ,' which he omits entirely, but Shakespeare accurately recalls it in '*rifted* Jove's stout *oak*'; while the touch in 'op'd and *let them forth*' unfolds the meaning of 'exire,' which Golding does not; so again Shakespeare represents 'voco'—'call'd forth,' which Golding altogether misses. How admirably, it may be added, has Shakespeare caught the colour, ring, and rhythm of the original, and how utterly are they missed in the lumbering homeliness of Golding."

Mr. Collins goes on to cite other typical passages from *Cymbeline* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, showing Shakespeare's knowledge of Ovid in the original.<sup>1</sup> He tells us also that "there are in the dramas many apparent reminiscences of the Epistles from Pontus, and of these Epistles there was no English version in Shakespeare's time." (One example is in *Lear*, IV, 1, 2-5 taken from Lib. II. Ep. 2. 31-2.)

Of the *Comedy of Errors* Mr. Collins writes:—

"This, as everyone knows, is an adaptation, with addi-

<sup>1</sup> "Take Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on which he is habitually drawing. Mr. Spencer Baynes was the first to point out that Shakespeare derived the name Titania from his knowledge of the Latin original, where it is always used as an Epithet, and an epithet which Golding invariably translates by a periphrasis, the word itself nowhere occurring in Golding's version."

A writer in *The Times Literary Supplement* (September 16th, 1904) says in a review of *Shakespeare's Ovid* (being Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses*, edited by W. H. D. Rouse, Litt. D.), "The finale of the *Metamorphoses* is certainly imitated or reproduced in Sonnet 55." But this, I think, is an error. That sonnet is based upon Horace (*Odes*, Bk. III, 30). Compare

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme,"

with

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius  
Regalique situ pyramidum altius, etc.*

"Your praise shall still find room, even in the eyes of all posterity," says Shakespeare. Compare Horace's *usque ego postera crescā laude recens, etc.* It is quite clear that Shakespeare was familiar with the *Odes* of Horace; no doubt he was equally familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the final verses may have been in his mind at the same time.

tions and modifications, of the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, while the first scene of the third act is directly imitated from the *Amphitruo* of the same poet (*Amphitruo*, Act I, Sc. 1, and Act IV, Sc. 1-6). Now it is all but certain that the *Comedy of Errors* was written between 1589 and 1592, and it is quite certain that it was written before the end of 1594. At that date there were no known English translations of those plays in existence, for Warner's version of the *Menaechmi* did not appear till 1595. It is therefore probable almost to certainty that Shakespeare must have read Plautus in the original. Of his familiarity, indeed, with Plautus there can be no question. In the *Taming of the Shrew* he borrows the names of two of the characters, Tranio and Grumio, from the *Mostellaria*. The scene in the same play where the Pedant, assuming the form of Vincentio, is confronted with the real Vincentio, is plainly borrowed from the scene in the *Trinummus*. The character, position, and fate of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* are so analogous to those of Pyrgopolinices in the *Miles Gloriosus*, that we cannot but suspect reminiscence. Parolles and Pistol are plainly studies from Plautus. It is curious, too, that we find the same puns and plays on words in the two poets." Whereof Mr. Collins gives some very interesting examples. He further suggests that many other passages of Shakespeare (including the lines "neither a borrower nor a lender be") are taken from Plautus, and "in any case," he writes, "of Shakespeare's familiarity with Plautus there can be no doubt—I have only given a few typical illustrations, the subject, if treated in detail, would require a monograph—and that he read him in the Latin is all but certain."

But this by no means exhausts the proofs of Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin, for Mr. Collins brings forward evidence to show that he must have been acquainted also with Seneca, Horace (there was no translation of the *Odes* in Shakespeare's time, "yet his plays abound in what

certainly appear to be reminiscences of them"), Lucretius, Juvenal, Cicero, and Virgil. For all this, I must refer to Mr. Collins's able and, as they seem to me, very conclusive articles. These passages, says Mr. Collins, "are typical, and the impression which they and scores of other passages make is, that Shakespeare was writing not with any direct or perhaps conscious intention of imitating or even with the original before him, but with reminiscences of it floating more or less vividly in his memory." If this be so then Shakespeare must have been saturated with classical reading so far at least as the Latin authors are concerned.

As to Seneca, Mr. E. A. Sonnenschein has recently brought forward a striking proof that Shakespeare was acquainted with that writer. "No one, I think," he writes, "has ever suspected that the central speech of the *Merchant of Venice* was anything but a wholly original creation of the poet." Yet, as he points out, all the leading ideas of Portia's great speech will be found in Seneca's treatise "On Mercy," addressed to the reigning emperor, Nero. Thus Seneca writes: *Nullum Clementia ex omnibus magis quam regem aut principem decet* (I, 3, 3), which Lodge thus translates: "But of all others Clemencie [Mercy] becometh no man more than it doth a Prince." Again, *Excogitare nemo quicquam poterit quod magis decorum regenti sit quam clementia . . . eo scilicet formosius id esse magnificentiusque fatebitur quo in majori praeestabitur potestate* (I, 19, 1), where the rendering is, "There is no man that can bethink him of anything that is more seemly for him that is in authority [*regenti*="the throned monarch"] than Clemencie. . . . And the more higher his dignitie is that is indued with this vertue the more noble shall we confess his ornament to be."

Compare with this Shakespeare's lines:—

It becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown,  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest.

Seneca writes : *Quod si placabiles et aequi delicta potentium non statim fulminibus persequuntur, quanto aequius est hominem hominibus praepositum miti animo exercere imperium?* (I, 7, 2), where Lodge translates : "But if the merciful and just gods punish not the faults of mighty men by confounding them by lightning, how much more just is it that a man who hath the charge over men should exercise his empire with merciful mind!" Seneca writes : *Quid autem? Non proximum illis (dis) locum tenet is, qui se ex deorum natura gerit beneficus ac largus et in melius potens?* Where we may translate : "Again ; Is not he second only to the gods who, bearing himself after their nature, is gracious and generous and powerful in all good works?" (Lodge has "And why doth not he that followeth the nature of the gods, which is to be gracious, liberal, and powerful to do good, become a second to them?")

Shakespeare has—

But mercy is above this sceptred sway.  
It is enthroned in the heart of kings ;  
It is an attribute of God himself.  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.

Again, Seneca wrote *Cogita . . . quanta (Romae) solitudo et vastitas futura sit si nihil relinquatur nisi quod iudex severus absolverit* (I, 6. 1). ("Think what solitude and desolation there would be in this City . . . if a man should leave none but such as a severe judge would absolve.")

Compare

Consider this,  
That in the course of Justice none of us  
Should see salvation.

It can hardly, I think, be doubted that the author of Portia's great speech was familiar with these passages of Seneca. As Mr. Sonnenschein writes : "It is only the inimitable form of expression that is Shakespeare's." As



usual the great magician turns all that he touches into purest gold.<sup>1</sup>

I have thought well to give Lodge's translation, but, as Mr. Sonnenschein points out, that translation was not published till ten years after the *Merchant of Venice*. "But that," says he, "is no difficulty to those who believe, as Mr. Churton Collins and others do, that Shakespeare had not forgotten the Latin which he had learnt at Stratford Grammar School." The amount of reading which the lad Shakspeare must have done, and assimilated, during his brief sojourn at the Free School is positively amazing! There would really seem to be no limit to it. And yet, alas, there is no record or tradition of all this prodigious industry—not a word to suggest the indication of a more than ordinarily active intelligence on the part of the young "Stratford rustic"!

As to Shakespeare's knowledge of Virgil, Mr. Collins has not, I think, made out much of a case; yet we have strong evidence of it in the *Plays* and *Poems*. Take *The Tempest*, for example. Here we not only have much talk about Dido and Æneas (which of itself, of course, proves nothing), but also, as it seems to me, at any rate one passage founded upon a Virgilian model. When Ferdinand first sees Miranda he exclaims (Act I, Scene 2, 420):

Most sure the goddess  
On whom these airs attend!

It can hardly be doubted that this is a reminiscence of the "O, dea certe," of *Æneid* I, 328.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sonnenschein thinks that the story of Augustus pardoning Cinna (Seneca; *De Clementiâ*, I, 9) may have suggested:

"It is twice blessed.  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

Such was certainly the case in this instance, if Seneca's story be true. (See *The Times Literary Supplement*, September 16th, 1904.)



Ferdinand continues :—

My prime request,  
Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder !  
If you be maid or no ?

This corresponds to Virgil's

O—quam te memorem, virgo ! namque haud tibi vultus  
Mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat.

Miranda replies :—

No wonder, sir :  
But certainly a maid.

With which may be compared Venus's reply :—

Haud equidem tali me dignor honore ;  
Virginibus Tyriis mos est, etc.

Like Miranda, Venus makes answer that she is a maid (*virgo*), a somewhat bold assertion on her part ; but, then, she is speaking in a feigned character. It is not till later that

Vera incessu patuit dea.

There is a less striking reminiscence of Virgil in Act I, Scene 2, line 485, where Ferdinand says :—

My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.

We are reminded of *Æneid*, XII, 908 :—

Ac velut in somnis, oculos ubi languida pressit  
Nocte quies, etc.

But here it must be confessed that we are on more doubtful ground.<sup>1</sup>

So much, then, as to Latin. What of Greek ? Here Mr. Collins seems to be struggling between a reluctance to proclaim a theory so startling to Stratfordian minds as that Shakespeare was able to read the Greek classic authors in the original, and an inward conviction that so it must have been. It seems clear from what he writes that

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Anders points out that the figure of the Harpy introduced in *The Tempest*, III, 3, is apparently taken from *Æneid*, III, 234 ff. *Shakespeare's Books*, p. 31.

he holds it quite probable that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* could read and understand the Greek originals, at any rate with the help of a Latin translation. In his first article,<sup>1</sup> as he tells us, he "endeavoured to prove that Shakespeare was familiar with the Latin language and with many of the Latin classics; that this knowledge gave him access to the Greek classics, nearly all of which had been popularised through Latin versions, and that the evidence for concluding that he availed himself of what was thus accessible to him is so ample and precise that it can scarcely fail to carry conviction." Here, indeed, Mr. Collins speaks only of knowledge gained through Latin versions; but he proceeds to give us parallelism after parallelism, illustration after illustration, leaving us, as it seems to me, no alternative, unless we put aside all these extraordinary resemblances as mere coincidences, but to believe that Shakespeare must have been familiar with the very Greek passages which with such wealth of learning he sets before the readers of the *Fortnightly Review*. In the first place he shows that the writer of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have been well acquainted with the epigrams of the Greek Anthology, which were so popular among scholars in the sixteenth century. Here "parallels swarm; and, even if we resolve two-thirds of them into mere coincidences, are collectively too remarkable to be the result of accident." He then deals at length with "Shakespeare's probable obligations to the Greek dramatists," and after quoting a large number of passages in support of this proposition, he adds: "Nor must we forget the many curious parallels between his play on words, his studied use of paronomasia, of asyndeton, of onomatopœia, of elaborate antithesis, of compound epithets, of subtle periphrasis, and above all his metaphors—with those so peculiarly characteristic of the Attic dramas. I have not

<sup>1</sup> I allude to the articles in the *Fortnightly Review* subsequently reprinted in *Studies in Shakespeare*.

space to illustrate, but it is the extraordinary analogies—analologies in sources, in particularity of detail and point, and in relative frequency of employment, presented by his metaphors to the metaphors of the Attic tragedians, that I find the most convincing testimony of his familiarity with their writings." This surely does not suggest a writer with no knowledge or merely a smattering of Greek, and working with Latin translations, but rather points to a scholar who could himself read the originals. Mr. Collins, however, opens his third article with the words, "It is not likely that Shakespeare could read Greek *with facility, but if he possessed enough of it to follow the original in the Latin version, as he probably did,*<sup>1</sup> he would not only be able to enrich his diction with its idioms and phraseology, but would acquire that timbre in style of which in the last instalment of this essay I gave illustrations." Then referring to the "general and miscellaneous parallels between the Shakespearean drama and Greek tragedies—parallels in reflection, sentiment, and expression," of which he has given such copious examples—he writes: "They may be mere coincidences. But if, on the other hand, further and more satisfactory evidence of Shakespeare's acquaintance with the Greek dramatists can be adduced, then surely such parallels will not be without importance as corroborative testimony. Let us now, therefore, narrow the area to a single drama, the *Ajax*. If Shakespeare had not read the *Ajax* and been influentially impressed by it, there is an end to all evidence founded on reference and parallelism."

For the evidence in support of this assertion, I must refer the reader to the article in question, where Mr. Collins goes on to argue that Shakespeare must have been profoundly under Greek influence. "Equally remarkable is the perfect correspondence between the attitude of Shakespeare and that of the Greek dramatists, though we must except Æschylus, towards the great problems of

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.

death and of man's future beyond it." "Not less Greek is his profound respect for the conventional symbols in which religious conceptions embody themselves, but his practical resolution of formal theology into the moral law." "And if he is Greek in his metaphysic he is equally Greek in his ethic, though in important respects his ethic is tempered with Christian ideals."

Either, then, he was familiar with the Greek writers, or "we must assume that instinct led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy, and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy."

Finally, Mr. Collins claims to have demonstrated "that Shakespeare could read Latin, that in the Latin original he most certainly read Plautus, Ovid, and Seneca," and as to "the Greek dramatists, and all those Greek authors besides Plutarch, who appear to have influenced him," that he had at least read them in Latin versions, and very probably was with such help able to follow them in the originals.

I think the literary world is much indebted to Mr. Collins for these scholarly articles. Never again, let us hope, shall we hear the amazing proposition put forward that Shakespeare had no knowledge of the classics. Canon Beeching must remodel his ideas of what "every literary critic" is supposed to know.<sup>1</sup> But especially it may be hoped that we shall be spared such entire fatuity as the following, culled from a letter in the *Westminster*

<sup>1</sup> Quite in the same style Mr. Andrew Lang wrote to Mr. Edwin Reed (1891): "I am indeed surprised that you should think the author of the Plays was a scholar. The reverse is patent, I think, to any one acquainted with classical literature." Mr. Reed's comment is: "The personal implication in the last sentence is quite characteristic of this writer." It is indeed. And poor Mr. Churton Collins! To think of his being set down as one not "acquainted with classical literature"! But, thank Heaven, "non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites."

*Gazette* of January 4th, 1902. "There is an argument," says this writer, "in favour of Shakespeare's authorship of the plays stronger than any I have seen advanced, and one altogether convincing to anyone of ordinary classical attainments—*Shakespeare is wholly wanting in classical culture*. . . . If Bacon was the most erudite, *Shakespeare was the least cultivated writer of his time*." It is really painful to set down on paper such nonsense as this. How any man who has read and studied those marvellous dramas (not to mention *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*) and who lays claim to "ordinary classical attainments," can write of Shakespeare that he was "wholly wanting in classical culture" and that he was "the least cultivated writer of his time," fairly passes my comprehension. If the Stratfordian theory brings men to such abysmal depths as these, we may be well content to seek salvation with the Baconians. The truth is, of course, precisely the reverse, and, as one who may at least make this claim to ordinary classical attainments, I venture to assert with absolute confidence that Shakespeare, so far from being the *least*, was the *most* cultivated writer of his time. Should the advocates of the ignorant uncultivated Shakespeare theory make a cheap retort as to the limits of my comprehension, or of my classical knowledge, I will not vex myself, for I need only refer them to Mr. Churton Collins's illuminating articles. Meantime, we have to note that the Stratfordians who assail us with such a choice variety of epithets to indicate the obtuseness and perversity of our understandings, are themselves as hopelessly divided over this primary question of the learning of Shakespeare as even Churchmen could be concerning a question of theological orthodoxy.

I think, then, it must be admitted that Mr. Collins has made out his case, that Shakespeare had undoubtedly



the knowledge of Latin claimed for him, and very probably some knowledge of Greek as well.<sup>1</sup>

But here two questions arise. In the first place, we ask (on the assumption that Shakspeare = Shakespeare), where, when, and how did Shakspeare acquire all this learning? I have already to some extent anticipated this question in the preceding chapter. Mr. Collins would have us believe that the boy Shakspeare acquired this power of reading and actually did read these Latin authors—Ovid, Horace, Lucretius, Plautus, Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal, and

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, who accept the tradition that Shakespeare was withdrawn from school at twelve or thirteen ("when he would be old enough to assist his father in his business, and, considering the growing embarrassments of the elder Shakespeare, would almost certainly be withdrawn from school for that purpose"), believe that in his hypothetical five years of schooling Shakspeare "would have read in the ordinary course Valerius, Cato, Æsop, Mantuan, a considerable part of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and something of Cicero, Terence, and Virgil." This, they say, "would be a fair Latin outfit, and there is no good reason to believe that Shakespeare materially augmented it in after life." As to Greek, they write, "Mr. Churton Collins has endeavoured with much ingenuity to establish Shakespeare's acquaintance with Greek literature, but when it is considered that he could only have acquired Greek in mature life by solitary study or private instruction, and that Latin translations would be difficult and uninviting, the initial improbability must be held to outweigh the precarious evidence of apparent coincidences which may be otherwise accounted for." We may leave these *literati* to fight this question out between them. I have already stated my reasons for thinking that all this assumption of *Shakspeare's* Latin learning at the Stratford Free School is "a fond thing vainly invented" to suit the now recognised exigencies of the case. The traditional Shakspeare had no learning, but these critics make no scruple of throwing over tradition when it does not suit them, though they are intensely conservative of it when it seems to support their case. The simple truth, as I hold, is that "Shakespeare" had abundant Latin, and a very fair amount of Greek, while "Shakspeare" had none of either, except perhaps a few crumbs of Latin. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse recognise that "the initial improbability" of *Shakspeare's* having a knowledge of Greek is, of course, enormous. Therefore Mr. Collins's demonstration that *Shakespeare* had this knowledge must be summarily dismissed. But the proof that *Shakespeare* had a large knowledge of Latin is so cogent that it cannot be disputed, therefore it must be assumed that somehow or another *Shakspeare* acquired this knowledge, though obviously it is wise to cut it down as much as possible. So Plautus among other Latin authors is quietly ignored, yet, as Mr. Collins shows, "it is probable almost to certainty that Shakespeare must have read Plautus in the original. Of his familiarity indeed with Plautus there can be no question."

the rest—"ad sensum with facility and pleasure"—at the little Stratford Grammar School, where we assume he spent some time between the ages of eight and thirteen. I have already referred to Mr. Collins's quiet assumption that the education there provided was on a par with that afforded or supposed to be afforded by the celebrated school at Ipswich. Mr. Collins, further, thinks that Greek might have been taught at Stratford, but admits that "when taught it was only taught in the highest forms." He tells us that Shakspeare "would enter the school some time between his eighth and ninth year," but he somehow forgets to mention that according to all tradition, and all available evidence, he was removed from school at an exceptionally early age, so that in spite of the unbounded assumption of the biographers none have ventured to keep him at the Free School beyond the age of thirteen. If, then, the young Shakspeare had attained to all this knowledge of Latin—knowledge which many a first-class classic might look upon with envy—at the Stratford Grammar School, between the ages of eight or nine and twelve or thirteen, surely it is a very extraordinary thing that all the early tradition is not only silent concerning these remarkable attainments of the poet who had become so famous as "Shakespeare," but, on the contrary, is unanimous in affirming, as did good old Thomas Fuller, that "his learning was very little"! As to Greek we may be quite sure that poor Shakspeare never reached those "higher forms" in which alone it was taught. In fine, it appears to me that this wondrous theory of Shakspeare's learning acquired at the hypothetical Grammar School can only be accepted by those whose faith is such as not only to be able to remove mountains but also to swallow them. Mere reason is clamorous on the other side. *Credo quia impossibile* must be the Stratfordian maxim.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember the dates. According to that distinguished Shakespearean, Mr. Fleay, Shakespeare came to London in 1587. In 1588-9,

Here, then, we come back to the old dilemma. If Shakspeare had no learning he could not have written the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare. On the other hand, if it can be demonstrated from the *Poems* and *Plays* (as Mr. Collins claims to demonstrate) that their author was a highly cultured man, learned at least in Latin, and profoundly under the influence of the old classical writers of both Greece and Rome, then Shakespeare and Shakspeare are different persons. All tradition, all evidence, positive and negative, all reason and all probability go to show that Shakspeare had no learning beyond, possibly, a little Latin. The works show that Shakespeare was a man of the highest culture, of wide reading, much learning, and of remarkable classical attainments.

But it may be asked, "Why should we not assume that Shakspeare was diligently studying the classics during that period, of which we know little or nothing, between his leaving Stratford and his first appearance as a writer?" Well, those who are prepared to assume anything and everything to satisfy the requirements of the Stratfordian hypothesis, may very well assume this also, and we, too, may be content to assume it just so long as we are prepared to disregard reason and common sense. We may be perfectly sure that the young provincial Shakspeare when he first came to town, leaving wife and children to look after themselves, had quite enough to do to find such employment as would enable him to keep the wolf from the door.<sup>1</sup> Tradition asserts, with much probability, that he found such employment in holding horses at the door

according to Dr. Furnivall and others, *Love's Labour's Lost* was composed; *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589-91; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* about 1590-1; *The Two Gentlemen* in 1590-92; *Romeo and Juliet* in 1591-3; and in 1593 *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention," was published. If therefore Shakspeare wrote these works, he must surely have acquired his classical knowledge before he came to town. Moreover, the actor's art is not exactly learnt in a day!

<sup>1</sup> I deal with Messrs. Garnett and Gosse's remarkable theory later on.

of the theatres or, subsequently, in learning the rudiments of his future profession in the capacity of call-boy. But why should we accept tradition when it is distasteful to us? Why not follow the good old rule, the simple plan, that tradition shall be accepted when it harmonises with our theories and preconceived ideas, and not otherwise? Why not draw a picture of Shakspeare, the pale-faced student in some Chattertonian garret, assiduously turning over the leaves of Plautus, Seneca, Juvenal, Ovid, and the rest, perhaps the Greek tragedians also, to say nothing of French, Italian, and Spanish authors, all lent to him by his intimate friends, Ben Jonson or the Earl of Southampton, and then suddenly taking the stage as an accomplished actor, without any of that preliminary study and apprenticeship to the art so necessary to all other mortals? Why, indeed, should we not make this and all other necessary assumptions, since, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps tells us, "there is not a single particle of evidence respecting his career during the next five years, that is to say, from the time of the Lambert negotiation, in 1587, until he is discovered as a rising actor and dramatist in 1592," and since the only reason that can be suggested against such assumptions is their flagrant and self-evident absurdity—a reason which in Shakspeare's case is not usually accepted as having any force whatever?

This brings us to the second of the two questions which arise on Mr. Collins's articles. He has not only to get over the testimony of the old writers, such as Fuller, Aubrey,<sup>1</sup> Rowe, and others, but he has somehow to explain

<sup>1</sup> Aubrey, who wrote more than sixty years after Shakspeare's death, but who quotes Beeston, a seventeenth-century actor, as his authority, writes "though as Ben Jonson says of him that he had but little Latin and less Greek, he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country." This schoolmaster story is caught at by the Stratfordians as drowning men catch at a straw. But Aubrey is indeed a broken reed to lean upon. His "little biographies," says Mr. H.-Phillipps, are "disfigured by palpable or ascertained blunders." In fact, he was a



away Ben Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek." How is this to be done? We must remember that Jonson's utterances are of the highest importance to the Stratfordians. Had it not been for the poem prefixed to the Folio of 1623, in which these words occur, I verily believe that the Stratfordian hypothesis would long ago have been given up as an exploded myth, or rather would never have obtained foothold at all. The Stratfordians, therefore, must either trust Jonson "all in all or not at all." They cannot discredit their own witness. Once let them admit that Jonson when he penned the words "thou hadst small Latin and less Greek" was really writing "with his tongue in his cheek," knowing that, as a fact, *Shakespeare* had remarkable classical attainments, and they, of course, open the door to the suggestion that the entire poem is capable of an ironical construction and esoteric interpretation. It is necessary, therefore, for Mr. Collins to attach a serious meaning to the "small Latin and less Greek" and yet to reconcile the words with his demonstration of Shakespeare's large knowledge of the Latin language, and of Latin authors, knowledge of which Jonson, of course, could not have been ignorant.

How does he attempt to do this? In the first place, he says, we must remember that Jonson "was a scholar and posed ostentatiously as a scholar in the technical sense of the term. . . . To him 'small Latin' and 'less Greek' would connote what it would connote to Casaubon or Lipsius. A literary acquaintance with Greek and Latin, the power, that is to say, of reading them *ad sensum* with facility and pleasure, is an accomplishment very different from a critical acquaintance with them or from the power of composing in them." But this, really, "won't do." If Shakespeare had this power of reading Latin "*ad sensum*

"foolish" and inaccurate gossip. It is indeed a pity that he did not tell us where that country school was situated, and that not a single author besides him has ever heard of it. Fancy Will Shakspeare as a country pedagogue!



with facility and pleasure," if "so far from Shakespeare having no pretension to classical scholarship he could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French," if "with some at least of the principal Latin classics he was intimately acquainted," and if "of the Greek classics in the Latin version he had," as Mr. Collins suggests, "a remarkably extensive knowledge," then we may be quite sure that Ben Jonson, pedant though he may have been, would not have made such an absurd statement as to say that Shakespeare had "small Latin." No, if old Ben used these words seriously, we may be confident that he intended to imply a very much smaller knowledge of Latin than Mr. Collins attributes to Shakespeare. This attempted explanation "won't hold water."

But Mr. Collins has another string to his argumentative bow. "We know," he says, "from Harrison and others that in the Elizabethan age an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics was assumed to be the monopoly of those who had been educated at Oxford and Cambridge, and that a man who was not associated with the Universities was at once set down as no scholar. Shakespeare stood almost alone among the prominent poets and dramatists of his time as having belonged to neither of the Universities. This not only excluded him from the ranks of the University wits as they were called, but from any acknowledged claim to the accomplishment which they absurdly regarded as their exclusive privilege and distinction."

This is singularly unfortunate because it is quite clear that Jonson was never at either University himself as a student. It is true that Fuller says he was at St. John's College, Cambridge, but Fuller, who was not born till nearly twenty years after Jonson left school, cannot be accepted as a trustworthy authority. Aubrey says he was at Trinity College, but this is certainly erroneous. Indeed,

both are wrong, having probably been misled by the fact that Jonson, in later life, received honorary degrees. Jonson himself told Drummond that he was "taken from school and put to a trade," and that the degree which he held at each University was "by their favour not his study." It is incredible that such a man as Jonson, who was not given to keeping his light under a bushel, and who would have been proud of his university education if he had had one, would have made no allusion to the fact of his having been a student at Cambridge, if such had been the truth, either in his conversation with Drummond, or in his voluminous correspondence.<sup>1</sup> No, it was to Westminster, and not to either University, that he owed his learning, as he himself records:—

Camden ! most reverend head, to whom I owe  
All that I am in arts, all that I know.

Jonson, therefore, would have been the very last man to deny the distinction of scholarship to all but those who had been to a university. That would have been to admit that he had no title himself to such distinction, while allowing it to his opponent Marston. Of a truth Mr. Collins's second attempted explanation of Jonson's celebrated phrase seems even worse than his first. If, then, we accept (as I think we must) his estimate of Shakespeare's scholarship, it surely follows, as it appears to me, that old Ben, for some reason of his own, was guilty of a *suggestio falsi* in the lines prefixed to the Folio of 1623; in fact, that he was laughing in his sleeve when he wrote them. The explanation, I take it, is that the description was perfectly true of Shakspeare, but had no application

<sup>1</sup> Jonson dedicated his comedy *Volpone* to "the most noble and most equal sisters, the two famous Universities." Had he been specially indebted to one of the two, i.e. had he been a student at either of them, there can, I think, hardly be a doubt that he would have mentioned it. His statement that he held his degrees "by their favour not his study" means, of course, that the Universities conferred honorary degrees upon him without any solicitation on his part. See p. 322 n. and 323 n.

to the real author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. But the further consideration of Jonson's remarkable utterances must be reserved for a later chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Before passing on I must deal with the convenient and quite unsupported, though not altogether novel, theory adopted by the very latest critics of Shakespearean biography. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse recognise, as, surely, all unprejudiced men *must* recognise, that the idea of Shakspeare coming a raw provincial from Stratford to London, adopting the player's profession, after many shifts and vicissitudes, and thereupon writing such a drama as *Love's Labour's Lost* and such a poem as *Venus and Adonis*, is, to say the least of it, wildly improbable. "Nothing," they write, "is more remarkable in his earliest productions than their perfect polish and urbanity. The principal characters in *Love's Labour's Lost* are princes and nobles, true to the models which he might have found in contemporary society. The young patricians in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* have in every respect the ideas and manners of their class. The creator of such personages must have been in better company and enjoyed a wider outlook upon society than can easily be believed attainable by an actor or a resident in a single city. Had this been otherwise, Shakespeare must have winced when he wrote in what perhaps was his first play, 'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits,' but we feel confident that he had 'seen the wonders of the world abroad.'" They note "that knowledge of good society" and "that easy and confident attitude towards mankind which appears in Shakespeare's plays from the first and which (we must concede this much to the Baconians) are so unlike what might have been expected from a *Stratford rustic*<sup>2</sup> or a London actor."

At last! We have waited long for it, but it has come

<sup>1</sup> See chapter xv. where I refer to Dr. Konrad Meier's recent interpretation of Jonson's well-known lines (see p. 465 n.)

<sup>2</sup> My italics.

at last—the recognition by literary critics of this obvious and elementary proposition. But how is the difficulty to be surmounted? How can it be suggested that Shakspeare (“Stratford rustic or London actor”) had before he composed his marvellously cultured *Plays* and *Poems*—those models of “perfect polish and urbanity”—“seen the wonders of the world abroad”? Well, the operation is perfectly simple. Between the Hegira from Stratford and the year before the publication of the *Venus and Adonis* the life of Shakspeare is “an absolute blank for the biographer. Except for one mention of his name in a legal document there is no trace of him from 1585 to 1592.” That being so, and all tradition being a *quantité négligeable* except when it is helpful to our own theories, why should not we make any assumption we please as to the manner in which Shakspeare occupied his time during these years? Why should we not quietly throw over the stories of Shakspeare’s holding, or forming a brigade of boys to hold, horses at the theatre door, the gaining admission to the theatre as a “servitor,” the apprenticeship to the actor’s profession, etc.? Shakspeare, as his works proclaim, was a man “qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes.” Why not, then, send Shakspeare to foreign climes, “to see the wonders of the world abroad”? Why, “in December, 1585, Leicester sailed from Harwich at the head of a great force to assume the government of the United Provinces in their war with Spain.” Some Warwickshire youths were of the party. What more natural than that Shakspeare should have been one of them? “Without question the new scene which would open upon him, the magnificent shows and triumphs with which Leicester was received, the view of tented fields and leaguers, the daily talk of war and statecraft, the association with all sorts and conditions of men, would go far to bestow that knowledge of good society, and create that easy and confident atti-



tude towards mankind which appears in Shakespeare's plays from the first, and which (we must concede this much to the Baconians) are so unlike what might have been expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor."

This is, indeed, a remarkable theory.<sup>1</sup> We observe in the first place that this dark interval in Shakspeare's life (though after all it is not much darker than the other periods of his unknown life history) is devoted, not as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps would have it to the "completion of his education" by a course of reading, but to sending him to the Low Countries, whether as a private soldier or an actor, or in some other capacity, is not definitely suggested.<sup>2</sup> Now I have no special knowledge of the manners and customs of the Elizabethan "Tommy Atkins," but it strikes me that the notion of converting Shakspeare into an attendant upon a sixteenth-century fighting man (if not a fighting man himself) in order to equip him with the culture and polish required for the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is about the oddest of all the eccentric ideas which owe their origin to the excited

<sup>1</sup> It is not, of course, enunciated for the first time by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse. "Mr. Thoms and Mr. Cohn, to some extent, account for Shakespeare on the Continent by believing that instead of going at once to London when fleeing from Stratford before Sir Thomas Lucy, he enlisted under Leicester for the Netherlands in 1585, but left the ranks for the more lucrative career of an actor. But these theories only crowd still more thickly the brief years in which the great works appeared." Appleton Morgan (p. 216) referring to *Shakespeare in Germany*, by Albert Cohn, and *Shakespeare's Autographical Poems*, by C. A. Brown.

<sup>2</sup> "A band of youths from Warwickshire did, we know, follow Leicester, and few Warwickshire youths can have had more cogent reasons for making one of their number than William Shakespeare. . . . *Certain it is*, at all events [this is going one better than Mr. Lee's "doubtless"], that Shakespeare would have eagerly embraced the opportunity of accompanying Leicester's expedition if it had presented itself, and there is good reason to think that it actually may have done so. Leicester took a company of actors with him to the Low Countries, and Shakespeare may have been a member of it, but it is quite as likely that he served in some other capacity"! (*Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, Vol. II, p. 199.) Alas for "those fanciful might-have-beens"!



imagination of Stratfordian critics. One might as well make Matthew Arnold enlist in a marching regiment as a preparation for the composition of *Thyrsis*. Jonson, we know, served for a short time in the Low Countries, and the experience was, no doubt, of great value to him, but it would have been a poor substitute for his education at Westminster! "Perhaps it was in the Low Countries," says Mr. Addington Symonds, "that he learned to drink deep and swear"!

But let us examine a little further into the probabilities of the case. And first let us note that the Stratfordians are here again as hopelessly divided as they are over the vexed question of "the learning of Shakespeare." Here, for example, is what Mr. Sidney Lee writes: "The suggestion that he joined at the end of 1585 a band of youths of the district in serving in the Low Countries under the Earl of Leicester, whose castle of Kenilworth was within easy reach of Stratford, is based on an obvious confusion between him and others of his name. The knowledge of a soldier's life which Shakespeare exhibited in his plays is no greater and no less than that which he displayed of almost all other spheres of human activity, and to assume that he wrote of all or of any from practical experience, unless the evidence be conclusive, is to under-rate his intuitive power of realising life under almost every aspect by force of his imagination."

The only comment we need make on this is that Messrs. Garnett and Gosse do not send Shakspeare to the Low Countries in order that he may gain knowledge of a soldier's life (as to which such an experience would, no doubt, be of the most valuable assistance), but in order that he may acquire that culture which is so obviously necessary for the author of those "earliest productions" which are so remarkable for "their perfect polish and urbanity," and "so unlike what might have been expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor." The literary

idea of the sort of training which is likely to bestow culture of this sort appears to me to be quite unique.

But now let us once more examine the dates. Leicester sailed from Harwich in December, 1585. According to Mr. Lee, Shakspeare came to London in 1586. "To London Shakespeare naturally drifted, doubtless trudging thither on foot during 1586, by way of Oxford and High Wycombe." According to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, Shakspeare visited Stratford in 1587, in order to concur with his parents in a proposed settlement between them and one Lambert, the mortgagee of the Asbies estate (his mother's property), whereby it was to be arranged that on Lambert's cancelling the mortgage and paying the sum of twenty pounds, the Shaksperes should convey to him all their title to the estate.<sup>1</sup> These dates hardly seem to square with Shakspeare's hypothetical visit to the Low Countries. But in any case this supposed visit is mere imagination. If it had any foundation in fact, is it to be supposed that none of the old writers should have heard of it? But tradition is absolutely silent as to anything of the kind, and there is nothing in the works of Shakespeare which can be cited in confirmation of the hypothesis. "It is," says Mr. Lee, "unlikely that Shakespeare ever set foot on the continent of Europe in either a private or professional capacity. He repeatedly ridicules the craze for foreign travel."<sup>2</sup>

In a word, it appears to me that the hypothesis adopted by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse in order to explain in some measure the writing by the "Stratford rustic and London

<sup>1</sup> This is the "legal document" alluded to by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse.

<sup>2</sup> I cite this, of course, to show how these Stratfordian critics are at loggerheads. That "Shakespeare," in spite of his ridicule for the craze of foreign travel, had visited the Continent there can, surely, be very little doubt. Of Shakspeare, on the other hand, it is in all probability quite true that he never left the shores of his native island. The Baconians are charged with casuistical argument and inability to weigh evidence, but what are we to say of biographers who invent imaginary incidents to bolster up their theories without even the shade of a shadow of evidence to support them?

actor" of such a play as *Love's Labour's Lost*, and such a poem as *Venus and Adonis*, is, though doubtless "mighty convenient," a singularly infelicitous one. Still, that some hypothesis of the kind is recognised as necessary, shows at least an appreciation of the exigencies of the case, and as such is a great advance on those "whole hogger" Stratfordians who, like Professor Baynes and Mr. Churton Collins, maintained that Shakspeare had actually written *Venus and Adonis* before he left Stratford! This is the "plenary inspiration" theory with a vengeance.

But why should we stop with the Low Countries? "The idiomatic ease of the French scenes in *Henry V*" are said by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse to "indicate that he [viz. Shakespeare] had acquired the language where it was habitually spoken." Many passages prove "his familiarity with the moods and aspects of the sea," surely gained by sailing over it to foreign lands. It has been proved, in the judgment of Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, "that Shakespeare before writing *Hamlet* had obtained from some source an intimate knowledge of the Castle of Elsinore," and though they do not think the hypothesis of a personal visit is necessary, because Leicester sent actors to Copenhagen in 1585, nevertheless that fact "does not demonstrate that it never took place; and nothing would so well fit in *with the long voyage which he certainly must have made at some time or other of his life.*"<sup>1</sup> Then, as we know, a book has been written to show that Shakespeare must have been in Germany.

And what are we to say of his accurate knowledge of the towns of Northern Italy—of Padua, Verona, Milan, Mantua, and especially of Venice? On this subject the reader should by all means consult Professor Elze's Essay on "The Supposed Travels of Shakespeare."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *History of English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 198. My italics.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on Shakespeare*, by Karl Elze, PH.D. Translated by L. Dora Schmitz.

Here he will find, to begin with, some very pertinent remarks as to the silly theory of Shakespeare having enlisted as a private soldier in Leicester's force, which hypothesis the Professor points out has no legs to stand upon. I can only refer the reader to the Professor's arguments, which Messrs. Garnett and Gosse seem to have forgotten. But as to Italy the case is different. The argument is here cumulative to show that Shakespeare must have had personal knowledge of some of the towns of which he presents us with such vivid and accurate portraiture. "As to Venice, it would be difficult to say which play transfers us more completely to the city of the lagunes, the *Merchant of Venice* or *Othello*, although it is only the first act of the latter that is acted at Venice." Dr. Elze, whom I should like to quote at length if space permitted, says very truly: "The poetic imagination may be ever so lively and creative, and the power of intuition ever so highly developed, one thing cannot be disputed, namely, that it bestows upon no one a knowledge of facts, but that such a knowledge can only be acquired either by experience or must be imparted by others." Dr. Johnson very correctly observes that "Shakespeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned," and, says Dr. Elze, "Should we therefore succeed in pointing out in the *Merchant of Venice* or elsewhere any knowledge of positive facts respecting Italy, which the poet could have obtained only in one of these two ways, and could it then be proved that he did not acquire it from books or oral communication, his journey to Italy would be established." With this proof Dr. Elze claims to have provided us in his very interesting pages. I can here only glance at his arguments.

Take, for instance, the description of Belmont in the *Merchant of Venice*. The Belmont of Shakespeare (unlike that of the Pecorone) "has its prototype unquestionably in one of those splendid summer residences, surrounded with



well-kept gardens and adorned with treasures of art, which the merchant princes of Venice possessed even in Shakespeare's day. . . . From the context it appears with certainty that Shakespeare possessed a perfectly accurate knowledge of this locality." Portia sends her servant Balthazar to Padua to fetch the "notes and garments" of her learned cousin Bellario and then to meet his mistress at the "common ferry" trading to Venice. "The ferry to Venice was at that time at Fusine, at the mouth of the Brenta." Portia's words are :—

Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed,  
Unto the *tranect*, to the common ferry  
Which trades to Venice.

"The nonsensical word 'tranect,' which is found in all the quartos and folios, and has been retained even by the Cambridge editors, proves that copyists and compositors possessed no knowledge of this word, and still less of the thing itself. Even the word 'traject,' which Theobald has correctly restored, is not a genuine English word, otherwise the poet would not have added the apposition 'to the common ferry,' which he surely did only to make the meaning clear to his readers and hearers. What visitor to Venice does not here directly recognise the Venetian *traghetto* (*tragetto*)? And whence did the poet get a knowledge of the *traghetto*? The ferry takes us across the 'laguna morta,' and up the great canal to the city, where we in spirit land at the Rialto. Shakespeare displays a no less accurate knowledge of this locality than of the villas along the Brenta, as he does not confound the Isola di Rialto with the Ponte di Rialto. He knows that the exchange 'where merchants most do congregate' is upon the former; nay, he appears to have been better acquainted with the Isola di Rialto than Coryat, fifteen years afterwards, for the name of Gobbo, which he has bestowed on the clown, reminds us vividly of the Gobbo



di Rialto, a stone figure which serves as a supporter to that granite pillar of about a man's height, from which the laws of the Republic were proclaimed," etc.

Shakespeare, as Dr. Elze truly says, "transfers us, without our being aware of it, into an Italian atmosphere, and in the fifth act makes us enjoy the charms of an Italian night as they could scarcely be felt more lively on the spot itself. The moonlight scene at Belmont is indeed a masterpiece which defies all rivalry, and is far above any that has proceeded from an Italian pen." He well compares Shakespeare's Italian pictures with those presented by Jonson in his *Volpone*. "Jonson not only exhibits a profound knowledge of the Italian language, but shows himself conversant with Venetian institutions, customs, and localities; he, so to say, lays the local colouring on inches thick; but it is everywhere the work of a book-worm whose object it is to display with self-sufficiency his own learning compiled *ad hoc* from other books." Shakespeare, on the contrary, writing from personal knowledge, as Dr. Elze believes, gives his characters "Italian souls, Italian passions, and Southern joyousness of life."

I repeat that I must refer to the essay itself for Dr. Elze's arguments, of the nature of which I have only given some slight indication. There is one, however, of such interest that I cannot omit to mention it. All readers of the *Winter's Tale* will remember how Shakespeare speaks of Julio Romano with enthusiastic praise and describes the statue of Hermione as his work. Julio Romano was well known as a painter. "The Palazzo de T. in Mantua built by Romano and fitted with his paintings and drawings was one of the wonders of the age." But Shakespeare makes Romano a sculptor! "Does not this prove complete ignorance, and could he have committed such an unpardonable mistake if he himself had been at Mantua?"

It seems, however, that this supposed error unexpectedly

serves to confirm Dr. Elze's hypothesis that Shakespeare had himself visited Mantua. In the first edition of Vasari (1550) are given two Latin epitaphs of Romano which were, it appears, inscribed on his tombstone in the church of San Barnaba at Mantua.<sup>1</sup> The epitaphs testify to the fact that Julio Romano was celebrated in his time for three arts—painting, architecture, and *sculpture*. Shakespeare is right! "He has made no blunder. And more than this, his praise of Romano wonderfully agrees with the second epitaph, in which truth to nature and life is likewise praised as being Julio's chief excellence."

Videbat Jupiter corpora *sculpta* pictaque  
*Spirare*, aedes mortalium aequarier coelo  
 Julii virtute Romani . . .

So runs the second inscription.

Either then, says Dr. Elze, Shakespeare must have studied Vasari, or he had been in Mantua and had there seen Romano's works and read his epitaphs. "Vasari's work was first published in 1550, and a second edition in 1568, but it was not translated into English till three hundred years afterwards (1850); the (unfinished) French translation also was not published till 1803. Shakespeare must therefore have been a perfect master both of the Italian and Latin languages, to have made use of the work and the epitaphs, moreover he must have used the first edition of it, for that alone contains the inscription which we have placed second."<sup>2</sup>

In much the same way Shakespeare was charged with ignorance "because in *Hamlet* he has used the name Baptista for a woman, after having employed it correctly in the *Taming of the Shrew*, till Von Reumont pointed

<sup>1</sup> The tombstone "has completely disappeared since the renovation of the church." (Elze.)

<sup>2</sup> "Greene's *Dorastus and Fawnia*, from which Shakespeare drew his story, contains no mention of Julio Romano, and, in fact, knows nothing of a statue of Hermione (there called Bellaria)." (Elze.)

out that in Italy Baptista is used like Maria as the name of a woman as well as of a man." "The charge of ignorance is thus," says Dr. Elze, "turned into its opposite and becomes a proof of the thoroughness of Shakespeare's knowledge."

It has been objected to the theory maintained by Professor Elze that Shakespeare "repeatedly ridicules the fashion of travelling and foolish travellers." Mr. Lee attaches importance to this objection. "It is," he says, "unlikely that Shakespeare ever set foot on the continent of Europe in either a private or professional capacity. He repeatedly ridicules the craze for foreign travel." The argument does not seem to me to have any weight, and I think Dr. Elze effectually disposes of it. Shakespeare's sarcasm was directed at foolish travellers, "fops of the stamp of Gabriel Harvey or Tom Coryat, who, after their return home, dressed and behaved like Italians, as if they had forgotten their English ways, a folly against which the poet's healthy mind and his patriotism must have alike revolted. That such reproofs on the part of the poet would be quite compatible with his having travelled himself is proved by the example of Nash, whom we know positively to have been in Italy, and who, notwithstanding, is no less sharp than Shakespeare in rebuking travelling fools and braggarts." It is indeed, *a priori*, in the highest degree improbable that such a man as Shakespeare would not have felt, and strongly felt, that desire, of which I imagine no great man has been destitute, "to see the wonders of the world abroad." He, if anybody, must surely have understood the advantages, and appreciated the delights, of foreign travel. And well did he know that "homekeeping youth have ever homely wits." Does Mr. Lee really suppose that the poet who could write of Italy as though he had been born under Italian skies would have ridiculed the longing to "swim in a gondola" in the city of lagoons?

"Ah, good old Mantuan ! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice :—

Venetia, Venetia,  
Chi non te vede not te pretia."<sup>1</sup>

This does not seem like the sentiment of a "home-keeping youth."

But Mr. Lee has yet another objection to the belief in a travelled Shakespeare. "The fact that he represents Valentine in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (I, 1, 71) as travelling from Verona to Milan by sea, and Prospero in the *Tempest* as embarking on a ship at the gates of Milan (I, 2, 129-44), renders it almost impossible that he could have gathered his knowledge of Northern Italy from personal observation." Curiously enough, there is appended to this pronouncement, as though in support of it, a note making reference to the very essay of Dr. Elze from which I have been quoting, and which so vigorously maintains the very hypothesis which Mr. Lee so scornfully rejects. Here, again, his argument appears to me to be of very little weight. As to the passage in the *Tempest*, we have only to turn to it to see that there is no necessary implication to the effect that Prospero embarked on a ship at the gates of Milan. He and Miranda are evidently supposed to be hurried overland to the sea (or possibly to a river), whence they are placed "aboard a bark." As Dr. Elze says: "The account given in the *Tempest* of Prospero's and Miranda's expulsion from Milan, though of a some-

<sup>1</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, 2. In *The Two Gentlemen* (Act IV, sc. 1, 33) when the outlaw asks Valentine "Have you the tongues?" he replies—

"My youthful travel therein made me happy,  
Or else I often had been miserable."

Mr. Lee writes (p. 14): "Several of the books in French and Italian whence Shakespeare derived the plots of his dramas—Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, and Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, for example—were not accessible to him in English translations; and on more general grounds the theory of his ignorance is adequately confuted." See also p. 59, n. 5.



what loose nature, yet proves nothing against the poet's knowledge, as it is clear from the context that the two were first taken across a portion of land before they reached the bark." (He then quotes the passage.)

As to the passage in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it is clear enough from the conversation of Launce and Panthino that the party is supposed to embark on a vessel in the river, and Dr. Elze makes a suggestion which seems at least plausible. "The question," he says, "might gain a different aspect if we consider that Upper Italy as early as the sixteenth century was intersected by canals, a fact which Shakespeare must have been aware of had he visited the country, so that the looseness of his descriptions would at least be reduced to comparatively small measure. There appears, indeed, to have been a regular system of communication by these watercourses; the barks which were employed for the purpose were called 'corriere' by the Venetians." Whether it was possible to go by water from Verona to Milan may be doubtful, but at any rate there seems no reason to suppose that a large portion of the journey might not have been so accomplished. It is well known that in this country, before the days of railroads, much travelling was accomplished by means of canals, of which interesting old pictures may still be met with.<sup>1</sup>

But, however this may be, I think most people will agree with Dr. Elze when he writes: "This much is certain—whether Shakespeare was in Italy or not—he knew

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Sullivan, who has made out a very good case in favour of the proposition that Shakespeare must have been acquainted with Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*, "written first in Italian," and "translated out of French by George Pettie" (1581), says: "One of the difficulties upon which they [the admirers of Shakespeare] lay peculiar stress is that connected with his references to the water communication between places in North Italy, which is now known to have been in existence in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This difficulty is, however, to some extent, disposed of by a reference to the *Civile Conversation*, where we find mention of persons, 'bounde from Padua to Venice,' embarking in a vessel for the purpose of



as well that Milan and Verona are no maritime towns, as it was not unknown to him that Bohemia is an inland country and that the forest of Arden breeds no lions." In the case of the supposed Bohemian coast, he found it "ready made" in Greene's *Dorastus and Fawnia* and was content to borrow it.

That Shakespeare had some knowledge of foreign languages cannot be doubted, and is, indeed, asserted by Mr. Lee, from whose work I extract the following: "Dr. Farmer enunciated in his *Essay on Shakespeare's Learning* (1767) the theory that Shakespeare knew no language but his own, and owed whatever knowledge he displayed of the classics and of Italian and French literature to English translations. But several of the books in French and Italian, whence Shakespeare derived the plots of his dramas—Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, and Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* for example, were not accessible to him in English translations, and on more general grounds the theory of his ignorance is adequately refuted. With the Latin and French languages, indeed, and with many Latin poets of the school curriculum, Shakespeare, in his writings, openly acknowledged his acquaintance. In *Henry V*, the dialogue in many scenes is carried on in French, which is grammatically accurate, if not idiomatic. His knowledge of French may be

getting to their destination—a means of communication between these places which is obviously alluded to in *The Taming of the Shrew*:

*Tranio.* 'Tis death for anyone in Mantua  
To come to Padua. . . .  
Your ships are stay'd at Venice."—(IV, 2.)

See "A Forgotten Shakespearian Volume," *Nineteenth Century*, Feb. 1904. Recent investigations have, as I learn on good authority, proved that in Shakespeare's time it was possible to go by water from Turin through Milan to the sea. The practice of travelling by canal boat, of which we have an amusing description in Horace's account of his journey to Brundisium, was popular in Italy in the sixteenth century, when so many of the roads were impassable.

estimated to have equalled his knowledge of Latin, while he doubtless possessed just sufficient acquaintance with Italian to enable him to discern the drift of an Italian poem or novel."<sup>1</sup>

I hold, then, that it is as reasonably certain as anything can be for which actual proof cannot be adduced that Shakespeare (*Ζεύς ὅστις ἢ Ζεὺς*) had sailed the seas and visited foreign countries, as Professor Elze so ably maintains. To Mr. Churton Collins we are indebted for having demonstrated that instead of Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek" Shakespeare had, in truth, large Latin, and probably not a little Greek also.<sup>2</sup> To Messrs. Garnett and Gosse we are beholden for having frankly admitted that some assumption must be made in order to explain the "perfect polish and urbanity" of Shakespeare's earliest productions, "so unlike what might have been expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor." And we have it further admitted that Shakespeare had a large knowledge of French and no little knowledge of Italian and Spanish also.

Now the truth of all these propositions is really self-evident to the unprejudiced reader from a study of the

<sup>1</sup> Concerning *Hamlet*, Mr. Lee writes: "No English translation of Belleforest's *Historie of Hamblet* appeared before 1608; Shakespeare doubtless read it in the French." (p. 178). The italics are mine, but I do not object to the adverb here.

<sup>2</sup> This chapter was written before the publication of *Shakespeare's Books* by H. R. D. Anders (Berlin, George Reimer). Mr. Anders has no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Shakespeare did not require translations for his knowledge of Latin authors, but went directly to the originals. The old idea of the unlearned Shakespeare and Farmer's famous essay seem now to be altogether abandoned. The early critics found no difficulty in postulating an unlearned Shakespeare, because he was assumed to have written by plenary inspiration, and the blessed word "Genius" was the "open Sesame" which unlocked the door to all his knowledge. Our modern critics get over all difficulty in postulating a learned Shakespeare by the simple process of cramming William Shakspeare with all manner of classical learning at the Stratford Free School. The argument is simplicity itself and very simple natures may accept it. Mr. Anders, by the way, makes what I think to be a great error in citing *Henry VI* and *Titus* as genuine plays of Shakespeare.

works themselves. Such a man (and a vast deal more besides) was Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. That Shakspeare the "Stratford rustic and London actor" should have acquired this learning, this culture, and this polish; that *he* should have travelled into foreign lands, studied the life and topography of foreign cities, and the manners and customs of all sorts and conditions of men (all this *sub silentio*); that *he* should have written some half-dozen dramas, besides the *Venus and Adonis*, dedicated in high-sounding language to a great earl of Elizabeth's Court, besides qualifying himself as a professional actor (to say nothing of performing the functions of horse-holder and call-boy); that *he* should have done all this and a good deal more between 1587 and 1592 is a supposition so wild that it can only be entertained by those who are prepared to accept it as a miracle. "And miracles do not happen"!

No; Shakspeare of Stratford cannot, by any possibility, be made to equal Shakespeare of the Universe. Reason denies it.

*Non si te ruperis, inquit,  
Par eris !*

#### NOTE TO CHAPTER IV

Hallam, though, as he tells us, he shrank from reopening the *vexata quaestio* of the learning of Shakespeare, does not conceal his belief that the great poet had very much more Latin than was commonly supposed. Speaking of "the phrases unintelligible and improper, except in the case of their primitive roots which occur so copiously in the plays," he writes: "In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* these are much less frequent than in his later dramas, but here we find several instances, thus: 'Things base and vile, holding no *quantity*,' for value; rivers

'that have overborne their *continents*,' the *continente ripâ* of Horace; '*compact* of imagination'; 'something of great *constancy*,' for *consistency*; 'sweet Pyramus *translated* there'; 'the laws of Athens, which by no means we may *extenuate*.' I have considerable doubt whether any of these expressions would be found in any of the contemporary prose of Elizabeth's reign; but could authority be produced for Latinisms so forced, it is still not very likely that one who did not understand their proper meaning would have introduced them into poetry." Mr. William Willis, in his *Baconian Mint*, denies that this use of the word *continent* indicates classic learning. He cites passages from North's *Plutarch* and others to show that the word in Shakespeare's time was used for "that which contained" as opposed to the contents. So North: "The continent exceedeth the thing contained." But this is not the point. The point is that Shakespeare uses "*continents* of rivers" in the sense of "banks of rivers," which is exactly Horace's *continente ripâ*. Moreover, as Hallam points out, he introduces such words into poetry. Charles Knight, speaking of Shakespeare's use of the word *expedient*, says: "The word properly means 'that disengages itself from all entanglements.' To set at liberty the foot which was held fast is *exped-ire*. Shakespeare always uses this word in strict accordance with its derivation, as, in truth, he does most words which may be called learned." Judge Holmes says: "Upon the word *premised* Theobald made the observation that Shakespeare is very peculiar in his adjectives; and it is much in his manner to use the words borrowed from the Latin closer to their original signification than they were vulgarly used in; so here, he uses *premised* in the sense of the word from which it is derived, *præmissus*; that is, sent before. This is the use of a writer whose mind is so thoroughly imbued with the Latin language, that he unconsciously incorporates it into his English." Dr. Baynes says of Touchstone's words to Audrey, "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most *capricious* poet, Ovid, was among the Goths" (Ovid was among the Goths, Gotes, the Getae, a Thracian tribe, among whom, in his banishment, he dwelt), that "the epithet 'capricious' (*caper*, a goat) in this speech is a good example of the subtle playing with words, the skilful



suggestion of double meanings of which Shakespeare, in common with Ovid, is so fond." (Note the double pun on "Goths" and "*caper*.") Dr. W. Theobald says: "When the author of the Shakespeare plays wrote

While that the coulter rusts  
That should deracinate such savagery—

the coining of the new word *deracinate* (to tear up by the roots) is evidence of his thorough familiarity with the Latin tongue. And there are hundreds and hundreds of words like that coined by him."

I have taken the above extracts from *Shaksper not Shakespeare*, by W. H. Edwards, who, citing Trench, *On the Study of Words*, writes: "The habitual coining of words from the Latin by an English writer, according to this author, is the evidence of a thorough knowledge of, and familiarity with, Latin. He has 'to work on already given materials to evolve what is latent therein,' etc. How could Shakespeare (who continually coins new words) have compared his language with the other and richer one, had he not been profoundly acquainted with the latter through study of books?"

A great deal more might be written to the above effect; but, happily, Mr. Churton Collins's illuminating essays have rendered it less necessary to pursue this line of argument (cogent though it be) at greater length. It really seems to me that the "fanaticism" lies with those who deny the learning of Shakespeare, because they see the enormous difficulty—I would rather say the impossibility—of associating it with Shaksper of Stratford.

I would here add that the argument for the learning of Shakespeare, like most other arguments in this controversy, has suffered from the *trop de zèle* of some of its supporters. Thus, in *Bacon versus Shaksper*, by Edwin Reed, we find it suggested that "To be or not to be; that is the question," is taken from the philosopher Parmenides—"To be or not to be, that is the alternative." But Parmenides said οὕτως ἢ πάνπαν πελέναι χρέων ἐστὶν ἢ οὐχί, which means that there is no intermediate state of existence between Being and Not-Being, or, in other words,



there is nothing between Existence and Non-Existence. But Hamlet puts a different question, which was correctly rendered in a Greek iambic by that celebrated Cambridge scholar Richard Shilleto: τὸ ζῆν ἄμεινον ἢ τὸ μὴ ζῆτῶ πάλαι, viz. "Is it better to live, or not to live? That is what I keep asking myself." Obviously, there is no real parallelism here.

There is, however, no little food for reflection in Shakespeare's two last sonnets. These are but versions of a fine Greek epigram, whether founded on the original, or on a Latin rendering of it. It is not a little remarkable, as Mr. Begley observes (*Is it Shakespeare?*, p. 71), to find William Shakespeare figuring in company with Grotius, Thomas Gray, Pagnini, Herder, and Bacon, for a version of a Greek epigram; but he so appears in Dr. Wellesley's *Anthologia Polyglotta*, published in 1849. The Greek epigram is by the Byzantine Marianus, and is quoted by Mr. Gollancz in the "Temple" edition of the *Sonnets*. A Latin rendering is to be found in *Selecta Epigrammata*, Basel, 1529. Here, then, is scholar Shakespeare, like Francis Bacon ("The world's a bubble, etc.") trying his hand at an English paraphrase of an epigram in Greek anthology! These sonnets are alternative versions of the same epigram—not translations but adaptations. Sonnet No. 154 begins thus:—

The little Love-god lying once asleep  
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,  
Whilst many nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep  
Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand  
The fairest votary took up that fire  
Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd;  
And so the general of hot desire  
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.

In the Greek original the slumbering Love had given his torch to the nymphs' keeping, and they, to quench it, dip it into the waters, but the torch kindles the waters, and "the amorous nymphs pour hot water thence into the bathing pool." In Shakespeare's version it is not "amorous nymphs," but "nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep," and it is not the nymphs generally, but one of them that is said to take up the "heart-inflaming brand." This nymph is described as "the fairest votary," and in

the companion sonnet as "a maid of Dian's." Who is meant? I cannot doubt that this "fairest votary" is the same as "the Imperial votaress" of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, against whom "Cupid's fiery shaft" was launched in vain, being "quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon"; and we all remember the famous portrait of Elizabeth as Diana with the crescent moon on her brow. But my interpretation goes further. In Sonnet 153 this "maid of Dian's" steeps the "love-kindling fire,"

In a cold valley fountain of that ground ;  
Which borrowed from this holy fire of Love  
A dateless lively heat, still to endure,  
*And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove*  
*Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.*  
But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new-fired,  
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast ;  
I, sick withal, *the help of bath desired,*  
*And thither hied,* a sad distempered guest,  
But found no cure ; the bath for my help lies  
Where Cupid got new fire, my mistress' eyes.

Note "I . . . thither hied." Whither? Surely here is an allusion to the city of Bath, popular in Elizabethan times as "against strange maladies a sovereign cure." Similarly we have in Sonnet 154:—

This brand she quenched in a cool well hard by,  
Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,  
Growing a bath and healthful remedy  
For men diseased ; but I, my mistress' thrall,  
*Came there for cure.*

When this thought struck me I at once referred to the "Third Variorum" to see if any of the commentators had suggested an allusion to the city of Bath, and I found that Steevens, one of the acutest of critics, had done so. Here, then, I believe, we have an allusion to the poet's "Mistress," the Virgin Queen, and to the city of Bath. Now Elizabeth, as we know from Nichol's *Progresses* (Vol. III, p. 250), and other sources, was at Bath in 1592, and, as Nichol's Editor observes, had evidently been there previously. He quotes a letter without date, but published in 1596, addressed probably to Lord Burleigh, which speaks of Bath

as "a place resorted unto so greatly, being at two times of the yeare as it were the pilgrimage of health to all saints," which reminds us of the words of the sonnet, "which yet men prove against strange maladies a sovereign cure." Was Shakspeare at Bath with the Queen? I think it probable that "Shakespeare" was; and thus, perchance, he came to write a paraphrase of a Greek epigram, and so to gain a place, among other scholars, in Dr. Wellesley's *Anthologia*. Possibly he had found that "as for appetite, the waters of Parnassus are not like the waters of the Spaw," as one wrote to Essex in 1594!

It is rather curious, by the way, to find that Bath was celebrated not only as a health resort, but as a favoured abode of the Muses—that its springs were not only famed for healing virtue but as "Pierian waters," and that there were Swans of that Avon also! Thus in *The New Bath Guide*, printed for J. Dodsley in Pall Mall, 1772, I note the following lines:—

Sweet are yon hills that crown this fertile vale!  
 Ye genial springs, Pierian waters, hail!  
 Hail woods and lawns! Yes—oft I'll tread  
 Yon pine-clad mountain's side,  
 Oft trace the gay enamell'd mead  
 Where *Avon* rolls his pride.  
 Sure next to fair Castalia's streams,  
 And Pindus' flowery path,  
 Apollo most the springs esteems,  
 And verdant meads of *Bath*.

Mr. Elton (p. 241) says: "The Sonnets in question show a real knowledge of the virtues of the 'Bathonian King's Bath.'"

## CHAPTER V

### "TITUS" AND THE TRILOGY

WE have seen how hopeless is the disagreement of the Stratfordians as to such questions as the following: "Was Shakespeare a man of learning and culture?" "Did he travel in foreign countries?" etc.; and I have suggested that the answer to such questions must be an emphatic "yes" in the case of Shakespeare, and an emphatic "no" in the case of Shakspeare. And now, before passing on to consider the few remaining facts that are known to us as to the life of Shakspeare after he had come to London, it is necessary to examine another question, or rather two questions, with regard to which the Stratfordians are divided in a similar manner. Did Shakespeare write *Titus Andronicus*? Did he write the Trilogy of *Henry VI*, or any part of it?

It is necessary to consider these questions before going further, because they have a not unimportant bearing on the arguments of Mr. Collins and others in favour of a learned Shakespeare, which we have just considered.

I have indicated that in my judgment Mr. Collins's argument, taken as a whole, must command acceptance; but that proposition must be limited by the following qualification. So far as the argument is founded on passages culled from *Titus Andronicus* I cannot admit its validity, for I am firmly convinced that this play was not written by Shakespeare. Again, so far as the argument is based upon passages selected from the Trilogy of *Henry VI*

it must be looked upon with great suspicion, for, in my opinion, there is little or nothing of Shakespeare in *Henry VI*, Part 1, and although we may reasonably think that his work appears in some measure in Parts 2 and 3, yet, as I shall show, it is by no means easy to say with anything like certainty, what passages in those two plays are to be ascribed to the Master.<sup>1</sup>

I am aware, of course, that nobody but the literary pundit, or “the brilliant young man,” is allowed to lay claim to the possession of “the literary sense,” so I must not appeal to that sense in support of the assertion that no one adequately endowed therewith could contend that either *Andronicus* or *Henry VI* (Part 1, at any rate,) is the work of the Master Mind. Still I may, perhaps, venture to express my conviction that Shakespeare, the divine Magician, who by a touch of his magic wand was able to commute the commonest of clay into the purest of gold, has not exercised his enchantment in the production of these dramas. But, since my judgment on such a matter, as I am fully aware, carries no weight except for myself, I will seek to commend it to the reader by other arguments, which, happily, are not difficult to find.

Let us take *Andronicus* first. “That *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare’s work,” writes Mr. Collins, “is as certain as anything connected with him can be, external and internal evidence alike are conclusive as to its authenticity.”<sup>2</sup> If the truth of this proposition is “as certain as anything connected with him can be,” I can only say that nothing connected with Shakespeare has any certainty at all. I have already more than once referred to Malone, who, in my judgment, was one of the ablest and acutest, as well as one of the most industrious, of Shakespearean critics. I am aware that it is the custom of some of our modern

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, p. 151, and Note A at end of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1903, p. 629 n.



instructors to put aside Malone with a Podsnappian wave of the hand, but in my humble opinion it would be to their advantage if they would pay more attention to his writings. Of this I feel sure, that no one is adequately equipped for Shakespearean controversy who has not read and considered Malone's criticisms. Malone, too, has this great advantage at the present day, that he wrote before the question of the Shakespearean authorship had arisen, so that he was not biassed in his judgments by the thought of how they might affect the anti-Stratfordian heresy. He is unstirred by the passions aroused by the Baconian theory, and is under no apprehension lest his pronouncements should perchance be found to give a loophole for the arrows of the unorthodox.

Now Malone has devoted several pages of very able and instructive criticism to the question of the authorship of *Andronicus*, and thus sums up his final conclusion: "All these circumstances combined, prove with irresistible force that the play of Titus Andronicus has been erroneously ascribed to Shakspeare." So much for Mr. Collins's "certainty"! "As certain as anything connected with Shakespeare can be," quotha!

But now, as one *nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*, I will set before the reader the reasons—or some of them—upon which Malone's judgment is based. (See his edition by Boswell, Vol. XXI, p. 557, and Vol. II, at p. 310.)

"To enter into a long disquisition," says he, "to prove this piece not to have been written by Shakspeare, would be an idle waste of time. To those who are not conversant with his writings, if particular passages were examined, more words would be necessary than the subject is worth; those who are well acquainted with his works cannot entertain a doubt on the question." This is, indeed, sad in view of Mr. Collins's enunciation of the very opposite certainty! "I will, however," adds Malone,

"mention one mode by which it may be easily ascertained. Let the reader only peruse a few lines of Appius and Virginia, Tancred and Gismund, The Battle of Alcazar, Jeronimo, Selimus Emperor of the Turks, The Wounds of Civil War, The Wars of Cyrus, Locrine, Arden of Feversham, King Edward I, the Spanish Tragedy, Selyman and Perseda, King Leir, the old King John, or any other of the pieces that were exhibited before the time of Shakspeare, and he will at once perceive that Titus Andronicus was coined in the same mint."

But this is by no means all. The play is one of great antiquity. It is mentioned in the induction to Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, in 1614, as one that had been exhibited "five and twenty or thirty years," which, if we take the lowest number, throws it back to the year 1589, and to 1584, if we take the highest.<sup>1</sup> "A booke entitled 'A Noble Roman Historie of Titus Andronicus'" was entered at Stationers' Hall, by John Danter, February 6th, 1593-4. "This," says Malone, "was undoubtedly the play, as it was printed in that year (according to Langbaine, who alone appears to have seen the first edition)<sup>2</sup> and acted by the servants of the Earls of Pembroke, Derby, and Sussex. It is observable that in the entry no author's name is mentioned, and that the play was originally performed by the same company of comedians who exhibited the old drama entitled *The Contention of the Houses of York and Lancaster*, the old *Taming of a Shrew*, and

<sup>1</sup> Jonson ranks together *Andronicus* and *Hieronimo* or *Jeronimo*, Kyd's sanguinary tragedy. "Professor Baker," writes Mr. Robertson, "is probably quite right in his conclusion that 'even as far back as 1585 the story of Titus had been staged,' though the phrase of Ben Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair*, making *Titus* and *Jeronimo* twenty-five or thirty years old in 1614, is a somewhat insecure basis for certainty." (*Did Shakespeare write Titus Andronicus?* p. 220.) But as Mr. Robertson also says (p. 237), "Jonson's manner of reference to an early form of the play almost excludes the belief that he held it for Shakespeare's."

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the 1594 edition has recently been discovered. (See *Athenaeum*, January 21, 1905.)

Marlowe's King Edward II, by whom not one of Shakespeare's Plays is said to have been performed. . . . Shakespeare's name is *not* in the title page of the edition printed in quarto in 1611, and therefore, we may conclude, was not in the title page of that in 1594, of which the other was undoubtedly a reimpression. . . . In short, the high antiquity of the piece, its entry on the Stationers' books, and being afterwards printed without the name of our author,<sup>1</sup> its being performed by the servants of Lord Pembroke (Shakespeare's plays having been acted by the Lord Chamberlain's or the Queen's or King's servants), the stately march of the versification, the whole colour of the composition, its resemblance to several of our most ancient dramas, the dissimilitude of the style from our author's undoubted compositions, and the tradition mentioned by Ravenscroft,<sup>2</sup> when some of his contemporaries had not been long dead (for Lowin and Taylor, two of his fellow-comedians, were alive a few years before the Restoration, and Sir John D'Avenant, who had himself written for the stage in 1626, did not die till April, 1668), all these circumstances combined, prove with irresistible force that the play of Titus Andronicus has been erroneously ascribed to Shakespeare."

But, then, it is objected that *Titus Andronicus* is mentioned by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598) as being the work of Shakespeare. This, I take it, is the chief reason why our neo-Stratfordians are so anxious to make poor Shakespeare responsible for this repulsive play. For there is a curious idea that the fact that Meres mentions certain tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare, in the year 1598, is somehow evidence of the Stratfordian authorship. Meres, however, merely mentions the name of the reputed author of the plays which he

<sup>1</sup> The three editions of 1594, 1600, and 1611 were all printed *without* Shakespeare's name.

<sup>2</sup> As to which see below, p. 136 and n.

enumerates as “Shakespeare’s.” He supplies no evidence to connect the author with the Stratford Player. Howbeit, the Stratfordians, or some of them, are now extremely reluctant to admit (as did the old critics) that Meres must have made a mistake in his catalogue. For, if he was inaccurate or misinformed in this particular, why not in others also? Besides, there is a reason more cogent still. How about Heminge and Condell? Are we to confess that they admitted a spurious drama into the collection of 1623? Are we to cast doubts upon the sacred book? Are we to allow our faith to be undermined by such insidious beginnings? No, perish the thought! A fig for Malone! A fig for Hallam! A fig for all the old critics! A fig for evidence! That Shakespeare wrote *Andronicus* is as certain—as anything else about Shakespeare!

I will consider the first folio of 1623, and the circumstances in which it was published, later on. As to Meres, Malone writes as follows: “His *enumerating* this among Shakspeare’s plays may be accounted for in the same way in which we may account for its being *printed* by his fellow-comedians in the first folio edition of his works. Meres was in 1598, when his book appeared, intimately connected with Drayton, and *probably* acquainted with some of the dramattick poets of the time, from some or other of whom he might have heard that Shakspeare interested himself about this tragedy, or had written a few lines for the author. The *internal evidence furnished by the piece itself*, and proving it not to have been the production of Shakspeare, greatly outweighs any single testimony on the other side. Meres might have been misinformed, or inconsiderately have given credit to the rumour of the day. For six of the plays which he has mentioned (exclusive of the evidence which the representation of the pieces themselves might have furnished), he had perhaps no better authority than the whisper of the theatre; for



they were not printed." And it is pointed out that he could not have been deceived by the title-page; since Shakespeare's name was not there.

The tradition mentioned by Ravenscroft (1686), to which allusion has been made, is as follows: "I have been told," says he (in his preface to an altered version of this play, published in 1687), "by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally his, but brought by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master touches to one or two of the principal parts or characters."<sup>1</sup> This is the only warrant for the idea that Shakespeare might possibly have "written a few lines for the author," as Malone suggests; but I prefer to believe that Meres simply made a mistake when he ascribed this ghastly drama to Shakespeare. "*Titus Andronicus*," says Hallam,<sup>2</sup> "is now by common consent denied to be, in any sense, a production of Shakespeare; very few passages, I should think not one, resemble his manner." As to the mention of it by Meres, he says, "In criticism of all kinds, we must acquire a dogged habit of resisting testimony, when *res ipsa per se vociferatur to the contrary*."

If ever there was a case where *res ipsa per se vociferatur*, it is this of *Titus Andronicus*. Strange, then, is it not, to find Mr. Churton Collins appealing to *internal evidence* (save the mark!) to prove the "certainty" of Shakespeare's

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Collins is very contemptuous of this "miserable scribbler," and says he is entirely untrustworthy. If that is the case, there is one witness the less in favour of Shakespeare's having even a finger (as Messrs. Garnett and Gosse put it) in *Andronicus's* pie. Ravenscroft begins by saying, "I think it a greater theft to rob the dead of their praise than the living of their money. That I may not appear guilty of such a crime, 'tis necessary I should acquaint you that there is a play in *Mr. Shakespeare's volume* under the name of *Titus Andronicus*, from which I drew a part of this." He continues as in the text. It is certainly not necessary for those who maintain that *Titus* is not by Shakespeare to accept the truth of Ravenscroft's tradition, which, as Mr. J. M. Robertson writes, has no value "save as testifying to a current doubt, in 1672, of Shakespeare's authorship of *Titus*." (See *Did Shakespeare write "Titus Andronicus"?*, pp. 11-13.)

<sup>2</sup> *History of Literature*, Vol. II, p. 179 (1873).



authorship? Or, rather, would it not be strange in any field of literature outside the Shakespearean controversy? Of *that*, however, it may be said to be altogether characteristic.

Mr. Collins's "certainty" has also to face the opposition of Mr. Sidney Lee, who writes (p. 58): "The tragedy, a sanguinary picture of the decadence of Imperial Rome, contains powerful lines and situations, but is far too repulsive in plot and treatment, and too ostentatious in classical allusions, to take rank with Shakespeare's acknowledged work.<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson credits *Titus Andronicus* with a popularity equalling Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, and internal evidence shows that Kyd was capable of writing much of *Titus*." We have seen, also, that Jonson couples *Titus Andronicus* with another play of Kyd's, viz. *Hieronymo*. For these and other reasons the learned Dr. Farmer was of opinion that Kyd was the author of this repulsive drama. Boswell, however, opined that it was the work of Marlowe, and I think there is something to be said for that theory. As Malone tells us (Vol. II, p. 311), "Marlowe's King Edward II and some other old plays were performed by the servants of the Earl of Pembroke, by whom not one of Shakespeare's undisputed dramas was exhibited." Now, one thing that strikes the reader of *Titus* is the peculiar way in which Latin quotations are brought in "neck and crop." Take, for instance, Act II, Scene I, 133:—

*Sit fas aut nefas . . . per Styga per manes vehor.*<sup>2</sup>

Or Act IV, Scene I, 81:—

*Magni Dominator poli  
Tam lentus audis scelera? tam lentus vides?*

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that Malone's arguments are much more thorough and convincing.

<sup>2</sup> *Manes* is evidently a misprint for *amnes*. The words of Seneca are *per Styga per amnes sequar*. This and the following quotation are both from Seneca's *Hippolytus*.

And, again, Act IV, Scene 2, 20, the well-known lines from Horace :—

*Integer vitae, scelerisque purus  
Non eget Mauri jaculis, nec arcu.*

I think very few even of our neo-Stratfordians would contend that these quotations proceeded from the pen of Shakespeare. They are, however, quite in Marlowe's style. Take, for example, the play of *Edward II*, just mentioned as having been performed, as was *Titus*, by the Earl of Pembroke's servants. Here we have (Act IV, Scene 6) :—

*Quem dies vidit veniens superbum  
Hunc dies vidit fugiens jacentem.*

This also is a quotation from Seneca (*The Thyestes*.)

In Act V (Scene 4, 69) we have a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, viz. :—

*Major sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere.*

See also lines 8, 61, and 63.

It is noticeable that the writer, whoever he was, who converted "The Second Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster" into the third part of *King Henry VI*, has put a quotation from Ovid (*Epistle from Phillis to Demophoon*) into the mouth of the dying Rutland, so that we have the following :—

*Clifford*: Thy father slew my father, therefore die.  
(*Stabs him.*)

*Rutland*: *Di faciant laudis summa sit ista tuae!*  
(*Dies.*)

Thus the poor boy expires with a Latin quotation and a pun (*Die, Di*) on his lips! The author of the old quarto was not guilty of this double atrocity, and we may, I think, be convinced that Shakespeare is equally innocent.

Thus had I written on Mr. Collins's note concerning *Titus Andronicus*, at p. 629 of his article in the *Fortnightly Review* for April, 1903, and before I had read his essay on

“Shakespearean Paradoxes” in his recently published *Studies in Shakespeare*. In the latter article Mr. Collins sets forth the grounds on which he would have us rehabilitate this rejected play. Mr. Collins is very indignant with that modern criticism which “seems to assume that to tell the truth is to thresh the straw; that anything which is new is better than anything which is true,” and he quotes from M. Duruy: “If I had a device, it would be *The True, The True Only*, I would leave the beautiful and the good to settle matters afterwards as best they could.” Herein I am heartily in agreement with Mr. Collins. Such criticism as that which he describes is abominable. But “Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.” I am entirely conscious that I only seek the truth in this interesting Shakespearean problem. It is simply puerile on the part of Mr. Collins to ascribe to all those who disagree with him on these matters “indifference to evidence, to probability, to reason.” Really, this sort of language should be reserved for the theologian when he is dealing with the “infidel.” And to speak of those who have dared to impugn the authenticity of *Titus Andronicus* as “these iconoclasts” is simply fatuous. For who are numbered among “these iconoclasts”? Theobald, Johnson, Malone, Farmer, Steevens, Hallam, Hazlitt, Professor Dowden, Mr. Fleay, Dr. Furnivall, Dr. Garnett, nay, even Mr. Sidney Lee himself!<sup>1</sup> Yet in the face of such a body of

<sup>1</sup> In his lecture on Plays Partly Written by Shakespeare, prefixed to Dr. Forshaw’s *At Shakespeare’s Shrine*, Dr. Garnett thus speaks of *Titus Andronicus*: “If Shakespeare wrote any part of *Titus Andronicus* and *Edward the Third*, he certainly did not write the whole . . . but his participation in either, though not impossible, is not as yet sufficiently demonstrated.” “*Titus Andronicus*,” observes Hazlitt, “is certainly as unlike Shakespeare’s usual style as it is possible. It is an accumulation of vulgar physical horrors, in which the power exercised by the poet bears no proportion to the repugnance excited by the subject.” Dr. Furnivall writes: “Only a few passages in *Titus* can be Shakspeare’s.” (Preface to the First Quarto *Hamlet*). Mr. Collins appeals to the authority of Charles Knight, who argued in favour of the authenticity of *Titus*. But Knight is a broken reed to lean upon. An enthusiastic Shakespeariorator, he “went bald-

opinion as this Mr. Collins commits himself to the proposition that, "it may be said without reserve that, if Shakespeare was not the author of *Titus Andronicus*, there is an end to circumstantial testimony in literary questions ; for *the evidence external and internal* is as conclusive as such evidence can be"<sup>1</sup>

I have shown that Malone finds that "*the evidence external and internal*" conclusively proves the very opposite. What says the celebrated Dr. Farmer? After observing that Shakespeare's name was not "on the title-page of the only edition published in his lifetime,"<sup>2</sup> he writes : "Indeed, *from every internal mark* I have not the least doubt but this horrible piece was originally written by the author of the lines thrown into the mouth of the Player in *Hamlet*, and of the Tragedy of *Lochrine* ; which, likewise, from some assistance perhaps given to his friend, hath been unjustly and ignorantly charged upon Shakespeare." What says

headed" in favour of the two parts of the *Contention* having been written by Shakespeare also. I verily believe that if the six additional plays (not to mention *Pericles*) published in the 1664 folio had been included in the collection of 1623, Knight would have maintained that these, too, were all the work of Shakespeare—and perhaps Mr. Collins would have been of the same opinion ! "All the editors and critics," says Johnson, of *Andronicus*, "agree with Mr. Theobald in supposing this play spurious. I see no reason for differing from them." Johnson did not believe that Shakespeare wrote any part of the play, and alludes to "the total difference of conduct, language, and sentiment by which it stands apart from all the rest." Dr. Farmer makes merry with Capell's "new argument" that "it must have been written by Shakespeare, because at that time *other people* wrote in *the same manner*!" He adds, "Capell thought *Edward III* was Shakespeare's because *nobody* could write so, and *Titus Andronicus* because *everybody could*." (Compare Mr. Collins's argument subsequently referred to, p. 146.) M. Mason agreed that "Shakespeare had no hand in this abominable tragedy." These are some of Mr. Collins's "iconoclasts" !

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Collins has now found an ally in Professor Courthope, whose theories I deal with in Note B affixed to this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The learned Farmer is astray here, for three editions of *Titus* were published in Shakspeare's lifetime, viz., those of 1594, 1600, and 1611. None of them bore Shakespeare's name. I quote from Farmer's celebrated essay, republished in Nicol Smith's *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 203.



that distinguished Shakespearean, Mr. Fleay? "That this play is not by Shakespeare is pretty certain from internal evidence." (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 280.) "It was acted, as we know from *Henslowe's Diary*, by Shakespeare's own company," writes Mr. Collins. "Fortunately we know that it was produced by the Earl of Sussex's men, 23rd January, 1594, and Shakespeare belonged to Derby's (Lord Strange's)," writes Mr. Fleay.<sup>1</sup> Malone, too, as I have shown, points to the fact that this tragedy, with *The Contention*, the old *Taming of a Shrew*, and Marlowe's *Edward II*, was performed by a company (Lord Pembroke's), by whom none of his admitted plays were represented.

It must have been one of Shakespeare's very earliest dramas, says Mr. Collins, therefore "if it could be shown that the play could not have been produced, say, before 1593, however overwhelming may be the other evidence of its Shakespearean authorship, the whole case must fall to the ground." "*Titus Andronicus*," says Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, "although pre-Shakespearean in spirit, was probably founded upon *Titus and Vespasian*, a play produced in April, 1592, and was acted as a new play in January, 1594, when Shakespeare would have been incapable of work so exaggerated and inartistic." If this be so, Mr. Collins's "whole case must fall to the ground," but it is only right to remark that, if we accept the theory of Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, we must assume that the play referred to by Ben Jonson was another and older version of *Titus Andronicus*. "The problem," says Mr. Israel Gollancz, "is complicated by the fact that there must have been at least three plays on the subject, according to the

<sup>1</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, under the date of January 22nd, 1593-4, mentions *Titus and Ondronicus* as "ne," i.e. "new" (though this *may* mean no more than "revised") and as originally played by Sussex's men. If *Titus* was really by Shakespeare, it is curious indeed that the diarist never mentions the dramatist's name. See *post*, chap. XII.



references in the Stationers' Registers, and Henslowe's *Diary*." All this might, at least, have taught Mr. Collins not to speak on the subject with such a pontifical air of *ex cathedra* dogmatism. But since he so readily accuses those who disagree with him with "indifference to evidence" and disregard of truth, let us see further what his own idea of "evidence" is. First, we have some singularly unconvincing parallels. Shakespeare wrote, "The quality of mercy is not strained. . . . It is an attribute of God Himself," etc., therefore he must have written the lines:—

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
Draw near them then in being merciful.

In *Titus* we find the line:—

The hunt is up, the morn is bright and *grey*.

Now "*grey*," says Mr. Collins, "is Shakespeare's favourite and constantly repeated epithet for the morning and the morning sky." Yes, no doubt it is, and "the grey morn" and "the grey dawn" have been favourite expressions with a multitude of authors, including the writer of *Kathleen Mavourneen*! Aye, but here is an example. In Sonnet cxxxii Shakespeare writes of certain eyes that he loves, and which look with pretty ruth upon his pain,

And truly not the morning sun of heaven  
Better becomes the *grey* cheeks of the east . . .  
As those two mourning eyes become thy face.

Now this comparison of the "mourning eyes," lighting up the face, to the "morning sun," lighting up the grey eastern sky, is a beautiful one. We have the same *contrast* in *Henry IV*, part 2, Act II, sc. 3, where we read of the glory of Percy that

It stuck upon him as the *sun* in the *grey* vault of heaven.

How absolutely different is the expression "the morn is bright and grey"! In the sonnet Shakespeare alludes to

grey sky brightening as the morning sun shines upon it. The expression in the play almost amounts to a contradiction in terms. The grey morn is not *bright*; the *bright* morn is not *grey*. In the words of the old rhyme—it is the "morning grey" which is the "sure sign" of the fine bright day *to come*. It is the bright morning which so often turns to the grey cloudy day, as Shakespeare had himself noticed (see Sonnet xxxiii). Therefore it was, no doubt, that Hanmer suggested the reading "gay" instead of "grey." How commonplace! How unpoetical! Such, perhaps, will be the reader's comment. But is it so? That which is poetical must be true to Nature, and such is the description of a morning as "bright and gay." Anyhow, to argue from the sonnet to the authenticity of *Titus* seems to me little better than childish. If such proofs by parallels is to be admitted, the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare has been proved up to the hilt! But, nevertheless, Hanmer's emendation must be rejected, and the old reading "grey" retained, and the passage turns out to give strong confirmation to the theory that not Shakespeare but Peele was part author of *Titus*, for in Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* (l. 350) we have the very same expression, applied, not indeed to the "morn" but to the "welkin" or vault of heaven.

The day is clear, the welkin bright and grey,  
The lark is merry and records her notes.

Then there are the lines in *Titus*:—

She is a woman, therefore may be<sup>1</sup> woo'd,  
She is a woman, therefore may be won.

And in *1 Henry VI*, 5, 3:—

She's beautiful and therefore to be woo'd;  
She is a woman, therefore to be won.

<sup>1</sup> Not "to be," as Mr. Collins misquotes it.

Yes, but as it seems perfectly clear that *1 Henry VI* is not by Shakespeare this parallel is not to the point. In fact, the parallels between *Titus* and *Henry VI* are strongly confirmatory of the theory that Marlowe had, at least, a share in the authorship, for we have similar parallels between *Henry VI* and *Edward II*. Thus, *Edward II*, Act I, Scene 4:—

He wears a lord's revenue on his back,

and *2 Henry VI*, Act I, Scene 3:—

She bears a duke's revenues on her back.

And, again, *Edward II*, Act II, Scene 2:—

The haughty Dane commands the narrow seas ;

and *3 Henry VI*, Act I, Scene 1:—

Stern Falconbridge commands the narrow seas.

Well may Mr. Verity say (notes to his edition of *Edward II*), "There are numerous similarities of diction between Marlowe's plays and the three parts of *Henry VI*, which support the view that he was in some way connected with the latter; as also with the two plays of *The Contention* and *The True Tragedie*, from which Parts 2 and 3 of *Henry VI* appear to have been recast. In *Titus Andronicus*, again, there are echoes of Marlowe."

Then there is another form of proof which consists in citing fine lines which must be indicative of the "masterly touch" of Shakespeare, just as if no one but Shakespeare in those times was capable of writing a fine line! Just as if "Marlowe's mighty line" was unknown to us!<sup>1</sup>

Then there is the influence of Ovid in *Titus Andronicus*. Just as if Marlowe, also, was not saturated with Ovid!

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Garnett and Gosse point out (Vol. II, p. 208) that not only does the play of *Titus Andronicus* bear upon it the impress of Marlowe, but also that though the "choicest passages" might be worthy of Shakespeare, the style is different from his.

But there is another proof still. It is to be found in Shakespeare's well-known “fondness for legal phraseology, and his profuse employment of it is so marked that its absence would be almost conclusive against the authenticity of a work attributed to him.” But *Titus Andronicus*, we are told, “will sustain the test.” In proof of which, Mr. Collins gravely puts forth such expressions as the following :—<sup>1</sup>

“*Affy* in thy uprightness,” “True nobility *warrants* these words,” “*Suum cuique* is our Roman justice,” “The Prince in justice *seizeth* but his own.” Why “*seizeth*” here should be italicised as a legal expression I cannot conceive. Is it because Mr. Collins is thinking of the legal “livery of seisin”? Is it to be seriously contended that wherever the word “seize” is used we have a legal expression? We have other instances of this fancied “legal phraseology” equally ridiculous, such as “will *doom* her death”!

“There is nothing so dangerous,” said Lord Campbell (and he is quoted by Mr. Collins), “as for one not of the craft to tamper with our free-masonry.” A very true remark—a layman “laying down the law” concerning legal phraseology is sadly apt to talk nonsense. What says Mr. Castle, K.C., (who really does know something about law)? “Whatever reason there is for thinking that it [*Titus*] was not the work of Shakespeare, there is still greater reason for thinking it could not be the work of any lawyer, especially of one who has shown such accurate knowledge as we find in Shakespeare's other plays. . . . In fact, it [this play] seems to do everything that a lawyer would not do, and leave undone everything that he would.” Again, “Anyone has only to see how differently the arrest and trial of a prisoner is treated in *Measure for Measure* or in *Henry the Fifth* where the three conspirators are

<sup>1</sup> The italics are Mr. Collins's.

arrested for treason in due form, and then compare these plays with the stuff given in *Titus Andronicus*, to at once see that the former plays show a knowledge of law and legal procedure, whilst the latter is the work of one who is remarkably ignorant of both." It is the very play which "most conspicuously displays his ignorance of law and want of legal training."

It seems a waste of time to pursue Mr. Collins's curious arguments any further. He would, of course, settle the question by his usual epithet. All who venture to disagree with him (and as we have seen, their name is legion and their authority great) will be dismissed as "ignorant," "absurd," "indifferent to evidence," etc. But there is just one other specimen of Mr. Collins's controversial methods to which I must call attention. Shakespeare, says Mr. Collins, "was eminently a man of business, and he followed at first, with timid servility, the fashion." Now let us apply this to *Titus Andronicus*. "He [Shakespeare to wit] had probably never written blank verse before, so he took that of Marlowe, Greene, and Peele as his models, and with what success he has imitated that blank verse may be judged from the fact that the drama has been attributed to those poets" !

This is exquisite. The critics have seen Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, one or all, in *Titus*, and it has been contended that one of these writers, or two, or all of them conjointly, was, or were, responsible for it. Not so, says Mr. Collins: the fact that the blank verse of *Titus* is so like the blank verse of Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, merely proves that that shrewd business man, that timid, servile imitator Shakespeare, exercised his wonderful genius in imitating that blank verse, and with such success that it has actually been ascribed to those very writers ! Comment, surely, is superfluous.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Farmer on Capell, who seems to have anticipated Mr. Collins in this curious argument. *Ante*, p. 140 n.



We have to observe, too, that Mr. Collins will not even allow that *Titus* is an old play recast by Shakespeare, or that anybody else had a hand in it at all. Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, whose opinion as to the non-Shakespearean authorship of the play I have quoted above, believe nevertheless that Shakespeare “had enough of a finger in *Andronicus’s* pie when (having probably been kept in abeyance by the closing of the theatres) it was served up to the public as ‘a new piece,’ to mislead the judicious Meres into attributing it to him.” Not so Mr. Collins. He is a “whole-hogger,” to borrow an elegant expression from the modern political world. “The unity of the play is,” he tells us, “quite unmistakable; the hand throughout is the same; there is nothing to indicate that it is a recast or recension of another work.” Yet Messrs. Garnett and Gosse are “disposed to think that his (Shakespeare’s) share may be discriminated.”

“Gentlemen,” wrote Mr. Leslie Stephen, addressing the theologians, “wait till you have some show of agreement amongst yourselves.”<sup>1</sup> May we not say the same to the orthodox Shakespeareans who excommunicate us as fools and fanatics incapable of weighing evidence, affected with invincible ignorance? To Mr. Collins, at any rate, I would venture to tender the time-honoured counsel, “Physician, heal thyself”!

Thus had I written before the publication of Mr. J. M. Robertson’s excellent and closely reasoned work, *Did Shakespeare write Titus Andronicus?* That work seems to me to dispose very effectually of the supposed Shakespearean authorship. Mr. Robertson’s own belief is that Peele and Greene were the chief authors of *Titus*, though Kyd also had some share in it. “The probability is that between 1590 and 1592 Greene revised or expanded an older play, in which Peele had already a large share; but there is the alternative possibility that Peele revised an old

<sup>1</sup> *An Agnostic’s Apology*, p. 41.

play by Greene and Kyd." He does not believe that Marlowe had "any serious share" in *Titus*. Whether or not this be the right solution of the problem, I am not now concerned to discuss. The point is that "Shakespeare" did not write the play. Of course, some of the "unorthodox" would like to think that he did; for if so, there are in this case very weighty arguments to prove that "Shakespeare" could not have been Shakspere of Stratford. On the other hand, some of the most ardent worshippers at the Stratfordian shrine cling to the Shakespearean authorship because of the inclusion of the play, not only in Meere's list, but also in the First Folio. Reason and evidence, internal and external, are, however, against them. It is amusing to see how completely Mr. Robertson, with pitiless logic, and far superior knowledge, disposes of Mr. Churton Collins. I cannot forbear one quotation. "We have seen a number of professors of literature, English and German, pronounce on a question of literary morphology without attempting any methodic comparison of the possible sources of type; for even the painstaking Professor Schröer has but glanced at them. Professor Collins, for his part, avows that he has not read Professor Schröer because, as he explains, 'I abominate German academic monographs, and indulge myself in the luxury of avoiding them, wherever it is possible to do so; being moreover insular enough to think that, on the question of the authenticity of an Elizabethan drama, an English scholar can dispense with German lights.' The trouble is that Professor Collins dispenses with all lights. On the one hand he dismisses the German critics as unreadable, though his special thesis may be said to have been 'made in Germany'; on the other hand, the whole line of English critics who are against him are dismissed by him, without argument, as paradoxers, iconoclasts, and illegitimate practitioners. All the while it has not occurred to him, in the exercise of his special functions, to collate *Titus*

critically with the contemporary Elizabethan drama, any more than he has thought of comparing Shakespeare's prose with the other prose of the time in pronouncing on its special merits. I cannot promise him that he will find such collation a 'luxury,' but he had better attempt it or else abandon the discussion. Simple brow-beating will hardly avail him beyond the circle of his co-believers."<sup>1</sup>

Equally to the point are Mr. Robertson's remarks on the highly characteristic assertion of Mr. Bellyse Baildon, the editor of *Titus* in the "Arden" edition, that whoever refuses to accept the infallibility of Meres "is deliberately giving himself over gagged and bound to the anti-Shakespeareans"! By "anti-Shakespeareans" Mr. Bellyse Baildon<sup>2</sup> means, of course, those *Pro-Shakespeareans* who do not believe that the "Stratford rustic" wrote the plays and poems, which they admire and appreciate quite as highly as any of their Stratfordian critics. But let us hear Mr. Robertson as to Meres. "Concerning the testimony of Meres, it was long ago pointed out that his lists of plays, like some of his lists of poets, are very artificially drawn up in *sixes*, six tragedies being named to balance six comedies. Lists so framed are *prima facie* open to suspicion, whatever might be the good faith of the maker; and in declaring that whoever refuses to accept the bare assertion of Meres 'is deliberately giving himself over gagged and bound to the anti-Shakespeareans,' Mr. Baildon is merely substituting vociferation for argument. Meres is not known to have had any personal acquaintance with Shakespeare before 1598 [nor at that time nor after it, I would add]. Mr. Baildon's statement that 'Shakespeare read his MS. sonnets to him' is a pure fiction on Mr. Baildon's part." Yes, "pure fiction" indeed! I would rather describe it in rather stronger terms. But it is highly characteristic of the fertile invention of the

<sup>1</sup> *Opus cit.*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Since this was written we have heard with much regret of Mr. Baildon's death.

"orthodox" school. But, continues Mr. Robertson, "the argument from Meres proves too much. On no grounds can we say that a bare ascription by him counts for much more than an ascription by a contemporary publisher. Now, as is well known, the *First Part of Sir John Oldcastle*, printed in 1600, has Shakespeare's name in full on the title-page; and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is similarly ascribed to him on the title-page of the quarto of 1608. On Mr. Baidon's principles, we 'deliver ourselves gagged and bound to the anti-Shakespeareans' if we decide that these plays are not Shakespeare's. Yet we all do so decide." Mr. Robertson's conclusion is that Meres "ascribed *Titus* to Shakespeare on the strength of a false or misleading report." Moreover, he appeals to Shakespeare's own declaration that *Venus and Adonis*, published in 1593, was "the first heir" of his "invention."<sup>1</sup> "With this declaration on record, and with the research of Mr. Fuller and Professor Baker lying before him, Mr. Baidon speaks of *Titus* as written by Shakespeare 'between 1589 and 1593.' And Mr. Collins, who protests so loudly his respect for external evidence, simply declines to let Shakespeare's own assertion stand for anything!"

But what, then, of the First Folio? Are we to doubt the infallibility of that sacred canon? Yes, for it obviously includes much that is not Shakespearean—*Henry VI* to wit<sup>2</sup> (at any rate, the first part), and *Henry VIII*, which, according to Stratfordian critics, was in great part written by Fletcher.

As to the internal evidence against *Titus* from vo-

<sup>1</sup> As to this, however, see p. 517 n.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Robertson says: "Meres, it will be remembered, does *not* credit Shakespeare with the *Henry VI* plays, though they had been much played long before 1598; the folio includes them as Shakespeare's, even as it ascribes solely to him the *Henry VIII* of which so much is visibly Fletcher's." We must remember, however, first, that Meres's lists were not, apparently, intended to be exhaustive; and, secondly, that he was, as I contend, quite right in not including the *Henry VI* plays as Shakespearean.



cabularly, metre, versification, plot, structure, etc., I can only refer the reader to Mr. Robertson's very instructive work.

Let us now consider the Trilogy, and here again I must refer to Malone, whose dissertation on the three parts of *King Henry VI* (Vol. XVIII, p. 557) was pronounced by Professor Porson (no mean judge) “to be one of the most convincing pieces of criticism he had ever met with.” (Boswell's note at p. 597.) Malone sets himself to prove that *The First Part of King Henry VI*, which was first published in the Folio of 1623, and of which therefore there is no quarto edition, “was the entire or nearly the entire production of some ancient dramatist,” and that *The Whole Contention of the Two Houses of York and Lancaster*, written probably before the year 1590 in two parts (viz. the first part of the *Contention*, etc., *with the Death of the good Duke Humphrey*, etc., first printed in 1594, and the second part, or *The true Tragedie of Richarde Duke of York, and the Death of good King Henrie the Sixt*, which originally appeared in 1595; both parts being printed together in 1600), was also the composition of some writer who preceded Shakespeare. According to Malone, therefore, the author of *Henry VI*, Part I, was not the author of the two parts of the *Contention*, and Shakespeare was not the author of any one of these three dramas. This proposition, which, in my opinion, is the true one, Malone proceeds to substantiate by arguments at which I can only glance in passing. First, as to *Henry VI*, Part I: “With respect to the diction and the allusions . . . it is very observable that in the *First Part of King Henry VI* there are more allusions to mythology, to classical authors, and to ancient and modern history than can be found in any one piece of our author's written in an English story; and that these allusions are introduced very much in the same manner as they are introduced in the plays of Greene, Peele



Lodge, and other dramatists who preceded Shakespeare ; that is they do not naturally arise out of the subject, but seem to be inserted merely to show the writer's learning." Of this Malone then proceeds to give copious examples, for which I must refer to his essay. Then, again, "The versification of this play appears to me clearly of a different colour from that of all our author's genuine dramas, while at the same time it resembles that of many plays produced before the time of Shakespeare. In all the tragedies written before his time, or just when he commenced author, a certain stately march of versification is very observable. The sense concludes or pauses almost uniformly at the end of every line, and the verse has scarcely ever a redundant syllable. The tragedies of *Marius and Sylla*, by T. Lodge, 1594; *A Looking Glass for London and England*, by T. Lodge and R. Green, 1598; *Selyman and Perseda*, written before 1592; *Selimus, Emperour of the Turks*, 1594; *The Spanish Tragedy*, 1592; and *Titus Andronicus* will furnish examples of a similar versification; a versification so exactly corresponding with that of the First Part of King Henry VI and The Whole Contention of the Two Houses of Yorke and Lancaster as it originally appeared, that I have no doubt these plays were the production of some one or other of the authors of the pieces above quoted or enumerated." Of this again we have copious illustrations.

Then we have the well-known quotation from Thomas Nash's *Pierce Pennilesse his supplication to the Devil* (1592): "How would it have joyed brave Talbot," etc., which almost undoubtedly refers to *Henry VI*, Part I, showing that that play had been on the stage before 1592.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some, of course, maintain that this is an allusion to an older play on the wars of York and Lancaster. See p. 167. Gifford declares there were "two score old plays on this subject on the stage." *Memoirs of Ben Jonson* (Col. Cunningshame's edition, 1875, p. xli). But this, I imagine, is an exaggeration. Payne Collier thought the allusion was to a lost play of which Shakespeare made use in his *Henry VI*, Part I.

Nash, it may be remembered, was an intimate friend of Green and Peele.

Further, the author of the first part of *Henry VI* makes the King say:—

When I was young (as yet I am not old)  
*I do remember how my father said,*  
 A stouter champion never handled sword.

Whereas in *Henry VI*, Parts 2 and 3, and also in the second part of the *Contention*, Henry says that he was made a king *at nine months old*.

After more arguments to a similar effect Malone writes: "On all these grounds it appears to me clear that neither Shakspeare nor the author of *The First Part of the Contention*, etc., or *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*, etc., could have been the author of *The First Part of King Henry VI*." He claims, in fact, to have "vindicated Shakspeare from being the writer" of that play, in which, as he truly says, "from the beginning to the end, except perhaps in some scenes of the fourth act, there is not a single print of the footsteps of Shakespeare."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "It may be asked," says Malone, "if the *First Part of King Henry VI* was not written by Shakspeare, why did Heminge and Condell print it with the rest of his works?" and on the assumption that those worthy men were the real and not merely the nominal editors of the *First Folio*, he naturally finds it somewhat difficult to answer the question. "The only way that I can account for their having done so," he says, "is by supposing either that their memory at the end of thirty years was not accurate concerning our author's pieces, as appears indeed evident from their omitting *Troilus and Cressida*, which was not recollected by them till the whole of the first folio and even the table of contents (which is always the last work of the press) had been printed; or that they imagined the insertion of this historical drama was necessary to understanding the two pieces that follow it; or, lastly, that Shakespeare for the advantage of his own theatre, having written a few lines in the *First Part of King Henry VI*, after his own *Second* and *Third* part had been played, they conceived this a sufficient warrant for attributing it, along with others, to him, in the general collection of his works. . . . Is it possible to conceive that they could have any other reason for giving *Titus Andronicus* a place in their edition of Shakespeare's works than his having written twenty or thirty lines in that piece, or having retouched a few verses of it, if indeed he did so much?" Malone's *Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. XXI, p. 592. I consider the question of the *First Folio* later on. See chap. ix.

As to *Henry VI*, Parts 2 and 3, "A book entituled The First Part of the Contention of the Two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster with the Deathe of the good Duke Humphrie, and the Banishment and Deathe of the Duke of Yorke, and the tragical Ende of the proud Cardinal of Winchester, with the notable Rebellion of Jack Cade, and the Duke of Yorke's first Claime unto the Crowne, was entered at Stationers' Hall, by Thomas Millington, March 12th, 1593-4. The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the Death of good King Henry Sixt, etc., was entered at Stationers' Hall at the same time. They were printed, as I have before observed, separately in 1594 and 1595, and reprinted together for the same person, T. Millington, in 1600. The first thing that strikes us in this entry is *that the name of Shakspeare is not mentioned*, nor is it in the early editions, nor, when the two plays were published in 1600, did the printer ascribe them to our author in the title-page (though his reputation was then at the highest), as surely he would have done had they been his compositions. In a subsequent edition, indeed, of the same pieces printed by one Pavier, without date, but in reality in 1619, after our great poet's [i.e. Shakspeare's] death, the name of Shakespeare appears; but this was a bookseller's trick, founded upon our author's celebrity, on his having new modelled these plays,<sup>1</sup> and on the proprietors of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatre not having published Shakespeare's Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI. The very same deception was practised with respect to King John. The old play (written perhaps by the same person who was the author of The Contention of the Two famous Houses, etc.) was printed in 1591, like that piece, *anonymously*. In 1611 (Shakespeare's King John, founded on the same story, having been probably often acted and admired) the old piece in two parts was reprinted, and, in order to

<sup>1</sup> Such is Malone's supposition.

deceive the purchaser, was said in the title-page to be written by *W. Sh.*<sup>1</sup> A subsequent printer in 1622 grew more bold and affixed Shakespeare's name to it at full length. It is observable that Millington, the bookseller, by whom the First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses, etc. was entered at Stationers' Hall, in 1593-4, and for whom that piece and The Tragedie of the Duke of York, etc., were printed, was not the proprietor of any one of Shakspeare's unpublished plays, except King Henry V, of which he published a *spurious* copy.”

Then, too, we find in the case of these two old quarto plays, as in the case of *Titus Andronicus*, that they are said in their title-pages to have been “sundry times acted by the earle of Pembroke his servantes.” “*Titus Andronicus* and The old Taming of a Shrew,” says Malone, “were acted by the same company of comedians, but not *one* of our author's plays is said in its title-page to have been acted by any but the Lord Chamberlain's, or the Queen's, or King's servants.”<sup>2</sup> This circumstance alone, in my opinion, might almost decide the question.”

Further, when “William Pavier republished the Contention of the Two Houses, etc., in 1619, he omitted the words in the original title page,—‘as it was acted by the Earl of Pembroke his servantes,’—just as, on the republication of King John in two parts, in 1611, the words ‘as it was acted in the honourable city of London’ were omitted, because the omitted words in both cases marked the respective pieces not to be the production of Shakspeare. And as in King John the letters *W. Sh.* were added in 1611 to deceive the purchaser, so in the republication of The Whole Contention, etc., Pavier, having dismissed the words above mentioned, inserted these, ‘Newly corrected

<sup>1</sup> A useful pseudonym! I deal further with the old play of *King John* in chap. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> The first edition of *Romeo and Juliet*, 1597, is said to have been acted by the Right Honble. the Lord of Hunsdon his servants; but Lord Hunsdon was Lord Chamberlain.



and enlarged by William Shakespeare'; knowing that these pieces had been made the ground work of two other plays, that they had in fact been *corrected and enlarged* (though not in that copy which Pavier printed, which is a mere republication from the Edition of 1600) and exhibited under the titles of The Second and Third Part of King Henry VI, and hoping that this new edition of the *original* plays would pass for those *altered and augmented* by Shakspeare, which were then unpublished."<sup>1</sup>

Malone asserts (and gives arguments in proof) that 'there are certainly very good grounds for believing that the First Part of the Contention of the Two Houses of York and Lancaster, etc., and The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke were written by the author or authors of the old King John printed in 1591." He at first thought that Greene and Peele (both University men, it may be remembered) were the joint authors of the two old quarto plays, or that Greene was the author of one and Peele of the other. Subsequently, however, (see Vol. II, p. 312) he came to the conclusion that Marlowe was the author of the old King John. He adds, "A passage in his historical drama of King Edward II, which Dr. Farmer has pointed out to me since the Dissertation was printed, also inclines me to believe, with him, that Marlowe was the author of one, if not both, of the old dramas on which Shakespeare formed the two plays which in the first folio edition of his works are distinguished by the titles of The Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI." Further on (Vol. XVIII, p. 592) he thus sums up his argument: "The entry on the Stationers' books of the old play, entitled the First Part of the Contention of the Two Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, etc.,

<sup>1</sup> "In the same manner," says Malone, "the old Taming of a Shrew, on which our author formed a play, had been entered at Stationers' Hall in 1594, and was printed in 1607 (also by Cuthbert Burbie in 1596) without doubt with a view to pass it on to the public as the production of Shakspeare."



without the name of the author ; that piece and *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of York*, etc., being printed in 1600 anonymously ; their being founded on the chronicle of Hall, who was not Shakspeare's historian, and represented by the servants of Lord Pembroke, by whom none of his uncontested dramas were represented ; the colour, diction, and versification of these old plays, the various circumstances, lines, and speeches that are found in them, and not in our author's new modification of them, as published in folio by his original editors ; the resemblances that have been noticed between his other works and such parts of these dramas as are only exhibited in their folio edition ; the discordances (in matters of fact) between certain parts of the old plays printed in quarto, and Shakspeare's undoubted performances ; the transpositions that he has made in these pieces ; the repetitions, and the peculiar Shaksperian inaccuracies, and phraseology, which may be traced in the folio, and not in the old quarto plays ; these and other circumstances which have been stated in the foregoing pages form, when united, such a body of argument and proofs in support of my hypothesis, as appears to me (though I will not venture to assert that 'the probation bears no hinge or loop to hang a doubt on') to lead directly to the door of *truth*."

In his preliminary remarks to the play of *Henry VI*, Part 1, Malone calls attention to the fact that many as are the "Shaksperianisms" in Parts 2 and 3, yet "none of these Shaksperian passages are to be found here" (viz. in Part 1). "I am therefore," he adds, "decisively of opinion that this play was not written by Shakspeare." This old play, viz. the first part of *Henry VI*, Malone supposed to have been written in 1589, or before.

Mr. Lee, it may be added, speaking of the Trilogy, says : "Criticism has proved beyond doubt that in these plays Shakspeare did no more than add, revise, and correct other men's work. In 'The First Part of Henry VI'

the scene in the Temple Gardens . . . the dying speech of Mortimer, and perhaps the wooing of Margaret by Suffolk, alone bear the impress of his style." The fact is, as Gifford long ago wrote, that "the production of such a drama as the *First Part of Henry VI* can confer no distinction on any abilities whatever."<sup>1</sup>

I need not pursue these arguments further. The point is that Shakespeare was not the author of those three plays. How any one could imagine that he was the author of *Henry VI*, Part I, passes my comprehension. Of the opening lines Coleridge writes: "If you do not feel the impossibility of [these lines] having been written by Shakespeare, all I dare suggest is that you may have ears—for so has another animal—but an ear you cannot have, *me judice*." And of the whole play he writes: "The hand of the Great Master is only occasionally perceptible" therein. The question is, is it perceptible at all? Certain critics, of course, proceed in this case, as with *Andronicus*, to pick out some few fine passages and to ascribe them to Shakespeare, as though nobody of that time but he could possibly have written fine passages. I have not the slightest doubt that if it had been a question whether Shakespeare had any hand in Marlowe's *Faustus*, the beautiful lines,

Oh thou art fairer than the evening air,  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars,

would have been unhesitatingly assigned to him. Acting on this principle, Mr. Israel Gallancz tells us that the Temple Garden scene (*Henry VI*, Part I, Act II, Scene 4) "is *certainly* Shakespeare's, though judged by metrical peculiarities it may well have been added some years after 1591." These *certainities*, so dear to the critic (cf. Mr. Collins's "certainty" as to *Andronicus*), are out of place. All we are entitled to say is that Shakespeare *may* have added

<sup>1</sup> *Gifford's Jonson*, by Cunningham, p. 165.

certain passages to this and to the two quarto plays, and that, if so, this scene is probably one of them.

In the second part of *Henry VI* the finest scene is the death of Cardinal Beaufort:—

Lord Cardinal, if thou think'st on heaven's bliss,  
Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.  
He dies and makes no sign. O God, forgive him !

But this occurs in the old quarto play:—

Lord Cardinal,  
If thou diest assured of heavenly blisse,  
Hold up thy hand, and make some sign to us.  
O see, he dies, and makes no sign at all :  
O God, forgive his soule !

And as Malone points out, it is remarkable that a similar proof is demanded in the old play of *The Troublesome Reign of King John* also, when that King is expiring:—

Then good my lord, if you forgive them all,  
Lift up your hand in token you forgive.

Again:—

In token of thy faith,  
And signe thou diest the servant of the Lord,  
Lift up thy hand, that we may wnesse here  
Thou diest the servant of our Saviour Christ.—  
Now joy betide thy soul !

Coincidences such as these greatly strengthen the theory that these two plays were by the same author. It should be mentioned, however, as possibly pointing to Greene's joint authorship of the second part of the *Contention*, that in the quarto, “Abradas, the Macedonian pirate,” is mentioned, whereas in *Henry VI*, Part 2, we have “Bargulus the strong Illyrian pirate.” “Abradas the great Macedonian pirate,” is, we are told, only to be found in Greene's pamphlet, entitled *Penelope's Web* (1589). As to Greene's famous reference to “Shake-scene,” in his *Groat's Worth of Wit*, I shall deal with it later on.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xi.

It is a curious fact that the adapter of the second part of the *Contention* makes a strange confusion between Queen Margaret and Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester. Thus, in *Henry VI*, Part 2, Act III, Scene 2, the King, replying to Margaret, says :—

I thank thee, *Nell*, these words content me much.

And the Queen actually refers to herself as Eleanor.

Why, then, dame Eleanor ! was ne'er thy joy.

And again :—

Because thy flinty heart, more hard than they,  
Might in thy palace perish<sup>1</sup> Eleanor.

And yet again :—

Ay me, I can no more ! die, Eleanor !

Knight, and others, quietly substitute the word Margaret (which, in the first instance, makes hash of the metre) without mentioning the fact that, as Mr. Gollancz says, "The playwright here seems, by some strange error, to have thought of Eleanor instead of Margaret." He seems to have been a hasty writer, whoever he was, and as inaccurate as Francis Bacon himself!<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion of the whole matter is that *Titus Andronicus*, and the Trilogy of *Henry VI*, are not the work of Shakespeare ; that his hand is probably not to be found at all in *Titus*, and only once or twice (if at all) in *Henry VI*, Part 1, but that he it probably was who altered and remodelled the two parts of the old *Contention of the Houses of York and Lancaster*, thereby producing *Henry VI*, Parts 2 and 3.

It is obvious that this conclusion has an important bearing on the question of Shakespeare's learning. Thus, turning again to Mr. Collins's articles, we find the following (*Fortnightly Review*, April, 1903, p. 628) : "It would

<sup>1</sup> i.e. cause to perish.

<sup>2</sup> I trust it will not be said that I present this as a Baconian argument.



not be too much to say that *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* are saturated with the influence of these tragedies,” viz. of Seneca. But in the light of the foregoing observations this argument is found to be devoid of weight, and if Shakespeare’s knowledge of Seneca is to be proved, it must be from other dramas, such as *Richard III*, in which, says Mr. Collins, the influence of this writer is “obviously apparent,” or *King John*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, where we are told such influence “is to be traced.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, since we may, perhaps, assume that the lines 210–20 of *Henry VI*, Part 2, Act III, Scene 2, are of Shakespeare’s authorship (seeing that they do not appear in the old quarto), the argument that Shakespeare was acquainted with *Lucretius II*, 352–60 (“the exquisitely pathetic picture of the heifer hunting with lowings after its butchered calf”), is not excluded. But the passage 1 *Henry VI*, 1, 6, which has so frequently been cited,

Thy promises are like Adonis gardens,  
That one day bloomed and fruitful were the next,

cannot be appealed to as showing Shakespeare’s classical knowledge, because we may say with confidence that it is not from his pen.<sup>2</sup>

If however we assume, with all the critics, that the scene in the Temple Garden is Shakespeare’s, then, of

<sup>1</sup> I have already shown how Seneca appears in *The Merchant of Venice*, ante, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Undue importance has been assigned to this passage, as though it showed that Shakespeare must have read Plato’s *Phædrus*, which had not been translated in his time. The writer, it is to be noticed, does not use this proverbial expression “the gardens of Adonis” in its proper sense. “It was applied to things which grew quickly, made a show for a short time and then withered away (Plato, *Phædrus*, 276 B.), but the author of this play, desirous of making a show of his learning, without considering its propriety, has made the Dauphin apply it as an encomium.” (Blakeway quoted by Gollancz.) Bacon was no doubt thinking of these “gardens of Adonis” when he wrote “the gardens of love, wherein he now playeth himself, are fresh to-day and fading to-morrow.” (Essex’s Device : speech of the Hermit.)



course, we are free to found upon it any argument which it may be thought to sustain as to his knowledge of law and lawyers. (See *Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson, and Greene*, by E. J. Castle, K.C., p. 65.) But since we may say with confidence that Shakespeare was not the original author of the Trilogy of *Henry VI*, and can at the utmost only be supposed to have added a very few touches to Part 1, and to have "enlarged" and remodelled Parts 2 and 3, I attach very little importance to the inferences which Judge Webb draws (*The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 42) from the assumption that this "noble Trilogy" was written by the same man as he who wrote the undoubted *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

There are other plays, arguments founded upon which, as to Shakespeare's learning, etc., must be received with caution, such as *Pericles*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Henry VIII*, since in none of these is it possible to say how much is from the pen of Shakespeare and how much from that of another writer.<sup>2</sup> But of these plays more anon.

<sup>1</sup> What an entirely different atmosphere we are in when we read *Henry IV*, for example! Or take *Richard III*, and read King Edward's sublime and touching speech, "Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death," etc. Here we have the real Master, immortal, divine, unapproachable. It requires no "expert" to tell us this. I am aware, of course, that some critics think that *Richard III* is not entirely by Shakespeare. Mr. Robertson, e.g., suggests that Marlowe had a hand in it, on account of the "double-endings," a very doubtful test as I think. Mr. Sidney Lee writes (p. 57): "In *Richard III* Shakespeare, working single-handed, takes up the History of England near the point at which Marlowe and he, apparently working in partnership, left it in the third part of *Henry VI*."

<sup>2</sup> The reader may consult Dr. Garnett's lecture, previously referred to, on "Plays partly written by Shakespeare." "It may surprise some of my hearers," says Dr. Garnett, "to be told that so considerable a part of the work which passes under Shakespeare's name is probably not from his hand." Part of *Macbeth* is now generally ascribed to Middleton, the author of *The Witch*.

## NOTE A TO CHAPTER V

### MR. SWINBURNE'S CRITICISM

It may be useful to set beside Mr. Collins's confident assertions the remarks of a celebrated critic who certainly has himself never suffered from want of confidence in his own opinion and judgment. In his *Study of Shakespeare*, Mr. Swinburne has made some observation on Marlowe's share in certain of the Shakespearean dramas. "No scholar," says he, "believes in the single authorship of *Pericles* or *Andronicus*; none, I suppose, would now question the part taken by some hireling or journeyman in the arrangement or completion for the stage of *Timon of Athens*; and few probably would refuse to admit a doubt of the total authenticity or uniform workmanship of the *Taming of the Shrew*." Let us see what our critic has to say of Marlowe. "When Christopher Marlowe," writes Mr. Swinburne, "came up to London from Cambridge, a boy in years, a man in genius, and a god in ambition, he found the stage which he was born to transfigure and re-create by the might and masterdom of his genius encumbered with a litter of rude rhyming farces and tragedies which the first wave of his imperial hand" swept utterly away. Then, after discussing various plays, and telling us, amongst other things, with reference to the scenes in *Richard II* devoted to the exposition of the character of that King, that he "cannot discern in any of them an equality in power and passion to the magnificent scene of abdication in Marlowe's *Edward II*," the critic thus writes (p. 50) of Parts 2 and 3 of *King Henry VI*: "Two points must of course be taken for granted: that Marlowe was more or less concerned in the production, and Shakespeare in the revision of these plays; whether before or after his additions to the original *First Part of King Henry VI* we cannot determine, though the absence of rhyme might seem to indicate a later date for the recast of the *Contention*. But it is noticeable

that the style of Marlowe appears more vividly and distinctly in passages of the reformed than of the unreformed plays. [My italics.] Those famous lines, for example, which open the fourth act of the *Second Part of King Henry VI*, are not to be found in the corresponding scene of the first part of the *Contention*; yet whether they belong to the original sketch of the play, or were inserted as an afterthought into the revised and expanded copy, the authorship of these verses is surely unmistakable:—

The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day  
Is crept into the bosom of the sea;  
And now loud howling wolves arouse the jades  
That drag the tragic melancholy night—

*Aut Christophorus Marlowe, aut diabolus*; it is inconceivable that any imitator but one should have had the power so to catch the very trick of his hand, the very note of his voice, and incredible that the one who might would have set himself to do so: for if this be not indeed the voice and this the hand of Marlowe, then what we find in these verses is not the fidelity of a follower, but the servility of a copyist.<sup>1</sup> No parasitic rhymester of past or present days who feeds his starveling talent on the shreds and orts, 'the fragments, scraps, the greasy relics' of another man's board, ever uttered a more parrot-like note of plagiarism. The very exactitude of the repetition is a strong argument against the theory which attributes it to Shakespeare. That he had much at starting to learn of Marlowe, and that he did learn much—that in his earliest plays, the influence of the elder poet, the echo of his style, the iteration of his manner, may be perpetually traced—I have already shown that I should be the last to question; but so exact an echo, so servile an iteration as this, I believe we shall nowhere find in them. . . . From this sample it might seem that the main difficulty must be to detect anywhere the sign-manual of Shakespeare, even in the best passages of the revised play. . . . In the earliest form known to us of this play it should seem that we have traces of Shakespeare's handiwork, in the latest that we find evidence

<sup>1</sup> As we have seen (*ante*, p. 146), Mr. Collins thinks this quite "credible." He ascribes to Shakespeare "the servility of a copyist."

of Marlowe's. But it would be something too extravagant for the veriest wind-sucker among commentators to start a theory that a revision was made of his original work by Marlowe after additions had been made to it by Shakespeare; yet we have seen that the most unmistakable signs of Marlowe's handiwork, the passages which show most plainly the personal and present seal of his genius, belong to the play only in its revised form; while there is no part of the whole composition which can so confidently be assigned to Shakespeare as to the one man then capable of such work, as can an entire and important episode of the play in its unrevised state. Now the proposition that Shakespeare was the sole author of both plays in their earliest shape is refuted at once, and equally from without and from within, by evidence of tradition and by evidence of style. There is therefore proof irresistible and unmistakable of at least a double authorship; and the one reasonable conclusion left to us would seem to be this, that the first edition we possess of these plays is a partial transcript of the text as it stood after the first additions had been made by Shakespeare to the original work of Marlowe and others; for that this original was the work of more hands than one, and hands of notably unequal power, we have again the united witness of traditional and internal evidence to warrant our belief; and that among the omissions of this imperfect text were certain passages of the original work, which were ultimately restored in the final revision of the entire poem as it now stands among the collected works of Shakespeare. No competent critic who has given due study to the genius of Marlowe will admit that there is a single passage of tragic interest in either form of the text, which is beyond the reach of the father of English tragedy; or if there be one seeming exception in the expanded and transfigured version of Clifford's monologue over his father's corpse, which is certainly more in Shakespeare's tragic manner than in Marlowe's, and in the style of a later period than that in which he was on the whole apparently content to reproduce or to emulate the tragic manner of Marlowe, there is at least but this one exception to the general and absolute truth of the rule; and even this great tragic passage is rather out of the range of Marlowe's style than



beyond the scope of his genius. In the later as in the earlier version of these plays, the one manifest excellence of which we have no reason to suppose him capable is manifest in the comic or prosaic scenes alone. The first great rapid sketch of the dying cardinal, afterwards so nobly enlarged and perfected on revision by the same or by a second artist, is as clearly within the capacity of Marlowe as of Shakespeare; and in either edition of the latter play, successively known as *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, as the *Second Part of the Contention*, and as the *Third Part of King Henry VI*, the dominant figure which darkens all the close of the poem with presage of a direr day is drawn by the same strong hand in the same tragic outline. From the first to the last stage of the work there is no mark of change or progress here; the whole play indeed has undergone less revision, as it certainly needed less, than the preceding part of the *Contention*.”<sup>1</sup>

With regard to *Titus Andronicus*, Mr. Swinburne (p. 30) refers (as does Malone) to the tragedy of *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*, published in 1594, which indicates a “brief and obscure period of transition,” and “undoubtedly in the main represents the work of a prior era to the reformation of the stage by Marlowe.” He continues, “The level regularity of its unrhymed scenes is just like that of the weaker portions of *Titus Andronicus* and the *First Part of King Henry the Sixth*, the opening scene, for example, of either play. With *Andronicus* it has also in common the quality of exceptional monstrosity, a delight in the parade of mutilation as well as massacre. It seems to me possible that the same hand may have been at work on all three plays.” On this hypothesis it seems possible that *Titus* instead of being the work of one author was the work of three, viz., the old writer of *Selimus*, who may be supposed to have written the first draft as it were; Marlowe, who, working on this groundwork, brought the play practically into shape as we now know it; and Shake-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. L. Courtney writes in the *Fortnightly Review* (October, 1905): “Gloucester, the Lord Protector, sometimes speaks with the voice of Marlowe, according to Mr. Ingram; while it is very interesting to note that, although Kentish men do not appear in Shakespeare’s other plays, they are spoken of admiringly in *Henry the VI*. Marlowe was, of course, a Kentish man.”



sppeare, who added a few touches.<sup>1</sup> So much, again, for Mr. Collins's "certainty"! As to *Henry VI*, Part 1, Mr. Swinburne writes: "As we are certain that he (Shakespeare) cannot have written the opening scene, that he was at any stage of his career incapable of it, so may we believe, as well as hope, that he is guiltless of any complicity in that detestable part of the play which attempts to defile the memory of the virgin saviour of her country. In style it is not, I think, above the range of George Peele at his best." In a characteristic note, he adds: "One thing is certain: that damnable last scene at which the gorge rises even to remember it is in execution as unlike the crudest phase of Shakespeare's style as in conception it is unlike the idlest birth of his spirit."

As already mentioned (p. 152), Thomas Nash, in his *Pierce Penilesse, his supplication to the Divell*, made a reference to a play of *King Henry VI* as early as 1592. "How would it have joyed brave *Talbot* (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his tombe, hee should triumphe again on the stage," etc. "We have here," says Dr. Ingleby, "doubtless an allusion to the play of *Henery VI* mentioned in *Henslowe's Diary* (March 3, 1591-2)." Few critics, I imagine, will contend that this old play was Shakespeare's. Dr. Ingleby continues, "this may or may not be identical with *the First Part of Henry the Sixth*, in the Folio Edition of Shakespeare, 1623. *Whether Shakespeare had any share in this latter play is, to say the least, problematical.*" *Henry VI*, Part 1, was not printed in any shape before it appeared in the First Folio. "It is plausibly conjectured," says Mr. Collier, "that Shakespeare never touched the First Part of *Henry VI* as it stands in his works, and it is merely the old play on the early events of that reign, which was most likely written about 1589." Dr. Drake (*Shakespeare and His Times*, Vol. II, 297) says the play "offers no trace of any finishing strokes from the master-bard."

<sup>1</sup> If anybody can so believe?

## NOTE B TO CHAPTER V

## PROFESSOR COURTHOPE'S THEORY

It is one of the troubles of a writer on Shakespearean controversy that the flow thereof is ceaseless and inexhaustible. We have seen that old critics like Malone and Farmer, and modern critics like Mr. Sidney Lee, Mr. Fleay, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, are agreed that *Titus Andronicus* is not the work of Shakespeare, while Mr. Churton Collins, on the other hand, asserts that it is "as certain as anything connected with him can be" that he *did* write this repulsive play. There has now appeared another doughty champion of the authenticity of *Titus* in the person of Mr. W. T. Courthope, late Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford, the fourth volume of whose *History of English Poetry*, containing an appendix on "some of the early plays assigned to Shakespeare, and their relationship to the development of his dramatic genius," has recently been published.

I have styled Mr. Collins a "whole-hogger," but I find that this expressive, if rather inelegant, epithet should have been reserved for the Oxford professor, for Mr. Courthope not only sides with Mr. Collins in accepting *Titus Andronicus* as wholly Shakespearean ("doubtless Shakespeare's earliest pure tragedy," he calls it, adopting Mr. Lee's favourite adverb), but also casts his lot in with Charles Knight, and maintains that the old plays known as *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* are the work of Shakespeare, and, of course, that all three parts of *Henry VI* are Shakespearean, and, further, that, "by parity of reasoning, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* and *The Taming of A Shrew* may also be confidently regarded as his early work."

Here is variance indeed among the "experts"! The unhappy *Titus*, knocked over by the missiles of all the best critics, lay sprawling on the ground, as we fondly thought, never to rise again. Mr. Collins sets him up on his pedestal once more, only

to be again overthrown by Mr. Robertson. Then comes Mr. Courthope and writes "resurgam" on the battered effigy. Mr. Courthope follows Charles Knight in asserting that *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* are Shakespearean, but Charles Knight thought so meanly of *Titus* that he refused to print it at all in his edition of Shakespeare. Coleridge wrote that he who thought that the opening lines of *Henry VI*, Part 1, could possibly have been written by Shakespeare, might indeed have ears, like "another animal," but could not have "an ear"; and Mr. Lee, as we have seen, writing of the three parts of *Henry VI*, says that "criticism has proved beyond doubt that in these plays Shakespeare did no more than add, revise, and correct other men's work."<sup>1</sup> As to *The Troublesome Raigne* and *The Taming of A Shrew*, the overwhelming preponderance of criticism has hitherto been against the Shakespearean authorship of these old plays. In a word, there seems to be now as much diversity of opinion among the high priests of the Stratfordian shrine as there could possibly be, and the moral thence to be derived by the unprejudiced searcher after truth is that he must take nothing on authority, but should endeavour to arrive at his own conclusion, according to the dictates of reason and common sense, as best he may.

For my part, I own that I am not impressed by Professor Courthope's arguments, which seem to me extremely meagre. He contends that Malone's reasoning is fallacious, because although "a work of genius always carries on its face the unmistakable personality of the author . . . it is a fallacy to suppose that this character will be always of one rigid and immutable type"; and he regards "the early plays in question," which "were produced while Shakespeare was a young man, lately arrived in London," as the work of the same master mind that produced *Hamlet* and *Lear* and *Macbeth*, so that by the comparison of the latter plays with the former we are enabled to study and appreciate "the development of genius." That is a matter which everybody must decide for himself. To me *solvitur legendo*. Let the student read these plays one after the other, beginning with the earlier ones, and see if he can bring himself to this conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Has it proved as much?

I certainly cannot. But, then, Mr. Courthope quotes Grant White to the effect that, if Shakespeare in *Henry VI* stole thousands of lines from *The Contention* and *True Tragedy*, those old plays must be his work also, "otherwise he must be branded with unexampled plagiarism." Yes; but suppose Shakespeare was not the author of *Henry VI*! In that case the argument as to plagiarism has no weight.<sup>1</sup>

But, again, says Mr. Courthope, if Shakespeare did not write *The Troublesome Raigne*, or only wrote part of it in collaboration with Marlowe and others, "he cannot be acquitted of mean plagiarism" when he wrote *King John* without making any acknowledgment of his indebtedness. But this is "an incredible hypothesis." Therefore we must "assume him to have been the sole author" of the old drama, which is "doubtless crude, ill-constructed, and full of obvious imitation, such as might be expected from a dramatist of small experience, but yet containing more of the elements of greatness than any historic play which had yet been produced on the English stage."

This argument does not strike me as a convincing one. I look upon Shakespeare as the man who took old plays and "alchemized them," giving us new lamps for old ones. In giving us *King John* for *The Troublesome Raigne* he gave us gold for brass, and I do not imagine that he troubled his head at all about possible charges of plagiarism. In the ten plays which form the series of "Histories" he was putting together, as Mr. Gollancz says, "a great national Epic on the crises in English history from the reign of Richard II to that of Richard III, with King John and Henry VIII respectively as the Prologue and Epilogue of the whole." In so doing, he took the work of others and "transmuted it into gold"; but he also, as I suppose, took much of such work untransmuted, just as he found it. At any rate, unless we are to contend that the whole of the dramas included in the

<sup>1</sup> The upholders of the authenticity of *Titus* attach much weight to the fact that it was mentioned by Meres in 1598. But Meres makes no mention of the early play of *Henry VI*. He mentions *King John*, which was not published till it appeared in the Folio of 1623. Are we to suppose that he alludes to *The Troublesome Raigne*, which was published anonymously in 1591, reprinted in 1611 as "written by W. Sh.," and again in 1622 with the words "Written by William Shake-speare" on the title-page?



Folio came from Shakespeare's pen, we cannot acquit him of appropriating the work of others without acknowledgment. But the fact is, of course, that ideas as to the rights of authorship in those days were totally different from what they are now.

It is, however, no part of my purpose to controvert Mr. Courthope's arguments. On the contrary, I should be only too glad to accept them if I could find it possible to do so; for contending, as I do, that, on full and dispassionate consideration of all the evidence, the conclusion emerges that the Stratford Player was not the author of the works of Shakespeare, I should naturally welcome results which so strongly tend to confirm and fortify that contention.<sup>1</sup> For what follows if Mr. Courthope's arguments are sound? It is generally agreed (and Mr. Courthope adopts that view) that *The Troublesome Raigne* was written soon after the defeat of the Spanish Armada "to gratify the strong patriotic and Protestant feeling of the people." It must, therefore, have been written about 1588 or 1589. *Titus* must have been written in 1589 at the latest, and probably a year or two before that date. All the three plays on the reign of Henry VI must have been written previously to 1592 (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 87), and, according to Malone, quoted by Mr. Courthope, *The Whole Contention of the Two Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* was probably written before 1590. *The Taming of a Shrew* was published in 1594, but if, as it seems reasonable to suppose, Greene alluded to it in his *Menaphon*, under date 1589, it must have been in existence several years earlier.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Baconians have long ago put forward the contention now raised by Mr. Courthope, viz. that the old plays in question are the work of "Shakespeare," and they now, of course, appeal to his authority in support of that position. See an article on the "Early Contemporary Evidence relating to the Authorship of the Elizabethan Drama," by the late Rev. Walter Begley, in *Baconiana*, October, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Greene writes: "We had an ewe among our rams whose fleece was white as the hairs that grow on Father Boreas' cheek." This, says Mr. Edwin Reed, is "evidently a thrust at 'The Taming of a Shrew,' which contained the following:—

Whiter than are the snowy Apennines,  
Or icy hair that grows on Boreas' chin.'"

(*Francis Bacon our Shake-speare*, p. 66.) But Richard Simpson long ago called attention to this allusion. (See Mr. Walter Begley's article in *Baconiana* above referred to.)



Now it is generally agreed that William Shakspere, then "a Stratford rustic," as Dr. Garnett has described him, came to London about 1587 or 1588. He "made his way to London," writes Mr. Lee (in his preface to Methuen's Standard Library *Shakespeare*, 1905), "where he obtained humble employment in the earliest playhouse that had been built in the country"; and we must now add, if we accept Mr. Courthope's theory, he at once produced five most remarkable plays, viz. *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, *The Troublesome Raigne*, and the three parts of *Henry VI*! These, it appears, sprang fully armed from his brain, like Minerva from the head of Jove!

Really, really, there must be some limits even to Stratfordian demands on our credulity!

Est quodam prodire tenus *sed* non datur ultra.

On grounds of ordinary common sense and knowledge of human possibilities, I unhesitatingly say that this hypothesis is preposterous, and that if Shakespeare was in truth the author of these old plays, then, of a certainty, Shakespeare was not the man from Stratford.

We may observe, too, though this is a trifling matter by comparison, that this extraordinary theory entirely sets at naught Shakespeare's statement that *Venus and Adonis* was the first heir of his invention. For that highly polished, cultured, and scholarly poem was not published till 1593, and must have been written after 1589, in which year appeared Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*, from which, as Mr. Lee writes (p. 66), "there is little doubt that Shakespeare drew some of his inspiration."<sup>1</sup>

Again, it may be useful to notice that *Titus* is mentioned in Henslowe's *Diary* as a new play acted at his theatre on January 23, 1593; that *Henry VI* is repeatedly mentioned in the *Diary*;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Of his two poems," writes Mr. Collins (*Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 120), "*Venus and Adonis* is plainly modelled on Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*." Yet he had previously told us (p. 108) that "it seems to me highly probable that it was composed at Stratford before he came up to London, as early perhaps as 1585"! Such is modern Stratfordian criticism.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Stotsenburg gives sixteen references, ranging from 1591 to 1593. (See his *Impartial Study*, p. 422.)

and that "The Tamyng of a Shrowe" is mentioned under date 11th of June, 1594. If these plays, or early plays with these titles, were really the work of Shakespeare, it becomes more extraordinary than ever that Henslowe, who mentions the names of all the other dramatists of his time, makes not a single reference to the greatest of them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *post*, chap. XII, "The Silence of Philip Henslowe." See also chap. XVI, on "The Early Authorship Argument."

## CHAPTER VI

### LATER LIFE AND DEATH OF SHAKSPERE

HAVING considered the question of the sort of education which the youthful Shakspeare was likely to have acquired at the Stratford Free School (on the assumption that his father sent him, and allowed him to continue there for a short time), we were naturally led on to consider the further question: What amount of learning must be postulated for the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*? and as the answer to this question is to be found in the works of Shakespeare we were further led into a digression as to the authorship of *Titus Andronicus*, and the Trilogy of *Henry VI*.

Let us now return to Shakspeare of Stratford, whom we left in London, whither, according to Mr. Lee, he had "naturally drifted, *doubtless* trudging thither on foot during 1586, by Oxford and High Wycombe," though Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, as we have seen, giving rein to their imagination after the approved manner of Shakespearean critics, have put forward the hypothesis that instead of drifting to London, the young provincial enlisted in Leicester's force for the Low Countries. We will, however, now follow Mr. Lee, who, at least before these latest contributors to the endless Shakespearean literature, was fondly supposed to have written the "definitive" orthodox *Life*.

"Shakespeare's earliest reputation," writes Mr. Lee, "was made as an actor, and, although his work as a

dramatist soon eclipsed his histrionic fame, he remained a prominent member of the actor's profession till near the end of his life." Now the actor's profession in the time of Elizabeth was by no means held in high esteem. "These players," says Asinius Lupus, in Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601),<sup>1</sup> "are an idle generation, and do much harm in a state, corrupt young gentry very much, I know it." To which, and further observations to the same effect, Tucça replies: "Th'art in the right. . . . They are grown licentious, the rogues ; libertines, flat libertines. They forget they are i' the statute the rascals ; they are blazoned there ; there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees ; they need no other heralds, I wiss." The last words are a hit at those players who, like Shakspeare, were desirous of obtaining a grant of a coat-of-arms, but the statute referred to is the Act of Elizabeth under which "Common Players" were ranked with rogues and vagabonds. "By an Act of Parliament of 1571 (14 Eliz. cap. 2)," writes Mr. Lee (p. 32), "which was re-enacted in 1596 (39 Eliz. cap. 4), players were under the necessity of procuring a licence to pursue their calling from a peer of the realm or 'personage' of higher degree, otherwise they were adjudged to be of the status of rogues and vagabonds." This statement, however, is not accurate, and I fear Mr. Lee had not "verified his quotations." The earlier of the two statutes of Elizabeth dealing with this matter is not 14 Eliz. cap. 2, but 14 Eliz. cap. 5 (1572), and the "licence" under the Act was to be given by two Justices of the Peace. The Act is: "An act for the Punishment of Vagabonds, and for Relief of the Poor and Impotent." Section 5 gives us a definition of "Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars," among whom were to be classed "All Fencers, Bearwardes, Common Players in Enterludes, and Minstrels, not belonging to any Baron of this Realme or towards any other honourable Personage of greater

<sup>1</sup> Act I, Scene 1.

degree.<sup>1</sup> All Juglers, Pedlars, Tinkers, and Petty Chapmen; which said Fencers, etc., etc., shall wander abroad, and have not License of two Justices of the Peace at least, whereof one to be of the Quorum." By Section 2, any such person if convicted as a vagabond at the Quarter Sessions was to be adjudged to be "grievously whipped, and burnt through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of an inch about," unless he could find someone to go surety for him and take him into service. The Act 39 Eliz. cap. 4 (1597) repealed the former statute, but it contained much the same definition of "Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars," which by Section 2 included "All persons calling themselves scholars going about begging. . . . All Fencers, Bearwards, Common Players in Interludes, and Minstrels wandering abroad (other than Players of Interludes belonging to any Baron of this Realm, or any other honourable Personage of greater Degree, to be authorized to play under the hand and seal of Arms of such Baron or Personage)," etc. Under this Act the person offending might be ordered "to be stripped naked from the middle upward and to be openly whipped until his or her body be bloody," and to be sent from parish to parish until he or she should be finally consigned to the parish where he or she was born.

These statutes give a pretty clear idea of the sort of estimation in which the players were held in the time of Shakespeare. No doubt, when taken under the patronage of the Queen or one of the great Elizabethan peers, they obtained, as Mr. Lee says, "a rank of respectability," and were relieved "of all risk of identification with vagrants or 'sturdy beggars.'" Yet, as we have seen, it could be made matter of reproach against them that they were "in the statute."

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee marks "personage of *higher* degree" as a quotation. The error is not material, but it is well to quote Acts of Parliament with accuracy.



Documentary evidence, as Mr. Lee tells us, proves that Shakspeare was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's company in 1594, and "it is fair to infer" that this was the company that he "originally joined and adhered to through life." Of his life as an actor, indeed of his life in London generally, we really know nothing. However, Mr. Lee jogs along merrily enough with his convenient "doubtless." "When Shakespeare became a member of the company it was *doubtless* performing at The Theatre, the playhouse in Shoreditch which James Burbage, the father of the great actor Richard Burbage, had constructed in 1576."

The only other London playhouse then in existence was the Curtain in Moorfields, but Philip Henslowe, the speculative theatrical manager, erected a third, called the Rose, on the Bankside, Southwark. "The Rose Theatre," says Mr. Lee, "was *doubtless* the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist." This is odd, because Henslowe kept a diary, which has been preserved, containing minute and valuable information respecting the English drama from 1591 to 1609. Henslowe recorded his dealings with all the leading playwrights of the day, but never once mentions the name of Shakespeare! *Doubtless* he had good reason for not doing so, but what it was, if Shakespeare achieved his earliest successes as a dramatist at the Rose Theatre, it is extremely difficult to imagine.<sup>1</sup>

"In 1599," writes Mr. Lee, "Richard Burbage and his brother Cuthbert demolished the old building of The Theatre and built, mainly out of the materials of the dismantled fabric, the famous theatre called the Globe on Bankside. It was octagonal in shape and built of wood, and *doubtless* Shakespeare described it (rather than the Curtain) as 'this wooden O,' in the opening chorus of

<sup>1</sup> See chapter XII, on "The Silence of Philip Henslowe."

*Henry V.*<sup>1</sup> After 1599 the Globe was mainly occupied by Shakespeare's [i.e. Shakspeare's] company, and in its profits he acquired an important share. From the date of its inauguration until the poet's retirement, the Globe—which quickly won the first place among London theatres,—seems to have been the sole playhouse with which Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] was professionally associated."<sup>2</sup>

"The practice of touring in the provinces" (I still quote from Mr. Lee's *Life*) "was followed with even greater regularity then than now. Few companies remained in London during the summer or early autumn, and every country town with two thousand or more inhabitants could reckon on at least one visit from travelling actors between May and October. . . . Shakespeare may be credited with faithfully fulfilling all his professional functions, and some of the references to travel in his sonnets were *doubtless* reminiscences of early acting tours." Many Shakespeareans believe that Shakspeare went with a company to Scotland<sup>3</sup> also, and some have sent him to

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Mr. E. K. Chambers thinks that the Globe was a square theatre, and that the "wooden O" refers "to some earlier theatre, probably the Curtain"! *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> S. L., p. 37. With reference to the boy actors who took women's parts Mr. Lee has propounded what seems to me an extraordinary theory. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* (I, 2, 53) Flute, when told he is to play "Thisby," protests, "Nay, faith let me not play a woman, I have a beard coming." To which Quince rejoins "That's all one; you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will." Whereupon Mr. Lee comments, "Men taking women's parts seem to have worn masks"! I presume Mr. Lee means *men* as distinct from *boys*, but, even so, surely it is a preposterous supposition. Imagine Juliet (e.g.) with a set mask face of only one expression! But the passage cited seems to give no warrant for such a revolting assumption. It would be quite in character with Quince's company of clowns, and part of the joke, that one of them should play "Thisby" in a mask. But it seems ridiculous to infer that this was the general practice. Had it been so "bully Bottom" would, surely, have been aware of it. But he evidently was not, for when the possibility of a mask is suggested, he interposes, "An I may hide my face let me play Thisby too"! In ordinary cases, if the boy had "a beard coming" the simple remedy would be, not to wear an absurd mask, but to shave it off.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Alexander Cargill, in *Chambers's Journal*, December, 1904, shows

Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries, but, as we have seen, Mr. Lee thinks it unlikely that he ever set foot on the Continent. "He *doubtless* owed all to the verbal reports of travelled friends or to books." In truth, however, he seems to have had quite enough to do at home. He was constantly acting (either in London or on tour in the provinces), and "remained a prominent member of the actor's profession till near the end of his life." He became, as we have seen, actor-manager also,<sup>1</sup> with a considerable share in the theatre, and "at an early period of his theatrical career he undertook, with triumphant success, the labours of a playwright." Nevertheless "he pursued the profession of an actor loyally and uninterruptedly until he resigned all connection with the theatre within a few years of his death." And now :

Match me this marvel save in Eastern clime ;

"The whole of Shakespeare's dramatic work was probably begun and ended within two decades (1591-1611) between his twenty-seventh and forty-seventh year," and "he must be credited with the production during those twenty years of a yearly average of two plays, nearly all of which belong to the supreme rank of literature," and "three volumes of poems must be added to the total."

There is no "mystery of William Shakespeare," so we

that there is no evidence whatever to prove that Shakspeare was ever in Scotland. All the records have been ransacked, and the names of various players have been found noted as visiting the north in Elizabethan times (Fletcher being one), but Shakspeare is nowhere mentioned.

<sup>1</sup> We are told that he had shares both in the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres (S. L., p. 214). Mr. Henry Davey (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 283) tells us that a share in the Globe "was reckoned worth over £200 a year," viz., I presume, some £1000, or more, calculated according to the present value of money. The same critic writes (p. 280): "Shakespeare's gains as an actor must far have exceeded his author's fees . . . his colleagues, Burbage, Heminge, and Condell, all died worth at least as much." I take it that this is true, and that the Rev. John Ward's tale of the large allowance granted him for writing two plays a year is pure fiction. The actor Alleyn, as is well known, made a very large fortune. (See p. 207.)

are assured, except in the minds of fanatics. A young provincial, with such smattering of education as he could procure during four or five years at a Free School (assuming, in his favour, that he was there), late butcher's apprentice, and speaking the dialect of his native county, comes, a penniless wanderer, straight from the society of the boors and petty tradesmen of obscure and illiterate Stratford, becomes successively horse-holder outside and "servitor" inside one of the London playhouses (and *such* playhouses!), obtains a place in the company, is constantly and assiduously playing to London audiences, or touring in the provinces; an actor-manager with shares in two theatres, and with a keen eye to business (taking *rem facias rem* as his motto); and, with all this, turning out each year at least two plays belonging to "the supreme rank of literature"—marvellous works not of an age, but for all time, replete with learning, as Mr. Collins has shown, and redolent of the highest culture, as no one, surely, but a "fanatic" *enragé* can deny, besides wondrous courtly and scholarly poems composed in quite early days, but marked in the same or even higher degree by the same learning and the same culture; yet remaining (for so the fact is, in spite of the diligent and lifelong investigations of enthusiastic admirers) *nomen et umbra*, and nothing more, for posterity—*here* is no mystery, *here* is nothing to marvel at, except "for those to whom the ways of genius are a stumbling-block"!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "All the arts, sciences and literatures must have been mastered by our sleepless Shakespeare, either at Stratford school or in the midst of his London career, when operating two theatres, reading plays for his stage, editing them, and acting himself (and Mr. Cohn will have it that in these unaccounted-for times he had visited Germany with his troupe and performed in all its principal cities, coining money as he went). Mr. Brown, Dr. Bell, and others announce that they believe that these travels of his extended to Italy, and Mr. Thoms and Mr. Cohn, to some extent, account for Shakespeare on the Continent by believing that instead of going at once to London when fleeing from Stratford before Sir Thomas Lucy, he enlisted under Leicester for the Netherlands in 1585, but left the ranks for the more lucrative career of an



Well, then, this man Shakespeare was learned ; he could read the Latin classics, "*ad sensum* with pleasure and facility" ; he had some knowledge of Greek and of Greek classic writers also ; he was polished, cultured, scholarly, courtly ; he moved in high society, was on intimate terms with great nobles, and had "personal relations" with some of the most distinguished men and women of the great Queen's Court : of all this there can be no doubt.<sup>1</sup> Neither can there be a doubt that he was the happy possessor of many books, and revelled in them. An ardent advocate of education, too, must he have been who proclaimed to his own and to all generations yet to come, that

There is no darkness but ignorance.

Let us continue our quest under the orthodox guidance of Mr. Sidney Lee. Shakspeare's "father's pecuniary embarrassments had steadily increased since his son's departure. Creditors harassed him unceasingly." In 1591 a creditor, Adrian Quiney, obtained a writ of distraint against him, and on December 25th of the same year he was "presented" as a recusant for absenting himself from church, his absence being, apparently, due to fear of process for debt.

actor. But these theories only crowd still more thickly the brief years in which the great works (which are, after all, what the world regards in these investigations) appeared. Either at Stratford school, or in the Blackfriars, or else by pure intuition, all this exact learning must have been absorbed." Appleton Morgan's *The Shakespearean Myth*, p. 218, referring to *Shakespeare in Germany*, by Albert Cohn ; *Shakespeare's Autographical Poems*, by C. A. Brown ; *Essays on Shakespeare*, by Karl Elze ; and *The Supposed Travels of Shakespeare*, by Mr. Thoms.

<sup>1</sup> "It was *doubtless* to Shakespeare's personal relations with men and women of the Court that his sonnets owed their existence" (S. L., p. 72.) "Shakespeare *doubtless* knew Florio as Southampton's protégé, and read his fine translation of Montaigne's *Essays* with delight" (p. 73 n.). "Shakespeare was also *doubtless* acquainted with Giles Fletcher's similar handling of the theme," etc. (p. 67 n.). I spare the reader further instances of the use of this convenient but rather irritating adverb. See pp. 25, 28, 34, 37, 39, 41, 44, 50 (twice), 55, 67 n., 72, 73 n., 74, 176, 178, 183, 186 n., 192, 193, and *passim*.



Shakspeare's wife, it seems, fared in his absence no better than his father. "The only contemporary mention made of her between her marriage in 1582 and her husband's death in 1616 is as the borrower at an unascertained date (evidently before 1595) of forty shillings from Thomas Whittington, who had formerly been her father's shepherd. The money was unpaid when Whittington died in 1601, and he directed his executors to recover the sum from the poet,<sup>1</sup> and distribute it among the poor of Stratford." I do not know what the evidence is to show that this debt must have been incurred before 1595.<sup>2</sup> It is sad to think that the man who in 1597 was so rich that he was able to purchase the largest house in Stratford, known as New Place, left his wife so badly provided for that she was constrained to borrow from her father's shepherd, and to find that the debt remained unpaid at the death of the lender in 1601. Yet in the year previous to the purchase of New Place we find the erst penniless John Shakspeare, backed, as we must suppose, by his now well-to-do son, making application to the Heralds' College for a coat-of-arms. This application John Shakspeare had made once before, viz. in 1568, while he was bailiff of Stratford, supporting it by numerous fictions concerning his family. The negotiations of 1568, however, proved abortive. The application, therefore, was now renewed by John and William Shakspeare, or rather, as it would seem, by William in John's name, and was accompanied by more fictitious allegations; and changes having taken place at the Heralds' College in 1597 (Essex becoming

<sup>1</sup> Whittington, it need hardly be mentioned, says nothing about "the poet."

<sup>2</sup> Mr. H.-Phillipps gives the extract from Whittington's will as follows: "Unto the poore people of Stratford xl.s. that is in the hand of Anne Shaxspere, wyfe unto Mr. Wylliam Shaxspere, and is due debt unto me, beyng paid to mine executor by the sayd Wylliam Shaxspere or his assignes according to the true meanyng of this my will." (H.-P., Vol. II, 186.)

Earl Marshal, and Camden Clarenceux King-of-Arms), a novel procedure was adopted by the applicants, who now audaciously asserted that certain draft grants prepared by the heralds in the previous year had been *assigned* to John Shakspeare while he was bailiff, and the heralds, instead of being asked for a grant of arms, "were merely invited to give him a 'recognition' or 'exemplification of it,'" which was a thing much more easily secured than a grant, for "the heralds might, if they chose, tacitly accept, without examination, the applicant's statement that his family had borne arms long ago, and they thereby regarded themselves as relieved of the obligation of close inquiry into his present status." (S. L., p. 151 and note.) There was, however, a limit beyond which these complaisant heralds refused to go. The Shaksperes, father and son, had calmly desired them to recognise the title of Mary Shakspeare, John's wife, to bear the arms of the great Warwickshire family of Arden then seated at Park Hall.<sup>1</sup> On this matter, however, the heralds appear, as Mr. Lee says, to "betray conscientious scruples," and this audacious claim was abandoned. The Shaksperes, however, obtained their coat-of-arms, with the motto so provocative of criticism *non sanz droict*, which, as their right seems to have been altogether imaginary, was presumably assigned to them on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle.

Whether Mr. William Shakspeare, Gent., *Armiger*, etc., now settled permanently at Stratford seems not quite clear. The purchase of New Place was, owing to the sudden death of the vendor, not finally completed till

<sup>1</sup> "Ridiculous statements were made respecting the claims of the two families [i.e. Shakspeare's and his wife's]. Both were really descended from obscure country yeomen, but the heralds made out that the predecessors of John Shakespeare were rewarded by the Crown for distinguished services, and that his wife's ancestry were entitled to armorial bearings," the heralds of course acting on the "ridiculous statements" made by Shakspeare. (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 162.)

1602, but in February, 1597-8, we find Shakspeare a householder in Chapel Street ward, in which New Place was situated, and "owner of ten quarters of corn." Only two inhabitants, we are informed, were credited with a larger holding. "In the same year (1598) he procured stone for the repair of the house, and before 1602 had planted a fruit orchard." In 1611, at any rate, he appears to have permanently settled at New Place. As the poor student says, in *The Return from Parnassus*, speaking of "those glorious vagabonds," the players who had enriched themselves :  
 With mouthing words that better wits had framed,  
 They purchase lands and now esquires are made.

Now, therefore, we find Shakspeare settled once more in his little native town of Stratford among the petty tradesmen, butchers, glovers, wool-staplers, mercers, drapers, haberdashers, innkeepers, *et hoc genus omne*, from whose society he had fled so many years before. He now occupies himself with building, planting orchards, etc., lending money, bringing lawsuits, buying up tithes, attempting to enclose common lands,<sup>1</sup> etc. One letter written to him in 1598 has been preserved. It is the only one. The writer is Richard Quiney, a fellow-townsmen (whose son Thomas afterwards married Shakspeare's daughter Judith), begging for a loan of money. Whether the request was granted is not known. In the same year another townsman, Abraham Sturley, writing, as it seems, to a brother in London, mentions "our countriman, Mr. Shaksper" as "willing to disburse some money upon some odd yardland or other at Shottery or near about us : he thinketh it a very fit pattern to move him to deal in the matter of our tithes." And the same Sturley, writing in November, 1598, to Richard Quiney aforesaid, points out to him that since the town was wholly unable, in consequence of the dearth of corn, to pay the tax, he hoped "that our

<sup>1</sup> See H.-P., Vol. I, 226 *et seq.*

countriman, Mr. Wm. Shak. would procure us money, which I will like of as I shall hear when and where and how."

Rare old Ben Jonson remained poor to the end of his days, but Shakspeare, the cautious, prudent, worldly-wise, saving Shakspeare, actor and actor-manager, had acquired a fortune, and Mr. Lee tells us that "Pope had just warrant for the surmise that he

For gain not glory winged his roving flight  
And grew immortal in his own despite"!

He had inherited too, so Mr. Lee tells us, his father's love of litigation. Litigious he certainly was, whether that quality was inherited or not, and, as certainly, he "stood rigorously by his rights in all his business relations." He found gain if not glory in money-lending, and was as rigorous as Shylock in strictly enforcing the conditions of the bond. "In March, 1600, he recovered in London a debt of £7 from one John Clayton. In July, 1604, in the local court at Stratford, he sued one Philip Rogers to whom he had supplied since the preceding March malt to the value of £1. 19s. 10d., and had on June 25 lent 2/- in cash. Rogers paid back 6/- and Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] sought the balance of the account, £1. 15s. 10d. During 1608 and 1609 he was at law with another fellow-townsmen John Addenbroke." Then, in February, 1609, he obtains judgment against Addenbroke for the payment of £6, and £1. 5s. costs, "but Addenbroke left the town, and the triumph proved barren." One Thomas Horneby, however, had made himself surety for Addenbroke, and Shakspeare, as Mr. Lee says, "avenged himself" by proceeding against the unfortunate surety.

I have not space to enlarge upon this life of Shakspeare, the retired gentleman, among the *petite bourgeoisie* of "the dirtiest village in all Britain." It is what the French would style *banale* to the last degree. What many people



have found extraordinary (on the hypothesis that Shakspeare = Shakespeare) is that these "astute business transactions," as Mr. Lee well calls them, "of these years (1597-1611), synchronise with the production of Shakespeare's noblest literary work—of his most sustained and serious efforts in comedy, tragedy and romance." Mr. Lee, however, thinks this to be an inconsistency "more apparent than real." It does not strike him as at all out of the way that a man should be writing *Hamlet*,<sup>1</sup> and at the same time bringing actions for petty sums lent on loan at some unspecified interest. Why should it be? Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* not for "glory" in his own time, still less with posterity, but simply for "gain." It was something that would *pay*, and there would be so much the more for money-lending, tithe-buying, the enclosure of common fields, etc. Such is the orthodox creed which except a man believe faithfully without doubt he shall be damned everlastingly as fool and fanatic.

The incident of the attempt to enclose the common fields affords such a characteristic example of Shakspeare's shrewd habit of looking after his own interest that it ought not to be omitted. It seems that one William Combe (son of that John Combe whose usurious propensities Shakspeare is said to have satirised in doggerel verses), about the year 1614, attempted, in conjunction with a neighbouring owner, "to enclose the common fields which belonged to the corporation of Stratford about his estate at Welcombe. The corporation resolved to offer the scheme a stout resistance. Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] had a twofold interest in the matter by virtue of his owning the freehold of 106 acres at Welcombe and Old Stratford, and as the joint owner now with Thomas Greene, the town clerk, of the tithes of Old Stratford, Welcombe, and Bishopton. His interest in his freeholds could not

Neither a lender nor a borrower be!"



have been prejudicially affected, but his interest in the tithes might be depreciated by the proposed enclosure. Shakespeare consequently joined with his fellow-owner Greene in obtaining from Combe's agent, Replingham, in October, 1614, a deed indemnifying both against any injury they might suffer from the enclosure. *But having thus secured himself against all possible loss, Shakespeare threw his influence into Combe's scale,*"<sup>1</sup> and supported the scheme of enclosure! Verily, a sharp man of business this! "Happily," however, as Mr. Lee says, "Combe's efforts failed, and the common lands remain unenclosed," in spite of the efforts of the new owner of New Place.

All that we know further of this very common life is that it came to an end in April, 1616.<sup>2</sup> According to the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford (writing in 1661-3), "Shakespear, Drayton, and Ben Johnson had a merry meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted." This meeting is said to have taken place at New Place, but the Rev. John Ward was writing at least five-and-forty years after Shakspeare's death, and there can be little doubt that the story is a myth. Shakspeare's friends, as his will shows, were Stratford worthies like Thomas Combe, Thomas Russell, or Hamnet Sadler; or his fellow-players, Heminge, Burbage, and Condell.<sup>3</sup>

The will was apparently drafted by Francis Collins, an attorney at Warwick, who signs as the first witness. It was possibly intended to be engrossed, but Shakspeare's death came, as we may suppose, more suddenly than was

<sup>1</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup> April 23, O.S.; May 3, N.S.

<sup>3</sup> "There is no mention of Drayton, Ben Jonson, or any of his other literary friends." (H.-P., Vol. I, 233.) We may add that if Jonson had been present with Drayton at the supposed Stratford meeting, just before Shakspeare's death, it is odd that he made no mention of it to Drummond in 1618. But the meeting is, no doubt, imaginary. I cannot see, however, that the story "can be refuted by the fact that he made his will in January, corrected it in March, and died in April," as Canon Beeching contends. As to Michael Drayton, Mrs. Stopes writes that "he was very communicative about himself,

anticipated. There are many erasures and interlineations, and the date is left as of March 25th. There are three sheets, at the foot of each of which Shakspeare signs his name.

One of the interlineations, apparently therefore an after-thought, is the bequest to his wife. "Item, I gyve unto my wiefe my second best bed with the furniture." Great efforts have been made to show that there is nothing in this inconsistent with the theory that Shakspeare was living with his wife on terms of idyllic affection. They have not been successful. "The name of Shakespeare's wife was omitted from the original draft of the will," writes Mr. Lee, "but by an interlineation in the final draft she received his second-best bed with its furniture. No other bequest was made to her. Several wills of the period have been discovered in which a bedstead or other article of household furniture formed part of a wife's inheritance, but none except Shakespeare's is forthcoming in which a bed forms the sole bequest." Comfort was for a time found in the belief that at any rate the widow had her "dower" in the testator's freehold lands, but Mr. Lee obtained an opinion from the late Mr. Charles Elton, Q.C., an eminent authority on real property law, to the effect that at any rate in the case of Shakspeare's latest purchase of freehold estate, viz. the house at Blackfriars, the right to dower was "barred" by the form of the conveyance, and there can be but little doubt that in the case of all his purchases of freeholds uses to bar dower had been inserted, as, indeed, was customary.<sup>1</sup>

he had many friends and patrons, he showered dedications among these broadcast, and from the dedications we learn much about his circumstances and ambitions." She adds pathetically, "It would have been comforting to us to have had as much authoritative autobiography of Shakespeare as we have of Michael Drayton." Very comforting indeed! And why has not Drayton told us anything about his dear friend Shakspeare, the great poet and dramatist? (Drayton b. 1563, d. 1631.)

<sup>1</sup> In Mr. Elton's posthumously published notes, collected in a bulky volume under the name of *William Shakespeare, his Family, and Friends*,

New Place is left to the testator's daughter, Susanna Hall, for life, with remainder in tail male, with remainder over to the younger daughter Judith in tail male. As to personal property "the precision with which Shakespeare's will accounts for and assigns to other legatees every known item of his property refutes the conjecture that he had set aside any portion of it under a previous settlement or jointure with a view to making independent provision for his wife." Alas for the idyllic legend of the rustic beauty, Anne Hathaway, to whose supposed shrine so many pilgrims annually direct their adoring feet! She had to put up with the second-best bed with the furniture thereof!<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lee, as we have seen, speaks of the precision with which this will accounts for and assigns to other legatees *every known item* of Shakspere's property. And precise it is. He gives to his niece, Elizabeth Hall, "all my plate except my brod silver and gilt bole, that I now have." He gave £10 to the poor of Stratford. He gives his sword to Thomas Combe. He gives divers small pecuniary legacies. He gives to "Hamlett Sadler xxvj<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup> to buy him a ringe," and the same to William Raynoldes for the same purpose. "And to my fellowes, John Hemynges, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell xxvj<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup> a peece to buy them ringes." To his daughter Judith he gives his "broad silver gilt bole."<sup>2</sup> All the rest of his "goodes,

it is only remarked that "nothing was said about Mrs. Anne Shakespeare's right to dower" (p. 227). But Mr. Elton had written to Mr. Lee, in 1897: "I have looked to the authorities with my friend, Mr. Herbert Mackay, and there is no doubt that Shakespeare barred the dower" in the case of the Blackfriar's freehold at any rate. (S. L., p. 222, note.)

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Henry Davey makes a truly delightful comment. He tells us that this "much-derided bequest . . . indicates that she was bed-ridden"! The humours of Stratfordian exegesis are really inexhaustible. If the poor woman was bed-ridden, which is an entirely gratuitous assumption (she lived more than seven years after Shakspere's death), was that any reason for cutting her off with the "second-best bed" only?

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lee writes (p. 223): "To his younger daughter he also left, with the tenement in Chapel Lane (in remainder to the elder daughter), £150 in money," etc. This is erroneous. The tenement in Chapel Lane is not men-

chattels, leases, plate, jewels, and household stuffe whatsoever" he gives, devises, and bequeaths to his son-in-law, John Hall, and his daughter Susanna, whom he appoints executors of his will.

The reader will have noticed one stupendous omission. Plate, jewels, the testator's sword, his silver-gilt bowl, his second-best bed, his household stuff, all these are mentioned, but of book or manuscript there is no mention whatever. What is the inference? Is it possible that the immortal bard, the myriad-minded man, the wonder of all ages, the great teacher, the universal philosopher, he who tells us so truly that ignorance is the only real darkness—is it possible that this man died without a book in his possession? Ben Jonson, as we know, had a grand library. He loved books, and he constantly gave them away to his friends. "The number of books which Jonson gave away is prodigious," writes his editor, and "some kind and cordial expression of his friendship accompanies each of them."<sup>1</sup> But Shakespeare, if indeed Shakspeare and

tioned, but Shakspeare left (*inter alia*) £50 to his daughter Judith "upon her surrendering" a copyhold tenement at Stratford, holden of the manor of Rowington, to her sister Susanna! Then Mr. Lee says that to his sister Joan he left (*inter alia*) "a life interest in the Henley Street property." This, again, is erroneous. The Henley Street houses were left to Susanna. To Joan he devised "the house with the appurtenaunces in Stratford, wherein she dwelleth, for her naturall lief, under the yearlie rent of xij<sup>d</sup>." These inaccuracies were pointed out by Mr. Stronach, in his pamphlet already referred to, but he himself falls into error as to the devise to Joan, which he describes as "a 'tenemente,' place not mentioned." It is odd indeed that Mr. Lee should have so misstated the document. Mr. Henry Davey, possibly misled by Mr. Lee, falls into the same errors both as to Judith and Joan Hart. "There were *bequests* to his sister Joan," writes Mr. Davey, but there was also a *devise* of the house in which she lived, as above-mentioned; and Judith did *not* receive "the tenement in Chapel Lane" (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 394). Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who correctly states the effect of the will, remarks that the testator "in devising his real estate to one child" had followed a general custom. (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 235, and see the will set forth at p. 169 of Vol. II.)

<sup>1</sup> i.e. as an inscription, such as that in Casaubon's Commentary on Persius presented to John Rowe. (See *Jonson's Works*, by Gifford, Colonel Cunningham's Edition, after p. 274.)



Shakespeare are one, dies without a single volume in his possession !

If he had had a library, if he had had in his possession any of those books which the poet Shakespeare used, and which he must have so much valued, is it credible that he would not have mentioned them? Would he have considered them of less importance than plate and linen, and jewels, and silver-gilt bowls? Compare the nuncupative will, made in 1635 by his son-in-law, John Hall. Hall was only a provincial doctor, a man who believed in the curative properties of "frog-spawn water, juice of goose-excrements, powdered human skulls, and swallows' nests," yet he, at least, had some appreciation of the value of books and manuscripts. The following is an extract of his will as reduced to writing by his witnesses: "Item, concerning *my study of bookes*, I leave them, sayd he, to you, my sonn Nash, to dispose of them as you see good. As for my *manuscriptes*, I would have given them to Mr. Boles, if hee had been here; but forasmuch as hee is not heere present, you may, son Nash, burne them, or doe with them what you please."<sup>1</sup>

"My study of books"—"my manuscripts." Of both there is in Shakespeare's will a silence that is truly appalling—appalling, that is, on the common hypothesis of authorship, but perfectly natural on the theory that player Shakspere and poet Shakespeare are distinct personages.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note that Shakspere's books, if he had had any, would have been included in Hall's bequest. "In a nuncupative will that was made by Mr. Hall a few hours before he died, he gave Thomas Nash, the husband of his only child, his 'study of books.' As the Halls were Shakespeare's residuary legatees, there can hardly be a doubt that any volumes that had been possessed by the latter at Stratford-on-Avon were included in this bequest . . . but, from the absence of all reference to books in the will of 1616, it may be safely inferred that *the poet himself was not the owner of many such luxuries*"! (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 251). For "many" read "any."

<sup>2</sup> "But can you name three or four books which Bacon had in his possession when he died?" I once heard asked in argument, and the questioner seemed



It has been said that Shakspeare had appointed his fellow-players, Heminge and Condell, to be his literary executors, and that he had, before his death, handed over to them his manuscripts "cur'd and perfect in their limbes, absolute in their members, as he conceived them."<sup>1</sup> If so, is it possible that he would have said not a word about them in his will? Not a word to indicate what his wishes were as to the time or manner of their publication, or to record his wish that published they should be, these immortal manuscripts, which he had (on this hypothesis) corrected for publication, and written out "without a blot"!

Let us remember what these manuscripts were. They included such masterpieces as *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, *As You Like It*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Had the First Folio of 1623 never been published the world would have lost all these priceless possessions. Is it possible to suppose that the author of such works was utterly careless as to whether they were published or not? Nay, the theory is that the spotless, blotless, corrected manuscripts were handed over by the author some time before his death to his fellow-players, Heminge and Condell, whom (by a separate "nuncupative" will, I suppose!) he had appointed his literary executors. Yet, though he names these men in his written will, though he leaves them each 26s. 8d. to buy a ring, he breathes no whisper as to his wishes concerning that property compared with which all his lands,

to think he had triumphed because an answer was not forthcoming. But that is not the point. The point is that Shakspeare makes no provision as to his books or MSS., though particular as to small matters of personal property. Bacon's will contains a specific bequest of his books—"I give to my brother Constable all my books"—and very particular directions as to his writings. The will of the actor Alleyn also (1626) is in striking contrast to that of Shakspeare. Alleyn had books, and had no doubt how to dispose of them.

<sup>1</sup> Prefatory address "To the Great Variety of Readers," prefixed to the First Folio, as to which see chap. ix.

all his personalty, had they been a thousand times as great, would have been as dross.

But so it is at every turn in this man's life. At every turn we are asked to stretch our credulity to breaking point by accepting that which is contrary to all human experience and to all reasonable probability.

Let us consider this matter a little further. Mr. and Mrs. Hall were, as we have seen, appointed by Shakspeare his residuary legatees. To them, therefore, would have gone his books and his manuscripts, if such he had. "Dr. Hall," as Judge Webb says, "was a man of business, and proved the will of his father-in-law on the 26th June, 1616, two months after his decease, but he never dreamt of claiming the Shakespearean plays as a portion of his residuary estate." Why not? These manuscripts, these plays, were valuable, and it is not suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Hall were indifferent to monetary considerations. Why, then, did they, executors and residuary legatees, make no claim to this valuable property? And why did their testator, who, if careless of literary fame, was, by universal consent, anything but careless when property was concerned, leave no directions as to its disposition? The Stratfordian answer to the question is, of course, that Shakspeare had already disposed of all his manuscripts to the acting company to which he belonged, and had no further interest in them, either personal or proprietary. We will examine this theory when we come to deal with the First Folio edition and the law of copyright in the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. For the present it may be sufficient to note that our great supposed poet and dramatist had at his death neither book nor manuscript in his possession, or to which he was legally entitled, or in which he had any interest whatever. Yet, even if he had parted with all his dramatic manuscripts, and cared not to retain any transcripts in his possession, one would think that he would at least have been

found in possession of copies of his *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and of the *Sonnets*, whether in manuscript or print. But the Stratfordians seem to think it the most natural thing in the world that their hero should have died bookless.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to Susanna Hall an instructive incident has been put on record. Hall died in 1635, and "during the civil wars, about the year 1642, a surgeon named James Cooke, attending in his professional capacity on a detachment stationed at Stratford Bridge, was invited to New Place to examine the books which the doctor had left behind him."<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Hall told him "she had some books left by one that professed physic with her husband for some money." Whereupon, says Cooke, "I told her if I liked them I would give her the money again." She brought them forth, and says Cooke further, "I, being acquainted with Mr. Hall's hand, told her that one or two of them were her husband's, and showed them her;—she denied: I affirmed, till I perceived she began to be offended, at last I returned her the money."

<sup>1</sup> Since I wrote the above, another Stratfordian "gem, of purest ray serene," has been supplied by a writer in the *Speaker* (December 7th, 1904). Mr. Arthur Symons, writing on "Stratford and an Edition of Shakespeare," after alluding to New Place as the house "in which he had lived for at least the most mysterious years of his life, the five years in which he wrote nothing," adds this truly precious comment towards the end of the article:—"I am not at all sure that Shakespeare had really given up work and ambition during those last years in which he was seeming to do nothing. May he not have been meditating, may he not have actually begun a revision of his old work which he may well have hesitated to carry far? Shakespeare revising Shakespeare: it suggests an ambition beyond anything that a man has conceived." Mr. Symons does not inform us whether Shakspeare was revising his manuscripts, or if he was working on the already published quartos, nor does he suggest what became of these books and manuscripts, with all the priceless revised work, at Shakspeare's death. Was he, perchance, revising some of those masterpieces which never saw the light till seven years after his death, such as *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*? Besides, had he not, at some unknown date, handed over his "writings" to the two players "cur'd and perfect of their limbes," and all the rest, "absolute in their members, as he conceived them"? Truly it cannot be said that the Baconians have any monopoly of drivel. (See chap. IX. on the First Folio.)

<sup>2</sup> H.-P., Vol. I, p. 252.

"The conversation here recorded," writes Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. I, p. 252), "would appear to show that Mrs. Hall's education had not been of an enlarged character; that books and manuscripts, even when they were the productions of her own husband, were not of much interest to her. Were it otherwise, it would be difficult to account for the pertinacity with which she insisted upon the book of cases (i.e. a manuscript Latin medical case-book of Hall's, which Cooke translated into English and published in 1657) not being in the doctor's handwriting; for his caligraphy is of an uniform and somewhat peculiar description, not readily to be mistaken for any of the ordinary styles of writing then in use. It is very possible, however, that the affixion of her signature to a document was the extent of her chirographical ability, for the art of writing was then rare amongst the ladies of the middle class, and her sister was a marks-woman."

This incident, as Mr. Phillipps also says, "exhibits her (Mrs. Hall) in one direction as a true scion of the poet [Shakspeare to wit], a shrewd person of business, caring more for gold than for books, albeit she was somewhat disturbed at the notion of parting with any of the latter that had been written by her husband, to whom she was warmly attached."<sup>1</sup>

Apparently, then, Mr. Shakspeare's elder daughter was not able to recognise her husband's handwriting, although his "caligraphy" was "of an uniform and somewhat peculiar description." She brings out manuscripts, however, and is very willing to sell them; but, alas, there are none of her father's! What had become of them, and what had become of those books which he (if Shakspeare = Shakespeare) must have possessed—his Holinshed, his North's *Plutarch*, his Florio's *Montaigne*, his *Belleforest*, his

<sup>1</sup> "Son Nash" had apparently not cared to deprive Mrs. Hall of his father's MSS. (See p. 191.)



Italian Romances, and all the other precious volumes which were the delight of the immortal dramatist?<sup>1</sup> What had become of them all? Where were they? And Echo answers "where"?

And here we are brought face to face with an astounding fact. Mrs. Hall could at any rate manage to affix her signature to a document, though probably this "was the extent of her chirographical ability." But her sister Judith, "the poet's" younger daughter, was unable to write her name. *Credite posteri!* The bard who was not of an age but for all time; the bard who has provided an appropriate word of poetry or philosophy for every incident and every contingency of human life; the bard whom to know is indeed a liberal education; the literary light of the world; the myriad-minded man who wrote that "there is no darkness but ignorance"—this greatest of the immortals, this demigod, did not even take the trouble to see that his daughter learnt to write her name! He left no books, and he left a daughter who could not read!<sup>2</sup>

One is fain to ask which hypothesis, then, makes the greater demand upon our credulity, the Baconian, or the Stratfordian?

Elizabeth, the only child of the Halls, born in February, 1608, was Shakspeare's last lineal descendant. He is said to have entertained a great affection for her. "If he had not been extremely fond of the little girl, it is not likely that he would have specifically bequeathed so mere a child nearly the whole of his plate in addition to a valuable contingent interest in his pecuniary estate." (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 205.)

This Elizabeth Hall married, first, Thomas Nash, of Stratford, a man of property who studied at Lincoln's Inn, and, secondly, John Barnard, of Abington, North-

<sup>1</sup> See Anders's *Shakespeare's Books*.

<sup>2</sup> As to the absurd suggested parallel in Milton's case see p. 204, note.

amptonshire, who was knighted by Charles II. On her mother's death she became the owner of New Place, and other property under Shakspeare's will. Lady Barnard lived till 1669-70, and one would have supposed that she would have had much to say about the great poet, her grandfather, who was so fond of her as a child ; that she would have cherished his memory, and would have affectionately preserved and been proud to exhibit many relics of him, including those books (if any!) which were at New Place when he died. Alas ! Nothing of the kind. Only the same silence that can be felt !

"It appears from the records of some Chancery proceedings," says Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, "that she inherited in after life the shrewd business qualities of her grandfather, but with this exception, nothing is known of her disposition or character." It seems that the descendants of the immortal poet were as unappreciative of their only claim to distinction as Shakespeare himself was careless of posthumous, or even contemporary, fame !

But, at any rate, we have the Stratford monument, with the well-known bust, that "rudely carved specimen of mortuary sculpture," as Mr. Lee calls it, with its "heavy unintellectual expression," the "clumsy" work of "Gerard Johnson or Janssen, who was a Dutch stonemason or tomb-maker, settled in Southwark."<sup>1</sup> Nobody knows who erected it, but it—or rather *some* monument—must apparently have been there before 1623, for Leonard Digges, in verses prefixed to the First Folio of that year, writes :—

When that stone is rent,  
And Time dissolves thy Stratford Monument.

This Leonard Digges does not allude to the inscription on a tablet, placed below the bust, which may or may not

<sup>1</sup> "The statement that it was cut by 'Gerard Johnson,' an Amsterdam 'tomb-maker,' is invariably accepted, but can be traced to no historical source." (Appleton Morgan, *The Shakespearean Myth*, p. 97.) I have more to say as to the bust. See chapter VIII. on "The Portraits of Shakespeare."

have been on the Stratford monument at the time when he wrote. Nobody knows who wrote it, or when; just as nobody knows who erected the monument. If we could only interrogate those who published the First Folio, seven years after Shakspeare's death, no doubt they could throw some valuable light on the subject. Very possibly "some gentlemen of London" caused the monument to be erected in Stratford Church, and employed Gerard Janssen, of Southwark, for that purpose (if *he* was the clumsy workman) somewhere about the time when the great work was being prepared for publication. But whoever he was that composed that inscription he could hardly have been much of a scholar, for the two Latin lines with which it commences contain a howling false quantity:—

Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,  
Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet.

It is to be hoped that Roche, or Hunt, or Jenkins, of Stratford Grammar School, would not have allowed the first syllable of Sōcrates to appear as the second foot of a dactyl!

These Latin lines claim for Shakespeare that he was a Nestor in experienced judgment, a Socrates in philosophical genius, and a Virgil in poetic art. As applied to Shakspeare of Stratford, so far as we know of him, these comparisons do not seem very appropriate. Nestor was the old man famed for the wisdom of his advice in the council of heroes. It does not seem that Shakspeare had much of the Nestor about him, nor, indeed, as Mr. Walter Begley says, was there "much of the 'Socratic method' or the Socratic philosophy displayed in any part of the life of William Shakespeare, the player, so far as we know it." As to "Maronem," the poet Shakespeare's contemporaries seem generally to have looked upon him as rather Ovidian than Virgilian.<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that the dis-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Walter Begley (*Is it Shakespeare?*, p. 103), by a slip, turns "Maronem" into "Ovid"!

tich, as Messrs. Garnett and Gosse remark, "is silent as to his work as a dramatist."

After this follow some English lines which show that the writer had no knowledge of the circumstances of Shakspeare's interment, for they speak of him as lying "within this monument," whereas he lies, or is said to lie, as all the world knows, under the stone in the chancel, and not within the monument. "It is curious," too, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps observes, that in this inscription "there should be no allusion to his personal character." Is it possible that a distinction was drawn even here between the "Shakespeare" of this cenotaph and the "Shaksperè" who is buried in the chancel?

Let us turn now to that stone in the chancel. Here we have Shakspeare's epitaph, written by himself:—

Good friend for Jesus sake forbear  
To digg the dust enclosed heare :  
Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones,  
And curst be he yt moves my bones.

These, we are told, are the last lines written—these the last sentiments uttered by the author of *Hamlet*! If so, the author of *Hamlet* might well have written also the doggerels on "Lousy Lucy," and the epitaph on old "John-a-Combe," which tradition has ascribed to him.<sup>1</sup>

Another extraordinary fact in this amazing life is that, with the exception of the *Plays*, and *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*, and that puzzle-poem, *The Phoenix and The Turtle*, Shakespeare appears to have written nothing, unless we are to accept the above-mentioned doggerels as his indeed! If "Shakespeare" was but a *nom de plume* this need not excite surprise, for it would merely mean that the author, whoever he

<sup>1</sup> Are we, really, to believe that the bard of the world's adoration, the sublime teacher, the great-minded, tolerant, "gentle" philosopher, died with a curse upon his lips—an imprecation against any man who might *move his bones*? A mean and vulgar curse indeed!



was, cared to publish those plays and poems only under that pseudonym. But if Shakspeare was indeed Shakespeare it does seem unaccountable that he should have written no lines to friends or patrons, no elegies on famous men or women of his day, no lyrics other than those, or some of those, which appear in the dramas, no epigrams, no epitaphs, no epithalamiums. Take Jonson's case, for example. Jonson wrote hundreds of poems, which in that day were classed as "epigrams." He wrote lines to his master, Camden, lines on the death of the Countess of Pembroke,<sup>1</sup> lines to "Lord Bacon" on his birthday, poetical addresses many, to friends, and patrons and personages of distinction, and a large number of lyrics and occasional pieces. In these poems, and in his prologues and epilogues, Jonson is continually giving us broad indications of his own personality; Shakespeare never gives us a glimpse of his, except it be in those enigmatical "Sonnets among his private friends." His plays "did take Eliza and our James"; yet the great Queen dies, and he sheds no melodious tear, weaves no wreath of song to lay upon her tomb. Prince Henry dies, "than which," says Grosart, "no death since Sydney's had so moved the heart of the nation as none evoked such splendid sorrow from England's foremost names—with one prodigious exception—in 'melodious teares.'"<sup>2</sup> And the one prodigious exception is Shakespeare. But why should William Shakspeare, of Stratford, have played the part of "William the Silent"? No plausible answer to this question has ever been suggested.

But, surely, when this great poet died there was a great burst of lamentation, a great concert of praise! Surely all his brother minstrels who survived him vied with each other to write his elegy. Alas! Again silence—the silence that can be felt. "His death was greeted with

<sup>1</sup> If these be really his.

<sup>2</sup> Grosart's *Joshua Sylvester*, Vol. I, p. 17.

a chorus of elegiac and panegyrical verses, poured forth by the best poets of the moment," writes Mr. J. A. Symonds, but he is speaking not of Shakespeare, but of Jonson.<sup>1</sup> How different was the case of Shakespeare! It was not till seven years after the death of Shakspeare that "Shakespeare's" elegy was written by this Ben Jonson whose own death was thus "greeted with a chorus of elegiac and panegyrical verse." It is true that one William Basse, a year before that (1622), had written some curious lines, in which he bids

Renowned Spencer lie a thought more nigh  
To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lie  
A little nearer Spenser, to make room  
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb,<sup>2</sup>

as though he thought Shakespeare was going to be buried in Westminster Abbey, as most assuredly Shakespeare ought to have been. But where is the "chorus of elegiac and panegyrical verses, poured forth by the best poets of the moment?" And once more "Echo answers 'where?'" It was not till the First Folio appeared in 1623 that a tribute was paid to his memory. Why was this? Was it because "the friends of the Muses" were, for the most part, aware that Shakespeare had not died with Shak-

<sup>1</sup> Jonson died in August, 1637. At the beginning of 1638 was published *Jonsonus Virbius*, or the memory of Ben Jonson revived by the friends of the Muses. In this collection are poems by most of the men of genius of that age; by the Lord Falkland, the Lord Buckhurst, Sir John Beaumont, Sir Thomas Hawkins, Mr. Waller, Waring, Mayne, and Cartwright, of Oxford, and many others. "This piece was published by Dr. Dupper, Bishop of Chichester and Tutor to Charles the Second, then Prince of Wales. What is there so desirable as to be loved in life, and lamented after death by wise and good men; or what more honourable to a poet than to have his memory embalmed by the tears of the Muses?" (Whalley, *Life of Jonson*, p. 53.)

<sup>2</sup> There are a good many versions of this poem. (See Ingleby's *Centurie of Prayse*, p. 136.) The lines, says Dr. Ingleby, "are usually attributed to the elder W. Basse." The date seems uncertain. See pp. 336 and 472.

sperere? Did Jonson perchance think that his idea might be realised when he wrote—

What a sight it were  
To see thee in our waters yet appear,  
To make those flights upon the banks of Thames  
Which so did take Eliza and our James?

Be the explanation what it may, the fact that Shakspeare should have practically remained seven years in his grave "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung" is one of those extraordinary things which we find in Shakspeare's life alone—extraordinary, that is, if Shakspeare be Shakespeare; quite intelligible on the contrary hypothesis.

Sixteen plays of Shakespeare were published in Shakspeare's lifetime: but it appears that not one of them was published with his sanction. "He made no audible protest," writes Mr. Lee, "when seven contemptible dramas in which he had no hand were published with his name or initials on the title-page." In 1599 William Jaggard published *The Passionate Pilgrim* with the name "W. Shakespeare" on the title-page as author. There were twenty pieces in all in the volume, but only five were written by Shakespeare, the bulk of the book being by Richard Barnfield and others. For thirteen years Jaggard allowed this book to be read as the work of Shakespeare (Shakspeare making no sign), and in 1612 he issued a third edition, still under Shakespeare's name as sole author, in which he included two new poems by Thomas Heywood as the work of Shakespeare. Heywood protested, and Jaggard removed Shakespeare's name from a few copies, and continued selling the rest as Shakespeare's. Shakspeare made no protest, but Heywood stated that *Shakespeare* was offended, and very probably he was so; but as he was, so I conceive, "a concealed poet," writing under a *nom de plume*, he seems to have only made known his annoyance through the medium of Heywood.

To all this must be added that, so far as we know,

Shakspere never during his life did or said anything to show that he claimed to be the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* or any of them. Among the many extraordinary things in this (on the common hypothesis) inexplicable life, this is surely one of the most extraordinary.

My last comment on the life of William Shakspere of Stratford shall be this. Meagre as our knowledge of it is, it is yet too much. Mr. Lee's claim that we have "a mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare" is, indeed, sufficiently ridiculous, but it would be far better for the Stratfordian theory if we had no biographical detail at all. If we knew nothing, we might imagine anything. What we do know is fatal to the case. It gives rise to the strongest possible presumption against the identity of Shakspere the player with Shakespeare the poet. It fully explains how Whittier came to write "Whether Bacon wrote the wonderful plays or not, I am quite sure the man Shakspere neither did nor could," and how John Bright came to say, in the vigorous style that was usual with him, "Any man who believes that William Shakspere of Stratford wrote 'Hamlet' or 'Lear' is a fool." Such strong language, however, as that used by the great tribune is to be deprecated. It should be left for the High Priests and Pharisees of literature. It is better to point out with Emerson how impossible it is to marry the facts of this man's life to the works that are ascribed to him. "Other admirable men have lived lives in some sort of keeping with their thought, but this man in wide contrast."



## NOTE ON THE IGNORANCE OF JUDITH SHAKSPERE

(See p. 196.)

Mr. Henry Davey, who writes the "Memoir" in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, casting about, like other Stratfordian apologists, for a parallel case to Judith's, has fixed upon Milton's daughter Anne. Of Judith he writes (Vol. X, p. 293), "probably, like Milton's eldest daughter, she could not write." This is really pitiful. Milton's three motherless daughters, living with their blind father, may not have received the best of education; but, at any rate, they could all read; indeed, the two younger girls read to their father works in French, Latin, Italian, and Spanish. Phillips adds Greek and Syriac also, but this must be taken *cum grano*. He says, indeed, that they read without understanding, but, as Professor Masson comments, this "is credible only in the sense that it roughly describes the actual result." But what of the eldest daughter, Anne? Well, we are told that, although she could read, she could not write. But Anne was a deformed cripple, and Professor Masson tells us that it was "her bodily infirmity" which prevented her from writing. Now, many a man—and woman too—unable to read or write, has learnt to scribble a signature (such was apparently Susanna Hall's case), but this poor girl, who, although she could read perfectly well, was prevented by her bodily infirmity from writing, is put before us as a parallel to the ignorant and entirely uneducated Judith Quiney! Is it really suggested, then, that Milton would not have caused his eldest daughter to be as well educated as her sisters had it not been for her physical and, perhaps, mental infirmities? To such lengths are Stratfordian apologists driven!

## CHAPTER VII

### • THE TRADITIONAL SHAKSPERE

**B**Y tradition is meant, as the dictionaries tell us, that which is handed down by oral communication—*id quod est traditum*. When a man has been in any way remarkable, stories naturally gather around his memory, which, it may be, become subsequently embodied in the writings of diarists and chroniclers. These, if only they appear to have proceeded from trustworthy contemporary sources, form very fair “evidence of reputation” as to the character and circumstances of the subject of them. Now the contemporary records as to Shakspeare’s life being meagre in the extreme, it not unnaturally occurred to certain persons, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, to consult “ancient witnesses” as to the life of the man to whom was attributed a work so magnificent as the authorship of the *Plays* and *Poëms* of Shakespeare, and to take notes of the stories told to them. Such traditional stories naturally require to be closely scrutinised, but they ought not, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps justly says, “to be hastily rejected as unworthy of serious discussion,” although “the latter is much too frequently the treatment extended to these hearsay records,” and one which is “highly favoured by numerous critics of the present day, who, guided by some mysterious instinct, assume to have a more intimate knowledge of Shakespeare’s [i.e. Shakspeare’s] personal history than was vouchsafed to the ancient inhabitants of his own native town.” Let us see, therefore, what sort of man was Shak-

spere of Stratford, and what sort of life he led according to the oldest traditional records which have come down to us.

Unfortunately we find no evidence of this description till between forty and fifty years after Shakspere's death. Let us begin with good old Thomas Fuller, whose *Worthies of Warwickshire*, forming part of his history of the *Worthies of England*, was published in 1662, the author having died in 1661, so that his notes on Shakespeare were probably written several years before the date of publication—say forty years or so after the death of Shakspere.

"He was," says Fuller, "an eminent instance of the truth of that rule *poeta non fit sed nascitur*—one is not made but born a poet. Indeed, *his learning was very little*, so that, as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so nature itself was all the art which was used upon him."

Here we see that Fuller is at direct variance with Jonson—at any rate, the Jonson of the Folio lines:—

Yet must I not give Nature all: thy Art,  
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part. . . .  
For a good Poet's made as well as born.  
And such wert thou.

At the same time he is in complete agreement with Jonson as to Shakspere's "small Latin and less Greek," telling us plainly that "his learning was very little," and saying that if alive he would confess himself "never any scholar."<sup>1</sup>

Next we have the Rev. John Ward, vicar of Stratford, who compiled a memoranda-book, begun, as an entry tells us, in February, 1661, and finished in April, 1663. His induction to the living occurred in 1662, so that he had

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with Fuller's imaginary wit combats between Shakspere and Jonson elsewhere. See chap. xi.

only recently settled in the town when he wrote his notes on Shakspeare, but Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps thinks "there can be no reasonable doubt that he has accurately repeated the prevalent local gossip" in his scanty entries. "I have heard," he says, "that Mr. Shakespeare was a natural wit, without any art at all; he frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for that had an allowance so large that he spent at the rate of a thousand a year,<sup>1</sup> as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and, it seems, drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted." Such was the "local gossip" about Shakspeare forty-six years after his death—"a natural wit, without any art at all," a boon companion, and a hard drinker.

We next come to John Aubrey, who completed his *Lives of Eminent Men* in the year 1680. Aubrey certainly does not bear a high reputation for accuracy or trustworthiness. Mr. Phillipps calls him "one of those foolish and detestable gossips who record everything that they hear or misinterpret," and says that "he must have been in the habit of compiling from imperfect notes of conversations, or, no doubt in many instances, from his own recollections of them." Gifford recalls the saying of Anthony Wood, the biographer of Jonson, that Aubrey was "a roving magotty-pated man," and says that "he thought little, believed much, and confused everything." Too much reliance must not, therefore, be placed upon the statements of this "industrious antiquarian." He may have been personally veracious, as Malone believed,

<sup>1</sup> About £8000 of our money, I suppose; £5000 at the least—a pretty good "allowance" for writing plays! And Milton got £10 only for the copyright of *Paradise Lost*! See *ante*, p. 179 n., as to Shakspeare's earnings. The actor Alleyn gave, we are told, no less a sum, in the whole, than £8870 for his estate at Dulwich, which would be equal to more than £40,000 of our present money. This shows what a fortune could be accumulated by a successful actor.



but that he was careless and inaccurate, if not even reckless in statement cannot, I think, be disputed, and he has made many bad and palpable blunders. Still he has some interesting notes on Shakspeare, though we must remember that the subject of them had died upwards of sixty years before they were made. I have already quoted the passage to the effect that "his father was a butcher," and that the boy "exercised his father's trade, but when he killed a calf he would do it in a high style, and make a speech." He goes on to say, "This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London I guesse about 18,<sup>1</sup> and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceedingly well. . . . He began early to make essayes at dramatique poetry, which at that time was very lowe, and his playes tooke well. He was a handsome well shap't man, very good company, and of a very readie and pleasant smooth witt." He goes on to speak in characteristic fashion of "the humour of the cunstable in a Midsomers Night's Dreame," whom he apparently confuses with Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and then quotes as authentic the doggerels on the death of old John O'Combe, the money-lender, ascribed to Shakspeare, and concludes as follows: "Though as Ben Jonson says of him, that he had but little Latine and lesse Greek, he understood Latine pretty well, for he had been in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the country."

This latter statement that "the immortal William" had in his younger years been a village schoolmaster has been eagerly caught at by some who saw plainly that the "small Latin" idea will not hold water, and thought that as a country dominie Shakspeare might have had the opportunity of picking up some of the large Latin which was undoubtedly possessed by the author of the *Plays*

<sup>1</sup> This would take Shakspeare to town in 1582, but his twins were not born till 1585. I have already given reasons for putting the date of the "Hegira" at 1587 or thereabouts.

and *Poems*. So, just as certain others have made Shakspeare an attorney's clerk in order to account, as they fondly imagine, for his knowledge of law, and as others, again, have sent him as a soldier to the Low Countries to study men and manners, he has been made, on the authority of the "magotty-pated man," a teacher of "hig, hag, hog" to rustic brats. When and where he so taught Aubrey unfortunately omits to mention, but as he supposes that Shakspeare came to London about eighteen, and was an actor at one of the playhouses, he must have occupied the pedagogue's stool at a somewhat early age. Obviously this schoolmaster story, which rests entirely upon the statement of this blundering untrustworthy gossip, is a mere myth; but it will, of course, be believed by those who wish to believe it in the fond hope that therein they may find some comfort.<sup>1</sup>

These, then, are the tales about Shakspeare as jotted down by Aubrey upwards of sixty years after the death of the Stratford Player. A butcher's son, apprenticed to his father's trade, making speeches in high style as he killed a calf, leaving Stratford (and wife and children, though Aubrey does not seem to have heard of these) while still a boy, and at once taking to acting and play-writing. Aubrey, it may be observed, does not dissent from the "small Latin and less Greek," but goes rather farther than the other collectors of gossip in saying that "he understood Latine pretty well." Here, then, is the traditional Shakspeare according to Aubrey.

I need not again quote at length the notes made by the Rev. William Fulman some little time before the year 1688, or the additions to them made, previously to 1708, by the Rev. Richard Davies. The reader will remember

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Henry Davey (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, pp. 264, 271) thinks it "almost certain" that what Aubrey really wrote was "*under a schoolmaster*"! If so, I presume "in the country" means at Stratford. Well, if we desire to insert a word in Aubrey's narrative, or any other, why should we not be at liberty to do so? *Cela se fait à Stratford!*

that Davies describes Shakspeare as "much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits," speaks of his having been "oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned" by Lucy, says he had to "fly his native country to his great advancement," and adds that "he dyed a papist." I have already discussed these notes (with the exception of the allegation that Shakspeare died a papist) in connection with the poaching story.<sup>1</sup> All, then, that this reverend gentleman has to tell us, as the result of the gossip which he had collected (we are now nearly a hundred years after the death of Shakspeare), is that the Stratford young man was a confirmed poacher; that he was often whipt and sometimes imprisoned; that he fled to London; that he caricatured Sir Thomas Lucy as Justice Clodpate (a confusion worthy of Aubrey); that "he dyed a papist," and that he "lays a heavy curse on any one who shall remove his bones." Fulman had noted that "from an actor of playes he became a composer," that "he dyed Ap. 23, 1616, aetat 53, probably at Stratford, for there he is buried, and hath a monument." So Fulman in 1687 was not even certain as to the place of Shakspeare's death.

We now come to the year 1693, when one Dowdall seems to have paid a visit to the church at Stratford. There he "saw the effigies of our English tragedian, Mr. Shakspeare." He quotes the inscription on the monument, "*Judicio Pylum*," etc., and the verses on the grave-stone. He then goes on to say "the clarke that show'd me this church is above eighty years old,"<sup>2</sup> he says that this

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 24 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> This could hardly have been the parish clerk of Stratford, for, as Mr. Elton points out (p. 333), "the Parish-books shew that one William Castle, born in 1628, was clerk and sexton at the time of Mr. Dowdall's visit, and throughout all the latter part of the century." He, therefore, instead of being "above eighty years old," was only sixty-five at the time. Either, then, Dowdall made a bad mistake as to his age, or we must imagine some other unknown "ancient witness."

Shakespear was formerly in this towne bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he ran from his master to London, and there was received into the play house as a serviture, and by this meanes had an opportunity to be what he afterwards prov'd." Here, then, is the traditional Shakspeare according to this old clerk of Stratford in the year 1693.<sup>1</sup> He confirms Aubrey's story that Shakspeare was apprenticed to a butcher, and says that he ran from "his master" (i.e. his father, according to Aubrey) to London, and became "a serviture" (a "call-boy," it has been said, or a "super" maybe) in the play-house, and thus obtained the "opportunity to be what he afterwards prov'd," viz., in the words of this traveller, "our English tragedian."<sup>2</sup> Dowdall, it will be observed, says nothing about Shakespeare's works, though he quotes the inscription on the monument.

A year after this, viz. in 1694, nearly eighty years after Shakspeare's death, one William Hall, an Oxford graduate, writes to a friend concerning Stratford-on-Avon: "That place I came unto on Thursday night, and the next day went to visit the ashes of the great Shakespear which lye interr'd in that church. The verses which in his lifetime he ordered to be cut upon his tombstone, for his monument have others, are those which follow:—[he then quotes the lines]. The little learning these verses con-

<sup>1</sup> If he were really "above eighty" (see note on last page) he would have been about four years old at Shakspeare's death.

As to Archdeacon Davies's assertion that Shakspeare "died a Papist," see Canon Beeching in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 349, note. I agree with the conclusion arrived at by Canon Beeching in his essay on "The Religion of Shakespeare," viz., that the Shakespeare of the Plays cannot be shown to have been either a Roman Catholic or a Puritan. I am convinced that he held very liberal opinions on the subject of religion—that he might have said with Tom Hood—

"My heart ferments not with the bigot's leaven,  
All creeds I view with toleration thorough;  
And have a horror of regarding Heaven  
As anybody's rotten borough"!

<sup>2</sup> See p. 473 n.



tain would be a very strong argument of the want of it in the author, did not they carry something in them which stands in need of a comment. There is in the church a place which they call the bone-house, a repository for all bones they dig up, which are so many that they would load a great number of waggons. The poet, being willing to preserve his bones unmoved, lays a curse upon him that moves them, and having to do with clarks and sextons, for the most part a very ignorant set of people, *he descends to the meanest of their capacitys and disrobes himself of that art which none of his co-temporaries wore in greater perfection.*"<sup>1</sup>

This Oxford graduate evidently asked himself what so many others have asked themselves, viz. how it was possible that the great bard of all ages, the grand poet-philosopher, of lofty soul and divine imagination, could have written such mean lines—lines which any ignorant village rhymester might have composed as the embodiment of his paltry thought—to be inscribed above his last resting-place? So making no doubt that Shakspeare the Player and Money-lender and Shakespeare the great dramatist are identical, he puts forward a much-needed defence, which however is more ingenious than convincing. He makes the author of *Hamlet* write down to the meanest of capacities, in order that he may be understood of sextons and clerks, and strike terror into their minds by his curse on all body-snatchers; and thus it is that a vulgar thought in vulgar language is the last message to posterity from him who was wont to clothe the noblest thoughts that the human mind can conceive in the noblest language which the human tongue can utter.

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
 As dreams are made on, and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleep.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

And curst be he that moves my bones !

Such are the extraordinary things that we are called upon to believe by the Stratfordian faith.<sup>1</sup>

So far we notice that although these collectors of traditional gossip have only succeeded in gleaning very meagre details, they are, at any rate, very much in agreement. We have the butcher's apprentice, whose learning was very little, more given to poaching than to study, who ran away from home at a very early age, and became first a servitor at a London theatre, and then a play actor. A great natural wit, of course, he must have been ; otherwise, how could he have written the *Plays* and *Poems* attributed to him? Withal a boon companion and a hard drinker. But here we notice that our ancient witnesses are chiefly remarkable for what they do *not* say. There is an entire silence as to William Shakspeare's schooling. Yet surely some of those who visited Stratford, and who saw the monument at the church—Dowdall, for instance, or Hall—would have been told something about Shakspeare's school-time at the Grammar School! One would have imagined that they would have made it a point to visit the school, in order to see where the great man received his education, as well as the monument erected to his memory in the church. Or are we to suppose that the "ancient witnesses" were silent on this subject? Let us turn again to what the Rev. John Ward, vicar of Stratford-on-Avon, wrote in 1662 or 1663. "He frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford." Not a word about the Grammar School.

<sup>1</sup> I trust I shall not be accused of a misquotation because I have substituted "an" for "this" in the above celebrated passage.

But this is really a prodigious omission. If Shakspeare had acquired at the Free School one half of the learning attributed to him by Mr. Churton Collins—one half or one third of the learning that must have been possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*—he must surely have become remarkable at school, if not as a worker, at any rate as a wonderful natural genius. Where are “those early presages of future renown, which,” as Malone writes, “his extraordinary parts must have afforded”? “There is no instance,” says Dr. Johnson, “of any man whose history has been minutely related that it did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour,” and therefore, says Malone, Shakspeare’s early history “would unquestionably furnish us with many proofs of the truth of his observation; of his acuteness, facility and fluency; of the playfulness of his fancy, and his love of pleasantry and humour; of his curiosity, discernment, candour and liberality; of all those qualities, in a word, which afterwards rendered him the admiration of the age in which he lived.”<sup>1</sup> Alas! tradition has preserved for us the calf-killing and the poaching, but of all those qualities—all those presages of future greatness—which, if Shakspeare and Shakespeare be identical, must, as Malone and Johnson say, inevitably have forced themselves upon the notice of his masters and his school-fellows, tradition has unfortunately nothing whatever to tell us. It is as silent as the grave.

We now come to the first attempt to write a biography of Shakespeare, viz. that made by Nicholas Rowe, who, in 1709, published *Some Account of the Life, etc., of William Shakespear*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Liberality,” by the way, does not seem to have been one of these!

<sup>2</sup> This has been republished *in extenso* by Mr. Nichol Smith, in his *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*. The editor has (p. 307) a curious note on Betterton, viz. “Downes has an interesting note in his *Roscius Anglicanus* showing how in the acting of this part (Hamlet), Betterton benefited by Shakespeare’s coaching.” This is astonishing, seeing that Shakspeare had been

Rowe was a writer of plays in the reign of Queen Anne, and was poet-laureate to George I. He tells us that he was indebted for the greater part of his information to the actor Betterton. Thomas Betterton was born in 1635 and appeared on the stage in 1660. He is said to have made a journey to Warwickshire about the year 1690 (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 12), more than seventy years after Shakspeare's death, "to gather up," as Rowe says, "what remains he could of a name for which he had so great a value." Rowe's *Life*, it will be observed, was not published till nearly a hundred years had elapsed after Shakspeare's death. Let us see what he has to tell us concerning the traditional Shakspeare of his time.

"He was the son of Mr. John Shakespear, and was born at Stratford upon Avon, in Warwickshire, in April, 1564. . . . His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that tho' he was his eldest son, he could give him no better education than his own employment. He had bred him, 'tis true, for some time at a Free-school, were 'tis probable he acquir'd that little Latin he was master of: but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forc'd his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language."

Here, then, we have, at last, mention of a school. "He had bred him for some time at a Free-school." What Free School? We are not told, but as there was a Free School at Stratford it has been not unreasonably assumed that this must have been the one. There, then, according

in his grave nearly twenty years when Betterton was born. The explanation is that Taylor, of the Black Fryars Company, was, according to Sir William Davenant, instructed by Shakspeare, and Davenant, who had seen Taylor act, according to Downes, instructed Betterton. There is a similar story as to Betterton playing King Henry VIII. Betterton was said to have been instructed by Sir William, who was instructed by Lowen, who was instructed by Shakspeare! (Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 34.)



to Rowe, "'tis *probable* [evidently he had no evidence before him] he acquired *that little Latin he was master of*." According to his first biographer, therefore, he appears to have had "small Latin" and *no* Greek. Anyhow, his father's financial embarrassments caused him to remove the boy from school "at an unusually early age," as Mr. Lee says, and "prevented his further proficiency in that language." Let us listen again to Nicholas Rowe.

"It is without controversie that he had no knowledge of the writings of the antient poets, not only from this reason, but *from his works themselves, where we find no traces of any thing that looks like an imitation of 'em*." The absurdity of the latter part of this passage is truly monumental, and reminds one of the ridiculous lines of Leonard Digges:—

Next Nature onely helpt him, for looke thorow  
This whole Booke, thou shalt find he doth not borrow,  
One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,  
Nor once from vulgar Languages Translate!

It is a pity we cannot call up the spirits of these writers and present them with a copy of Mr. Collins's Essays! But, in truth, any intelligent reader of the "works themselves," though but *mediocriter doctus*, can but laugh at statements so curiously in opposition to the facts. No; it may be true enough that Shakspeare had little learning, and "no knowledge of the writings of the antient poets," but the proposition is not only false, but "gross as a mountain, open, palpable" when applied to Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*.

But "whatever Latin he had," says Rowe, "'tis certain he understood French, as may be observ'd from many words and sentences scatter'd up and down his Plays in that language; and especially from one scene in *Henry the Fifth* written wholly in it. Upon his leaving school he seems to have given intirely into that way of living which his father propos'd to him; and in order to settle in the

world after a family manner, he thought fit to marry while he was yet very young." Then follows the deer-stealing story which I have already discussed ; the result, according to Rowe, being that Shakspeare "was oblig'd to leave his business and family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London. It is at this time, and upon this accident, that he is said to have made his first acquaintance in the Play-house. He was receiv'd into the Company then in being, at first in a very mean rank [as "a servitude" Dowdall says]; but his admirable wit, and the natural turn of it to the stage, soon distinguish'd him, if not as an extraordinary Actor, yet as an excellent writer. His name is printed, as the custom was in those times, amongst those of the other Players, before some old Plays, but without any particular account of what sort of parts he used to play ; and tho' I have inquir'd I could never meet with any further account of him this way, than that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet. I should have been much more pleas'd to have learn'd from some certain authority which was the first Play he wrote."

With the last reflection we shall all certainly be in full agreement. It would be infinitely more satisfactory to learn which was Shakespeare's first play than to be informed that his top performance was the Ghost in *Hamlet*! But apparently there was no better evidence in Rowe's day than now as to the chronological order of the plays. Thomas Betterton apparently had nothing to say on that point.

Rowe goes on to say that "art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that, for ought I know, the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, and had the most fire and strength of imagination in 'em, were the best." This phrase about "art" and "nature" as applied to Shakespeare had already become a stock expression in Rowe's time.

The biographer then goes on to say of Shakespeare:

"Besides the advantages of his wit, he was in himself a good-natur'd man, of great sweetness in his manners, and a most agreeable companion; so that it is no wonder if with so many good qualities he made himself acquainted with the best conversations of those times." This acquaintance "with the best conversations of those times" is a little bit of assumption on Rowe's part for which he adduces no evidence. Dryden had said in his *Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age*, "I cannot find that any of them had been conversant in courts, except Ben Johnson; and his genius lay not so much that way as to make an improvement by it. Greatness was not then so easy of access, nor conversation so free, as it is now." That last statement is a very true one, and the evidence that Dryden desiderated is still to seek in Shakspeare's case. However, it is certain that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* was both "conversant in courts" and "acquainted with the best conversations of those times."

We may observe here how Rowe differs from the earlier collectors of Shakspearean tradition. They had jotted down what was told them by gossips and "ancient witnesses" concerning Shakspeare. Rowe adds to these certain propositions as to which a study of "the works themselves" makes us affirm that they must be true concerning the author Shakespeare. All modern biographies (so called) of Shakespeare, of course, do likewise. He goes on to admit, however, that he has no evidence for this acquaintance "with the best conversations of those times," for he writes, "what particular habitude or friendships he contracted with private men, I have not been able to learn, more than that every one who had a true taste of merit, and could distinguish men, had generally a just value and esteem for him"—a very general proposition indeed, and a very vague one. It *must* have been so; therefore no doubt it *was* so! We need not follow Rowe

any further. We may remark in passing that he thought Spenser was referring to Shakespeare in the line—

Our pleasant Willy ah ! is dead of late,

although Spenser's death happened twenty years before Shakspeare's,<sup>1</sup> and that he announces that Ben Jonson was "altogether unknown to the world" in 1598, although he is mentioned by Francis Meres in that year as one of the principal writers of tragedy! Gifford has poured the vials of his scorn on this statement, and on the "arrant fable" to the effect that Shakspeare patronised Jonson by bringing out *Every Man in His Humour*.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, this biographer does not seem to have consumed much time in making inquiries concerning Shakspeare's life, for he states that "he had three daughters," having added one out of his imagination, and never having heard of the son Hamnet. Surely Betterton, who is said to have made a pilgrimage to Stratford to gather up what remains he could, ought to have collected better materials!

How came it, I ask again, that none of these pilgrims visited the Free School to consult the records and the master and such "ancient witnesses" as they could find concerning Shakspeare's school time? If only one of them could have left such a note as this: "I saw the Free School, and was shown the name of William Shakspeare on the old school lists, and was told that he was a boy of great natural talents and of great promise, and, indeed, of no small industry, since, though he was only a short time at the school, and never reached the upper classes, he nevertheless contrived to read the books that were read in those classes, as well as those read in the lower classes, reading, in fact, not only Erasmus and Mantuanus, but

<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible that he is right in this. See p. 518.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of Ben Jonson*, by Gifford. Col. Cunningham's edition (1875), pp. 1, li.



also Virgil and Ovid and Horace and Cæsar and Sallust and Cicero and Livy and Plautus and Terence and Seneca, not to mention a few Greek authors as well"! What a thousand pities it is that the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford, or Dowdall, or some other record hunter, has not left us such a precious legacy as this, so that Mr. Sidney Lee and Mr. Churton Collins might have had something to rest upon besides their own fertile imagination, *and* the works of Shakespeare!<sup>1</sup>

Combining Rowe, then, with the earlier diarists and *chiffonniers* in the field of tradition, we are able to obtain a very fair picture of the traditional Shakspere. It is, as I have already described it, the picture of a Warwickshire rustic, with no learning, with very little schooling, with no reputation either for industry or talents. All are agreed in this.

"There has always prevailed a tradition," wrote Dr. Johnson, "that Shakespeare wanted learning, that he had no regular education, nor much skill in dead languages. Jonson, his friend, affirms that *he had small Latin and less Greek*; who, besides that he had no imaginable temptation to falsehood, wrote at a time when the character and acquisitions of Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspere] were known to multitudes. His evidence ought therefore to decide the controversy, unless some testimony of equal force could be opposed."

<sup>1</sup> Rowe says: "There is one Play of his, indeed, *The Comedy of Errors*, in a great measure taken from the *Menæchmi* of Plautus. How that happen'd I cannot easily divine, since, as I hinted before, I do not take him to have been master of Latin enough to read it in the original, and I know of no translation of Plautus so old as his time." Dr. Johnson says: "*The Comedy of Errors* is confessedly taken from the *Menæchmi* of Plautus; from the only play of Plautus which was then in English." But the translation of the *Menæchmi* by "W. W." (supposed to be William Warner) was not published till 1595, and *The Comedy of Errors* was acted at Gray's Inn in 1594. Those who believe that Shakespeare could not translate Latin of course adopt the hypothesis that he saw the translation in manuscript. Everybody who had a work in manuscript appears to have shown it to Shakspere. There was no end to the MSS. that he saw and read!

But as to Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, it is found that testimony not only of equal but of overwhelming force can be opposed, namely, the testimony of the "works themselves." What, then, is the conclusion? We may accept tradition or we may reject it, but we must not deal with it arbitrarily, according to our caprice, or to suit our preconceived theories. We must not claim Jonson as an infallible witness of truth when we can cite him in favour of the hypothesis which we wish to support, and summarily dismiss him when his testimony does not square with our views. Counsel cannot at the same time discredit his own witness, and ask the jury to act on his evidence where it seems to make in favour of his client; or, if he does, he will probably make the other side a present of the verdict. So, too, we are not justified in summarily dismissing the old gleaners of ancient tradition when they tell us that Shakspeare was a butcher's apprentice with no learning, and at the same time appealing to them in support of other alleged facts as to the Stratford Player which we are ready and willing to accept as true.

One thing, at any rate, stands out very clearly, and it is this. Those who accept Mr. Collins's estimate of the learning and culture of Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* (and I for one believe it to be founded on the "impregnable rock" of "his works themselves"), must be prepared to throw over altogether not only Jonson's testimony in this particular, but all the old tradition accumulated by gleaners in the field of hearsay evidence from Thomas Fuller to Nicholas Rowe. For, as "An old Scholar of Trin. Coll., Cam.," wrote in *The Speaker*, of June 11th, 1904: "We have given good-bye to tradition with its unlearned Shakespeare; we have realised that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have been a man of wide reading, of large classical knowledge, and of the highest possible culture; we have said a long farewell to Dr. Farmer's celebrated essay which was sup-

posed to have settled the question 'for all time,' and we have recognised that Jonson's 'small Latin and less Greek' must be explained away. *E pur se muove.*" The ignorant Shakespeare writing by plenary inspiration has gone to the realm of fallen leaves and outworn faces.

We recognise, then, that the traditional Shakspeare will not fit the case. The Stratford Player, as revealed to us by this evidence, cannot sustain the part of Shakespeare, the immortal poet and dramatist. As Emerson said, "We cannot marry the man to his writings." Did, then, the old writers referred to collect mere fables without foundation in fact? is the tradition nothing but a myth? and did Ben Jonson speak untruly with his lips? Or is there an explanation?

Well, to those who are not of the Stratfordian faith there is an explanation, and a fairly simple one. The tradition is true, and Jonson's statement is true. Jonson when he wrote those famous words had Shakspeare of Stratford in his mind, and Shakspeare *had* "small Latin and less Greek."<sup>1</sup> Fuller was right, "his learning *was* very little." And so of the rest. Their statements may be accepted as very good "evidence of reputation," and true, for the most part, as to Shakspeare. It is only when we come to weave the life of Shakspeare into the biography of Shakespeare that endless difficulties arise.

ὄξος τ' ἀλειφά τ' ἐγγέας ταύτῳ κύτει  
διχοστατοῦντ' ἂν οὐ φίλως προσενέποις.

Imagine Shakspeare of Stratford, as he is revealed to us by tradition (and what other evidence of him have we than tradition?)—imagine *this* man writing, as the first heir of his invention, that polished, scholarly, cultured poem *Venus and Adonis*, redolent of the Court and of aristocratic graces! Imagine *him* as the author of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*! Imagine *him*, finally, as the author of *Hamlet*!

<sup>1</sup> See p. 475 for Dr. Konrad Meier's novel interpretation of these words.

Renan has said that in the realm of the supernatural men accept as beliefs things at which, were it not for *atavism*, they would simply smile. And what is "*atavism*"? It connotes all those prejudices and tradition which a man has inherited from his forefathers. He accepts the irrational without question because it was unquestioningly accepted by his ancestors. And so it is, as it seems to me, in this Shakespearean question. We accept as articles of faith things at which, were it not for *atavism*, we should simply smile. We believe in a miracle because our fathers and grandfathers have believed in it. And the more incredible it is shown to be when the searchlight of truth and reason is turned upon it, the more closely do we grapple it to our souls with hoops of steel. The more our faith is undermined the greater becomes our indignation and our contempt for the rationalist. Here, too, *Credo quia impossibile* becomes the motto of the orthodox.

No; the man who wrote those works must, undoubtedly, have represented the highest culture of his age—must have been one familiar with courts, and accustomed to meet the greatest of his time on a footing of equality.

Shakspeare, on the other hand, was, in all probability, very much what tradition has revealed him to us. He had had but little schooling; he had "small Latin and less Greek"; but he was a good *Johannes Factotum*; he could arrange a scene, and, when necessary, "bumbast out a blank verse." Whether in truth he wrote the lines to Sir Thomas Lucy, or to old "John o'Coombe,"<sup>1</sup> or to Ben Jonson, "who was *once* one," etc., or the other doggerels ascribed to him by tradition, we do not know, but the man who wrote the epitaph on the Stratford gravestone was

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps in his monumental edition of Shakespeare's works, in sixteen volumes, quotes (Vol. I, p. 197) from the MS. Ashmole: 38, p. 180, as written not many years after the death of Shakspeare: "On John



evidently capable of such things ; just as evidently Shakespeare was not.

Here, then, is the reconciliation of tradition with the evidence afforded by "the works themselves."

Even as I write comes into print some instructive correspondence concerning the traditional Shakspeare. Dr. Furnivall sends to the *Westminster Gazette* (Oct. 31st, 1904) "some interesting extracts from the Plume MSS. at Maldon, Essex," supplied to him by "that excellent antiquary and editor, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Clark, of Great Leighs Rectory, Chelmsford." The first of these extracts (which, by the way, are for the most part very old stories often published before) is another version of the well-known yarn that Ben Jonson once began to write his own epitaph as follows : "Here lies Ben Jonson—who was *once* one," and challenged Shakspeare to complete it ; whereupon "Shakspeare took the pen from him and made this :—

Here lies Benjamin—with short hair upon his chin—  
Who, while he lived, was a slow thing—and now he's dead is  
no-thing."

Combe a covetous rich man Mr. Wm. Shak-spear wright this att his request while hee was yet liveing for his epitaphe :—

Who lies in this tombe ?

Hough, quoth the devill, tis my sone, John a'Combe. *Finis.*

But being dead, and making the poore his heiers, hee after wrightes this for his epitaphe :—

Howere he lived judge not.

John Combe shall never be forgott,

While poor hath memmorye, for hee did gather

To make the poore his issue : hee their father

As record of his tilth and seedes

Did crowne him in his latter needes. *Finis.* W. Shak."

This is a little better than the doggerels to "old John o'Coombe" quoted by Aubrey as having been composed by Shakspeare at a tavern ; viz.—

Ten in the hundred the devill allowes,

But Combes will have twelve he swears and vowes.

If any one askes who lies in this tombe

Hoh ! quoth the devill, tis my John o'Combe !

The reader may take his choice which of these poetic effusions he will ascribe to "Shakespeare" !

Now we shall have no difficulty at all in believing that Shakspeare wrote these brilliant lines. They are quite after his style. But that Shakespeare wrote them we may, I think, very reasonably doubt.

Let us pass on to the second extract, which is headed, "Ben Jonson : Shakspeare and his Father," and runs as follows : "Ben Johnson at the Christning of Shakespeare, his child, to which he was invited god father, said to him, 'Now you expect a great matter. But I will give it a Latin (latten) spoon, and you shall translate it.'" Now this remark might well have been made to Shakspeare by Ben Jonson, for it agrees remarkably with Ben's statement that Shakspeare had "small Latin and less Greek," implying as it does that the Stratford Player would have found it no easy matter to translate Latin. The remark, however, would have had no point if addressed to Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, who, as we have seen, had much Latin, and, probably, no inconsiderable amount of Greek also.

But let us proceed to the third extract, which Dr. Furnivall evidently thinks important, and even illuminating. Here it is : "He (Shakspeare) was a glover's son. Sir John Mennes saw once his old father in his shop—a merry-cheekt old man, that said, 'Will was a good honest fellow, but he *darent* have crackt a jesst with him att any time.' (*This is the only known notice of the look of Shakspeare's father, and his opinion of his gifted son, and is a great gain.*)"<sup>1</sup>

Upon this Dr. Furnivall subsequently wrote (*W. G.*, November 2nd, 1904) to say that "darent" is an "unlucky misprint," for "Plume—afterwards Archdeacon of Rochester and founder of the Plumean Professorship of Astronomy at Cambridge—wrote that the father (John Shakspeare) 'darest' (or 'durst') have so crackt his jest with his son at any time."

<sup>1</sup> The italics in this parenthesis are Dr. Furnivall's.

Now that Plume did *not* write as Dr. Furnivall suggests seems clear from a perusal of the extract itself. According to Dr. Furnivall, what Plume wrote was that *John Shakspeare said* that "Will was an honest fellow, but he durst have crackt a jest with him at any time." This, however, seems inconsequential, and is, in fact, a *non sequitur*. For why "but"? If "Will was an honest fellow" *raison de plus* that his father should not have been afraid to crack a jest with him! In fact, "darent" makes sense, and "durst" does not. But we need not much disturb ourselves about the true reading, for a correspondent, signing himself "A. G.," points out (*W. G.*, November 3rd, 1904) that "Sir John Mennes was born on March 1, 1599, and that the father of Shakspeare died in September, 1601. Hence it was at a very early age that the future knight 'saw once' John Shakspeare 'in his shop'—apparently travelling from Kent especially for that purpose, accompanied by his nurse! This, doubtless, enhances the 'great gain' of his report of 'Shakspeare's father, and his opinion of his gifted son'; since this report may be regarded as the sweetly unsophisticated impression of the innocent little toddler!"

In order that the point of this may not be lost, I must add that Dr. Furnivall has written: "I hope Dr. Andrew Clark's discovery of this unique record of the appearance of old John Shakespeare and what he said of his son will lead all folk who have the chance of seeing sixteenth and seventeenth century MSS. to read them carefully through in the hope that something about Shakespeare may occur in them. *Surely some note about his Sonnets and his dark Lady must be lying hid somewhere!*"

There could scarcely, I think, be found a much better example than the above of the futilities which are gravely trotted out by enthusiastic Stratfordians as valuable evidence to illustrate the life of Shakspeare. Plume quotes Sir John Mennes as having spoken to John Shakspeare,

and as describing the appearance of the "merry-cheekt old man." Here, says Dr. Furnivall, is "the only known notice of the look of Shakspeare's father, and his opinion of his gifted son," and this is "a great gain!" It turns out that the witness cited must have been a toddler of about two years old when he is supposed to have taken notes of his conversation with the Stratford "glover"! But Dr. Furnivall is so impressed that he trusts there will be further reading of sixteenth and seventeenth century MSS. in the hope of further rich discoveries. Surely, he thinks, there must be some note about the *Sonnets* and the *Dark Lady* lying hid somewhere! Well, it is just possible that such there may be, and that it will some day be found, but I venture to predict that it will have no reference to the son of John Shakspeare the illiterate glover or butcher or general dealer of Stratford-on-Avon.

No account of the traditional Shakspeare could be considered complete which omitted a reference to the famous Crab Tree story. I will give it in the words of Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps. "It would appear from this tradition that the poet [Shakspeare to wit] one summer's morning set out from his native town for a walk over Bardon Hill to the village of Bidford, six miles distant, a place said to have been then noted for its revelry. When he had nearly reached his destination, he happened to meet with a shepherd, and jocosely enquired of him if the Bidford drinkers were at home. The rustic, perfectly equal to the occasion, replied that the Drinkers were absent, but that he would easily find the Sippers, and that the latter might perhaps be sufficiently jolly to meet his expectations. The anticipations of the shepherd were fully realized, and Shakespeare, in bending his way home late in the evening, found an acceptable interval of rest under the branches of a crab-tree which was situated about a mile from Bidford. There is no great wonder and no special offence to record, when it is added that he was overtaken by drowsiness, and



that he did not renew the course of his journey until early in the following morning. The whole story, indeed, when viewed strictly with reference to the habits and opinions of those days, presents no features that suggest disgrace to the principal actor, or imposition on the part of the narrator. With our ancestors the ludicrous aspect of intoxication completely neutralized, or rather, to speak more correctly, excluded the thought of attendant discredit. The affair would have been merely regarded in the light of an unusually good joke, and that there is, at least, some foundation for the tale may be gathered from the fact that as early as the year 1762, the tree, then known as Shakespeare's Canopy, was regarded at Stratford-on-Avon as an object of great interest."<sup>1</sup>

Now this story of Shakspeare's getting "intoxicated" and passing the night under a crab-tree may be only a myth; just as the story of his last drinking bout with Jonson and Drayton is almost certainly an invention. The existence of the tree, a sketch of which was made by Ireland in 1792 or 1793, is certainly no evidence of the truth of the tale told by the host of the White Lion Inn to the anonymous gentleman who visited Stratford in 1762, and was taken by the innkeeper to Bidford to see "Shakespeare's Canopy."<sup>2</sup>

At the same time it would be a great mistake to omit all reference to such stories, for whether true or false, they afford, as I have already said, very good "evidence of reputation" as to the habits and character of Shakspeare. They tell us (and there is nothing else to tell us) what sort of man he was according to early belief.

Again, Manningham's story, to which I allude else-

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines*, Vol. I, p. 217; and see Vol. II, p. 325 *et seq.*, where the authorities for this tale are collected.

<sup>2</sup> *British Magazine* for June, 1762, quoted by H.-P., Vol. II, p. 326. Halliwell, in his colossal edition of Shakespeare's works, also gives a sketch of this famous tree.

where,<sup>1</sup> of how Shakspeare played a trick on Burbage like that which d'Artagnan played on "Miladi's" lover, shows the traditional Shakspeare in another light, as a man of pleasure; and it must be remembered that John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law, is a contemporary witness, for the entry in his diary bears date March 13th, 1601. The story on the face of it is by no means an improbable one, but true or false, when taken in conjunction with others, and with what we know of the history of Shakspeare's early marriage, it shows that the Stratford Player was, according to tradition, a worshipper at the twin shrines of Venus and Bacchus. The "unco' good and rigidly righteous" may hold up their hands in holy horror, and the ardent worshippers of the Stratfordian Temple may be highly indignant, that such stories should be even mentioned (though they are ready to hug fiction of any sort to their souls when it suits their purpose), but surely no impartial biographer can pass over such traditions in silence, for they are his only guide as to the estimate which was formed of the Player's character and temperament by his contemporaries. Quite in keeping with these old anecdotes is the story that Sir William d'Avenant was Shakspeare's son, which, as Mr. Lee remarks, "was at times complacently accepted by the reputed son," and of which Mr. Lee further says, "the antiquity and persistence of the scandal belie the assumption that Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] was known to his contemporaries as a man of scrupulous virtue." This story, again, may be true or false, but taken with the others, it helps to reveal to us what sort of man the traditional Shakspeare was—a boon companion, a lover of pleasure and good company, but withal (as we must not forget) a shrewd man of business, having "*rem facias rem*"

<sup>1</sup> See p. 340. This, as Mr. Lee says, is "the sole anecdote of Shakespeare [Shakspeare] which is positively known to have been recorded in his lifetime" (p. 214).

as his practical motto, a creditor not to be trifled with, and looking as sharply after the pence as after the pounds.<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, being the traditional Shakspeare, we may ask once more, Is this the sort of man to write, among other things, those adoring *Sonnets* to a beautiful boy—the young Earl of Southampton, as it seems most reasonable to believe; the young Earl of Pembroke as some maintain? Is this the man who came from Stratford with *Venus and Adonis* in his pocket, and who wrote *Love's Labour's Lost* immediately he came to town?

These questions appear to me to carry their own answer with them. That answer is an "everlasting no." And yet I know there are many men and women who find no difficulty in accepting these and other miracles. But we are not all gifted with such sublime faith.

I desire to guard against misunderstanding. I do not mean, of course, to suggest that because Shakspeare was a lover of wine and woman, therefore he could not have been the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. Such a suggestion would, indeed, be idiotic, for "wine, woman, and song" are a notorious and a time-honoured association. Still less do I write in any censorious spirit. I have too much anxiety for the preservation of my own glass house to think of throwing hypocritical stones at either the living or the dead. But what I submit is that this traditional Shakspeare, taking him as a whole, and considering his parentage, his environment, his character, and all the circumstances of his life, so far as the old witnesses reveal them to us, does not, in any way or in any measure, fulfil the conditions necessary for the sublime poet, the profound philosopher, the universal teacher, the object of the world's admiration, the writer of the *Sonnets*, the

<sup>1</sup> It must be confessed that it is not very easy to reconcile the pleasant, "gentle," easy-going, joke-loving, amatory boon-companion, with the shrewd, cautious, money-lending, money-saving man of business. Shakspeare, it seems, combined all these apparently antagonistic qualities. But here is only one contradiction the more.

author of *Adonis*, and *Lucrece*, the creator of Hamlet, and Lear, and Prospero, the cultured courtier, the erudite lawyer, the—in short, the all in all that the greatest of critics have recognised in Shakespeare, as revealed to them not by tradition, and not by biographers, but by the immortal works themselves.

But here I have to face the outraged virtue of Judge Willis. Mr. Willis is very nobly indignant at those who repeat traditional anecdotes of the dead. Historians and biographers, it seems, should never repeat hearsay. "Nothing can be more discreditable than to listen to hearsay when it affects the character of another. If the person who speaks it to the disparagement of another professes to speak of his own knowledge, his statement should never be accepted, without an opportunity being afforded for denial or explanation. This conduct is due to the living; in respect of the dead, it is atrocious to accept or repeat to their injury second-hand gossip, or even direct statements, which they have not had the opportunity of denying or explaining."<sup>1</sup>

Noble sentiments! They swell with conscious virtue in every line. But what is the unfortunate historian or biographer to do when he is dealing with men who have been dead some hundreds of years? What evidence has he to go upon if he is to reject all "hearsay"? The usual method has been to collect records and traditions, to examine them critically, having regard to their source, their date, and other matters necessary to be taken into consideration, and to form such judgment as may be possible as to their probable truth and historical value. But this will not do for the lofty soul of Judge Willis—at any rate, where Shakspeare is concerned! "Nothing can be more discreditable than to listen to hearsay, when it affects the character" of a living person, and "in respect of the dead, it is atrocious." What, then, is to be done?

<sup>1</sup> Prefatory note to Judge Willis's Mock Trial.



Mr. Willis has a plan of his own, and nothing could be simpler. You have only to put the dead witnesses into the box and examine them *vivâ* (?*mortuâ*) *voce*, and allow (under restrictions) certain facilities for friendly cross-examination, and there you are! You then have their direct personal statements—no atrocious “hearsay.” And Mr. Willis,

with a smile that is childlike and bland,

really believes, or affects to believe, that this mock trial, “although imaginary, is a real test”! In pursuance of this marvellous method of “judicial investigation,” he proceeds to call “spirits from the vasty deep” as witnesses in the case, merely to put into their mouths what he wants them to say, while he is careful to prevent his imaginary counsel on the other side from putting any effective questions in the so-called cross-examination. This strikes me as being about the most childish and futile method of dealing with a great question that can possibly be conceived.

Mr. Willis, for example, calls Edward Blount, one of the publishers of the First Folio, to say, amongst other things, that he has “seen Shakespeare [meaning the player] in conversation with the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Montgomery.” Thus we have direct evidence that the Stratford actor was on terms of personal intimacy with these great noblemen, and Mr. Lee’s assertion to the contrary as regards Pembroke<sup>1</sup> is at once scattered to the winds. But why should we stop there? Why, when he was about it, did not Mr. Willis make the witness produce a bundle of correspondence between “Shakespeare” and these two noble Earls, or the Earl of Southampton, or Essex, or any others of the great men of his time with whom it is assumed that he was so intimate, and as to whom some shreds of connecting testimony would be so extremely valuable? Such “evidence” (save the mark!) would have been just as useful—and just as childish.

<sup>1</sup> See Lee’s *Life*, Appendix VII.

Blount is further made to say that when Heminge and Condell brought him the manuscripts, "I saw I had in my hands a treasure," but nevertheless, says the supposed witness, "I did not preserve these priceless papers which the two players professed to have received from him (Shakespeare) absolute in their numbers as he conceived them."<sup>1</sup> "I did not see any reason for keeping them," complacently observes the complaisant phantom.

Heminge and Condell are made to swear that they undertook their editorial work without any remuneration at all, and without any thought of such a thing, just as "the authors of the four gospels, the finest biographies in the world, received nothing for them!" This analogy is mightily provocative of a reply; but it is perhaps sufficient to say *nil agit exemplum litem quod lite resolvit*.

William Jaggard is called to say "I never heard a doubt cast on Shakespeare being the author of the plays and poems printed and published in his lifetime." Yet Jaggard was himself the piratical printer who published another man's work as Shakespeare's in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Of course, no question as to this is allowed to be put in cross-examination.<sup>2</sup>

Ben Jonson is called to swear that he had nothing whatever to do with the writing of the Players' Preface to the Folio, though Malone long ago claimed to have established "beyond a doubt" that "every word of the first half of this address to the reader, which is signed with the names of John Heminge and Henry Condell, was written by Ben Jonson."<sup>3</sup> Here, again, none of the questions suggested by

<sup>1</sup> I deal further with this absurd fiction in chap. IX.

<sup>2</sup> I wrote this criticism in *The Westminster Review* of February, 1903. A very effective cross-examination of William Jaggard was supplied by Mr. George Stronach in *Baconiana* of April, 1903. Jaggard died before the Folio was licensed or issued, and four years before the date (1627) at which Mr. Willis makes him give "evidence"!

<sup>3</sup> See *Malone's Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 663, ed. 1821, and *infra.*, p. 264.

Malone's able and, as it seems to me, conclusive criticism are put to old Ben, though they might, according to the common saying of the courts, have "knocked the witness into a cocked-hat!"

Heminge is made to say that the Folio is the final, best, and perfected text of Shakespeare. "The same with Hamlet; there are important portions in the Folio, not in the quartos." Not a word about that magnificent "soliloquy on reason and resolution," as Mr. Swinburne calls it, where "the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height, and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth," and which, nevertheless, is only to be found in the quartos. Mr. Willis would really seem to have imperfectly studied his brief here.

When Bacon's name is mentioned, as that of the possible author, the whole court is convulsed with laughter, and the judge has to retire for some minutes. This is Mr. Willis's idea of "judicial investigation." It would be equally simple to make the judge and the whole court roar with laughter at the idea of the "Stratford rustic" having written the *Plays* and *Poems*. Now this, certainly, is not argument, neither is it at all calculated to convert opponents. We can only conclude, therefore, that Mr. Willis aspires merely to preach to the already converted.<sup>1</sup> He tells us that when he was reading his paper in the Inner Temple Hall some of his hearers supposed he was reading the report of a trial which had actually taken place, and asked for an inspection of the MS. they thought he had discovered! Of a truth there must be many simple, ingenuous youths—many Slenders—in the Temple nowadays! The case, too, appears to have been tried by Mr. Justice Shallow.

I have, perhaps, wasted too much time over this non-

<sup>1</sup> Yet Mr. C. E. Hughes has thought it worth while to cite this foolish passage in his *Praise of Shakespeare*, to which Mr. Lee has contributed a preface.

sense, but I thought it well to cite it as an example of the sort of stuff which does duty for argument among a certain class of Stratfordian enthusiasts. I certainly prefer the "hearsay" of early tradition to Mr. Willis's brand-new method of procuring direct evidence to order. "Is this *law*?" once asked the Duke of Wellington in a Court of Justice. "Oh! Yes, your Grace," was the reply. "You may depend upon it that everything you hear *here* is law." "Hum!" said the Duke. "*Damned nonsense*"!



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PORTRAITS OF "SHAKESPEARE"

WHEN we ask what was the appearance of Shakspeare of Stratford, and what sort of features had nature endowed him withal, we are again forcibly reminded of Mr. Lee's superb bit of bluff to the effect that we have far more "biographical detail" in the case of Shakspeare than in that of any poet contemporary with him, which, if it means anything at all to the purpose, must mean that we know more about "the man from Stratford" than about any poet of Elizabethan times. We turn again to the comparison with Ben Jonson. I have never heard it suggested that Jonson's portrait by Gerard Honthorst is either spurious or fails to give us a true likeness of the original. Neither have I heard any similar doubts cast upon the miniature portrait of Ben in the royal library at Windsor Castle. Moreover, when we compare these two we see that they are undoubtedly portraits of the same man. In fact, we feel that we know, without any reasonable doubt, what manner of man Jonson was in appearance; just as his voluminous writings, and especially his numerous personal references to himself, his friends, patrons, and acquaintances, coupled with the many references to him in the contemporary writings of others, enable us to know, beyond reasonable doubt, what manner of man he was in the matter of character and temperament, and what sort of life he led.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Octavius Gilchrist writes (Colonel Cunningham's Edition of *Gifford's Jonson*, Vol. I, p. CCLXXII): "The regret which is felt by every lover of the

But who will venture to say that he knows what Shakspeare was in the matter of personal appearance? Well, no doubt there are some enthusiasts who will assert that they know perfectly well; but it will be found that their asserted knowledge is really an example of that faith which is said to become "a passionate intuition," the strength whereof is in inverse proportion to the evidence on which it is supposed to rest. It is another instance of that convenient "illative sense" which enables some favoured mortals to know just what they want to know without being put to the trouble of searching for evidence or of finding reasons for the faith that is in them.

In Shakspeare's case there is no lack of "counterfeit presentments," but they labour under the disadvantage that none of them can be said to be beyond suspicion, and that they all differ so widely, one from the other, as to suggest that a different model posed for each. We have only to compare the Stratford bust, the so-called "Droeshout original," the "Ely Palace" portrait, and the "Chandos" portrait, to say nothing of the terra-cotta bust in the possession of the Garrick Club, and the alleged "death-mask," to see at once the truth of this statement, unless, indeed, we look through glasses of a very pronounced Stratfordian colour, in which case we shall, no doubt, see anything that we desire to see.<sup>1</sup>

drama that no painting of Shakspeare has been authenticated, has no existence in the case of his friend. While the rude graver of Droeshout preserves in the title-page of the First Folio the only genuine resemblance of Shakspeare, numerous portraits of Jonson remain to which no suspicion attaches. Their age, the excellence of their execution, their general correspondence with one another, concurring with their similarity to Vaughan's curious engraving, all combine to establish their general authenticity. Ben does not appear to have felt any reluctance at having his features conveyed to posterity, they were such as he needed not to be ashamed of—nor is it likely from his extensive attachments, even if he had felt this reserve, that the partiality of friendship should not have triumphed over his scruples. We know, however, that he submitted to the pallet." See further *ubi cit.*

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Grosart in his Introduction to Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr* (p. 63, note) tells a story of a certain Marquis who asked, "Can I doubt of the

The fact is, that just as the utter dearth of information concerning Shakspeare tempted unprincipled men to deceive the public by the forgery of documents purporting to supply new facts—such as John Jordan's fabrications, Ireland's wholesale forgeries, and the numerous forgeries promulgated by John Payne Collier—so the absence of any authentic portrait of Shakspeare prompted needy and unprincipled artists to supply the public demand, and their own necessities at the same time, by fabricating likenesses of "the immortal bard"—all of them, of course of undoubtedly contemporaneous date!

The following extract is from Mr. John Corbin's recently published book, *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*. Mr. Corbin, I may add, is a Stratfordian, and writes to advocate the claims of the Ely Palace portrait:—

"For many decades the Director of the National Portrait Gallery was asked on an average of rather more than once a year to buy a presentment of the great dramatist, a counterfeit presentment, usually at an exorbitant price, and to this day, the Director informs me, the supply continues. The origin of these portraits is easily accounted for. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, as is well known, the national interest in Shakespeare became feverish, and broke out in forgeries, of which those of the notorious Ireland are the most memorable. One of the plague-sores of this unwholesome time was the manufacture of portraits of Shakespeare, 'mock originals,' as their fabricators called them, which bade fair to become one of the permanent products of England. Literally dozens of them are known to have been circulated. In the case of one Zincke and one Holder, the method of manufacture was laid bare. Any old painting from a

existence of Homer when I possess his bust and portrait?" Similarly, certain persons seem to ask to-day, "Can I doubt as to the authorship of the Plays when I can see the bust at Stratford, and as many portraits of Shakespeare as I desire?"

junk-shop, an antique dancing master, an elderly lady in cap and blue ribbons, a Dutch admiral, was bought for a few shillings and deftly furnished forth with a set of new features, ostensibly those of the great poet. These were, of course, painted over the original portrait in a manner more or less archaic, and artificially blackened with smoke, so as to seem a part of the original painting. Wivell has a curious passage with regard to the smoking of a mock original.<sup>1</sup> Very often a story was concocted connecting the 'original' with Shakespeare's family, and pasted on the back in pseudo-Elizabethan script. Life portraits thus manufactured sold to the delighted connoisseur for prices from three to six pounds, the smallness of which, no doubt, contributed to the purchaser's delight, as well as to his belief in the keenness of his connoisseurship. The most amusing circumstance with regard to these mock originals, and at the same time the circumstance most pertinent to the present discussion, is that as soon as a connoisseur bought one of them he fell hopelessly beneath its spell. Both Zincke and Holder, when suffering from lapses into honesty, found the utmost difficulty in convincing the purchaser that there was a shadow of doubt as to the authenticity of an 'original,' such is the magic of the worship of Shakespeare when joined with the pride of connoisseurship. The old lady became the property of the French actor Talma, who enshrined it in a costly frame and displayed it to his admiring friends. Charles Lamb it is said—and one scarcely knows whether to laugh or to weep—fell down on his knees and kissed it. The story of the Dutch admiral, which is preserved in a written confession of the forger, is pure farce. Having picked the portrait up for five shillings, Holder repainted it, and sold it to a print-seller, named Dunford, for four pounds ten shillings. Dunford, waxing enthusiastic over his find, induced

<sup>1</sup> See Abraham Wivell on Shakespeare's Portraits (1827). See also James Boaden on the same subject (1824).



literally hundreds of 'connoisseurs' to inspect it, and they all seem to have acknowledged its great value." Dunford, who declared that Sir Thomas Lawrence, Benjamin West, "and four hundred competent judges" had recognised the portrait as authentic, himself sold it for one hundred guineas. "When the portrait was exposed as a fraud, Sir Thomas Lawrence is said to have denied that he had vouched for its authenticity; but it is evident that neither he nor Benjamin West discovered the imposture when they examined the portrait—a fact that throws some little light on the value of the critical opinion of celebrated painters, even when they are presidents of the Royal Academy. In his confession Holder laughs somewhat more than in his sleeve, and remarks that the crowd of connoisseurs were 'blind altogether'. . . . Holder had an admirable craftsman's pride in his art. The Dutch admiral Shakespeare he seems to have regarded as a poor thing, though his own; but he records with pride: 'I afterwards made another Shakespeare worth a score such as the above.' The fate of this worthy Shakespeare is, unhappily, not recorded. The known dozens of mock originals cast a gloom over the prospect of any portrait subsequently brought to light; but this mock original has a separate claim upon the imagination. The more one is convinced that any particular portrait is an original, and no mock, the greater the lurking terror of Holder's 'other Shakespeare,' and in view of it—or in the lack of a view of it—we shall not be justified in pursuing any but the most cautious and scientific mode of investigation."

This "mock original" in which Holder took such pride for all we know is now one of those which adorn the Stratford shrine. But this story of the fabrication of Shakespeare "originals" teaches us another lesson besides that of caution in dealing with alleged portraits of "the great dramatist." Why was it that these ingenious artificers set to work to make these counterfeit present-

ments? And why, when made, did they differ so much among themselves? The reason was that, except the Stratford bust and the Droeshout engraving in the Folio, the artists had really nothing to work upon. There were portraits of Ben Jonson, there were portraits of the actors Alleyn and Burbage, there was a portrait of Mr. Willis's friend, Richard Sibbs, so fond of bringing "legal phraseology into his sermons," and many engravings thereof;<sup>1</sup> but of "Shakespeare" there was really no portrait at all. Mr. Corbin, indeed, finds "evidence of the currency of Shakespeare's portrait during his lifetime" in a well-known passage in *The Return from Parnassus*, where Gullio, after quoting from the opening stanza of *Venus and Adonis*, exclaims: "O sweet Mr. Shakespeare, I'll have his picture in my study at the Courte!" Mr. Corbin tells us that when he showed this passage "to Mr. Sidney Colvin, keeper of the Prints in the British Museum, he remarked that it would almost indicate the currency of prints of Shakespeare." Here I cannot help suspecting that the writer's memory must be somewhat at fault. He speaks as though he introduced this passage to the notice of Mr. Sidney Colvin for the first time, whereas that very learned scholar must of course have been perfectly familiar with words so often quoted from a work which he had doubtless many times perused. Nor can I think that Mr. Colvin would have considered the words cited as either "almost," or at all indicating the currency of prints of Shakespeare in his lifetime, though, possibly, he laid great emphasis on the useful word *almost*! The fool Gullio, revelling in the very luxurious imagery of the poem, says he really must have "sweet Mr. Shakespeare's" picture in his "study at the Court." Gullio is a ridiculous impostor, and his "study at the Court," as the dramatist makes us clearly understand, is not supposed to have any existence except in his

<sup>1</sup> See p. 394. Sibbs's portrait was four times engraved. The portrait of Burbage, said to be by himself, and the fine portrait of Alleyn are in the Dulwich Gallery.

own imagination. To make an impression on his hearers this pretentious vapourer, affecting rapture at the verses quoted, boasts that he will have the poet's "picture," but to take this as proof that such pictures were actually in existence at the time is merely "to give to airy nothings a local habitation," and to find "evidence" in clouds and soap bubbles.

But we have, at any rate, the Droeshout engraving and the Stratford bust. These two have always been cited as undoubtedly authentic portraits of Shakespeare. Thus Mr. Corbin writes (p. 14): "In judging a portrait without history two tests are indispensable. It must resemble one or both of the two portraits of Shakespeare which we know to have been approved by his contemporaries—the Droeshout engraving and the bust at Stratford—and it must be demonstrably painted in the manner in vogue during Shakespeare's life." But here our difficulties at once begin. Except when viewed through those Stratfordian glasses which make everything appear as the worshipper desires it to appear, the bust and the engraving really bear no resemblance the one to the other. Harken first unto Mr. Sidney Lee: "Only two extant portraits are *positively known*<sup>1</sup> to have been produced within a short period after his death. These are the bust in Stratford Church and the frontispiece to the folio of 1623. Each is an inartistic attempt at posthumous likeness. There is considerable discrepancy between the two; their main points of resemblance are *the baldness on the top of the head*, and the fulness of the hair about the ears."

Well, two bald men always resemble each other so far as their baldness is concerned, and since a great many men are bald on the top of the head there is no lack of resemblances to this extent. Let us cheerfully admit

<sup>1</sup> My italics. We shall see further as to this with regard to the bust presently.

baldness and fulness of the hair about the ears as the main points of resemblance." But when one comes to look at the features, which after all are generally considered the important things in a portrait, the resemblance is seen to vanish into "thin air." I assure the reader that no pun is intended; the words were written *currente calamo!* Look at the bust. "It is," says Mr. Lee, "a rudely carved specimen of mortuary sculpture. There are marks about the forehead and ears which suggest that the face was fashioned from a death mask,<sup>1</sup> but the workmanship is at all points clumsy. The round face and eyes present a heavy unintellectual expression." This unhappy bust is supposed to have been the work of Gerard Johnson or Janssen, "who was," as Mr. Lee says, "a Dutch stonemason or tomb-maker settled in Southwark."<sup>2</sup> "Unfortunately," writes Mr. Corbin, "he seems scarcely to have deserved his very modest title of 'tomb-maker.' *The face of the bust is even cruder in modelling, if possible, than that of the print is in draughtsmanship.*" These, be it remembered, are the words of an ardent Stratfordian, and, I believe, an authority on portraiture and sculpture. Mr. Corbin goes on to point out what is, indeed, evident to the most casual observer, viz. that the bust resembles nothing that ever was on sea or land, for in the normal face the hair begins at the base of the nose, often in the very nostrils, and this is notably the case in the Droeshout engraving. In the bust there is a wide and very ugly interval." This is well shown in Mr. Corbin's engraving of the mask taken from the bust (facing p. 26 of his book), though Mr. Lee's frontispiece of the Stratford monument fails to reveal it. The bust, in fact, shows what appears to be an abnormal upper lip,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is rather amusing in the light of subsequent investigations.

<sup>2</sup> It is not a little extraordinary that nothing should be known as to how the monument came to be erected. Who erected it, and when?

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Spielmann says that this is appearance only, but Sir F. Chantrey, who examined the bust carefully, spoke to the Rev. William Harness of "the extraordinary length of the upper lip."



with a moustache stretched across it, but leaving, as Mr. Corbin says, a wide and ugly interval between the hair and the nose (a thing for which we search natural humanity in vain), and also a narrow but very distinct interval between the hair and the upper lip.<sup>1</sup>

The conditions which Mr. Corbin lays down as "indispensable tests" in judging of a Shakespeare portrait are then, as he admits, "fraught with difficulty." "For," says he, "the two authentic portraits obviously represent Shakespeare at widely different periods; they are both rude in technique, and have been impaired by accident or clumsy alteration."

As for the Droeshout engraving I can never understand how any unprejudiced man, with a sense of humour, can look upon it without being tempted to irreverent laughter. It is not only that it is, as Mr. Corbin points out, altogether out of drawing; not only is the head preternaturally large for the body; not only is it quaintly suggestive of an unduly deferred razor; but it looks at one with a peculiar expression of sheepish oafishness which is irresistibly comic. Well indeed might Jonson advise the reader "if he wants to find the real Shakespeare," as Mr. Corbin excellently puts it, "to turn to the plays," to look "not on his picture, but his book."<sup>2</sup>

To return to the bust, with its expression of heavy

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Spielmann thinks that this "shaven space between the nose and moustache, and between moustache and lip" is merely a "long-prevailing fashion carried to an extreme," and mentions other portraits where the same thing may be observed. If this be so, it is very curious that none of the other (supposed) portraits of Shakespeare exhibit the same "fashion." Had he adopted it "for this occasion only"?

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Stopes, in the article subsequently referred to (*Monthly Review* April, 1904), speaks of "the inartistically designed, and coarsely executed engraving of Droeshout," and adds that in the reproduction which appeared as frontispiece to Shakespeare's Poems in 1640, the engraver Marshall "increased the inanity of the expression." "Inanity" is certainly the right word for that particular expression of face (see further, as to this quaint engraving, p. 467. *et seq.*).

stupidity. "It seems strange, no doubt, according to modern ideas," says Mr. Corbin, "that Shakespeare's family should have accepted so imperfect a likeness; but here as elsewhere modern ideas are perhaps misleading. In days when the stone for the monument had probably to be carted the hundred and more miles from London, a fraction of an inch might not have been so grave a consideration even on a poet's nose"! Mr. Corbin, of course, quotes Leonard Digges's stilted lines once more,

Thy workes, by which out-live  
Thy tombe, thy name must when that stone is rent  
And Time dissolves thy Stratford monument,

as making it certain that the present monument was in existence in 1623, and concludes that "crude as the bust is, it is to be regarded as the presentment of the Shakespeare who in 1616 was familiar to Stratford-on-Avon."

Yet, as Mrs. Stopes says (*Monthly Review*, April, 1904), "Every one who approaches the Stratford bust is more disappointed in it, as a revelation of the poet, than even in the crude lines of Droeshout. There is an entire lack of the faintest suggestion of poetic or spiritual inspiration in its plump earthliness."

Here, however, we are brought face to face with one of those extraordinary surprises which are always meeting us in this marvellous Shakespearean "biography." It seems absolutely certain that this Stratford bust, the Mecca-stone of so many pilgrimages, and to which so many worshippers have bowed the knee in rapt adoration, is in reality not the original bust at all; neither is the monument which now stands at Stratford the original monument. This is surprising enough, but more surprising still is it that nearly all the Shakespearean critics, biographers, and general rum-magers should have overlooked, or ignored, the fact till it was pointed out to them by Mrs. Charlotte C. Stopes in the *Monthly Review* of 1904.

The fact is that the earliest representation of the Shakespeare bust and monument is to be found in Sir William Dugdale's great *History of the Antiquities of Warwickshire*, and both bust and monument as depicted therein differ widely in every important particular from the bust and monument of the present day!

Mrs. Stopes, in the article referred to, gives a reproduction of Dugdale's engraving of the monument, and also an enlargement of the bust as represented in his work.<sup>1</sup> The whole thing is changed. Instead of the heavy, stupid-looking man, holding the pen and paper which the designer has put into his hands, "after the manner of the schoolboy who wrote under his drawing of something on four legs, 'this is a horse,'" we see a melancholy-looking individual with hollow cheeks. "The moustache drops down softly and naturally instead of perking upwards, there is no mantle on the shoulders, no pen in the hand, no cushioned desk." Moreover, "the arms are bent awkwardly, the hands are laid stiffly, palms downward on a large cushion, suspiciously resembling a *wool-sack*."<sup>2</sup>

Now, Dugdale, according to Mrs. Stopes, "seems, judging from the notes of his diary, to have prepared his work in the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon about 1636, though the publication was delayed by the civil wars for twenty years." From what we know of him, and from a comparison of other representations given in his work with existing monuments, we may be confident that he has reproduced the Shakespeare bust, as it was in his

<sup>1</sup> I have compared these with the engraving in an extremely well-preserved copy of Dugdale's *Antiquities*, and find that they are quite accurate. (See Frontispiece.)

<sup>2</sup> This is quite true, but Mrs. Stopes, it is to be remembered, is very ardently anti-Baconian! It is rather curious, I may add, that the "Felton" portrait, which has been hotly claimed by some as an "original," is the only one of the numerous "Shakespeare portraits" in which "the moustache grows downwards," as does that shown in Dugdale's engraving. It is also very curious that Mr. Spielmann says nothing about this engraving. See his essay in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 397, as to the "Felton" portrait.

time, with, at any rate, as Mrs. Stopes says, "some degree of fidelity." But he has placed an entirely different god in the shrine. I can see no resemblance whatever between the melancholy man depicted by him and any of the (so-called) portraits of Shakespeare, except in the high forehead (which, however, is not exaggerated as in the Droeshout engraving), and in "the fulness of the hair about the ears," which is certainly not a very peculiar characteristic for a man of Elizabethan times. His hands, with extended fingers, rest lovingly on "the woolsack," as if pressing it towards him, but "melancholy marked him for her own" might well have been the inscription for the stone below.

Of this original bust Mrs. Stopes writes, "the unsatisfactory, or rather, in some aspects, the satisfactory fact is, that it *differs in all important details from the bust as it appears now*" (original italics).<sup>1</sup>

One cannot help smiling as one thinks of all the ingenious efforts made by Mr. Corbin and others to show that the present bust (which really bears not the faintest resemblance to Dugdale's) does not so greatly differ from the Droeshout engraving. Mrs. Stopes, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> The entire monument as depicted by Dugdale differs in almost every detail from the present one. (See the engravings in Mrs. Stopes's article.) She omits to state that the engraving in Dugdale is by Hollar; but, as she observes, it is "open to the interpretation that Dugdale or his draughtsman was careless and inexact in details." I should certainly suspect that the little sitting figures, e.g. (holding spade and hour-glass) are by no means exact copies of the originals. They are placed as no monumental sculptor would be likely to place them. But unless Hollar was a fraud and devised an effigy of his own "out of his inner consciousness," and Dugdale was so untrustworthy as to accept it, the bust in his time must have been entirely different from what it is now. Mere carelessness or inaccuracy will certainly not account for the discrepancy. Halliwell, in his *Works of Shakespeare* (16 vols., 1853), writes that this engraving "is evidently too inaccurate to be of any authority; the probability being that it was not taken from the monument itself, and a comparison of it with Vertue's drawing, published in Pope's edition of Shakespeare, 1725, evidently shows that the details were fanciful." But this is mere assertion, and the suggested comparison proves nothing at all, nor does it raise any presumption against Hollar's or Dugdale's accuracy or honesty.



thinks that Dugdale's presentment "is not unlike an older Droeshout," but it requires a vast amount of imagination to detect any likeness whatever between the Folio engraving and Dugdale's melancholy man. But Mrs. Stopes is certainly not deficient in imagination. She imagines that the Dugdale picture "shows us the tired creator of poems, exhausted from lack of sleep, 'Nature's sweet restorer,' weary of the bustling London life, who had returned as soon as possible to seek rest at home among his own people." Well, well, it is indeed marvellous what imagination can do! I have never heard it suggested, however, that the Stratford Player, "William the Conqueror," was so exhausted by his effort as a "creator of poems" that he suffered from want of sleep; but in this suggestion the lady sees "something biographical." Well, almost any freak of the imagination does duty as "biography" where Shakespeare is concerned; but if I should be told that Dugdale's effigy represented an elderly farmer deploring an exceptionally bad harvest, "I should not feel it to be strange"! Neither should I feel it at all strange if I were

In his *Outlines* Halliwell simply ignores Dugdale. His engraving was doubtless too inconvenient to be brought to public notice! (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 258.) Mrs. Stopes writes: "In order to compare his work in other examples, I asked a friend to take a photograph of Sir Thomas Lucy's tomb, as pictured in Dugdale, and another from the original, which has been very little restored since it was sculptured in Shakespeare's time. He took that from the book, but found that the tomb itself was in a bad light for photography, and sent me instead a pencil outline. This supports Dugdale's rendering of important details, though he failed somewhat, naturally, in catching the expression. It allows us to believe that he reproduced the Shakespeare's bust with some degree of fidelity." On the whole, I see no reason at all why we should doubt the substantial accuracy of Dugdale's figure. It holds the field as the representation of the Stratford bust as it was in its original form. Dr. Whitaker has told us that Dugdale's "scrupulous accuracy, united with stubborn integrity," has elevated his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* "to the rank of legal evidence." Mr. Spielmann quotes this pronouncement only to dissent from it, but he supplies us with no proof of Dugdale's inaccuracy. Certainly the general opinion hitherto has been that of Dr. Whitaker. Anyhow, it is impossible to suppose that Hollar would have drawn and that Dugdale would have published a mere travesty of the Stratford Monument.

told that it was the presentment of a philosopher and Lord Chancellor, who had fallen from high estate and had recognised that all things are but vanity!

But when, we may well ask, was this alteration made? When was the god in the shrine thus tampered with? Mrs. Stopes thinks the culprit was John Ward, the grandfather of Mrs. Siddons, who "was in Stratford in 1746, and gave the whole proceeds of a representation of *Othello* in the Town Hall on September 8 towards the restoration of Shakespeare's tomb. Orders were given to 'beautify' as well as to repair it. We are left altogether in the dark as to the degree of decay and the amount of reconstruction, but that it was fundamental seems evident." This may be so, but we have no evidence to prove that the substitution of the new for the old monument was not done even before this date.

Another question suggests itself. Why was the alteration made? Was Dugdale's bust thought to bear too much resemblance to one who was not Shakspeare of Stratford? Or was it thought that the presence of the "woolsack" might be taken as indicating that Shakspeare of Stratford was indebted for support to a certain Lord Chancellor? Or what was the reason that operated to induce these vandals to destroy the old monument, and to erect a brand new one, altered in every particular (always excepting the turned-down collars, and the buttons down the centre of the jerkin), in substitution for it? It is impossible to find the answer, but once more, one smiles (rather sadly this time) to find that of "the two authentic portraits" of Shakespeare, as Mr. Corbin and so many others call the present bust and the Droeshout engraving, one at any rate is now shown not to be authentic at all, leaving the Stratfordians to find such comfort as they can in the "inanity" of the Droeshout print, unless indeed they are content to recognise a new idol, of an entirely new type, in Dugdale's melancholy figure.

And now a word as to the other so-called portraits of "the immortal bard." Of these the one which is now most favoured by the orthodox is that which is generally known as the "Flower portrait," because the theory has been put forward that this is the original painting from which Martin Droeshout executed his engraving. "As recently as 1892," writes Mr. Lee (p. 236), "Mr. Edgar Flower, of Stratford-on-Avon, discovered in the possession of Mr. C. Clements, a private gentleman with artistic tastes, residing at Peckham Rye, a portrait alleged to represent Shakespeare. . . . Mr. Clements purchased the portrait of an obscure dealer about 1840, and knew nothing of its history, beyond what he set down on a slip of paper when he acquired it." In the upper left-hand corner the picture bears, in *cursive characters*, the inscription "Willm Shakespeare 1609." On the death of Mr. Clements in 1895, it was purchased by Mrs. Charles Flower, and was presented to the Memorial Picture Gallery at Stratford, where it now hangs.

Mr. Sidney Lee, in the 1898 edition of his *Life of William Shakespeare*, wrote of this portrait: "Connoisseurs, including Sir Edward Poynter, Mr. Sidney Colvin, and Mr. Lionel Cust, have almost unreservedly pronounced the picture to be anterior in date to the engraving, and they have reached the conclusion that in all probability Martin Droeshout directly based his work upon the painting." But, writes Mr. Corbin (p. 73 of the work referred to), "it so happened that I had a letter from Sir E. J. Poynter expressing his opinion directly opposite to that Mr. Lee attributed to him, and also notes of the conversation in which Mr. Colvin animadverted on the 'cursive' inscription, and said that he was inclined to think the portrait an early copy of the engraving. These I brought to Mr. Lee's notice. In the library edition of his *Life*, published in 1899, the so-called Droeshout original was replaced as frontispiece by a reproduction

in colours of the Stratford bust, and Sir E. J. Poynter was omitted from the list of connoisseurs in favour of the portrait." Mr. Sidney Colvin and Mr. Lionel Cust are, however, still quoted as "almost unreservedly" pronouncing the picture to be "anterior in date to the engraving."<sup>1</sup> But Mr. Corbin writes: (p. 62) "In September, 1896, I had an interview with Mr. Sidney Colvin at the British Museum. My notes of this interview are to the effect that, though he assigned the portrait to a very early date, perhaps the first half of the seventeenth century, he regarded it as a very careful copy of the print!" In an article published in *Harper's Magazine* for May, 1897, the same writer tells us that "Sir Charles Robinson, his Majesty's Surveyor of Pictures, pointed out that the inscription is in cursive characters. The custom at that period was to use capitals. Mr. Sidney Colvin, Keeper of Prints in the British Museum, told me later that this cursive inscription was unique in his experience."<sup>2</sup> Then in his book (p. 74) he writes, alluding to Mr. Lee's citation of Mr. Colvin as an authority in favour of the portrait, "with regard to Mr. Colvin's opinions there are thus two second-hand reports, which are as nearly contradictory as possible. In 1898, and again in 1901, I tried to secure his written statement of them; but while he has made no correction in the words my notes attribute to him, he is apparently—and considering the personal turn the dis-

<sup>1</sup> Our faith in "connoisseurs," including the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, is, alas, not a little shaken, when we find it asserted, on excellent authority, that a spurious portrait of Charlotte Brontë, altogether unlike the supposed original, has been admitted into that gallery. If such an egregious error can be committed in the case of a person whom some still living can remember, what may not be done in the case of a seventeenth-century portrait—especially where the features of the alleged original are, really, altogether unknown to us?

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Corbin repeats these statements in his book (p. 63) and adds, "The custom at that period was to use block letters, such as we find in the Ely Palace portrait," but he says (p. 78) "it would be more accurate to say that the characters are what printers call lower-case italics," but they "are none the less suspicious on that account."



cussion has taken, not unnaturally—unwilling to be drawn into it. The opinion Mr. Lee attributes to him accordingly, that the portrait is anterior in date to the engraving, is not, at least in one very important meaning of the word, ‘unreserved.’”

As to Mr. Cust, Mr. Corbin tells us that in 1896 he (Corbin) obtained from him a written statement as follows: “In spite of its being painted over another portrait, I still regard (the Droeshout painting) as a picture of the early seventeenth century. I cannot pledge myself to its having *preceded* the Droeshout engraving, although my inclination is to think so. I feel quite convinced that it is not one of the countless forgeries with which the world is perpetually being dosed. The portrait agrees with the engraving, and may therefore be accepted as a portrait of Shakespeare. . . . Whether done during his lifetime or not must remain a matter of uncertainty. It is not the work of a good painter.” Upon this Mr. Corbin comments: “Few documents have ever come to my notice which indicate more clearly the tragic difference between the inclination to believe and belief.” Mr. Cust’s opinion certainly does not read much like what Mr. Lee calls an “almost unreserved” pronouncement that the picture is “anterior in date to the engraving”!

It will have been noticed that Mr. Cust speaks of the picture as “being painted over another portrait.” This important fact was discovered by Sir Charles Robinson, His Majesty’s Surveyor of Pictures and Superintendent of the Art Collections of the South Kensington Museum. As Mr. Corbin writes: “The existence of an underlying portrait has never been denied, and at once calls up the shades of Zincke and Holder,” and he adds (p. 69): “Holder and Zincke sold dozens of counterfeit presentments beside which this is Hyperion to a satyr.” Also “the fact remains that the characters in which the inscrip-

tion is written, as has been already stated, are so suspicious that they have been ruled out of the case."

Now Mr. Lee tells us nothing about these suspicious "cursive letters"; does not even mention the fact that the picture is painted over an underlying portrait; has, as Mr. Corbin shows, wrongly cited Sir Edward Poynter as an authority in favour of the portrait being the "Droeshout Original"; and says not a word of the great weight of opinion on the other side. It is an excellent example of the judicial spirit in which Mr. Lee writes.

What are the opinions on the other side? Sir Charles Robinson wrote (*Times*, December 3rd, 1898), saying that the members of the Society of Antiquaries were at first strongly inclined to believe in the portrait, as no doubt they were, for, of course, it would be a grand thing to find the original of the Droeshout engraving! "But this was in the evening, after dinner, when people are often inclined to see things in the most favourable light. . . . A reinspection, however, in the full light of day threw quite a different complexion on the matter. It was then soon perceived that the picture was of precisely the same class as the majority of the other *soi-disant* Shakespeare portraits, that is to say, it was substantially an ancient sixteenth or seventeenth-century portrait, painted in oil on panel, which had been fraudulently repainted and vamped up in various ways—metamorphosed, in fact, into a portrait of the great dramatist, probably towards the end of the last or the beginning of the present century. Apparently the original portrait was that of a lady, for the leading forms and details of the work could still be discerned in many places by a practised eye piercing through the fraudulent envelope. There was, moreover, one other damning circumstance. The picture was painted on a substantial white-wood panel, put together in the Italian manner, an almost certain indication that the original work was that of an Italian master, doubtless

working in his own country. Had it been a genuine contemporary portrait of Shakespeare, on the other hand, painted in this country, the material on which it was executed would just as certainly have been a thin oak panel, simply glued up in the usual English manner of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."

Here it must be noted that the allegation as to the "white-wood panel" was promptly contradicted by Mr. G. R. M. Murray, of the Botanical Department of the British Museum, who pronounced the panel to be elm; but the statement that it was "put together in the Italian manner" has not, so far as I know, been controverted.

Then that doughty champion, Dr. Furnivall, appears on the scene. "Dr. Furnivall," says Mr. Corbin (p. 61), "assailed the picture with his customary vigour, on the ground that it has no pedigree, and declared it was a 'make-up' of the late seventeenth century from the print and the bust, both of which the artist had seen." He subsequently appears to have modified his opinion to the extent that he "was forced to admit that no trace of the bust is discernible. He had overlooked the fact that in the engraving the cheek showed a marked fulness. But his judgment as to the portrait, and, in fact, as to all painted portraits of Shakespeare, remains unchanged."

But Mr. Corbin himself supplies some of the most damning evidence against the portrait. It would seem that the artist got hold of an old portrait painted on a worm-eaten panel, and painted over the worm-holes, thus providing the "connoisseurs" with an undoubted antique! Some of the worm-holes are clear cut; others seem painted round the edges, *and at least one, on the line of the right cheek-bone, has plainly been painted over; it is discernible now only because the paint has sagged into it.* If these appearances are to be relied on, the painter sought to give an appearance of antiquity by using a panel already "worm-holed"! Such are Mr. Corbin's

notes of 1896, but he adds, "in 1901 the surface paint in this worm-hole has apparently been picked away"<sup>1</sup>

Oh! sweet Mr. Shakespeare! I *will* have his picture to hang in my study!

Mr. W. Salt Brassington, Librarian of the Memorial Gallery at Stratford, writes with all the passionate faith of a priest of the shrine: "There is now *no doubt* that it is a life portrait of Shakespeare, painted in 1609." We might say, in fact, with Mr. Collins, that it is "as certain as anything connected with Shakespeare can be"! What says Mr. Mather, however, "a connoisseur of the school of Morelli and Berenson," who accompanied Mr. Corbin to Stratford to view the picture? His verdict is: "clearly a late copy of the print."<sup>2</sup>

We need not follow Mr. Corbin any further in his criticism of this marvellous newly-found "Droeshout original." It is a very pretty quarrel as it stands between the various Stratfordian "connoisseurs," who disagree among themselves about this picture as they disagree about almost every other point of Shakespearean controversy. I think, however, every impartial reader of Mr. Corbin's book will admit that the author, and the authorities whom he cites in his favour, have between them knocked the "Droeshout Original," metaphorically speaking, into a cocked-hat and spurs!

And now one word as to the picture itself. It is obviously an improvement on the extremely crude engraving. "Though coarsely and stiffly drawn, the face is far more skilfully presented than in the engraving, and

<sup>1</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, May, 1897, p. 903. *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*, p. 78. Mr. Corbin further says: "In colouring the portrait resembles the bust, with a single exception. I failed to find the least trace of hazel in the eyes; they are simply muddy blue." Mr. Spielmann's conclusion is that "the Flower portrait, with its improvements on the Droeshout defects, yet in design fundamentally identical, is the copy from the print as completed for the Folio, and not the original of it." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 387.)

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Corbin's book, p. 77.



the expression of countenance betrays some artistic sentiment which is absent from the print." So Mr. Sidney Lee (p. 238). The ordinary observer remarks at once that the stubbly growth of hair on the upper lip of the engraving has now blossomed forth into quite a presentable moustache. I do not know if this is appealed to as a proof that the portrait is of "anterior date" to the print! One would rather think, however, that, bad workman as the engraver unquestionably was, he would hardly have suppressed this elegant moustache if he had found it in his model picture, and substituted the stubbly hairs of malice prepense.<sup>1</sup> But be that how it may, the face is still the face of a simpleton, though not showing quite so much "inanity" as that of the print. If there is "*some* artistic sentiment" to be found in it, it is assuredly the "irreducible minimum." Now any copyist of the engraving, seeing what a lamentable model he had before him, would naturally try to improve upon it as much as possible, while at the same time taking care not to make too great a departure from the original, and that this represents the true state of the case with regard to this so-called "Droeshout Original" will, I think, be the conclusion arrived at by every man who does not allow his wish to get the better of his judgment. The "Flower portrait" is "doubtless" an improved copy of the Droeshout engraving, vamped up in the approved Holder-Zincke fashion, so as to appear contemporaneous with the date inscribed upon it.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Corbin himself, having demolished the "Droeshout Original," proceeds to advocate the claims of what is known as the "Ely Palace" or "Ely House" portrait, nor

<sup>1</sup> As to the moustache and the differences between the engravings in the four Folio editions, the reader may consult Mr. Corbin at p. 80 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Yet Messrs. Garnett and Gosse adopt it as the frontispiece of the second volume of their *English Literature Illustrated*, as a "copy of an original Portrait of Shakespeare in oils, 1609." Thus is the public fooled to the top of its bent.

is it to be wondered at that as a good Shakespearean he should desire to find the bard of our admiration in this picture rather than in the "Flower portrait." For here we have the painting not of a sheepish hydrocephalous simpleton with leering eyes, but of a man of fine type and of intellectual characteristics.

"This painting," says Mr. Lee, "is of high artistic value. The features are of a far more attractive and intellectual cast than in either the Droeshout painting or engraving, and the many differences in detail raise doubts as to whether the person represented can have been intended for Shakespeare. Experts are of opinion that the picture was painted early in the seventeenth century."

I do not propose to follow Mr. Corbin in his arguments in support of the "Ely Palace" portrait. He has knocked over the "Droeshout Original," but he has, I fear, failed to make good the claims of his own favourite picture as an original portrait of Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

Then we have the "Chandos," portrait now in the National Portrait Gallery. Here we have quite a different personage, with beard and earrings, and a weak-looking chin. There is, of course, the high forehead, "the baldness at the top of the head, and the fulness of the hair about the ears," but the expression is very different from that of either the "Flower" portrait, or the "Ely Palace" portrait. "Its pedigree," writes Mr. Lee (p. 241), "suggests that it was intended to represent the poet, but numerous and conspicuous divergencies from the authenticated [?] like-

<sup>1</sup> "The strongest evidence," writes Mr. Corbin (p. 56), "of the authenticity of the Ely Palace portrait is to be derived from the character of the moustache, and of the drawing of the costume." These do not strike one as very strong pegs whereon to hang a picture of such weight! Mr. Corbin gives us both a photogravure (frontispiece) of the Ely Palace portrait, and an engraving (p. 40). It is curious to notice that the lines of the jerkin in these two appear to be entirely different. I am unable to understand how this should be so, if both were taken from the same original.

nesses show that it was painted from fanciful descriptions of him some years after his death." Again, there is the "Felton" portrait, of which we are told that "Steevens held that it was the original picture whence both Droeshout and Marshall made their engravings, but there are practically no points of resemblance between it and the prints."<sup>1</sup>

Then there is a so-called "Jansen" portrait, as to which Mr. Lee says, "It is a fine portrait, but is unlike any other that has been associated with the dramatist."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Jansen did not come to England till after Shakspeare's death; but perhaps the Player gave him a sitting during one of his numerous continental trips, and "made up" specially for the occasion!

Further, there are the "Soest" or "Zoust" portrait, the "Buttery" portrait lately on view at Sotheby's,<sup>3</sup> an imaginary terra-cotta bust (suggesting reminiscences of Mr. Tree in one of his numerous characters) now in the possession of the Garrick Club, and generally considered the most pleasing likeness of Shakespeare, because it is quite different from all others; the alleged "Death-mask," and other counterfeit presentments. But it would be a waste of time to delay further over these so-called Shakespeare

<sup>1</sup> Lee, page 242. William Marshall made a copy of the Droeshout engraving for the frontispiece of the edition of *The Rape of Lucrece*, published in 1655. It has been pretended that Richard Burbage, the actor, painted both the "Chandos" and the "Felton" portraits, and those who desire so to do will doubtless believe it.

<sup>2</sup> We were told by *The Tribune*, of February 18, 1907, that Mr. Spielmann gives this picture the first place among "Shakespeare" portraits; but Mr. Spielmann, in his recently published essay, says of it that "its identity with Shakespeare, it is to be regretted, cannot on any existing ground be regarded as established." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 392.)

<sup>3</sup> This so-called portrait is painted on a panel with the poet's coat-of-arms and motto, "non sans droit," as the newspapers told us. It was discovered about the year 1850 by the late Charles Buttery, picture restorer to the late Queen, and was "at once recognized by him as a genuine seventeenth-century portrait of Shakespeare"! I went to see this picture at Sotheby's, in 1902, and was not edified. Mr. Lee ignores it.

portraits. Shakespeare has been well called a "myriad-minded" man, and to judge by the numerous alleged representations of him, all differing amongst themselves, one would imagine that he was a "myriad-headed" man as well. But the fact is that, as commonly happens, the demand has produced the supply. There are in reality no portraits of Shakespeare, for it may be said with confidence that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* had not the absurd and inane features of the Droeshout signboard; and how any of the orthodox could for a moment desire to find the bard of their admiration in that monstrosity is indeed extraordinary. No; we have no portrait of Shakespeare. We "must look not on his Picture but his Book," unless, indeed, we fall back upon Dugdale's picture of the bust as it was when he saw it about 1636. This truly would seem to be the best authenticated of all the representations of the poet. It is, as Mrs. Stopes says, "the earliest known engraving." A melancholy man, truly, but is it not likely that "Shakespeare" in old age was a melancholy man? Mrs. Stopes thinks that in this bust "there is something biographical, something suggestive," that "it shows us the tired creator of poems, exhausted from lack of sleep." "Far from resembling the self-contented fleshy man of to-day, the large and full dark eyes look out of cheeks hollow to emaciation." May not this be the true Shakespeare? But stay. Look for a moment at the frontispiece to the *Sylva Sylvarum*, showing Francis Bacon in 1626. Note those hollow cheeks, that short beard, that drooping moustache, that peculiar underlip, "the fulness of the hair about the ears," and the high forehead which the hat fails entirely to conceal; compare it, even to the row of buttons running down the centre, with Dugdale's engraving. "Look upon this picture, and on that." And the bust was executed by a London man! The stone carted from London! Good heavens! *Ah! Corydon, Corydon, quae te dementia cepit!* Is it for



Hanwell we are heading, or shall we be consigned to Broadmoor as criminal lunatics?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since this was put into print yet another Shakespeare portrait has been discovered. The cry is still they come! "Widespread interest has been aroused by the rediscovery of what is supposed to be the earliest known portrait of Shakespeare at the Bridgewater Arms, Winston, near Darlington. The portrait, which measures  $15\frac{1}{4}$  inches by  $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches, has in white letters on the panel the inscription, 'Ac suae (aetatis suae) 24-1588,' and on the back are the letters 'W+S.' Nowhere, however, is there an indication of the painter's name or initials." (*The Tribune*, February 18th, 1907. See, too, the *Daily News* and *Manchester Guardian* of same date, and *The Observer* of February 17th.) One of the first things, therefore, that "the Stratford rustic" seems to have done on coming to town was to get his portrait painted—perhaps it was a presentation portrait for the Earl of Southampton! But if we may judge from the reproductions in the newspapers this very latest discovery is not exactly "a thing to be grasped at." *O qualis facies, et quali digna tabellâ!* But the excitement concerning it seems to have subsided almost as suddenly as it arose. The fact is that the thing is getting a trifle overdone. But Mr. Lee might truly write that the wealth of Shakespearean portraiture "far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare"! Evidently the immortal bard was *bellua multorum capitum*—as "multi-faced" as Southey's demon. Unfortunately his portraits, like the greater part of the "mass of biographical detail," were "faked." Mr. Spielmann, whose essay on the Portraits of Shakespeare has appeared since this work was in type, writes: "I may say at once that a long and minute study of the portraits of Shakespeare in every medium and material has led me, otherwise hopeful as I was at the outset years ago, no distance at all towards the firm establishment of the reputation of any one of them as a true life-portrait." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 374.)

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIRST FOLIO

**I**N 1623 was published that most precious of volumes known as the First Folio. Mr. Sidney Lee tells us, in his introduction to the recently published Facsimile, that "of the thirty-six plays which appeared in this volume only sixteen had been printed at earlier dates—fifteen in the author's lifetime, and one, *Othello*, posthumously. . . . No less than twenty dramas, of which the greater number rank among the literary masterpieces of the world—nine of the fourteen comedies that were here brought together for the first time, five of the ten histories, and six of the twelve tragedies—were rescued by the First Folio from oblivion." Well may Mr. Lee say that "the pieces, whose approaching publication for the first time was thus announced, were of supreme literary interest," viz. *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen*, *Measure for Measure*, *Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *Winter's Tale*, *3-Henry VI*, *Henry VIII*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*. Licence to publish these sixteen plays was obtained from the Stationers' Company, by Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, on November 8th, 1623. Four other dramas which had not hitherto been published in the form which they now assumed were included in the Folio volume, viz.: *Henry VI*, Parts 1 and 2, *King John*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, but for the publication of these no licence was sought, presumably because they were

founded upon, or were revisions of, earlier plays already in print.<sup>1</sup>

And not only is it true that of the thirty-six plays published in the Folio only sixteen had been printed or published before, but—and this is still more remarkable—six of them, as it seems, had never been heard of before, to wit: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Timon of Athens*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Coriolanus*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Henry VIII*.<sup>2</sup> What did Player Shakspeare of Stratford do with the MSS. of these six plays? Why did he make no use of them in his lifetime? It is certain that these precious manuscripts were not in his possession when he died in 1616. How is it that they never saw the light till seven years after his death?

For the great gift of the First Folio the world is indebted to those, whoever they were, who undertook its publication in 1623; but not to the author of the dramas, if William Shakspeare of Stratford was indeed the author; for he, careless of fame, intent on "gain not glory," had passed away seven years before, without book or manuscript in his possession, and without breathing a word as to any wishes which he might conceivably have entertained as to the publication of these world's masterpieces. So far as he

<sup>1</sup> "Each of these plays," writes Mr. Lee (*Life*, p. 251), "was based by Shakespeare on a play of like title, which had been published at an earlier date, and the absence of a licence was *doubtless* due to an ignorant misconception on the part either of the Stationers' Company's officers or of the editors of the volume as to the true relations subsisting between the old pieces and the new." Notwithstanding Mr. Lee's favourite adverb, I rather doubt that "ignorant misconception."

<sup>2</sup> There was, of course, an old play, *The Taming of a Shrew*, and a play of *Henry VIII* or *All is True* (as Sir Henry Wotton styles it), being acted at the Globe Theatre in 1613, when the performance was put an end to by the fire which consumed the theatre. Mr. Fleay says (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 250), "*Henry VIII* as we have it is *not* the play that was in action at the Globe when that theatre was burned." Mr. Gollancz says it "undoubtedly" *was* so; and of the same opinion is Dr. Garnett (Essay prefixed to *At Shakespeare's Shrine*, p. 12). Who shall decide when (as usual) the doctors disagree? *All's Well that Ends Well* may *perhaps* be identical with *Love's Labour's Won*, mentioned by Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598).

was concerned, his interest in the works of Shakespeare ceased when he quitted the stage; so far as he was concerned *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale*, and the other immortal dramas, then unpublished, might have been for ever lost to humanity.

"He and his colleagues wrote for the stage, and not for the study," says Mr. Lee. "They intended their plays to be spoken and not read," and Shakespeare, we are told, "was paid by the company for his writings, and in return made over to the company all property and right in his manuscripts"; after which, it seems, he thought no more about them, and cared nothing.

We will consider this remarkable theory more particularly later on. Let us now examine this priceless First Folio volume.

The title-page tells us that it contains "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. Published according to the True originall Copies. London. Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Edward Blount, 1623." The colophon, at the end of the book, is, "Printed at the charges of W. Jaggard, Edward Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Aspley, 1623."

The work had, of course, to be printed by a member, or members, of the Stationers' Company, and as Malone tells us, several of these booksellers<sup>1</sup> had "a property in the quarto plays which were here reprinted," wherefore their assent to, and co-operation in the publication was necessary. William Jaggard was, says Mr. Lee, "the piratical publisher of *The Passionate Pilgrim*," and "had long known the commercial value of Shakespeare's work." Blount, who appears both on the title-page and in the colophon, "had been a friend and admirer of Christopher Marlowe, and had actively engaged in the posthumous publication of two of Marlowe's poems. He had published that curious collection of mystical verse entitled

<sup>1</sup> Bookseller, stationer, publisher were convertible terms in those days.



*Love's Martyr*, one poem in which, 'a poetical essay of the Phoenix and the Turtle,' was signed 'William Shakespeare.'" Isaac Jaggard was William Jaggard's son.<sup>1</sup>

The nominal editors of the volume are Shakspeare's fellow players, John Heminge and Henry Condell. Dick Burbage would, "doubtless" (if I may use Mr. Lee's favourite adverb), have been associated with them, but he had died in 1618. The names of these worthies, Heminge and Condell, are signed to the Epistle Dedicatory and to the Preface, addressed "to the great variety of readers," which are prefixed to the volume. The Dedication is addressed "to the most Noble and Incomparable Paire of Brethren, William Earle of Pembroke, etc., Lord Chamberlaine to the King's most excellent Majesty, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, etc., Gentleman of his Majesties Bedchamber. Both knights of the most Noble Order of the Garter, and our singular good Lords."

Let us deal first with the Preface, "To the great variety of Readers." Malone showed long ago that at any rate the greater part of this was written by Ben Jonson. "Hemings and Condell being themselves wholly unused to composition, and having been furnished by Jonson, whose reputation was then at its height, with a copy of verses in praise of Shakspeare, and with others on the engraved portrait prefixed to his plays, would naturally apply to him for assistance in that part of the work in which they were, for the first time, to address the publick in their own names."<sup>2</sup> Whether these worthy players did anything more than lend their names for the occasion may well be

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee says (Preface to Facsimile, p. 14): "Jaggard associated his son Isaac with the enterprise. They alone of the members of the syndicate were printers. Their three partners were publishers or booksellers." This is odd, seeing that the title-page bears the inscription: "*Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Edward Blount.*" How came this, if Blount was not a printer? Mr. Lee is not accurate as to the signature of *The Turtle and Phoenix*. It is "Shake-speare." (See Lee's *Life*, p. 251.)

<sup>2</sup> *Malone's Shakspeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 663.

doubted ; but, for the present, let us see how Malone sets about to prove Jonson's authorship of the Preface, or the greater part of it. This he does most conclusively by setting forth in parallel columns extracts from the Preface and corresponding passages from Jonson's works. I must refer the reader to the second volume of *Malone's Shakspeare* (p. 664) for the proof, but I will give one or two examples of the parallel passages set forth.

The Players' Preface begins thus : " To the great variety of Readers. From the most *able* to him that can but spell." In like manner we find prefixed to *Catiline*, in 1611, two addresses : " To the Reader in ordinary "—" To the Reader extraordinary "—or, in other words, " To the great variety of Readers," the " Reader extraordinary " being, in the corresponding passage, " the most able " ; " the Reader in ordinary " he " that can but spell." So, too, in the Preface to the *New Inn*, we have " To the Reader. If thou beest such (i.e. if thou can'st indeed read) I make thee my patron, and dedicate my work to thee. If not so much, would that I had been at the charge of thy better literature. Howsoever, if thou *can'st but spell*, and join my sense, there is more hope for thee, etc." In the Folio Preface we have, " There you are *numbered* ; we had rather you were *weighed* " ; and in Jonson's *Discoveries*, " Suffrages in parliament are *numbered*, not *weighed* " ; and the passage continues : " Nor can it be otherwise in those publique counsels where nothing is so *unequal* as the equality ; for there, *how odde soever mens braines or wisdomes are*, their power is alwas *even* and the same." Compare this with the Folio Preface. " Then, *how odde soever* (i.e. how unequal soever) *your braines be or your wisdomes*, make your license the same, and spare not " ; the word " *odd* " being here used in its original sense, as opposed to that which is *even* or *equal*. Then, again, in the Preface we have : " *Judge your sixpen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth* at a time,

or higher, so you can rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, whatever you do, Buy. *Censure* will not drive a Trade . . ."; while in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, acted in 1614, we find "It is further agreed that every person here have his free will of censure. . . . It shall be lawful for any man to judge his *sixe-pen'orth*, his *twelve pen'orth*, so to his *eighteen pence*, *two shillings*, and *half a crowne*. . . . He shall put in for censures here, as they do for lots in the lottery; marry if he drop but *sixpence* at the doors, and will *censure a crowne's worth*, it is thought there [is] no conscience or justice in that." There is, too, a similar passage in *The Magnetick Lady*. "Read him, therefore," says the Folio Preface, "and *again and again*; and if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger *not to understand him*." This is altogether Jonsonian, for Ben was fond of this contrast between *reading* and *understanding*. So in his address to the ordinary reader, prefixed to *Catiline*: "Though you commend the two first acts, with the people, because they are the worst, and dislike the oration of Cicero, in regard you *read* some passages of it at school, and *understand them not yet*, I shall find the way to forgive you." And in his first epigram "To the Reader": "Pray thee, take care, that taks't my book in hand, To *read it well*, that is, to *understand*."

So Malone, citing passage after passage, throughout twelve pages, and I venture to say that a more conclusive proof of authorship from internal evidence could not be found.<sup>1</sup> Malone, it is true, thought that the players might have written some part of this Preface themselves, though

<sup>1</sup> One must charitably hope that Mr. Willis had not read this conclusive proof when he made Blount say, in his absurd mock trial, that Jonson wrote neither the Dedication nor the Address. *The Shakespeare-Bacon Controversy*, by William Willis, p. 16. Mr. James Boaden had no doubt about the matter. "Ben Jonson," he says, "it is now ascertained, wrote for the Player editors the Dedication and Preface to his works." (*On the Portraits of Shakespeare*, 1824, p. 13.)

all of it had been under Jonson's revising hand ; I venture to say, however, seeing that Jonson undoubtedly wrote so much, and that worthy Heminge and worthy Condell were "not only wholly unused to composition," but were probably altogether incompetent to write in this style at all, that Jonson wrote the whole of it. Old Ben was not the man to write part and leave the rest to two players who, if they were not ignorant, had at any rate no literary experience or qualification. It is a very reasonable supposition that he wrote the Dedication to "The Incomparable Paire" also. Consider this sentence, for example: "Country hands reach foorth milke, creame, fruites, or what they have ; and many Nations (we have heard) that had not gummes and incense obtained their requests with a leavened cake. It was no fault to approach their gods by what meanes they could: and the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples." Is that the style of players, such as they were in 1623—such as the *Return from Parnassus* reveals them to us? Why, it is taken direct from Pliny, *Mola salsa litant qui non habent thura* ; and from Horace ;

Immunis aram si tetigit manus,  
Non sumptuosâ blandior hostiâ,  
Mollivit aversos Penates  
Farre pio, et saliente micâ.<sup>1</sup>

No, no, this does not smack of Heminge and Condell, but of the same classical pen that composed the Preface. There is really nothing derogatory to the character of these good men in supposing that they were ready to appear as signatories to what was written for them. It was quite customary to do so. Thus when the Folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays was brought out in 1647, by the publisher Humphrey Moseley, there was a similar dedicatory epistle addressed to the

<sup>1</sup> There is, too, a touch of Ovid in the "fruites": *Et sparsæ fruges parcaque mica salis*. (Fast. 2. 536.)



survivor of the "Incomparable Paire," viz. Philip, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who was then Lord Chamberlain. This was signed by ten of the actors of the King's Company, but nobody, I imagine, supposes that they wrote it, or any one of them. "The actors who aided the scheme," writes Mr. Lee, in his Introduction to the Facsimile edition of the First Folio, "played a very subordinate part in its execution. They did nothing beyond seconding Moseley's efforts in securing the 'copy,' and signing their names—to the number of ten—to the dedicatory epistle."

But let us still further examine the "Preface to the great variety of Readers." After the first paragraph, which is Jonsonian to the core, as any one who has read old Ben can see even without Malone's elaborate proof, the two players continue: "It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have been wished, that the author himselfe had lived to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care and paine, to have collected and publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with divers stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors, that expos'd them: even those are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers,<sup>1</sup> as he conceived them: Who, as he was a happie imitator of nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

*Halte là!* This "gives furiously to think." "We have

<sup>1</sup> This phrase, "absolute in their numbers," is, of course, a Latinism. See p. 285 n.

scarse received from him a blot in his papers"! The players tell us, therefore, that they "received" the "papers" from Shakespeare, that they hold the author's own manuscripts, and that these were written with such "easinesse"—*currente calamo*; the writer's thoughts being put on paper just as he conceived them—that there is hardly a blot on them. But this is palpably and absurdly untrue. Let us hear what the Cambridge editors have to say on the point. "The natural inference to be drawn from this statement is that all the separate editions of Shakespeare's plays were 'stolen,' 'surreptitious,' and 'imperfect,' and that all those published in the Folio were printed from the author's own manuscripts. But it can be proved to demonstration that several of the plays in the Folio were printed from earlier quarto editions, and that in other cases the quarto is more correctly printed, or from a better manuscript, than the Folio text, and therefore of higher authority. For example, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and in *Richard II*, the reading of the quarto is almost always preferable to that in the Folio, and in *Hamlet* we have computed that the Folio, when it differs from the quartos, differs for the worse in forty-seven places, while it differs for the better in twenty at most. As the 'setters forth' are thus convicted of a 'suggestio falsi' in one point, it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another. Some of the plays may have been printed not from Shakespeare's own manuscripts, but from transcripts made from them for the use of the theatre. And this hypothesis will account for strange errors found in some of the plays—errors too gross to be accounted for by the negligence of a printer, especially if the original manuscript was as unblotted as Heminge and Condell described it to have been. Thus, too, we may explain the great difference in the state of the text as found in different plays. It is probable that this deception arose not from deliberate design on the part

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of Heminge and Condell—whom, as having been Shakespeare's friends and fellows, we like to think of as honourable men—but partly, at least, from want of practice in composition, and from the wish rather to write a smart preface in praise of the book than to state the facts clearly and simply. *Or the Preface may have been written by some literary man in the employment of the publishers, and merely signed by the two players.*"<sup>1</sup>

"Want of practice in composition" would hardly account for the statement as a fact of what the writers must have known to be false; but, no doubt, the solution of the difficulty lies in the passage which I have thrown into italics. The Preface was undoubtedly written by a "literary man," and that "literary man" was Jonson.

In truth it requires but very little thought to perceive that the idea that the players had Shakespeare's unblotted autograph manuscripts in their hands is futile. R. L. Stevenson recognised this. "We hear of Shakespeare and his clean manuscript; but in the face of the evidence of the style itself and of the various editions of *Hamlet*, this merely proves that Messrs. Hemming and Condell were unacquainted with the common enough phenomenon called a fair copy. He who would recast a tragedy already given to the world, must frequently and earnestly have revised details in the study."<sup>2</sup>

This is sound common sense; but we must carry the inquiry further. Had the publishers of the First Folio any of Shakespeare's original manuscripts at all? From Mr. Lee's introduction to the Facsimile edition, I gather that in his opinion the question must certainly be answered in the negative; for he tells us that "the First Folio text was

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Cambridge Shakespeare* (1863), p. 24. The editors, whose initials are appended to this Preface, were W. G. Clark and T. Glover. The second and third editions were edited by Mr. Aldis Wright. The italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup> *Men and Books*, p. 149. (Essay on Thoreau.)

derivable from three distinct sources ; firstly, the finished playhouse transcripts, or 'prompt-copies' ; secondly, the less complete transcripts in private hands ; and thirdly, the quartos." In the case of sixteen of the plays the publishers had previously printed quarto editions at their command, and, as the Cambridge editors tell us, "It can be proved to demonstration that several of the plays in the Folio were printed from earlier quarto editions." But since, in other cases, the Folio text so often differs from that of the quartos (and by no means always for the better, as the same editors remind us), it is evident that the publishers must have had manuscripts of some kind to work from. These, says Mr. Lee, were, in the first place, the theatrical "prompt-copies." But these alone were not sufficient. "But even if it were the ultimate hope of the publishers of the First Folio to print all Shakespeare's plays, *in the inevitable absence of his autograph MSS.*<sup>1</sup>, from the finished theatrical transcripts or official 'prompt-copies,' their purpose was again destined to defeat by accidents on which they had not reckoned. In 1623, the day was far distant when Shakespeare first delivered his dramatic MSS. to the playhouse manager. In some cases thirty years had elapsed, in none less than twelve, and during the long intervals many misadventures had befallen the company's archives." There was, for instance, says Mr. Lee, the fire, in 1613, at the Globe, "where the Company and its archives had been housed for fourteen years." Therefore, according to this writer, the publishers had, in some cases, to fall back upon "the less complete and less authentic transcripts in private hands."

This is Mr. Lee's conception of the sort of manuscripts which the publishers of the First Folio had to work upon. "No genuine respect was paid to a dramatic author's original drafts after they reached the playhouse. Scenes and passages were freely erased by the managers, who

<sup>1</sup> My italics.



became the owners, and other alterations were made for stage purposes. Ultimately the dramatist's corrected autograph was copied by the playhouse scrivener; this transcript became the official 'prompt copy,' and the original was set aside and destroyed, its uses being exhausted. The copyist was not always happy in deciphering his original, *especially when the dramatist wrote so illegibly as Shakespeare*,<sup>1</sup> and since no better authority than the 'prompt-copy' survived for the author's words, the copyist's misreadings encouraged crude emendation on the actor's part. Whenever a piece was revived a new revision was undertaken by the dramatist in concert with the manager, or by an independent author, and in course of time the official playhouse copy of a popular piece might come to bear a long series of interlineations. Thus stock pieces were preserved not in the author's autograph, but in the playhouse scrivener's interlineated transcript, which varied in authenticity according to the caligraphy of the author's original draft, the copyist's intelligence, and the extent of the recensions on successive occasions of the piece's revival."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Lee further tells us that "only eighteen (or with *Pericles* nineteen) of Shakespeare's thirty-seven dramas remained in 1623 in the repertory of the theatre." In other cases, therefore, the "promoters" of the work had to search for, and obtain permission to make use of, transcripts which private persons had obtained by some means or other.

It will be seen that by this theory poor Heminge and Condell are thrown over altogether. The most rabid Baconian could not treat them with more contempt. They have put their signatures to a preface in which they tell us that they have "collected" Shakespeare's "writings," and

<sup>1</sup> My italics. But how about Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, and the "Italian script"? *Ante*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to the Facsimile, p. 18.

these are "cur'd and perfect of their limbes . . . absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them." They are the author's own manuscripts, for "we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers," which fact is put forward as proof of the "easinesse" with which he wrote! And who would know the handwriting of their fellow-actor if not Messrs. Heminge and Condell? Yet now we have the accepted modern biographer and critic telling us that instead of clean unblotted autograph MSS., the publishers had before them, besides the quartos already printed, only "prompt copies" and other "less complete and less authentic transcripts" collected from private persons! Moreover, in the case of the "prompt copies," not only had the poet's original manuscript been treated with but little respect, but the copyist had not unfrequently made errors in deciphering his original, "especially when the dramatist wrote so illegibly as Shakespeare"!

So much for Messrs. Heminge and Condell and the papers without a blot! I conceive that these worthies saw no harm whatever in putting their signatures to Jonson's preface when asked to do so. I have no doubt that "Dick Burbage" would have done the same had he been alive.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is quite possible that in the case of many of the plays these nominal editors had, as R. L. Stevenson suggests, "fair copies," by whomsoever made, placed before them. The theory that the promoters of the undertaking, in some cases at any rate, worked from theatrical copies seems at first sight to be supported by the fact that in three plays, viz. *The Taming of the Shrew*,

<sup>1</sup> As a fact this statement as to unblotted manuscripts seems to have been, as the editor of the 1811 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher suggests, "a sort of commonplace compliment." For "the same story as to entire freedom from paper-blotting is applied by the stationer Humphrey Moseley to John Fletcher. He says in the introduction to the Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647, 'Whatever I have seen of Mr. Fletcher's own hand is free from interlining, and his friends affirm that he never writ any one thing twice.'" (Stotsenburg's *Shakespeare Title*, p. 91.)

*Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Henry VI*, Part I, we find the names of subordinate actors inserted instead of those of the dramatic characters which they represented. Nevertheless it is by no means safe to make that assumption. Knight, for example, wrote : " There is a remarkable peculiarity in the text of the Folio which indicates that it [*Much Ado*] was printed from a playhouse copy," because in Act IV of that play the name of the actor Kempe is substituted for that of Dogberry, and the name of Cowley for that of Verges. From this Knight concluded that Heminge and Condell had permitted the names of Kempe and Cowley to remain as they found them in the prompter's book, "as a historical tribute to the memory of their fellows." Yet the truth is that the peculiarity alluded to by Knight is common both to the Folio and the Quarto of 1600—the Folio, in fact, was printed from the Quarto!<sup>1</sup>

Before proceeding further it may be instructive to set side by side with Mr. Lee's rationalistic hypothesis the entirely different theory of another Stratfordian enthusiast of undoubting and childlike faith. It is like comparing a "verbal inspirationist" of the old Biblical school with a representative of the "higher criticism" of modern times ; and it will afford another illustration of the manner in which, like the theologians, Stratfordians disagree amongst themselves, though again, like the theologians, they at least find agreement in the invectives which they launch at the heads of heretics and infidels.

This is how the ingenuous Mr. Willis—who has adopted the charming and facile, if somewhat childish, expedient

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it seems rather curious, if we are to suppose that "prompt-copies" were made use of, that the various scenes were not indicated. *Henry VI*, Part I, for instance, commences with *Actus primus, Scæna Prima*, but the other scenes are not marked, so that, except the words "Enter the Master Gunner of Orleans," we have nothing to show that we have left the Tower of London (Act I, Scene 3) for Orleans (Act I, Scene 4). *Julius Cæsar* is divided in acts, but not scenes. *Antony and Cleopatra* into neither. *Macbeth* into both acts and scenes. (See, further, Mr. Castle's *Shakespeare-Bacon*, etc., p. 351.)

of calling witnesses from the shades and putting into their mouths what he wishes them to say—has dealt in his mock trial with this question of the manuscripts.

Mr. Willis puts Edward Blount into his imaginary witness-box, and this is the sort of "evidence" (save the mark!) that he gives: "Some time in the early part of the year 1622 Mr. Heminge and Mr. Condell called upon me. They brought a large bundle of manuscript. They said they were desirous of publishing all the plays that Shakespeare had written, in order to keep alive the fame of Shakespeare, and as an entertainment and instruction for succeeding generations; that they ought to do it at once, because imperfect copies were getting abroad. . . . The manuscripts were handed over to me; I cannot say they were all in the same handwriting. I do not know the handwriting of Shakespeare. I saw, by a hasty inspection, that there were twenty plays which, to my knowledge, *had not appeared in print in any shape or form.*"<sup>1</sup> Then Blount is made to say that, having examined the manuscripts, "I saw I had in my hands a treasure." However, when he is subsequently asked if he has preserved this "treasure," he replies that he has not. He has not the manuscripts in his possession. "I did not see any reason for keeping them!"

I make this quotation not only because it is amusing to see the sort of theory which is gravely put forward by a learned county court judge, who looks upon all sceptics in this matter as "fanatics" (may we, I wonder, take this as a specimen of the orthodox idea of "evidence" and "probability"? ) but also because it is instructive to note these extreme differences in Stratfordian belief, for it will be seen that Mr. Willis's theory differs *toto cælo* from the hypothesis adopted by Mr. Sidney Lee.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Original italics.

<sup>2</sup> It is indeed difficult to conceive how any reasonable being, who has given consideration to the facts of the case, can maintain the hypothesis that



But let us further examine Mr. Lee's more reasonable theory. According to this it is the most natural thing in the world that Shakspeare should have had no manuscript in his possession when he died, and should have left no directions for the publication of his work, including the many then unpublished masterpieces, for he had many years before parted with his manuscripts and all rights in them to the theatrical company to which he had belonged. "He and his colleagues," says Mr. Lee in his Preface to *the Facsimile*, "*wrote for the stage and not for the study. They intended their plays to be spoken and not to be read.*"<sup>1</sup> It was contrary to the custom of the day for dramatists to print their plays for themselves, or to encourage the printing of them by others, or to preserve their manuscripts. Like all dramatists of his age Shakespeare composed his plays for the acting company to which he attached himself; like them he was paid by the company for his writings, and in return made over to the company all property and right in his manuscripts." According to this theory, then, Shakspeare had assigned all rights in his manuscripts to the company, was duly paid, kept no copies, and thought no more about them. And such, we are told, was the universal custom with dramatists of the day. It will, I suppose, be set down to "fanaticism" that I should doubt the truth of this proposition; that I should doubt if it be consonant with the known facts of human nature; that I should doubt that Marlowe, for instance, assigned away all rights in his dramatic works and was

Heminge and Condell had really received from Shakespeare his autograph manuscripts. In their "epistle dedicatory," which differs somewhat from the Preface "to the great variety of Readers," these worthies tell us that the author "not having the fate, common with some, to be executor to his own writings," they "have collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his orphans guardians." If they actually "received" them from Shakspeare himself they must have so received them before the spring of 1616 when Shakspeare died, yet they let seven long years elapse before doing their duty by these poor orphans!

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

thenceforth careless whether or not they were published for the benefit of posterity. And what of him whose name at once occurs to us? What of Ben Jonson? Did he never see to the printing of his plays or "encourage the printing of them by others"? Surely it is notorious that in his case the contrary was the fact. Jonson was most particular as to the publication of his dramatic works. He carefully revised them for the press, and wrote prefaces for the published editions. Thus, when he published his *Sejanus*, he was careful to inform his readers that those portions which had been contributed to the drama, as acted, by another pen, had been excised. "I would inform you," he says, with some sarcasm, "that this book, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the public stage; wherein a second pen had good share: in place of which I have rather chosen to put weaker, and, no doubt, less pleasing, of mine own, than to defraud so happy a genius of his right by my loathed usurpation." We are asked, however, to believe that the author of *Hamlet*, writing "for the stage and not for the study"—"for gain, not glory"—made over once and for all his rights in it to the Globe Company; preserved no manuscript, and reserved no right, or thought, of publishing it. And so, too, with those marvellous master works which were only rescued by the Folio from oblivion—*The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*—he had no interest in their publication, no anxieties for their preservation. Assuredly it would tax a "forty-parson power" to provide all the faith that is required for this orthodox Stratfordian theory!

But there is a great deal more to be said. The idea that Shakespeare was the poor creature that some of his orthodox admirers would make him out to be; that he wrote for the stage only and not for the study; that he cared only to make "a competence" and to get a coat-of-arms, and

thought nothing of posthumous fame, is contradicted not only by presumptions founded on the known facts of human nature, but by other conclusive arguments.

In the first place we may remark that the poet of the Sonnets, so far from being indifferent, aspired to and was assured of immortality. Thus Sonnet xviii:—

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

And again, Sonnet lv:—

Not marble nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

See also the same idea in Sonnet lxxv, and other places. Is it possible to suppose that this man imagined there would be less immortality for his *Hamlet* than for these “sugred sonnets”?

“It must never be forgotten,” writes Mr. Justice Madden, “that not one of the copies in the possession of Heminge and Condell, true original though it may have been, had been either written or revised by its author with a view to publication.” Upon which supposed fact the learned judge makes the following not unnatural comment: “That the author of *Othello* and *As You Like It* should not have deemed those works worthy of the editorial care bestowed on *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*; that he used them simply as a means of making money, and, when that purpose had been served, took no further heed of them; that, notwithstanding the publication and rapid sale of pirated and inaccurate copies, he was never moved, during the years of his retirement at Stratford, to take even the initial step of collecting and revising for publication the manuscripts of his plays; and that so far as their author was concerned, they might be stolen, travestied, or perish altogether; are surely among the strangest facts in the history of literature.” Yes, indeed, adds Judge Webb, “among the strangest facts in the history of literature

most surely, if the retired Player was in reality the author of *As You Like It* and *Othello*—facts so strange, indeed, as to suggest a doubt whether he could by any possibility have been the author. Nevertheless the facts stated by the learned judge are accepted as authentic by all the biographers of Shakspeare. In the opinion of all he showed utter insensibility as to the literary value of the Shakespearean Plays, and utter indifference as to their preservation.”<sup>1</sup>

But now let us consider a critic of a very different order. As we have seen, R. L. Stevenson, writing of *Hamlet*, says that “he who would recast a tragedy already given to the world must frequently and earnestly have revised details in the study”; and as we know, *Hamlet* was revised and revised again. Let us see what that plain-speaking critic, Mr. Swinburne, has to say on this. I make no apology for quoting at some length. “This minor transformation of style in the inner play, made solely with the evident view of marking the distinction

<sup>1</sup> This is how a distinguished French writer, diplomatist, and literary critic conceives of Shakespeare: “He is romantic in his plays, a conservative bourgeois in his life. . . . When an attack was made or any literary wrong inflicted on him he said and did nothing. To Greene’s slanders and Jonson’s sneers he answered not a word. *His propensity to hold aloof was an ‘all round’ one*, and led him to keep apart even on occasions when more would have been expected from his ‘open and free nature.’ At a time when all authors exchanged complimentary poems to preface each other’s works, when burly Jonson wrote many even in favour of men he liked little enough, not once did Shakespeare do the same. He never troubled any one for such verses, nor ever wrote any. Most poets paid their tribute to Elizabeth, to Prince Henry, when they died; he wrote nothing. More or less silly, ridiculous, or insignificant works were published under his name, he never disclaimed them; garbled texts of his own dramas, of the masterpieces of his peerless genius were issued, he never protested nor gave the real text. *Such an attitude under such provocation is absolutely unique.*” So writes Monsieur J. J. Jusserand in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*. He goes on to say that he did not seem to have “the slightest regard” for his plays, and “as for his Sonnets, in spite of all he says in them of their assured immortality, he attached no more importance to them than to his plays; he never printed any, and when a pirate printed them, he said nothing.” Like Brer Rabbit, it



between its duly artificial forms of speech and the duly natural forms of speech passing between the spectators, is but one among the innumerable indications which only a purblind perversity of prepossession can overlook of the especial store set by Shakespeare himself on this favourite work, and the exceptional pains taken by him to preserve it for after time in such fullness of finished form as might make it worthiest of profound and perpetual study by the light of far other lamps than illuminate the stage. *Of all vulgar errors the most wanton, the most wilful, and the most resolutely tenacious of life, is that belief bequeathed from the days of Pope, in which it was pardonable, to the days of Carlyle, in which it is not excusable, to the effect that Shakespeare threw off Hamlet as an eagle may moult a feather or a fool may break a jest; that he dropped his work as a bird may drop an egg or a sophist a fallacy; that he wrote 'for gain, not glory,' or that having written Hamlet, he thought it nothing very wonderful to have written.*<sup>1</sup> For himself to have written, he possibly, nay probably, did not think it anything miraculous; but that he was in the fullest degree conscious of its wonderful positive worth to all men for all time, we have the best evidence possible—his own; and that not by mere word of mouth, but by actual stroke of hand. . . . Scene by scene, line for line, stroke upon stroke, and touch after touch, he went over all the old laboured ground again; and not to ensure success in his own day, and fill his pockets with contemporary pence, but merely and wholly with a purpose to make it worthy of himself and his future students. . . . Not one single alteration in the whole play can possibly have been made with a view to stage effect or to

seems, he "went on sayin' nuffin"! *Absolutely unique* indeed! But the worthy man, we are told, only wanted to retire to his native Stratford, to "have the best house, and be among the most considered citizens there." A "unique" immortal, and a perfectly "unique" creed!

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

present popularity and profit ; or we must suppose that Shakespeare, however great as a man, was naturally even greater as a fool. . . . Every change in the text of *Hamlet* has impaired its fitness for the stage, and increased its value for the closet in exact and perfect proportion.<sup>1</sup> Now, this is not a matter of opinion—of Mr. Pope's opinion or Mr. Carlyle's ; it is a matter of fact and evidence. Even in Shakespeare's time the actors threw out his additions ; they throw out these very same additions in our own. The one especial speech, if any one such especial speech there be, in which the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth, is passed over by modern actors ; it was cut away by Heminge and Condell. We may almost assume it as certain that no boards have ever echoed—at least, more than once or twice—to the supreme soliloquy of Hamlet. Those words which combine the noblest pleading ever proffered for the rights of human reason with the loftiest vindication ever uttered of those rights, no mortal ear within our knowledge has ever heard spoken on the stage. A convocation even of all priests could not have been more unhesitatingly unanimous in its rejection than seems to have been the hereditary verdict of all actors. It could hardly have been found worthier of theological than it has been found of theatrical condemnation. Yet beyond all question, magnificent as is that monologue on suicide and doubt which has passed from a proverb into a by-word, it is actually eclipsed and distanced at once on philosophic and poetical grounds by the later soliloquy on reason and resolution."

A word of comment on this. Swinburne, remarking on the undoubted fact that *Hamlet* has been revised "scene by scene, line for line, stroke upon stroke, and touch after

<sup>1</sup> This is in direct contradiction to Mr. Lee's opinion that he "wrote for the stage and not for the study"! As already mentioned, Mr. Lee thinks that Pope "had just warrant" for his famous lines. (*Life*, p. 225.)

touch," impresses upon us that all these changes were not made "with a view to stage effect or to present popularity and profit," for, on the contrary, "every change in the text of *Hamlet* has impaired its fitness for the stage and increased its value for the closet." As a striking example he refers to that great speech in Act IV, Scene 4, commencing

How all occasions do inform against me,  
And spur my dull revenge

—that speech whence Shelley took his celebrated line

We look before and after—

in which, says Swinburne, the genius of Shakespeare "soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth," and which, in his judgment, eclipses and distances the famous "monologue on suicide and doubt." Now this speech, as he tells us, magnificent as it is, was written not for the stage but for the study, not for the hearer but for the reader; the proof being that it is omitted in all acting editions, and was "cut away by Heming and Condell" themselves, i.e. it is not to be found in the Folio. It is clear, therefore, that Mr. Swinburne rejects the allegations of the players that in the Folio they have presented us with Shakespeare's Plays in their final form "absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them"; for the excision of this speech from the Folio has, on his own showing, not "impaired its fitness for the stage," but has, on the other hand, greatly impaired "its value for the closet"; for which reason the modern editors of *Hamlet* have always reinstated it. Similarly there are other passages found in the quartos but not in the Folio the omission of which, though we could ill spare most of them for the study, really improves the play for the stage. Take, for example, the passage, Act III, Scene 4, l. 71 :—

Sense, sure, you have,  
Else, could you not have motion, etc.

These and other lines might well be omitted from a play

which must necessarily be greatly "cut" for acting purposes.

Judge Webb, as it seems to me, has somewhat misunderstood Mr. Swinburne on this matter of the revision of *Hamlet*; for he quotes him as though he supported his own opinion that the passages omitted from the Folio were deleted by Shakespeare "with true judgment." "Every passage he omitted," says Judge Webb, "he must be supposed to have deliberately omitted, as inconsistent with the perfection of his work as he finally conceived it. These omissions, strange to say, have been restored by those who have affected to give us Shakespeare's text."<sup>1</sup> But Mr. Swinburne is evidently of opinion that the modern editors have done well in restoring the speech "on reason and resolution"; for Shakespeare's own revised version, intended for the study and not for the stage, must be, according to this critic, not the Folio of 1623, but the Quarto of 1604; and Mr. Swinburne would, I take it, agree with the Cambridge editors that where the Folio version of *Hamlet* differs from the quartos it generally differs for the worse. The theory usually put forward by the critics is that the Folio version is an abridgment for the stage. Thus Mr. Fleay writes (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 227): "*Hamlet* is extant in three forms—the Folio, which is evidently a stage copy considerably shortened for acting purposes; the 1604 Quarto, which is a very fair transcript of the author's complete copy, with a few omissions; and the 1603 Quarto, imperfect and inaccurate." But even if we take this view, and consider the 1604 Quarto to represent the author's revised version, I do not think we are called upon to accept Mr. Swinburne's opinion in its entirety, and to say that "every change" made by Shakespeare in revising the text of *Hamlet* "has impaired its fitness for the stage, and increased its value for the closet in exact and perfect proportion." I cannot think

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 265, Note F; and see p. 86.



that the retention (viz. by the Quarto) of the magnificent "soliloquy on reason and resolution," for example, rejected though it be by the actors, really impaired the fitness of the play for the stage. Some will, no doubt, be of opinion that Mr. Swinburne's eulogy of this speech is couched in somewhat extravagant terms,<sup>1</sup> but I think it must be conceded that, if not in language at any rate in meaning and in the lesson which it inculcates, it is a finer speech than the more famous soliloquy; for the latter, magnificent though it is in its language, and of great dramatic propriety in the mouth of that strange character *Hamlet*, is, considered as serious philosophy, quite contemptible. For what does it amount to? Simply to the proposition that everybody would commit suicide were it not for fear of what might happen after death! How much finer is the sentiment of the other speech, omitted by the editors of the Folio—"the noblest pleading ever proffered for the rights of human reason"! This, if finely declaimed by an actor equal to the task, could, surely, not impair the fitness of the play for the stage; nor can I imagine why it should have been constantly omitted unless it be because *Hamlet* has already had one long soliloquy, and it was necessary to shorten the play for acting purposes.

On the other hand, that the Folio *Hamlet* is simply an abridged version for the stage is far from clear; for this 1623 edition has evidently been under the revising hand for other purposes than those of mere abridgment. Additions have been made as well as omissions. The Quarto, therefore, though it professes to be "printed from the only true and perfect copy," wants several passages found in the Folio, and the latter, though in the opinion of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Swinburne's *perfervidum ingenium* sometimes carries him away. For example, in the old editions of *King Edward the Third*, Act II, Scene 2, 157, the old editions read "But I will through a hellie spout of blood," which so takes Mr. Swinburne's fancy that he declaims about "this unspeakable and incomparable verse." Yet "hellie (i.e. helly) spout" is, as Mr. Tyrrell pointed out, but a scribe's error for "Hellespont"!

the Cambridge editors it differs from the Quarto for the worse in forty-seven places, yet according to the same critics differs for the better in twenty places. "We feel," says Dr. Garnett, "that *Hamlet* expresses more of Shakespeare's inner mind than any other of his works, and is the most likely of any to have been subjected to close revision." Among other things, as the same writer points out, "one trifling circumstance indicates revision; the alteration of *twelve* years, given in the First Quarto as the period for which Yorick's skull had been interred, to twenty-three, upon Shakespeare's remarking that he had made Hamlet a man of thirty"!

Whether, then, the Folio *Hamlet* is really to be looked upon as an abridgment for the stage, or whether, in spite of the omission of certain "purple patches," it is to be regarded as the result of the author's final revision, and therefore as "absolute in its numbers as he conceived it,"<sup>1</sup> may, as it seems to me, still be considered a question open to argument. But the point is that the play was "recast" and "revised"; and not only this, but many other plays. Thus *Romeo and Juliet* was "re-written"; *King Henry the Fifth* "is hardly less than transformed"; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in the original version of which "there was not," says Mr. Swinburne, "a note of poetry from end to end," is re-written till it becomes "the bright light interlude of fairyland child's play, which might not unfittingly have found place even within the moon-charmed circle of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." Other plays were treated in similar fashion, and, says Mr. Swinburne, "there is not one of his contemporaries whom we can reasonably imagine capable of the patience and self-respect which induced Shakespeare to re-write the triumphantly popular parts of *Romeo*, of *Falstaff*, and of *Hamlet*, with

<sup>1</sup> This expression, as Judge Webb points out, is Pliny's "liber numeris omnibus absolutus"—a quite Jonsonian adaptation. And see Petronius Arbiter quoted at p. 486 n.

an eye to the literary perfection and performance of work which, in its first outlines, had won the crowning suffrage of immediate and spectacular applause."

In the light of all this patient revision and re-writing, the absurdity of the manuscripts without "a blot" stands very clearly revealed. But how does it square with the theory that Shakespeare sold his plays to the company once for all, and preserved no manuscripts? Are we to suppose that he was called in from time to time to revise his plays at the theatre? But this would only be required, as Mr. Lee suggests, in case of the "revival" of a piece, and such a theory is absolutely at variance with Mr. Swinburne's judgment that the successive revisions were made not for the stage, but for the study—not for present profit, but for posterity. Here again we have an interesting and edifying instance of contradictory beliefs among our Stratfordian instructors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "If," writes Judge Webb, "it was Shakspeare who recast *Hamlet*, who re-wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, who renovated and transformed *Henry the Fifth*, who enriched and ennobled the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, who tempered and enriched *The Taming of the Shrew*, and who with consummate skill touched up the three plays which form the Trilogy of *Henry the Sixth*; if it was the Player who, to increase their value for the study, deliberately impaired their fitness for the stage; if, in fine, it was the Player who was resolved to make them worthy of himself and of his future students; if all this be admitted, the inevitable question rises, Why did the Player fail to publish what he had so laboriously prepared for publication? He was in the full possession of his powers. In his retirement he had ample leisure. He had no reason for concealment or disguise. If he was indifferent to fame, admittedly he was not indifferent to money," etc. Mr. Lee's answer would be, as I gather, the Player did not publish because he had sold all his rights to the company. But then we are confronted with two difficulties. First, all this revision could only have been done, from time to time, at the theatre, as Shakspeare was called upon to revise pieces for revival; and, secondly, we must reject the belief, so forcibly upheld by Mr. Swinburne, that the author revised for the study. If, on the other hand, we adopt the reasonable belief that Shakespeare worked on his own manuscripts, at his own times, and in his own chamber—that he had some appreciation of his own greatness, and wrote for posterity as well as for his own generation—then does it become increasingly hard to believe that the Player who died without book or manuscript of any sort (whether poem or drama) was the Shakespeare of immortality.

But, however this may be, surely it will now be conceded that it is reasonable to hold that Shakespeare was *not* indifferent to the fate of his works; that he did *not* write for "gain" only and not for "glory"; that he revised his plays again and again, not simply for the stage, but for the student; that he recognised, among other things, the greatness of his own *Hamlet*, and laboured "to make it worthy of himself and future students"—in a word that he was not a monstrous exception to all the known rules of human nature, but that, immortal genius as he was, he recognised that his works were worthy of immortality. But if this eminently reasonable view be accepted, then does it become ever increasingly difficult to identify this Shakespeare with the Player who retired to Stratford about 1611, leaving some twenty plays, and among them some of his very finest, unpublished, and, apparently, taking no interest in their fate.

Let us consider the strange case of *King Richard III.* This play was first published anonymously in 1597. "In the following year a second edition appeared, ascribed on the title-page to 'William Shake-speare.' Then followed a third edition in 1602; a fourth in 1605; a fifth in 1612; and a sixth in 1622. The changes made in these successive editions were not important; but when the Folio appeared in 1623 some very marked improvements had been effected in the text. Mr. Richard Grant White says that these additions and corrections are 'undeniable evidence that the copy in question had been subjected to carefullest revision at the hands (it seems to me beyond a doubt) of Shakespeare himself, by which it gained much smoothness and correctness and lost no strength. In minute beauties of rhythm, in choice of epithets, and in the avoidance of bald repetition, the play was greatly improved by this revision,' and was 'evidently from the perfecting hand of the author in the maturity of his powers.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have taken this extract from Mr. Edwin Reed's *Francis Bacon our Shakespeare*, p. 117.



To the same effect write the Cambridge editors: "Passages which in the Quarto are complete and consecutive are amplified in the Folio, the expanded text being quite in the manner of Shakespeare. The Folio, too, contains passages not in the quartos, which, though not necessary to the sense, yet harmonise so well, in sense and tone, with the context, that we can have no hesitation in attributing them to the author himself."

The question, then, arises, when was all this revising done—when were these new passages supplied "by the author himself"? The Stratfordian answer must be that all this work was done by Shakespeare, from time to time, before the spring of 1616, and probably before 1611, when, according to Mr. Lee, he "permanently settled at New Place."<sup>1</sup> But what had he to work upon, since, after selling his play to the company, he did not preserve his manuscript? Well, of course, there was always the "prompt-copy" at the theatre, so we are driven to suppose that he worked upon this, and thus, through Messrs. Heminge and Condell, this revised theatrical manuscript of *Richard III* (e.g.) came into the possession of the publishers of the Folio, having been inaccessible to Mathew Lawe, of St. Paul's Churchyard, who reissued this play in 1605, 1612, and 1622.

But here we are confronted with a rather curious fact. It appears that there were twelve printer's errors peculiar to the Quarto of 1622, and these all reappear in the Folio version of 1623. It follows from this that the editors of the Folio, instead of working on a manuscript, worked on the Quarto of 1622, and somehow omitted to correct the printer's errors of that Quarto. Is not the natural conclusion that "some person unknown" took the Quarto of 1622, revised it, added the new passages, and thus put it into the form in which it appeared in 1623? If so Mr. Reed has warrant for his assertion that "the changes in the

<sup>1</sup> As to "Shakespeare revising Shakespeare" at New Place, see p. 194 n.

play, comprising one hundred and ninety-three new lines and nearly two thousand retouched, were made by the author himself in 1622-3," some seven years after Shakspeare's death!

The case of *Othello* is very remarkable. This great tragedy was not printed in any form during the lifetime of Shakspeare, but six years after his death, viz. in 1622, it was published by Thomas Walkley. In 1623 a new version appeared in the Folio, not only with 160 new lines, but also with numerous and important emendations!

The second and third parts of *Henry VI* were published in 1594 and 1595 under the titles, respectively, of "The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous houses of Yorke and Lancaster," etc., and "The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of York, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt," etc. Second editions of both appeared in 1600; and in 1619, three years after Shakspeare's death, a third edition was published of the two plays together—"The Whole Contention betweene the two Famous Houses, Lancaster and Yorke etc. . . . Divided into two Parts and newly corrected and enlarged. Written by *William Shakespeare*, Gent." In the Folio of 1623 these same plays "appear under new titles, and the Second part now contained 1578 new lines and is otherwise much altered."<sup>1</sup>

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* was issued in 1602, and was reprinted in 1619, three years after Shakspeare's death. In the Folio of 1623 the play appears as a new and greatly enlarged version, with the number of lines increased from 1620 to 2701, the Folio version thus becoming nearly twice as long as that of the Quarto; and there are numerous emendations introduced. The case of *Richard II* equally deserves careful consideration. "This great play was first published anonymously in 1597. A second

<sup>1</sup> Bompas, *Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 100. As to the Trilogy of *Henry VI*, see chap. v.

edition, substantially a reprint, but with the name of 'William Shake-speare' as author on the title-page, followed in 1598; a third, with the famous deposition scene added to it, in 1608; and a fourth in 1615." (Edwin Reed, *Francis Bacon our Shakespeare*, p. 106.) The next appearance of the play was in the Folio of 1623. Now it is clear that the editor of the Folio based his version on the Fourth Quarto (1615). As Dr. Furnivall writes: "There is no doubt on this point; the quarto errors which have crept into the Folio text, and which prove its connection with the quarto version, are clearly traceable to quarto four as their immediate source." But nevertheless the Folio version, though based on this Quarto text, and repeating these errors which were peculiar to it, does not simply follow it, but contains many additions and improvements. The natural and reasonable supposition, surely, is that these were made subsequently to 1615. If so, by whom? William Shakspeare had retired to Stratford in 1611 at the latest, and probably before that date. In 1611, says Mr. Lee (p. 208), he had abandoned dramatic composition. He died in April, 1616. The Stratfordian editors are driven to assume hypothetical MSS. which somehow had not been made use of in the four previous editions throughout.

There are many other instances of the revision and re-writing of the Shakespearean dramas, some of which appear in the Folio as practically new compositions. When was it done, and by whom? The orthodox hypothesis that it was done by Shakspeare, from time to time, for the theatre, the manuscripts being left with the company or (in the case of not a few of the "transcripts") having found their way into the hands of "private owners," from whom they were purchased by the publishers of the Folio, seems, when closely examined, not a credible one. Is it not a more natural solution that "Shakespeare" himself revised his works for publication, and that some part,

at any rate, of this revision was done after 1616 and before 1623?

One more observation upon Mr. Lee's theory as to the sources from which the Folio was compiled. According to this hypothesis Shakspeare had made over all right in his manuscripts to "the acting company to which he attached himself." It was, then, the company, and not Messrs. Heminge and Condell, who owned the manuscripts, viz. the limited number of "prompt-copies" that remained "in the repertory of the theatre" in 1623. One would have expected, therefore, that the Folio volume would have been, as Judge Webb says, "accredited by the proprietors of the theatres with which Shakspeare was connected." But such was not the case. The two players, who were put forward as the nominal editors, were not even managers. They were "doubtless," as Cuthbert Burbage described them, "deserving men," but they seem to have been quite insignificant personages. It has already been remarked that although, in the Jonsonian Preface "to the great variety of Readers," words are put into their mouths which seem to imply that they "received" the manuscripts from Shakespeare himself, yet both in this Preface and the Epistle dedicatory they tell us that they have "collected" the plays. But of this we may be sure, viz. that neither the proprietors of the theatre nor the owners of the transcripts "in private hands" would have parted with the documents in their possession without being paid for them. As Judge Webb reminds us: "When the collected edition of the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher was published in 1647, the Stationer in his address to the Reader says:— 'Twere vain to mention the chargeableness of this work; for those who owned the manuscripts too well knew their value to make a cheap estimate of any of these pieces.'"<sup>1</sup> We may be sure that the owners of the Shakespeare

<sup>1</sup> We are told that the dramatist Shirley contributed this "address to the Reader."



manuscripts "well knew their value" also. Who, then, found the money to purchase them? According to Mr. Lee, the "syndicate" of printers and publishers who brought out the volume, at the head of whom stood William Jaggard, the printer, who "as the piratical publisher of *The Passionate Pilgrim* had long known the commercial value of Shakespeare's work."<sup>1</sup> Thus, then, finally disappear poor Heminge and Condell, with the unblotted manuscripts showing the easiness with which Shakespeare knocked off such "trifles" (so the Epistle dedicatory styles the plays) as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*! Of this faith it may, surely, be now said (*pace* Mr. Willis, K.C.) "nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum aere lavantur." It is pretty clear that if the editors of the Folio had, indeed, any blotless manuscripts before them, they must have been, as Mr. R. L. Stevenson suggests, "fair copies," and, if such they had, it would be interesting to know who supplied them. But for how much mythology has that statement of the manuscript without a blot been responsible!

On the other hand, if we accept Mr. Lee's theory of the syndicate, and the threefold source from which the Folio was compiled, we must accept the proposition that Shakespeare "wrote for the stage and not for the study," in direct contradiction to Mr. Swinburne's assertion that the poet revised his works "for the closet" and not for the stage—and not only in contradiction to Mr. Swinburne, as it seems to me, but also to reason and common sense, for we must shut our eyes to the evidence afforded by these constant, careful, and minute revisions, and we must accept that belief, "of all vulgar errors the most wanton, the most wilful, and the most resolutely tenacious of life," that "he wrote 'for gain, not glory,'" and thought no more of his dramatic works after he had been duly paid for them.

There is, of course, another hypothesis. It is that

<sup>1</sup> Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 250.

Shakespeare did not die in 1616; that Shakspere's second-best bedstead "was not Shakespeare's bedstead"; that "Shakespeare" had been adopted as a *nom de plume*<sup>1</sup> by a man of that transcendent genius, universal culture, world-wide philosophy, and unapproached dramatic powers which Shakespeare's works prove to have been among the attributes of their creator; a man moving in Court circles, among the highest of his day (as assuredly Shakespeare must have moved), who, for reasons not difficult to conceive, wished to conceal his identity. This hypothesis, which it is the fashion to ascribe to the morbid imagination of wild fanaticism, seems to me, I confess, an extremely reasonable one, far more so, in fact, than the faith, beset on every side with countless difficulties and mutually destructive theories, which, surrendering its reason to the high priests of the established and endowed literary church, is content to accept these immortal works as, one may almost say, the *Parerga* of a provincial player, thrown off with ease, "as an eagle may moult a feather or a fool may break a jest."

Supposing that there was such an author as I have suggested, he may well have conceived the idea of publishing a collected edition of the plays which had been written under the name of Shakespeare, and being himself busy with other matters, he may have entrusted the business to some "literary man," to some "good pen," who was at the time doing work for him; and why not to the man who wrote the commendatory verses, the "Lines to the Reader" (opposite to the engraving), and, as seems certain, the Preface "to the great variety of Readers"? It was necessary, of course, to come to an arrangement with the book-

<sup>1</sup> I prefer this old expression to the now more fashionable "pseudonym." *Nom de plume* means a name adopted to write under, and not for other purposes; whereas a "pseudonym" may be employed as a general *alias*, and still seems to many to bear with it some lurking suggestion of false pretence. Whether or not the French ever use, or used, the expression *nom de plume* seems to me quite immaterial.

sellers who owned most of the "copies" of the plays already entered in the Stationers' Registry; nor would theatrical manuscripts, such as "prompt-copies," giving the dramas in the forms which they had assumed in the process of evolution on the stage and adaptation to its requirements, have been neglected by any sensible editor. In the case of at least sixteen of the plays there were the already printed quartos to work upon. In other cases, if the author had been careless about keeping copies of his manuscripts, these would have to be collected from the theatre or from private persons (possibly "grand possessors") by purchase or otherwise. Then there were the twenty plays which had not as yet seen the light in printed form. These, "so many as not formerly entered to other men," would have now to be entered,<sup>1</sup> and the book would, of course, have to be published by a member, or members, of the Stationers' Company. If only the manuscripts of these sixteen plays, including the *Tempest* (the poet's last drama in which the magician announced his intention to break his staff, and to drown his book), had been preserved to us, possibly they might have thrown a flood of light upon the circumstances in which the work was produced.

But however this may have been, one thing is now certain, viz. that the statement to which the two players put their signatures is discredited. "Clearly they wished to suggest," says Mr. Lee, "that the printers worked exclusively from Shakespeare's undefiled autograph," and clearly this was not the fact. Moreover, as the Cambridge editors write, "as the 'setters forth' are thus convicted of a 'suggestio falsi' in one point, it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another." Meantime those who have waxed so indignant at the idea of accusing the worthy players, or good "old Ben," of being guilty of "telling a lie" may surely calm themselves.

<sup>1</sup> They were entered to Blount and Isaac Jaggard on November 8th, 1623, as above mentioned.

A lie, as Dr. Johnson has told us, is "a criminal falsehood," i.e. an unjustifiable falsehood; but though truth must certainly be the general rule of conduct, there are, as everybody knows, many falsehoods that are justifiable, some that it is actually a duty to tell. Sir Walter Scott, we are told, thought it perfectly justifiable for a writer who wished to preserve his anonymity, to deny, when questioned, the authorship of a work, since the interrogator had no right to put such a question to him. One need not doubt that those who republished the plays which had been issued under the *nom de plume* of "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare" thought themselves perfectly justified in so doing. As to the players, they merely acquiesced in their signatures being affixed to the preface written by the "literary man" according to the usual custom.

That the name "Shakespeare" had been used as a convenient pseudonym is a mere matter of fact. Plays, and poems too, had been published in that name which nobody now considers to have been written by the author of *Hamlet*, and seven of these, viz. *Pericles*, *The London Prodigal*, *The History of Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, *The Puritan Widow*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *The Tragedy of Locrine*, were actually included among Shakespeare's works by the editors of the 1664 Folio, in spite of the fact that the 1623 volume professed to be a collection of "The works of William Shakespeare, containing *all* his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, truely set forth according to their first original." Of these plays *Pericles*, as Judge Webb says (p. 82 n.), "had been published in quarto in 1609, and 1611, and 1619, and it had been published as by Shakespeare. Its omission in the [First] Folio, therefore, must have been a deliberate act, and not a default occasioned by any difficulty in finding or obtaining the original of the play." The name of Shakespeare appeared in full on the title-pages of *The Life of Oldcastle* in 1600, of *The London Prodigal* in 1605, and of *The York-*



shire Tragedy; while plays like *Lochrine*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, and *The Puritan Widow* appeared under the initials "W. S."

A word now as to the printers of the Shakespeare plays previously to 1623. Mr. Lee tells us (p. 247) that "only two of Shakespeare's works—his narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*—were published with his sanction and co-operation," and of the sixteen pre-existent "quarto" plays he tells us (p. 254) that they were "surreptitiously and imperfectly printed," and as to William Jaggard, Mr. Lee describes him as "a well-known pirate publisher." These statements, says Mr. Bompas (p. 101), seem at least exaggerated. For "James Roberts, who printed the quartos of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Hamlet* of 1604, enjoyed for nearly twenty years the privilege, under license from the Stationers' Company, of printing the playbills, a privilege he could scarcely have retained had he habitually pirated plays against the will of the author and players, and in defiance of the rules of the Stationers' Company." I do not think, however, that there is much force in this. All that the Stationers' Company was concerned with was to see that nothing was published without their licence, and this J. Roberts was careful to obtain. There is nothing to show that he acted in defiance of the rules of the company.<sup>1</sup> As to the Jaggards, Mr. Bompas writes: "The Jaggard family, John, William, Isaac, and E. Jaggard, were among the chief printers of London. William Jaggard was appointed in 1611 printer to the City of London; and in 1613 the Jaggards bought James Roberts' business. They also published four editions of Bacon's *Essays* in 1606, 1612, 1613, and 1624. William Aspley and John Smethwick

<sup>1</sup> The 1600 Quarto of *The Merchant of Venice* was duly registered on July 22nd, 1598, with the *proviso* "that it be not printed by the said James Roberts or any other whatsoever without licence first had from the Right Honorable the Lord Chamberlain." See chapter x on "Sixteenth-Century Copyright."

had each published two of the Shakespeare quartos.<sup>1</sup> It is not likely that Ben Jonson would select as publishers or printers of the Shakespeare Folio men notorious for having pirated the plays." This argument, however, supposes that the author of the plays had really objected to the publication of these quartos: which seems very doubtful indeed.

Meantime we may just note in passing, and for what it is worth, that the noble Lords, to whom this Folio of 1623 was dedicated, were both friends of Bacon; that the Jaggards, the printers, had published four editions of Bacon's *Essays*; that Jonson, who was so closely concerned in the publication of the Folio, had become Bacon's friend and literary assistant, and one of the "good pens," as Archbishop Tenison tells us, who aided him in translating his works into Latin; and that in 1621 Jonson was staying with Bacon at Gorhambury and wrote a sonnet in praise of his sixtieth birthday. But, no doubt, that way madness lies!

Of the engraving by Martin Droeshout and the lines by Jonson and others prefixed to the Folio volume I have spoken elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> Both William Aspley and John Smethwick were members of the syndicate whose names figure on the Folio colophon.

## CHAPTER X

### SIXTEENTH-CENTURY COPYRIGHT

**I**T is very necessary to consider the law of copyright in Elizabethan times. It is sometimes said that there was no such law in the sixteenth century. Thus Mr. Lee writes (p. 45 n.): "In the absence of any law of copyright, publishers often defied the wishes of the owner of manuscripts." And in his Preface to the Folio Facsimile he expands this as follows: "The theatrical manager viewed the publication of plays as injurious to his interests, and until a play had wholly exhausted its popularity on the stage he deprecated its appearance in print. But however indifferent the Elizabethan dramatist was to the reading public, and however pronounced were the manager's objections to the publication of plays, there developed among playgoers and others at the close of the sixteenth century a wish to peruse, in private, dramas that had achieved success in the theatre. Publishers quickly sought to gratify this desire for their own ends. *In the absence of any statutory prohibition they freely enjoyed the right of publishing any manuscript, whatever might be the channel through which it reached their hands, provided that they purchased a licence for its publication of the Stationers' Company.*<sup>1</sup> At times failure on the part of an author to keep his manuscripts in safe custody, at times the venality of an amanuensis, rendered manuscript

<sup>1</sup> But, as we shall presently see (p. 304), no person was allowed to print "any book or anything for sale or traffic" unless he was himself a member of the Stationers' Company.

literature accessible to the publisher without the author's personal intervention. In such circumstances it was not the publisher's habit to consult an author about the publication of his work, and in the case of plays it was the rule rather than the exception for the manuscript to reach the publishers through other hands than those of the dramatist. The publisher was, moreover, wont to ignore the claim to ownership in a play that was set up by the theatrical manager who had bought it of the writer."<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen therefore, that, according to Mr. Lee, if a publisher, in Shakespearean times, got hold of a manuscript which had been stolen from the custody of the author—say if he bought it from a thief, or from a “venal amanuensis”—there was no law to restrain him from publishing it for his own profit, in spite of the protests of the author, so long as he obtained the necessary licence from the Stationers' Company.

I hope, and I will endeavour to show, that this is not an accurate statement of the law of England in the times referred to.

It will be observed that though Mr. Lee in the first of the above extracts speaks of “the absence of any law of copyright,” in the second extract he limits this general statement by speaking of “the absence of any statutory prohibition”; and he assumes that if there were no such statutory prohibition there was no law to prevent the publisher from acting in the unscrupulous manner supposed. Mr. Lee does not seem to have considered whether such iniquitous proceedings would have been allowed by the common law of England. Yet it has been held over and over again in our courts that an author has a right at common law to prevent the publication by another of his manuscript without his permission. “The term ‘copyright,’” as Baron Parke said in the case of *Jefferys v. Boosey* (4 H.L.C. 920), “may be understood in two different senses.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to First Folio Facsimile, p. xi. The italics are mine.



The author of a literary composition, which he commits to paper belonging to himself, has an undoubted right at common law to the piece of paper on which his composition is written, and to the copies which he chooses to make of it for himself and others. If he lends a copy to another his right is not gone; if he sends it to another under an implied undertaking that he is not to part with it, or publish it, he has a right to enforce that undertaking. The other sense of that word is the exclusive right of multiplying copies; the right of preventing all others from copying, by printing or otherwise, a literary work which the author has published. This must be carefully distinguished from the other sense of the word."

As to copyright in the first sense of the word, the law is thus stated in Mr. Copinger's well-known work on the subject (Third Edition, p. 7): "Every man has the right *at common law* to the first publication of his own manuscript; it cannot without his consent be even seized by his creditors as property. He has, in fact, supreme control over his own productions, and may either exclude others from their enjoyment or may dispose of them as he pleases. He may limit the number of persons to whom they shall be imparted and impose such restrictions as he pleases upon their use."

In the celebrated case of *Millar v. Taylor* (4 Burrows 2303), which was decided in the time of Lord Mansfield, the law on this point was thus stated by Mr. Justice Yates.<sup>1</sup> "Most certainly the sole proprietor of any copy may determine whether he will print it or not. If any person takes it to the press without his consent, he is certainly a trespasser; though he came by it by legal means, as by loan or devolution; for he transgresses the bounds of his trust, and therefore is a trespasser. . . . Ideas are free,

<sup>1</sup> This learned judge dissented from the judgment of the majority of the court on certain other points, but the judges were unanimous on the point of the common-law right of an author to the first printing of his manuscript.

but while the author confines them to his study, they are like birds in a cage, which none but he can have a right to let fly; for till he thinks proper to emancipate them, they are under his own dominion."

This, therefore, being part of the common law, had, according to these learned judges, always been the law of the land. But, it may be objected, it is one thing for judges in the time of Lord Mansfield and afterwards to lay it down that such, in their opinion, must always have been the law of England, and another thing to prove that that law was recognised, and could have been enforced, in Star Chamber times. At first sight there seems to be much force in the objection, for I do not know that any records can be produced showing that authors in those old days had successfully appealed to the courts in vindication of their common-law right to prevent the unauthorised publication of their works; but, nevertheless, I think we may confidently assert that English law would never have sanctioned a proceeding so entirely iniquitous as that in which, according to Mr. Lee, it quietly acquiesced, viz. that a publisher might, without let or hindrance, publish a stolen manuscript if only he had obtained the licence of the Stationers' Company for such publication. The judgments in *Millar v. Taylor* are direct authority to the effect that our law never tolerated any such inequitable proceedings,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As to the Star Chamber, which claimed a penal jurisdiction in all matters relating to printing and publishing, Mr. Justice Willes, giving judgment in *Millar v. Taylor*, says, "No case of a prosecution in the Star Chamber for printing without licence or against letters patent, or pirating another man's copy, or any other disorderly printing has been found. *Most of the judicial proceedings of the Star Chamber are lost or destroyed.*" (We know, however, that unlicensed printing was severely punished.) It is understood that the judgment delivered by this learned judge was really the judgment of Lord Mansfield. As to the *civil* jurisdiction of the Court of Star Chamber, it seems to have been confined to certain admiralty and testamentary matters, suits between corporations, or between foreigners, or British subjects and foreigners, and "sometimes between men of great power and interest, which could not be tried with fairness by the common law." (Hallam, *Const. History*, Vol. III, chap. VIII.) Hudson, who practised in the Court at the

and show that the right in question was recognised as a common-law right in the early part of the seventeenth century. Thus, Mr. Justice Willes (p. 2314), after referring to Milton's *Areopagitica*, or "Speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing" (1644),<sup>1</sup> and pointing out that Milton there speaks of "the just retaining of each man his several copy, which God forbid should be gainsaid," draws attention to the Statute 14 Car. II, 33 (1662), which prohibits printing without the consent of the *owner*, upon pain of forfeiting the book and 6s. 8d. for each copy, half to the king and half to the *owner*, to be sued for by the owner in six months. "The Act," says the learned judge, "*supposes an ownership at common law*, and the right itself is particularly recognised in the latter part of the third section of the Act where the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of the Universities are forbid to meddle with any book or books the right of printing whereof doth solely and properly belong to any particular person or persons. The sole property of the owner is here acknowledged in express words as a common-law right, and the legislature who passed that Act could never have entertained the most distant idea that the productions of the brain were not a subject matter of property. To support an action on this Statute *ownership* must be proved, or the plaintiff could not recover, because the action is to be brought by the *owner*, who is to have a moiety of the penalty. The

beginning of the seventeenth century, and was its historian and apologist, writes as to *civil causes*: "I know men will wonder that I should offer them to be subject to this Court"; but he shows that some, nevertheless, fell within its jurisdiction, such as those mentioned by Hallam, and a few others. (See *Collectanea Juridica*, Vol. II.) Further light on the Star Chamber may be obtained from Mr. J. S. Burn's work (1870), *Reports of Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission*, printed for the Camden Society, and edited by Dr. S. Rawson Gardiner; and *Select Cases before the King's Council in the Star Chamber*, 1477-1509, edited for the Selden Society by I. S. Leadam, 1903.

<sup>1</sup> Milton, it will be remembered, had been attacked by the Stationers' Company for publishing pamphlets without a licence.

various provisions of this Act effectually prevented piracies WITHOUT [*sic*] actions at law or bills in equity by owners" —i.e. the Act provided a new and convenient remedy for the author whose copyright had been infringed, but, of course, left intact the existing remedies for the breach of this *common-law right*, viz. by action at law, or by filing a Bill in Equity; and the statute is itself an indisputable proof that such remedies were before that date open to an aggrieved author. But quite independently of such excellent authority, it would have been impossible to conceive that our law would have refused to provide a remedy for the violation of so elementary a right.

At the same time it may well have been that, in practice, it was found difficult and troublesome for an author to enforce such a right. The offending publisher would, of course, be a member of the powerful Stationers' Company, and the poor author might constantly find that it was better to "take it lying down" than endeavour to obtain justice by litigation.

Let us now consider copyright in the second sense of the word, viz. "the exclusive right of multiplying copies; the right of preventing all others from copying, by printing or otherwise, a literary work which the author has published." This right had its origin in these sixteenth-century days, when "copy" became the technical term for the right to produce copies, i.e. the copyright. Under the circumstances of the time, however, the right became lodged not in the author, but in the publisher of a literary work. Copyright, in fact, had its origin, not in any enlightened desire to protect authors, but in the desire of "authority," as represented by the sovereign, and especially by the Star Chamber, to prohibit the publication of all works not especially licensed for that purpose. One of the means by which this was accomplished was by granting a monopoly to the Stationers' Company. From the time of its foundation, that Company had kept a



register at their hall in which the members were required to enter the titles of all books and other works printed by them. At first this was done under a private ordinance of the Company, which, of course, affected its members only; but in 1556 the Company was incorporated by a Charter of Philip and Mary, under which, and under a decree of the Star Chamber of the same year, no person was allowed to print "any book or anything for sale or traffic" unless he was a member of the Stationers' Company.<sup>1</sup> In 1559 this Charter was confirmed by Elizabeth, and under her Injunctions of the same year it was provided that every book was to be licensed by Her Majesty, or by six of the Privy Council, or perused and licensed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London, the Chancellors of both Universities, the Bishop being Ordinary (i.e. Ecclesiastical Judge as well), and the Archdeacon also of the place where such should be printed, or by two of them, the Ordinary of the place to be always one; and the names of the allowing Commissioners were to be added at the end of the work for a testimony of the allowance thereof. "Pamphlets, Plays, and ballads" were to be so licensed by any three of the Commissioners as appointed in the City of London to hear and determine causes ecclesiastical tending to the execution of the Statutes of Uniformity.

By a decree of the Star Chamber, dated June 23, 1586, it was ordered that "no person shall imprint or cause to be imprinted or suffer by any means to his knowledge his press, letters [= type], or other instruments to be occupied in printing of any book work copy matter or thing whatsoever except the same book, etc., hath been heretofore allowed or hereafter shall be allowed before the printing thereof, according to the order appointed by the Queen's

<sup>1</sup> Ninety-seven persons named, with Master and Warden, were incorporated as a society of the art of a stationer, and no person in England was to practise the art of printing unless one of the Society.

Majesty's Injunctions, and been first seen and perused by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London for the time being, or any one of them," exceptions being allowed for the Queen's Printer and the Books of the Common Law. No printing presses were to be permitted except in London and the two Universities.<sup>1</sup>

Under the system so established an author would, as it seems, sell his manuscript "out and out" to a member of the Stationers' Company, who, having duly obtained a licence to print the work, and having entered the title on the register of the Company, would thenceforth be the owner of the "copy," or copyright. Assignments of such a right had also to be effected by entry on the register. An author might, of course, sell his manuscript to another individual not a member of the Company (to a theatrical manager, for example), and the purchaser might subsequently assign his right to a "stationer" for publication. Thus the copyright in the second sense of the word always became vested in a "stationer."<sup>2</sup>

From all this it would seem (1) that an author could restrain any person from publishing his manuscript, or

<sup>1</sup> See Arber's transcripts of entries in the Stationers' Register, Vol. I, p. 13; Vol. II, p. 807. All these royal proclamations and decrees of the Star Chamber were, I take it, of very doubtful legality, but they regulated procedure in the matter of printing and publishing till the abolition of the Star Chamber by 16 Car. I, c. 10. It may be noticed that Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bacon's old tutor, who licensed *Venus and Adonis* for publication, "aggravated the rigour of preceding times" by his hostility to free printing. It was at his instigation that the Star Chamber published these ordinances for the regulation of the Press. (Hallam, *Const. Hist.*, Vol. I, chap. v.)

<sup>2</sup> The preamble to the by-laws of the Company, made August 17, 1681, runs as follows: "Whereas several members of the Company have great part of their estates in *copies*, and by ancient usage of this Company, where any book is *duly entered in the register book of this Company*, such person, to whom such entry is made, is and always hath been reputed and taken to be *proprietor* of such book or copy, and ought to have the sole printing thereof; which privilege and interest is now of late often violated and abused; it is therefore ordained," etc. See the above-cited case of *Millar v. Taylor* as to this.

could bring an action against him for so doing, so long as he had not disposed of his right to it; and (2) that the publisher could prevent any other publisher from issuing the work. At the same time it is clear that the law was frequently violated (indeed, the by-laws of the Stationers' Company above referred to assert as much with regard to the violation by one member of the Company of the rights of another in his "copy"), whether because of the difficulty of enforcing it, or through the supineness of authors; and that in consequence authors were frequently defrauded by surreptitious copies of their works being issued by "piratical" publishers. Moreover, when the author had disposed of his work to a printer, the latter might, as it seems, do what he liked with it in the way of alteration, addition, omission, etc., without being liable to be called to account by the writer. Altogether it was not a very happy time for authors. Nevertheless, it seems tolerably clear that if Shakespeare acquiesced in the unauthorised publication of any of his manuscripts, the right to which he had not disposed of, whether of dramas or of other works (the Sonnets e.g.), it was not because there was, as Mr. Lee asserts, no law of copyright at all to which he might have appealed. On the contrary, we must conclude that for some reason or other he preferred to put up with the injustice done to him rather than to appeal to the law for protection. I do not think "old Ben" would have "taken it lying down" in this way. We do not hear of *him* gazing with equanimity on "stalls laden with unwarranted and corrupt versions of his works," as, according to Mr. Lee, was the fact in Shakespeare's case. It seems that the "piratical publishers" were less anxious to put forward "surreptitious copies" of *his* dramas and poems, and I do not think it was merely because he was less popular with the public. Shakespeare, however, raised no protest even when very inferior works by other writers were published in his name. Good, easy-going man!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 279, and note.

## CHAPTER XI

### • SHAKESPEARE ALLUSIONS AND ILLUSIONS

WE are frequently told that the best answer to sceptics in the matter of the Stratfordian authorship is to be found in the wealth of contemporaneous allusion to Shakespeare, and we are referred to Dr. Ingleby's *Centurie of Prayse* and Furnivall's *Three Hundred Fresh Allusions to Shakspeare*. Well, we turn to those two volumes, and we find collected every possible allusion to Shakespeare, real or imaginary, within the dates indicated, which the industry of man has been able to bring to light from carefully ransacked records; but of evidence in support of the proposition to be proved it appears to me that there is little or none.

What is it we should expect to find in contemporary records? We should expect to find allusions to dramatic and poetical works published under the name of "Shakespeare"; we should expect to find Shakespeare spoken of as a poet and a dramatist; we should expect, further, to find some few allusions to Shakespeare or Shakspeare the Player. And these, of course, we do find; but these are not the object of our quest. What we require is evidence to establish the identity of the player with the poet and dramatist; to prove that the player was the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. *That* is the proposition to be established, and *that* the allusions fail, as it appears to me, to prove. At any rate, they do not disprove the theory <sup>v</sup> that the true authorship was hidden under a pseudonym.



Let us, however, examine some of these allusions to Shakespeare, real or supposed. I will take first the one that is so constantly quoted by editors, and biographers, and commentators, as showing that as early as the year 1592 Shakspeare was known as one who had given proof of "facetious grace in writing, that approves his art." I refer, of course, to the well-known passage in Chettle's preface to the *Kind-Hart's Dreame*. Now as to this supposed allusion I have two propositions to make. First, that it is, demonstrably, not an allusion to Shakspeare (or Shakespeare) at all; and, secondly, that to cite it, as is constantly done, in such a manner that the reader is led to suppose that Shakspeare's name actually appears on the face of the document, and that there is no doubt whatever about the matter, is simply to disregard the claims of common honesty.

But in order to deal satisfactorily with Chettle I must first examine Greene's equally well-known utterance in his *Groatsworth of Wit*. This work was probably first published in 1592, having been entered at Stationers' Hall on the 20th of September in that year, but the earliest known edition bears date 1596.<sup>1</sup> It is thus addressed: "To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities." Now there are three playwrights (or, as Chettle subsequently calls them, "play-makers") addressed, who are identified by Fleay (following Collier) as Marlowe, Peele, and Lodge,<sup>2</sup> the principal playwrights of the time. "Base-

<sup>1</sup> Robert Greene died on September 3rd, 1592.

<sup>2</sup> Some have supposed that Marlowe, Peele, and Nash are meant, but it seems impossible that Nash can be referred to, for Chettle when he makes his apology for publishing Greene's book says: "I protest it was all Greene's, not mine nor Master Nashes, as some unjustly have affirmed"; and he writes, he says, "as well to purge Master Nashe of that he did not, as to justifie what I did." If Nash was himself addressed by Greene he would hardly have been suspected of being the author of Greene's book. (See also Fleay's *Life of Shakespeare*, pp 110, 260.)

mindes men al three of you," writes Greene, "if by my miserie ye be not warned; for unto none of you, like me, sought those burres to cleave; those puppets, I meane, that speake from our mouths, those anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they al have beene beholding, is it not like that you to whome they all have beene beholding, shall, were ye in that case that I am now, be both at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. I know the best husband of you all will never prove an usurer, and the kindest of them all will never prove a kinde nurse; yet, whilst you may, seeke you better maisters, for it is pittie men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes."

The line "O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide" occurs in the old quarto play of the *True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York, and the Death of Good King Henry the Sixth*, being the second part of the *Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, and reappears in *Henry VI*, Part I, Act I, Scene 4. It is commonly assumed that in "Shake-scene" we have an allusion to Shakespeare, but if so it seems clear that it is as an actor rather than as an author that he is attacked.<sup>1</sup> All

<sup>1</sup> Greene, writing in 1590, gives us an imaginary interview between Tully and Roscius, in which the orator thus addresses the actor: "Why, Roscius, art thou proud with Æsop's crow, being pranked with the glory of others' feathers? Of thyself thou canst say nothing. . . . What sentence thou utterest on the stage flows from the censure of our wits," etc. This clearly explains the meaning of the "crow beautified with our feathers." Nash, in

Greene's invective is launched at the players, of whom he speaks with great bitterness. They are the burrs that cleave to the writers, the puppets that speak from the mouths of others; "anticks garnisht" in the colours provided for them by others. They are "apes" and "rude grooms." Why Greene should have been so particularly bitter against the players, and why he should have thought it necessary so seriously to warn his fellow playwrights against them, we do not know. Possibly it was only because they were well paid, whereas the dramatic author who supplied them received a miserable pittance for his work; because as the writer of *The Return from Parnassus* puts it,

With mouthing words that better wits have framed,  
They purchase lands, and now Esquires are namde.<sup>1</sup>

Possibly he had some further and more personal reasons for his spleen. Anyhow, it is obvious that he is not attacking the players generally as *authors*. He does not accuse them of passing off other men's work as their own. What he says is, that they are beholden to him and other dramatic authors for the words which they speak, and so reap a rich harvest from the wits of others, yet that in his trouble he is forsaken of them, though in prosperity they stuck to him like

his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, writes, "Sundry other sweet gentlemen I do know, that we [*sic*] have vaunted their pens in private devices, and tricked up a company of taffaty fools with their feathers," etc.; upon which Richard Simpson's comment is: "Notice this; it proves that when Greene, three years later, called Shakespeare 'an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers,' he need not have meant anything more than that he was an actor, who had gained his reputation by speaking the verses that the poet had written for him." (See *The School of Shakspeare*, Vol. II, pp. 359, 368.)

<sup>1</sup> Better it is 'mongst fiddlers to be chiefe  
Than at a plaier's trencher beg relief.  
But ist not strange these mimick apes should prize  
Unhappy schollers at a hireling rate?"

*The Return from Parnassus*, Act V, Scene I.

For the reading "namde," instead of the usually received "made," see Mr. Macray's Edition.

"burrs," and such also is likely to be the fate of his fellow playwrights. But among the players he specially singles out Shakspere (if, indeed, Shakspere is meant), as being not only, as they all were, "garnisht in our colours," and "beautified with our feathers," but also "an upstart crow," and one who was "in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country." So far there is nothing which necessarily implies that he accuses the player of holding himself out as a writer also, but the words "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you," do seem to have that implication. To bombast appears to have meant originally to stuff out with cotton wool; as in "they bombast their doublets."<sup>1</sup> Had the word stood alone it might, perhaps, have meant, as applied to a player, to rant, or to "gag," which in theatrical slang means to add words of one's own to those of the author; for "Bombastes" is not a turgid writer, but a speaker of inflated and thrasonic language, a man of "mouthing words." Moreover, *Shake-scene* suggests the ranting actor, as in *The Puritaine* (1607), where Pye-boord says: "Have you never seene a stalking-stamping Player, that will raise a tempest with his tounge, and thunder with his heels?"<sup>2</sup> But the player here is accused of supposing himself to be "as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you," viz. the playwrights whom Greene is addressing, which certainly looks as if he meant to suggest that this

<sup>1</sup> Bulwer (1650) cited in the *New English Dictionary*. In Scott's *Abbot* we read: "My stomach has no room for it, it is too well bombasted out with straw and buckram." Greene, by the way, speaks of the players as "these buckram gentlemen." Dr. Ingleby quotes a passage from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* where the author complains that "in tricking up themselves men go beyond women . . . more like Players, Butterflies, Baboones, Apes, Antickes, than men."

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Dr. Ingleby, who also compares Jonson's lines:—

"to hear thy Buskin tread,  
And shake a Stage."



Shake-scene supposed himself able to compose, as well as to "mouth" verses.<sup>1</sup>

Now, as I have already said, there seems to be some reason for supposing that the *Contention* was written by Greene himself in conjunction with Marlowe, and therefore it has been suggested that Greene is alluding to the new edition of the *True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*, which had been written by Player Shakspeare according to the orthodox view, but by somebody else under the pseudonym of Shakespeare according to the heretical view. According to this theory, Shakespeare, as the "upstart crow," seems to be one of those alluded to by "R. B. Gent" in *Greene's Funeralls*, 1594, where he writes:—

Greene, is the pleasing object of an eie ;  
Greene, pleasde the eies of all that lookt uppon him ;  
Greene, is the ground of everie Painter's die ;  
Greene, gave the ground, to all that wrote upon him.  
Nay more, the men that so eclipst his fame  
*Purloynde his Plumes*, can they deny the same ?

This, at any rate, affords a very good explanation of Greene's wrath against Shakespeare. But is it certain that by "Shake-scene" Greene intended Shakspeare? It is usually so assumed because the parodied line occurs in *Henry VI*, Part 3, which was published in the Folio of 1623, under the name of Shakespeare. But *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke* was published anonymously (1595), and, as I have elsewhere endeavoured to show, it was not written by Shakespeare. This seems to detract not a little from the force of the argument of those who think that there is here an allusion to Shakspeare. At any rate, it is only a surmise, but, even assuming its validity,

<sup>1</sup> Thus in Dekker's *Satiro-Mastix* Sir Rees ap Vaughan calls upon Horace (Jonson) to "swear not to bombast out a new Play with the olde lynings of Jests, stolen from the Temple Revels," and Nash, in his introduction to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), writes of those "who, mounted on the stage of arrogance, think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse."

the utmost that we should be entitled to say is that Greene here accuses Player Shakspeare of putting forward, as his own, some work, or perhaps some parts of a work, for which he was really indebted to another. Anyhow, Greene refers to this "Shake-scene" as being an impostor, an upstart crow beautified with the feathers which he has stolen from the dramatic writers ("our feathers"); a "Poet ape," to borrow Jonson's expression; a "Johannes factotum," who could do a little bit of everything, and withal self-conceited, and so far from being, as Shakspeare is so often represented, an easy-going, genial, boon companion, that he is fitly described as hiding a tiger's heart under a player's hide! This is indeed strange, but such is poor Greene's celebrated death-bed supposed allusion to Player Shakspeare in 1592, that is, before "Shakespeare" had published "the first heir" of his "invention." When it is closely examined I do not think it is of very much assistance to the biographer, more especially as it cannot be said with certainty that it is an allusion to Shakspeare at all.<sup>1</sup>

But now we are in a position to deal with Chettle's equally famous allusion. Chettle, who had apparently published Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, subsequently issued a book called the *Kind-Hart's Dreame*, which was entered at Stationers' Hall on December 8th, 1592. In the Preface to this work are the following words: "About three months since died Mr. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry booksellers' hands, among others his 'Groatsworth of Wit,' in which a letter, *written to divers play makers, is offensively by one or two of them taken*;"<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that in 1592, when the *Groatsworth of Wit* was written, the name "Shake-speare" (with or without the hyphen) was unknown to literature, nor did it appear on any play till 1598. The *True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York* was not published till 1595, and then anonymously, as above mentioned. The first and second parts of the *Contention between the Two Famous Houses* were published together as *The Whole Contention*, "written by William Shakespeare, Gent," in 1619. As to these plays see chap. v.

<sup>2</sup> My italics.

because on the dead they cannot be avenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a living author, and after tossing it two and fro, no remedy but it must light on me. How I have all the time of my conversing in printing hindred the bitter inveying against schollers, it hath been very well knowne, and how in that I dealt I can sufficiently proove. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other, whome at that time, I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that, as I have moderated the heate of living writers, and might have usde my owne discretion, especially in such a case, the author dead,—that I did not I am as sory as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe have seene his demeanour no lesse civil, than he excelent in the qualitie he professes;—besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty; and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art.”

It is absolutely clear from this that Greene's address to the three playwrights had been taken offensively by two of them. “With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted,” says Chettle, “and with one of them I care not if I never be.” He then goes on to speak of “the other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had.” This “other” may be either one of the two who took offence, whose acquaintance Chettle made subsequently, or it may mean the third of the play-makers, who seems not to have taken the matter offensively. Chettle wishes he had spared this one by cutting offensive matter out of Greene's book (as he might easily have done, the author being dead), which implies that this one had, at any rate, some cause for offence. But whoever this “other” was, it is clear that he was one of the three “play-makers,” and could not possibly have been “Shakespeare,” who was not one of those addressed by Greene, not being one of “those Gentlemen, his Quondam acquaintance, that spend

their wits in making Plaies." In fact, when the thing is looked into, there seems to be no pretence at all for saying that Chettle here makes an allusion to "Shakespeare."

Mr. Fleay saw this plainly enough. In his *Life of Shakespeare* (p. 119) he writes as follows: "The line 'O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide' occurs in *Richard, Duke of York* (commonly but injudiciously referred to as the *True Tragedy*), a play written for Pembroke's men, probably in 1590, on which *Henry VI* was founded. It is almost certainly by Marlowe, the best of the three whom Greene addresses. In December Chettle issued his *Kind-heart's Dream*, in which he apologises for the offence given to Marlowe in the *Groatsworth of Wit*, 'because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes; besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty and his facetious grace in writing which approves his art.' To Peele he makes no apology, nor indeed was any required. Shakespeare was not one of those who took offence; they are expressly stated to have been two of the three authors addressed by Greene, the third (Lodge) not being in England."

Whether Mr. Fleay was right in identifying Marlowe with the playwright to whom Chettle makes his apology may, perhaps, be doubtful, for Chettle, as I conceive, deals separately with Marlowe in the following passage: "For the first, whose learning I reverence, and, at the perusing of Greene's booke, stroke out what then in conscience I thought he in some displeasure writ; or, had it been true, yet to publish it was intolerable; him I would wish to use me no worse than I deserve." But however this may be Mr. Fleay is clearly right in saying that there is no reference to Shakespeare.

Mr. Castle's legal mind has also appreciated that fact.



"Chettle's meaning is clear," he writes.<sup>1</sup> "The letter of Greene was addressed to three play-writers, said to be Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele. Two of these complain. One of those complaining he does not know nor care to know; the other he is sorry for, as he is of very excellent demeanour, etc. These two I consider must be Lodge and Peele, for of the first, Marlowe, he speaks separately." Then, after citing the passage which I have just quoted from Chettle, he proceeds: "This is also clear. Marlowe was the Nestor of the rising literary world—the giant whom they all respected. Chettle simply submits himself to his judgment, but deals with the other as pointed out. Yet Malone twisted this apology of Chettle's to one of the two play-makers to whom the letter was written, and who had taken offence, as an apology to Shakespeare. It is difficult to see how the language could be so understood, even by one of his most ardent admirers. The letter was not addressed to Shakespeare; he was not one of the play-writers; he was a pretender in Greene's eyes; and as far as one can see he was severely left alone by Chettle. Of course it is immaterial whether Chettle apologised to him, or to Peele, or Lodge.<sup>2</sup> But it is material to see whether a whole succession of writers, Malone, Steevens, Dyce, Collier, Halliwell, Knight, and a host of minor authors, are so blinded by their admiration for Shakespeare, that they cannot read a simple document correctly, or are such simple followers of Malone that they have adopted his mistakes and made no inquiry for themselves."<sup>3</sup>

We see, then, that a careful examination of the document under consideration renders it quite clear that

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson, and Greene*, by E. T. Castle, Q.C. (now K.C.), 1897.

<sup>2</sup> I do not agree in this. It is by no means immaterial.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. W. L. Courtney has been led into this same error in his article on "Christopher Marlowe." *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1905. So too Monsieur Jusserand (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 300). This pestilent perversion is as infectious as the plague.

Chettle makes no allusion to Shakespeare; and we see that this has been pointed out by such a distinguished Shakespearean as Mr. Fleay, and that a King's Counsel, accustomed to pronounce on the construction and interpretation of documents, has expressed himself very decidedly to the same effect; notwithstanding which we find that the modern biographers and critics, Mr. Sidney Lee, Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, and Mr. Churton Collins, not only persist in this error, not only ignore all that Mr. Castle and Mr. Fleay have said on the subject, but actually so write as to convey to the mind of the ordinary reader that Chettle makes mention of Shakespeare by name in the Preface to his work, and that, consequently, the supposed allusion is not a matter of inference and argument, but a fact patent on the document itself! The usual way of doing this is by quietly slipping in Shakespeare's name in a bracket, without any admonition to the reader that his name is not mentioned by Chettle at all.

Thus Mr. Sidney Lee writes (p. 53): "In December, 1592, Greene's publisher, Henry Chettle, prefixed an apology for Greene's attack on the young actor to his *Kind-Hartes Dreame*, a tract reflecting on phases of contemporary social life. 'I am as sorry,' Chettle wrote, 'as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe have seene his [i.e. Shakespeare's] demeanour no lesse civill than he [is]<sup>1</sup> excelent in the qualitie he professes," etc. etc.<sup>2</sup> Messrs. Garnett and Gosse adopt

<sup>1</sup> The brackets are, of course, in the original. Mr. Lee also writes (p. 224): "At the opening of Shakespeare's career Chettle wrote of his 'civil demeanour,'" etc.

<sup>2</sup> The commentators, quietly appropriating this as an allusion to Shakspeare, explain "quality" here as a reference to the actor's profession. But the word is used of any profession or occupation. Thus in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Act IV, Scene 2, Shift says: "I have now reconciled myself to other courses, and profess a living out of my other qualities." And in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Act IV, Scene 1) the word is used of an outlaw's occupation, Valentine being addressed by one of the band as "a man of such perfection as we do in our quality much want." Again, Thomas

exactly the same very convenient expedient,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. D. H. Lambert, in his *Cartæ Shakespeareanæ* (p. 3), follows suit by calmly annotating Chettle's words, "the other whom at that time I did not so much spare," etc., with a brief "i.e. Shakespeare"! Mr. Churton Collins (*Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 108) writes: "What is certain is, as we know from Greene and Chettle, that he (i.e. Shakspere) was writing plays before 1593."<sup>2</sup>

A more dishonest method of writing biography than this can hardly be imagined. I think I have made it quite clear that Chettle makes no reference to Shakespeare; but even if this could be disputed, surely it is the duty of every honest writer to inform the reader that the supposed Shakespearean allusion is only a matter of argument and hypothesis, and that there is high authority for denying its existence! To insert Shakespeare's name in

Heywood, in a letter to his bookseller, Nicholas Okes, prefixed to his treatise, "An Apology for Actors" (1612), uses the word with reference to a printer. "The infinite faults escaped in my book of Britain's Troy, by the negligence of the printer, as the misquotations, etc. . . . when I would have taken a particular account of the errata, the printer answered me, he would not publish his own disworkmanship, but rather let his own fault lie upon the neck of the author, and being fearful that others of his quality had been of the same nature and condition," etc. etc. Greene uses the word "faculty" of the actor's profession. See Simpson's *School of Shakespere*, Vol. II, p. 366 *et seq.* Of course "quality" might be used of that profession also, as of others. Mr. Henry Davey, more honest than most Shakespearean biographers, states that "Chettle's apology does not name Shakespeare," but absurdly adds that it "sufficiently indicates him by the word *qualitie* applied commonly to his profession." This writer further states, on the authority of Greene and Chettle, that "Shakespeare was in 1592 already known as a successful dramatist, besides being an actor, and personally esteemed by some of the higher classes"! Well! well! well! (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 276.)

<sup>1</sup> See their *English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. J. M. Robertson is both too honest a critic, and too good a reasoner, to be any party to this dishonest distortion of the facts. "This is quite unwarranted," he comments on Mr. Collins's above-quoted assertion. "Neither Greene nor Chettle ever named Shakespeare or any of his plays." It is true that Mr. Robertson thinks "we are fully entitled to infer from the 'Shake-scene' passage in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* that he (Shakespeare) had had a hand in plays before 1593; but certainly not that he had written

parenthesis, or note, so as to make it appear that the allusion is patent on the face of the document, appears to me a course of procedure closely akin to that of those who attempt to gain credit by false pretences. Then we have Mr. Collins, who presumably has read Mr. Castle's book (since he dismisses it with the epithet he so much loves to apply to those who do not share his own opinions),<sup>1</sup> suppressing all reference to that learned writer's criticism of those who are "so blinded by their admiration of Shakespeare that they cannot read a simple document correctly," and calmly telling his readers that it is "certain" from what Chettle has said (coupled with Greene's reference to the "upstart crow") that Shakspeare was writing plays before 1593! I have already discussed Mr. Collins's idea of "certainty" with reference to *Titus Andronicus*. We now have the measure of his idea of fair play. It is quite characteristic that this writer should accuse others of "misrepresentations" and "impudent fictions." But why, we are fain to ask, do Shakespearean biographers think themselves entitled to ignore all the ordinary canons of criticism, and to adopt methods which, were the lives of other men concerned, would be characterised as simply dishonest?

I now come to an almost equally famous, and, this time, an undoubted allusion to Shakespeare. I refer to the often-quoted words which the author of the old play, *The Return from Parnassus*, has put into the mouth of the player Kempe. These words are constantly cited as

one," on which point Mr. Robertson opines that Shakespeare's own declaration as to the "first heir of his invention" is surely final. But, after all, that "Shake-scene" had really reference to Shakespeare is only an assumption. Judge Stotsenburg disputes the hypothesis, and suggests that the reference is to Anthony Munday, but it must, I think, be confessed that his reasoning is by no means convincing. See *An Impartial Study of the Shakespeare Title*, chap. XII., and Mr. Robertson's *Did Shakespeare write "Titus Andronicus"?*, p. 22. Mr. Collins repeats his inexcusable misrepresentation as to Chettle at p. 137 of his *Studies in Shakespeare*.

<sup>1</sup> "Absurd" (p. 211), "palpably absurd" (p. 213), and so forth.



bearing testimony to the unquestioned pre-eminence of Shakespeare as a dramatist in the year 1601. Thus Professor Arber, in the introduction to his edition of the play, tells us that it is a comedy which "publicly testifies on the stage, in the characters of Richard Burbage and William Kempe (fellow-actors to William Shakespeare, and deservedly general favourites), to his confessed supremacy at that date not only over all University dramatists, but also over all the London professional playwrights, Ben Jonson himself included."

I propose to show that this is an entire misconception, and that the passage has no such significance as claimed for it. But before examining this and other passages, it will be well to devote a few lines to a consideration of the work in question.

*The Return from Parnassus*, of which Professor Arber published a reprint, is the third play of a trilogy consisting of *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, *The Return from Parnassus, Part 1*, and *The Return from Parnassus, Part 2, or The Scourge of Simony*. The three plays have been excellently edited by the Rev. W. D. Macray.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier-printed texts of the third play (that edited by Professor Arber) many passages were rendered unintelligible by errors of the press. These, however, were, for the most part, cleared up by readings gained from a manuscript which came into the possession of Mr. Halliwell-Phillips. "The new readings," writes Mr. Macray, "show how fair a field is really open to conjecture in the attempted correction of old texts for which no MS. authority exists, and justify much of the conjectural criticism which is applied to Shakespearean difficulties. They prove also the critical acumen and ingenuity of Edm. Malone, since several of the corrections are found to correspond with emendations noted by him, as apparently

<sup>1</sup> *Parnassus. Three Elizabethan Comedies, 1597-1601*. Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1886.

his own guesses, in the margins of one of his printed copies."<sup>1</sup>

The plays, which are by an unknown author, but which contain some remarkable coincidences with Bishop Hall's *Satires* (first printed in 1597), are said to have been acted by the students of St. John's College, Cambridge, the first in December, 1597, the third in January, 1602,<sup>2</sup> and the second at some intermediate Christmastide.

Let us now examine the passage in the third play referred to by Professor Arber, and so constantly quoted by Shakespearean biographers. In the third scene of Act IV the players Burbage and Kempe are brought on to the stage, and while waiting for the scholars, whom they are to instruct in the art of acting, they thus hold converse:—

*Burbage.* Now *Will Kempe*, if we can intertaine these schollers at a low rate, it will be well, they have often times a good conceite in a part.

*Kempe.* It's true indeede, honest *Dick*, but the slaves are somewhat proud, and besides, it is a good sport in a part, to see them never speake in their walke but at the end of the stage, just as though in walking with a fellow we should never speake but at a stile, a gate, or a ditch, where a man can go no further.<sup>3</sup> I was once at a Comedie in Cambridge, and there I saw a parasite make faces and mouths of all sorts in this fashion.

*Burbage.* A little teaching will mend these faults, and it may be besides they will be able to pen a part.

*Kempe.* Few of the university pen<sup>4</sup> plaies well; they smell too

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Parnassus*, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> See Arber's Introduction. The Professor thinks the representation was "rather in the first six days of January, 1602, than in the last six of December, 1601," but Gullio's observation (Act III, Scene 1), "I cal'd thee out for new year's day approacheth," seems to be an argument in favour of December, 1601.

<sup>3</sup> This is rather curious. The modern amateur is generally prone to the opposite fault, namely, to be always walking about the stage while he is speaking.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Macray, adopting apparently the reading from the Halliwell-Phillipps MS., prints "Few of the University (men) pen plaies well." This speech of Kempe's is the one usually quoted without context.

much of that writer *Ovid* and that writer *Metamorphosis*,<sup>1</sup> and talke too much of *Proserpina* and *Juppiter*. Why here's our fellow *Shakespeare* puts them all downe, aye and *Ben Jonson* too. O that *Ben Jonson* is a pestilent fellow, he brought up *Horace* giving the Poets a pill, but our fellow *Shakespeare* hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit.

*Burbage*. It's a shrewd fellow indeed: I wonder these schollers stay so long, they appointed to be here presently that we might try them: oh, here they come.

It is strange indeed that this passage has been quoted in all seriousness as though it were the writer's testimony to the "confessed supremacy," as Professor Arber says, "of England's superlative poet," whereas it is obvious on the face of it that it is sarcastic, the fact being that the players are held up to ridicule, before a cultivated audience of Cambridge scholars and students, as ignorant, half-educated vulgarians, "rude grooms," as Greene called them, who know so little about classical authors that they think there was a writer called *Metamorphosis*, as well as a writer called *Ovid*! It is surely needless to point out that a University dramatist, writing for a University audience, did not intend to be taken seriously when he made player Kempe say, "few of the University [men] pen plaies well"!<sup>2</sup> But I do not think it has ever been pointed out how absurd is this criticism of Will Kempe's,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Castle makes a curious mistake here. He quotes the passage as though it ran, "and that writer's *Metamorphosis*." Quoting possibly at second hand he does not seem to have perceived that the players are being held up to ridicule. (*Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson, and Greene*, p. 191.) Possibly he was misled by Gifford, who in a note to his *Memoirs of Ben Jonson* makes the same mistake. (See the *Works of Ben Jonson*, by W. Gifford, edited by Colonel Cunningham, p. lxii.)

<sup>2</sup> In just the same way the writer makes Gullio, the pretentious fool, in the first play, after quoting some of his own silly "extempore" lines, say, "a dull Universitie's head would have bene a month about thus much" (Act IV, Scene 1). The fact is, of course, that nearly all the best dramatists of the time were University men. Marlowe, Greene, and Nash were Cambridge men; Lyly, Lodge, and Peele were at Oxford. Jonson, indeed, does not appear to have been at either University as a student (see note *infra*, p. 323), but he got the best he could out of the best school of the time, and was Camden's special protégé.

if it is to be taken as a eulogium of Shakespeare. For what, according to Kempe, is the objection to the University pens? That they "smell too much of that writer *Ovid*, and that writer *Metamorphosis*, and talk too much of *Proserpina* and *Juppiter*." But this criticism if it applies to anybody applies in an eminent degree to Shakespeare himself. Who so saturated with *Ovid*, the *Metamorphoses* especially, as Shakespeare? Who talks, all out of season, of *Proserpina* and *Jupiter*, if not the writer who makes his "Queen of Curds and cream," brought up in a Bohemian grange, as Judge Webb says, parade her knowledge of the Greek Mythology by exclaiming,

O, *Proserpina*,  
For the flowers now which frightened thou let'st fall  
From Dis's waggon?<sup>1</sup>

It seems pretty obvious, in fact, that the passage, so far from being intended to be taken in its literal sense, conveyed to the audience the very opposite meaning. Ben Jonson, though not, as it seems, a student at either Oxford or Cambridge, held an honorary degree at each University, and seems to have been particularly connected with St. John's College, Cambridge.<sup>2</sup> I take it that all this about Jonson's being "a pestilent fellow" is ironical. It is extremely unlikely that the University writer intended to exalt Shakespeare at the expense of Jonson. Who is it that speaks? Will Kempe, the clown and morris-dancer. In the first play, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (Act V), Dromo comes on to the stage "drawing a clowne in with a

<sup>1</sup> *A Winter's Tale*, Act IV, Scene 4.

<sup>2</sup> Fuller says that he was "statutably admitted" there, whereas Aubrey says he went to Trinity College; and, as Gifford pointed out, "if Jonson had been on the foundation at Westminster, and went regularly to Cambridge, this must have been the college": but it seems clear that both Fuller and Aubrey were mistaken. Jonson's M.A. degree at both Universities was due, as he told Drummond, "to their favour, not to his studie" (i.e. it was spontaneously conferred, and not solicited). Jonson, it seems, was never a student at either Oxford or Cambridge. See further on this point at p. 108 *supra*.



rope," and accosts him thus: "Why, what an ass art thou! dost thou not knowe a playe cannot be without a clowne? Clownes have bene thrust into playes by head and shoulders ever since Kempe could make a scurvey face"; and in the scene of the third play now under consideration, when the students come on (after Burbage's "Oh, here they come"), Studioso exclaims, "Welcome Mr. *Kempe* from dancing the morrice over the Alpes"; indeed, if any one wants to form an idea of what sort of a player this Will Kempe was, he has only to turn to Mr. Sidney Lee's illustrated *Life of Shakespeare* (p. 40), where he will see a picture of this "clowne" dancing a jig, while a youth plays a drum with one hand and a fife with the other. The University man, no doubt, chuckled when he was made to talk of "our fellow Shakespeare"—"a shrewd fellow indeed," as Burbage adds—as having made the scholarly Ben Jonson bewray his credit. Ben, in his *Poetaster*, did indeed bring up Horace giving the poets a pill (Horace being Jonson himself), but what is meant by Shakespeare having given him a purge, etc., nobody has ever been able to explain.<sup>1</sup> Well may Mr. Mullinger remark (*University of Cambridge*, p. 524 n.) that the notices in the third play seem "to convey the notion that Shakespeare is the favourite of the rude half-educated strolling players, as distinguished from the refined geniuses of the University"! Yet this is the passage which is so constantly paraded as being indubitable, contemporaneous testimony to the supremacy of Shakespeare!

Since writing as above I have lighted on the following in Gifford's *Memoir of Ben Jonson*. Commenting on this passage in the *Return from Parnassus* Gifford writes: "In the recent edition of Beaumont and Fletcher it is referred to 'as a proof of Jonson's enmity' [i.e. to Shakespeare], and called 'that strong passage.' When will this folly end? But true, it is a *strong* passage, a very *strong* one—

<sup>1</sup> See p. 326 n.

but against whom? Frankly I speak it, against Shakespeare, who, if Will Kempe be worthy of credit, wantonly interfered in a contest with which he had no concern. . . . Now I am on the subject of this old play, I will just venture to inform those egregious critics that the heroes of it are laughing both at Will Kempe and Shakespeare. Of Shakespeare's plays they neither know nor say anything; when they have to mention him in their own character they speak merely of his *Lucrece* and his *Venus and Adonis*. Yet Shakespeare had then written several of his best pieces, and Jonson not one of his. . . . We shall now, I suppose, hear little more of Will Kempe, who was probably brought on the stage in a fool's cap, to make mirth for the University wits, and who is dismissed, together with his associate, in a most contemptuous manner, as '*a mere leaden spout*,' etc. Unfortunately, the Shakespeariolaters, instead of taking a hint from Gifford, have continued blindly to quote Will Kempe as a serious witness to Shakespeare's "confessed supremacy." In another place Gifford remarks, truly enough, "Kempe is brought forward as the type of ignorance, in this old drama." Yet the critics have wasted much time in the endeavour to identify the supposed "purge," which, according to Will Kempe, Shakespeare gave to Jonson, "that made him bewray his credit"! (See *Gifford's Jonson*, by Colonel Cunningham, pp. lxii, n., and cxcviii, n.). If the dates would allow it, I should be inclined to think that in Shakespeare's supposed purge there was an allusion to Dekker's *Satiro-Mastix*, where there are many references to pills and purges to be administered to Jonson, and in which Jonson is made to "bewray his credit"—("beray" or "bewray" is specially used of the action of an aperient; see the *Parnassus* plays *passim*)—and is finally crowned with nettles instead of laurel. The *Satiro-Mastix* was published in 1602, but before that it had been, as the title-page tells us, "presented publicly" by the Lord Chamber-

lain's servants, and "privately by the children of Paules," so that it must have been known to the public a considerable time before publication. It is usually supposed that Shakspeare took a part in it—some say that of William Rufus—and in that sense "our fellow Shakespeare" may have taken part in administering the purge.<sup>1</sup>

But there are other allusions to Shakespeare in this Trilogy which we may now examine.

In the first of the three plays we are introduced to Gullio, the fool of the piece, "the arrant braggart, the empty pretender to knowledge, and the avowed libertine," as Mr. Macray correctly describes him. "Now, gentlemen, you may laugh if you will for here comes a gull," says Ingenioso, as this Gullio comes upon the stage. This idiot, who never opens his mouth but to utter absurdities, tells the poor scholar Ingenioso that he proposes to bestow some verses, "a diamonde of invention," upon his mistress; "therefore," says he, "sithens I am employed in some weightie affayres of the courte, I will have thee, Ingenioso, to make them, and when thou hast done I will peruse, pollish, and correct them." Ingenioso asks, "What veine would it please you to have them in?" Whereupon Gullio replies, "Not in a vaine veine (prettie i' faith!): make me them in two or three divers veines, in Chaucer's, Gower's, Spencer's, and Mr. Shakespeare's. Marry, I think I shall entertaine those verses which run like these:—

Even as the sun with purple coloured face  
Had tane his laste leave of the weeping morne, etc.

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that *Troilus and Cressida* was the "purge" seems to me a futile one. That dismal play, which, as Mr. Israel Gollancz says, "has been well described as 'a Comedy without genuine laughter, a Tragedy without pathos,'" was more likely to act as an opiate than as a purge, even if we could suppose that Jonson is meant to be satirised as Thersites, which seems to me altogether improbable. Moreover, although Thersites is represented as the chartered railer, and held up to scorn as base and cowardly, he is not punished as is the victim in *Satiro-Mastix*. The play has some immortal

O sweet Mr. Shakespeare! I'll have his picture in my study at the Courte."

The lines are, of course, from *Venus and Adonis*, which this oaf is very fond of quoting. It is noticeable that while he speaks of Chaucer, Gower, and Spenser without any prefix, it is always "*Mr. Shakespeare*" with him. Thus, further on, he says: "Let this duncified worlde esteeme of Spencer and Chaucer; I'll worshipp sweet Mr. Shakespeare, and to honour him will lay his *Venus and Adonis* under my pillowe." Which appears to make "*Mr. Shakespeare*" not a little ridiculous.

To be eulogised by this fool is, of course, the reverse of recommendation. Gullio, in fact, shows only that *Venus and Adonis* was the favourite poem of that class which this fatuous character, this pretentious, affected, and ridiculous man of fashion, this soi-distant Don Juan, "this habberdasher of lyes, this bracchidochio, this ladyemonger," as Ingenioso styles him, so well represents.<sup>1</sup>

In the second play we have yet another allusion to Shakespeare. Ingenioso reads to Judicio the names of a number of poets that he may pass judgment upon them. After discussing Spenser, Constable, Lodge, Daniell, Watson, Drayton, Davis, Marston, Marlowe, and Jonson, Ingenioso propounds the name of William Shakespeare; upon whom Judicio gives his "censure" thus:—

Who loves not *Adons* love, or *Lucrece* rape?  
His sweeter verse contaynes hart throbbing line,  
Could but a graver subject him content,  
Without loves foolish lazy languishment.

lines (one of them concerning the "touch of nature" which "makes the whole world kin," constantly misquoted, or rather misapplied), but one can hardly conceive any audience sitting it out. As to the question of its authorship see p. 357 *et seq.*

<sup>1</sup> We may remember that the *Venus and Adonis* of "sweet Mr. Shakespeare" was satirised (by Markham as we are told) in *The Dumb Knight* as a lascivious poem. (Fleay's *Life*, p. 78.)



Not surely much of a testimony to the supremacy of the great poet!<sup>1</sup>

The supposition, therefore, that any of the allusions in this trilogy prove the pre-eminence of Shakespeare as a poet, in the opinion of literary men of the time, seems, when closely examined, to be quite unfounded. As to Professor Arber's idea that Player Kempe's observations may be taken as showing the "confessed supremacy" of the immortal bard at that date, "not only over all University dramatists, but also over all the London Professional playwrights, Ben Jonson himself included," it seems clear that the very opposite inference is to be drawn, so far, at least, as the opinion of the Cambridge University students is concerned. The opinion of the University is evidently the very opposite to the opinion of Will Kempe, and to the opinion of the fool Gullio. In fact, the only thing of real importance in these allusions is this, that the Cambridge dramatist makes Kemp and Burbage speak of "our fellow Shakespeare" as an author. But when we remember the feud which always existed between the scholars and the players in those times, and appreciate the fact that the scholar playwright is satirising the players, we shall, I think, see that the significance to be attached to this utterance is, after all, not very great. It is quite consistent with the theory that Shakespeare was a mask name. The whole scene is evidently a burlesque in which

<sup>1</sup> When Ingenioso propounds the name of *Benjamin Johnson*, Judicio exclaims "the wittiest fellow of a bricklayer in England." Ingenioso, however, who in other cases leaves Judicio to pronounce judgment, calls Jonson "a mere empyric, one that getts what he hath by observation, and makes onely nature privy to what he indites, so slow an inventor that he were better betake himself to his old trade of bricklaying . . . as confident now in making a booke, as he was in times past in laying a brick." This must surely be meant for nothing more than chaff at Ben's expense. It could hardly be intended for serious dispraise to say of a poet that he founded his writing on observation and on *nature*, but it is curious to observe that the characteristic of being indebted solely to *nature*, which is usually attributed to Shakespeare ("next nature only helped him," etc.), is here ascribed to Jonson. "This is not altogether the critic's creed," as Gifford says (p. cxcviii).

the poor players are held up to ridicule for their ignorance generally, and for their distorted notions as to "Shakespeare" and Jonson in particular. Moreover, the fact that Kempe urges as objections to "the University pen" those very things which might particularly be urged as objections to Shakespeare, viz. his Ovidian thoughts and utterances, and his uncalled-for classical allusions, seems to show that Master Kempe, as conceived by the playwright of St. John's College, had no very clear idea of what he was talking about.<sup>1</sup>

The feelings of the poor University scholar towards the successful player may be gathered from the passage some lines of which I have already quoted, and which it may be well now to set forth entire:—

Better it is mongst fidlers to be chiefe  
 Than at a plaiers trencher beg reliefe.  
 But ist not strange these mimick apes should prize  
 Unhappy schollers at a hireling rate?  
 Vile world, that lifts them up to hye degree  
 And treades us down in groveling misery.  
 England affordes those glorious vagabonds,  
 That carried earst their fardels on their backes,  
 Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,  
 Sooping it in their glaring satten sutes,  
 And pages to attend their masterships.  
 With mouthing words that better wits have framed  
 They purchase lands, and now Esquires are namde.<sup>2</sup>

The complaint that these "mimic apes" prize the "unhappy schollers at a hireling rate" refers to Burbage's remark, made just previously to Kempe, "if we can inter-

<sup>1</sup> "I will venture to affirm," says Gifford (p. cxv, n.), "that more of the *heathen mythology* may be found in a single scene, nay in a single speech of Shakespeare, Fletcher, Massinger, and Shirley, than in the whole of Jonson's thirteen comedies. Nothing is so remarkable as his rigid exclusion of the *leitivities* of Greece and Rome." (*Cynthia's Revels* is, of course, exceptional.)

<sup>2</sup> This is the reading adopted by Mr. Macray from the Halliwell-Phillipps' MS. The old printed version reads "made" (*Return from Parnassus*, Part 2, Act V, Scene 1).

taine these schollers at a low rate it will be well, they have often times a good conceite in a part." The shrewd players were apparently speculating on the possibility of getting some poor scholars to join their company, for the inferior parts, at very low rates. As to "they purchase lands, and now Esquires are namde," here is, very probably, an allusion to Player Shakspeare, who had bought lands at Stratford before this date (the contract for the purchase of New Place was in 1597), and whose father had got his grant of arms in 1599. "Be merry, my lads," says Kempe to the scholars, "you have happened upon the most excellent vocation in the world for money; they come North and South to bring it to our playhouse; and for honours, who of more report than Dick Burbage and Will Kempe? He is not counted a gentleman that knows not Dick Burbage and Will Kempe. There's not a country wench that can dance Sellengers Round but can talke of Dick Burbage and Will Kempe."

Subsequently Philomusus asks:—

And must the basest trade yeeld us reliefe?  
Must we be practis'd to those leaden spouts,  
That nought doe vent but what they do receive?

It is clear that, in the estimation of this "University pen," the player's trade was an extremely contemptible one.

Such are some typical cases of those "allusions" which are so confidently appealed to by Mr. Lee as conclusive evidence that Player Shakspeare wrote the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare. One of them I have shown not to be an allusion at all, the others, as I think the unprejudiced will admit, have little or no evidentiary value as regards the question at issue, for they are quite consistent with the theory that Shake-speare was in reality a pseudonym. And what of the rest? Mr. Lee is, as we have seen, very contemptuous of those ignorant persons who conceive

that he has built his edifice not on "the impregnable rock" of evidence, as he fondly imagines, but on the shifting sands of prejudice and imagination. I am not impressed by Mr. Lee's assertion that those who differ from him are incompetent to form a just estimate of the value of evidence. I do not know anything in Mr. Lee's life or writings which would lead me to suppose that he is himself endowed with that faculty. His Shakespearean polemics always bring to mind the saying of the old Greek philosopher, πολυμαθὴν νόον οὐ διδάσκει—πολυμαθὴν in this case standing for study of Elizabethan literature. But let us hear what that distinguished Shakespearean, Mr. Fleay, who certainly cannot be charged with want of knowledge, learning, or industry, has to say on this subject. Speaking of the "allusions" which have been "collected, and well collected, in Dr. Ingleby's *Century of Praise*," he says: "They consist almost entirely of slight references to his (Shakespeare's) published works, and have no bearing of importance on his career. Nor, indeed, have we any extended material of any kind to aid us in this investigation; *one source of information, which is abundant for most of his contemporaries, being in his case entirely absent. Neither as addressed to him by others, nor by him to others, do any commendatory verses exist in connection with any of his or other men's works published in his lifetime,—a notable fact, in whatever way it may be explained.*<sup>1</sup> Nor can he be traced in any personal contact beyond a very limited circle, although *the fanciful might-have-beens*<sup>1</sup> so largely indulged in by his biographers might at first lead us to an opposite conclusion!"

The medley of further allusions so laboriously collected and published by Dr. Furnivall certainly carry the matter no further; that is to say, they are of little or no value on the question of authorship. But there has been recently published (in fact, since I commenced to write this

<sup>1</sup> My italics.



chapter) a book called *The Praise of Shakespeare*, compiled by Mr. C. E. Hughes, and with a preface by Mr. Sidney Lee. Now here, at any rate, one may expect to find among the allusions of the "First Period" (from 1596 to 1693) the very best of the proofs for which we seek. "The whole of the sceptical argument," says Mr. Lee in his preface, "ignored alike the results of recent Shakespearean research and the elementary truths of Elizabethan literary history. . . . The conjecture that Shakespeare lived and died unhonoured rests on no foundation of fact. The converse alone is true. Shakespeare's eminence was fully acknowledged by his contemporaries and their acknowledgments have long been familiar to scholars."

This seems to me mere *σκιαμαχία*—or I should, perhaps, rather say *ignoratio elenchi*. But first as to the fact. Though the learned Dr. Ingleby, whom even Mr. Lee would, I imagine, scarcely venture to include among the ignorant, makes perhaps too broad an assertion when he says (*Forespeech*, p. 11) that "the bard of our admiration was unknown to the men of that age," it is, I think, indisputable that Mr. Lee speaks but the language of exaggeration when he says that "Shakespeare's eminence was fully acknowledged by his contemporaries." The "allusions" are far from giving support to so sweeping an assertion. That there *was*, however, contemporaneous testimony to Shakespeare's eminence is not denied. There is, that is to say, some testimony by contemporaries to the fact that there was a poet of pre-eminent genius who wrote under the name of Shakespeare. It would have been strange indeed if it were not so. The really remarkable thing is that there is not much more of it. It is admitted that poems and plays of transcendent excellence were published under the name of Shakespeare during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. It would indeed have been phenomenal if no contemporaneous voice had been raised to give them praise, and

to us it does seem strange that, although such voices there were, yet so few and far between were they, and so many and so important were the voices that kept silence on this theme, that Dr. Ingleby is almost justified in his statement that "the bard of our admiration was unknown to the men of that age."<sup>1</sup> The fact is, of course, that as was once said of Mr. Gladstone, great men are like great mountains, and we require to be at a very considerable distance from them before we can adequately appreciate their grandeur. The result is that the real appreciation of Shakespeare's transcendent genius is a plant of comparatively modern growth. The point, however, to which I wish to direct attention, is that the contemporary eulogies of the poet, although they afford proof that there were some cultured critics of that day of sufficient taste and acumen to recognise, or partly recognise, his excellence, afford no proof that the author who published under the name of Shakespeare was in reality Shakspeare the Stratford player. The most that can be said is that there is, *a priori*, a presumption to that effect, but it is certainly very far from being what is known to lawyers as an irrebuttable presumption.

Let us take a 'modern instance. Suppose that the true identity of George Eliot had never been revealed. Suppose also that there had been living at the time of the publication of Miss Evans's works a smart young man, say a foreign-office clerk, or a second-rate actor if you will, who bore the name of George Eliot. Suppose, further,

<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Ingleby points out, Thomas Lodge's *Wits Miserie and the World's Madness* was issued as late as 1596, but "among the 'divine wits' named we do not find the name of Shakespeare. Similarly in 1598 was published Edward Guilpin's collection of satires called *Skialethia*; the sixth of which contains the names of Chaucer, Gower, Daniel, Markham, Drayton, and Sidney, but not that of Shakespeare." He might have added that Dr. Peter Heylyn, of Magdalen College, Oxford, wrote a celebrated *Description of the World*, published in 1621, but in his list of famous English dramatic poets he does *not* include the name of Shakespeare!

that a question were raised as to the authorship of these works. It is very obvious that any amount of contemporaneous eulogy of the writer "George Eliot" would not afford a tittle of evidence in favour of the contention that the foreign-office clerk or actor of that name was, in truth, the author, even although some persons had during his lifetime credited him with the authorship.

I am aware of the dangers of analogy, and I am equally aware that the two cases are not altogether "on all fours," as the lawyers would say, and therefore I merely give this hypothetical case as being, under due limitations, a fair illustration of my meaning, as against those who appear to think that all praise, if not all notices, of Shakespeare afford proof of the Stratfordian authorship.

*Revenons à nos moutons.* Let us come back to the "allusions." Mr. Hughes leads off with the well-known extracts from Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, or Wits' Treasury, published in 1598. Meres expresses the opinion that "the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends." Here we have, again, the "Sweet Mr. Shakespeare" of Gullio, Shakespeare of the Poems—the *Venus and Adonis* especially—all sugar and honey, and, as the truth was, saturated with Ovid.<sup>1</sup>

Meres also says that "the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine-filed phrase" if they would speak English. Here we note "*fine-filed phrase*" as showing that Meres, at any rate, was not so foolish as to imagine that Shakespeare threw off his poetry *currente calamo* without effort, or that he "never blotted out a line"; and,

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this:—

Sweet honey dropping Daniell doth wage  
War with the proudest big Italian  
That melts his heart in sugred sonneting.

*The Return from Parnassus*, I, 2, 241.

comparing Jonson's reference to "his well-turned and *true-filed* lines," we see that both these critics recognised the fact that Shakespeare used both file and polish, or in other words, rewrote, recast, corrected, and revised. Then, again, Meres says that "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage"; and he then gives us a valuable list, evidently not intended to be exhaustive, of some of the Shakespearean plays then extant. These "allusions" are very interesting, but how they negative the hypothesis that "Shakespeare" was a *nom de plume* is not apparent. There is nothing whatever to show that Meres had any personal acquaintance with the author.

Then follows Richard Barnfield (1598), who again speaks of Shakespeare as "honey-flowing," and says that his *Venus* and *Lucrece* have placed his name "in Fame's immortal book." Next comes John Weaver (1599), and once more we hear of "honey-tongued Shakespeare," admired for his "rose-cheeked Adonis," and "Fire-hot Venus," and "chaste Lucretia." Weever, however, does mention

Romeo, Richard,<sup>1</sup> more whose names I know not,

and speaks of "their sugared tongues."

John Davies, of Hereford (1610), is rather more to the point, for he writes lines to "our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare,"<sup>2</sup> and, addressing him as "Good Will," says that "according to some if he had not played some kingly parts in sport," he might have been "a companion for a king," and "been a king *among the meaner sort*," hardly the sort of language which we should expect to be addressed to the immortal bard! He adds that Will sows

<sup>1</sup> In the original this seems to have been written "Romea-Richard." (See Ingleby, p. 16.)

<sup>2</sup> Why does Mr. Hughes omit the hyphen? (See Ingleby, p. 94.)



while others reap. The note in Ingleby, by L. Toulmin Smith, is as follows: "It seems likely that these lines refer to the fact that Shakspeare was a player, a profession that was then despised and accounted mean." Indeed, John Davies seems to have the player in his mind rather than the poet. Did he, perchance, mentally separate the two?<sup>1</sup>

Next comes Thomas Freeman (1614, only two years before Shakspeare's death), who writes "To Master W. Shakespeare," and says that for him

Who loves chaste life, there's *Lucrece* for a teacher;  
Who list<sup>2</sup> read lust there's *Venus and Adonis*;

but goes on to say:—

Besides in plays thy wit winds like Meander.

Hence we jump at once to William Basse (1622), six years after Shakspeare's death, which reminds us that although at Jonson's death there was a competition among his brother poets for the writing of his elegy, the results being gathered together in *Jonsonus Virbius*, as a wreath to be laid upon his tomb, yet, for some unexplained reason, Shakspeare had to lie six years in his grave, "without the meed of one melodious tear," till this unknown Basse published his cryptic lines, with which, as with Jonson's own verses prefixed to the 1623 Folio, I have elsewhere dealt at some length.<sup>3</sup>

This brings us to the unknown author of the inscription on the Stratford monument, and the verses of Hugh Holland and Leonard Digges, which, together with Jonson's, appear on the opening pages of the First Folio. I notice,

"Thou hadst been a companion for a *King* (*sic*)  
And beene a King among the meaner sort"?

I suspect an allusion to a name, or some esoteric meaning which, at the present day, we cannot understand.

<sup>2</sup> Why does Mr. Hughes print "but" instead of "list"?

<sup>3</sup> See chap. XVI. p. 472 *et seq.*, and *ante*, p. 201.

however, that the compiler has omitted Digges's lines which were prefixed to the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems, and which it seems he had written with the view to their publication in the 1623 volume. But it is a pity not to put all one's witnesses in the box, so I will myself call Leonard Digges, and the reader shall judge of the value of his evidence.

He leads off with the assertion that "Poets are born not made," and appeals to Shakespeare as a signal example of the truth of that proposition. Thus he at once challenges Jonson's

For a good poet's made as well as born ;  
And such wert thou.

According to Digges, Shakespeare had no art at all, or, as he absurdly expresses it, he had

Art without art unparaleld as yet ;

here, again, coming into conflict with Jonson's

Thy *art*,  
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.

No wonder that Jonson should have excluded these lines from the Folio, as we may reasonably presume he did.

Now let the reader hearken to this estimate of Shakespeare as conceived by Digges :—

Next Nature only helpt him, for look thorow  
This whole Book, thou shalt find he doth not borrow  
One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,  
Nor once from vulgar languages translate,  
Nor Plagiari-like from others glean,  
Nor begs he from each witty friend a scene  
To piece his acts with, all that he doth write  
Is pure his owne, plot, language exquisite.

Absurdity could hardly go further than this. It is as if one should praise Swift for the chasteness of his language,

the delicacy of his thought, the sweetness of his temper, and his obvious desire to avoid giving offence to anybody! It is, in fact, to praise Shakespeare for exactly those qualities which in Shakespeare's case were conspicuous by their absence, and shows that this Digges was either writing with his tongue in his cheek, or had no conception of what he was talking about. Yet this ridiculous writer is often cited as though his upside-down comments had some evidentiary value on the question of the Shakespearean authorship!

Few of the "Shakespeare allusions" are better known than the words of Thomas Fuller, (1643-62), whom I have already quoted to the effect that Shakespeare was "an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, *Poeta nascitur non fit*; one is not *made* but *born* a poet." For "his learning was very little," and if alive, he would confess himself to be "never any scholar." Then follows this often-quoted passage: "Many were the *wit-combates* betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention." This has been frequently quoted by ardent Shakespeareans, "with just enough of learning to misquote," as if the words stood, not "I behold," but "I beheld," so as to give the impression that the writer was himself present at these supposed "wit-combates"; but inasmuch as "worthy old Fuller" was not born till 1608 he was only eight years old when Shakspeare died. It is plain, therefore, that he beheld these imaginary conflicts "in his mind's eye" only.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fuller seems to have known but little of Shakespeare, for alluding to the "warlike sound of his surname" he says that from it "some may conjecture him of a military extraction."

Let us now turn to an undoubted allusion to Shakspeare the player, made by one whose family had been long associated with him, and who must have known him well. In 1635 Cuthbert Burbage, son of James, and brother of Richard the famous actor, addressed a petition, on behalf of himself "and Winifred his brother's wife, and William his son," to the Earl of Pembroke, the survivor of the "Incomparable Pair" to whom the Folio was dedicated, and then Lord Chamberlain. I do not find the petition in Ingleby's *Century of Praise* or in the lately published *Praise of Shakespeare*, but it is given *in extenso* by the industrious Halliwell-Phillipps (I. 291). Cuthbert Burbage recites that his father "was the first builder of playhouses, and was himself in his younger years a player," that he built his first playhouse on leased land, and had a lawsuit with his landlord, "and by his death the like troubles fell on us his sons; we then bethought us of altering from thence, and at like expense built the Globe . . . and to ourselves we joined *those deserving men*, Shakspeare, Hemmings, Condall, Phillips and others, partners in the profits of that they call the House," of which the petitioners were lessees. He adds that when he and his brother took possession of the Blackfriars (which his father had "purchased at extreme rates") they "placed men players, which were Hemmings, Condall, Shakspeare, etc.," as successors to the children of the Chapel. It does indeed seem strange, as Judge Webb remarks, that the proprietor of the playhouses which had been made famous by the production of the Shakespearean plays, should in 1635—twelve years after the publication of the great Folio—describe their reputed author to the survivor of the Incomparable Pair as merely a "man-player" and a "deserving man"! Why did he not remind the Lord Chamberlain that this "deserving man" was the author of all these famous dramas? Was it because he was aware that the Earl of Pembroke "knew better than that"?



Again, we may ask why it is that Henslowe, the proprietor of the Rose, who kept a diary (1592-1603) in which he recorded his dealings with all the leading playwrights of the day, never once mentions the name of Shakspere as being one of them, or indeed at all.<sup>1</sup>

Let me here give one other instance of the "negative pregnant." John Manningham, Barrister-at-law, of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, a well-educated and cultured man, makes an entry in his diary under date February 2nd, 1601. "At our feast we had a play called Twelve Night, or What you Will, much like the Comedy of Errors, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and near to that in Italian called *Inganni*. A good practice in it to make the steward believe his lady widow was in love with him, by counterfeiting a letter as from his lady, in general terms, telling him what she liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his apparel, etc., and then, when he came to practise, making him believe they took him to be mad." Upon March 13 of the same year he makes another entry as follows: "Upon a time when Burbidge played Richard Third there was a citizen gone so far in liking with him, that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespear overhearing their conclusion went before, was entertained, and at his game ere Burbidge came. Then message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third. Shakespeare's name William."

Now if Shakspere the player was known to the world as the author of the plays of Shakespeare, it does seem

<sup>1</sup> Yet, says Mr. Lee, "The Rose Theatre was *doubtless* the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist." If this were so, Henslowe's silence would be trebly inexplicable. But "doubtless" with Mr. Lee is generally used to introduce a proposition unsupported by evidence and peculiarly doubtful. I deal with "the silence of Philip Henslowe" at some length in chap. XII.

extremely remarkable that John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law, should have made that curious addendum to his scandalous story, "Shakespeare's name William," instead of saying "the brilliant author of that Twelfth Night play which so much amused me at our feast a few weeks ago"! But Manningham, it seems, had no suspicion of the identity of Shakespeare the author and Shakspeare the merry player, who played this not very edifying trick on his fellow actor.<sup>1</sup>

I will conclude with two contemporary allusions to Shakespeare which are not a little interesting.

In Camden's *Remains*, 1614, at p. 44, we read: "Whatsoever grace any other language carrieth in verse or prose, in tropes or metaphors, in echoes and agnominations, they may all bee lively and exactly represented in ours. Will you have Platoes veine? reade Sir Thomas Smith. The Ionicke? Sir Thomas Moore. Ciceroes? Ascham. Varro? Chaucer. Demosthenes? Sir John Cheeke, who in his treatise to the Rebels hath comprised all the figures of rhetorik. Will you read Virgil? Take the Earle of Surrey. Catullus? Shakespeare and Barlowe's fragment. Ovid? Daniell. Lucan? Spencer. Martiall? Sir John Davies and others. Will you have all in all for prose and verse? Take the miracle of our age, Sir Philip Sidney."

The authorities at the British Museum inform us<sup>2</sup> that the above is an extract from "*The Excellencies of the English Tongue*, by R[ichard] C[arew], Esq., an essay written about

<sup>1</sup> When Phillips the actor died in 1605, he left a bequest "To my fellow William Shakespeare a thirty shillings piece in gold," using no words to distinguish him from other fellow players. Apart from the players' preface to the Folio, which I have dealt with elsewhere, there is never any recognition of him by his "fellows" as a poet and dramatist. He is just the "man player," the "deserving man." Mr. D. H. Lambert, in his *Shakespeare Documents*, prints the first but discreetly omits the second of the above entries in Manningham's Diary.

<sup>2</sup> On a written card exhibited at the recent exhibition of Shakespeare books, etc.

the beginning of the seventeenth century, and communicated to Camden, who printed it in 1614." Camden, at any rate, accepted it, and made himself responsible for it. But what is the meaning of "Shakespeare and Barlowe's fragment"? It is presumed that Barlowe is merely a *lapsus calami* for Marlowe. But are we to understand that Shakespeare and Marlowe collaborated in this "fragment"? Or is the meaning merely that Catullus may be found "exactly represented" in the poems of Shakespeare (*Venus and Adonis*, e.g.), and in a fragment by Marlowe (possibly *Hero and Leander*)?<sup>1</sup>

My last quotation is from an old work called "*Polimanteia*, or the meanes lawfull and unlawfull to judge of the fall of a Common-wealth against the frivolous and foolish coniectures of this age. Whereunto is added a letter from England to her three daughters, Cambridge, Oxford, Innes of Court, and to all the rest of her inhabitants. Printed by John Legate, Printer of the Universitie of Cambridge, 1595. Dedicated to the Rt. Honble Robert Devorax, Earle of Essex and Ewe; signed 'W.C.,' which is generally interpreted Wm. Clark or Clerke, though some have ascribed the work to William Camden. In the letter to the Universities and the Inns of Court (see page numbered R 2 and following) the author is alluding to writers of the University school, such as Spenser and Daniell, and he has this marginal note to the passage: "All praiseworthy Lucrecia, Sweet Shak-speare. Eloquent Gaveston, Wanton Adonis, Watson's heyre."

<sup>1</sup> "E. W. S." (*Shakespeare-Bacon*, p. 5) writes: "That Shakespeare passed for a scholar is also attested (as Halliwell-Phillipps has somewhere observed) by a passage in *Camden's Remaines* which intimates that Marlowe was helped by Shakespeare (necessarily before June, 1593) to render Catullus into English." An examination of the words above quoted will, however, show, as I think, that the passage does not bear this meaning. It is very curious to observe how Marlowe and Shakespeare selected the same passages of Ovid for translation or paraphrase. The *Hero and Leander*, by the way, would be more suggestive of this poet than of Catullus.

"Gaveston" is, I presume, an allusion to Marlowe's *Edward II*.<sup>1</sup> As to "Watson's heyre," Mr. Sidney Lee (*Dictionary of National Biography*) thinks that the writer (whom he assumes to be William Clerke) means to refer to Shakespeare as the poetical heir to Thomas Watson (*circ.* 1557-92). This seems *very* doubtful. But whatever may be the meaning of the expression it is clear that "W. C." couples Shakespeare with Marlowe and Watson, both University men, and conceives of him as being himself a member of one of the Universities, and, presumably, of one of the Inns of Court also. This is not a little significant, especially when we remember that the book was published in 1595, only a few months after the *Lucrece* of "Sweet Shak-speare."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Or, perhaps, to Drayton's "Legend of Piers Gaveston."

<sup>2</sup> I have examined both the works cited at the British Museum. They are frequently very incorrectly quoted. I may here add that in *The Times* of December 27th, 1905, two columns are taken up by an article by Mr. Sidney Lee headed "A Discovery about Shakespeare." Among the documents preserved at Belvoir Castle is an account of the household expenses of Francis, sixth Earl of Rutland, wherein has been found an entry showing that in March, 1613, the sum of forty-four shillings was paid to "Mr. Shakespeare" (how the name is spelled in the original entry I do not know) for work "about my Lorde's impreso," and a like sum to his fellow player Richard Burbage (who was, as everybody knows, a painter as well as an actor) "for paynting and making it." An "impreso," or, more correctly, "impresa," was, we are told, "a hieroglyphical or pictorial design (in miniature) which suggested some markedly characteristic quality or experience of the person for whom it was devised, while three or four words of slightly epigrammatic flavour were appended," as a motto, "to drive the application home." Shakspeare is designated as "Mr." because he had, "with great difficulty," as Mr. Lee says, and by not a few false pretences, as he might have added, obtained a coat-of-arms from the Heralds' College, but both he and Burbage received the same remuneration. This, it is to be noted, was in 1613, when Shakspeare, as Mr. Lee tells us, had "retired from the great work of his life." Not much here to show that he was recognised as the "great dramatist" and immortal poet! Incidentally Mr. Lee mentions that the fifth Earl of Rutland married Sir Philip Sidney's daughter, Elizabeth, who "in her father's spirit assiduously cultivated the society of men of letters. She bought and read their books and welcomed them to her table." Ben Jonson "was often her guest, and with him and with the poet and dramatist, Francis Beaumont, she regularly corresponded." Strange, is it not, that there should be no corre-



spondence between this cultured lady and the great poet and dramatist, "Mr. Shakspeare," who was employed (for the reward of forty-four shillings) "about my Lorde's impreso" at Belvoir Castle! Why did *he* never correspond with the patrons of literature and art in his time? "It may well be," says Mr. Lee, "that documents which are yet to be discovered will set Shakespeare also among the poets who shared the hospitality of Sidney's daughter at Belvoir"! A consummation devoutly to be wished certainly; but such documents are always "to be" and never "are" discovered. What is shown is that Shakspeare and Dick Burbage are employed for a not excessive remuneration to do some fanciful work for the Earl of Rutland, and are duly paid for it; and no doubt they went home rejoicing. Somehow I cannot think that "Shakespeare" would have made any charge for work of this kind!

On the whole this record, so far from showing that William Shakspeare of Stratford was the admired poet and successful dramatist, whose society was cultivated by the great personages of his day, appears to me to tell strongly on the other side. And now let us see how it is made use of by the fertile imagination of the Stratfordians. I read in the *Westminster Gazette* (November 30th, 1906), under the heading "Shakespeare at Belvoir," the following words: "As to Shakespeare having been *frequently* at Belvoir, *that seems certain beyond doubt* [my italics]. The Rutland Earls were related to Lord Southampton as well as to the Penshurst Sidneys, and had Ben Jonson for one of their literary 'tame cats.'" Not much evidence so far, but mark what follows. "Among the Belvoir papers, dated March 31, 1613, is the entry of a sum paid to Mr. Shakespeare and Mr. Burbage for preparing my lord's 'impreso,' in other words, an emblematical design with an appropriate motto illustrating some great quality or greater deed." We know, therefore, that Ben Jonson was a "tame cat" at Belvoir. About Shakspeare we have a single line of a steward's account of household expenses, showing that three years before his death, and at a time when, if he was the great poet, he would have been at the zenith of his fame, he is paid forty-four shillings for this trivial fancy-work. Therefore, it is "certain beyond doubt" that he was "frequently at Belvoir," and "doubtless," as an honoured guest; perhaps, like Ben Jonson, as a "tame cat"! Thus is "Shakespearean" biography concocted!

Again, there has recently been published a new volume of *Hatfield Manuscripts*, to which *The Tribune*, of December 18th, 1906, has devoted two "leaderettes." Here we read as follows: "Shakespeareans will turn at once in the new volume of *Hatfield Manuscripts* to the documents which have to do with Shakespeare's generous and sympathetic patron Henry Wriothesley Earl of Southampton. . . . Southampton was one of those fine spirits who was privileged to break the bonds of the eternal commonplace, and could realise that, as Scott has phrased it in *Kenilworth*, it was not the playwright paying homage to the peer but the immortal conceding a conventional tribute to the mortal. In the *Hatfield Manuscripts* we find Southampton writing after the failure of Essex's plot in tender strain but philosophic spirit to his young wife, Elizabeth Vernon. An especial interest attaches to this ill-fated venture, because there is very little doubt that it was the ruin attending it, which involved some of his closest friends, that induced the

melancholy and tragic mood so conspicuous in the penultimate stage of Shakespeare's development." With greatly excited interest we turn to the volume. Here, at least, we shall find some allusion by Southampton, in one of his numerous letters, to the great dramatist whose "generous and sympathetic patron" he had been ! Here, at least, that "fine spirit" who could realise that he was but a mortal receiving conventional tributes from an immortal has left some testimony, some few words, expressive of the profound homage which he yielded to the great poet who was not of an age but for all time ! Alas ! It is the same old story ; the same hope deferred that maketh the heart sick. Of Shakespeare not one single word. All this of "the generous and sympathetic patron" ; all this of Shakespeare's "melancholy and tragic mood," induced by the ruin attending the failure of Essex's plot, belongs not to the realms of fact, but to the visionary regions of imagination and conjecture.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SILENCE OF PHILIP HENSLOWE

**L**ET us now put together some important facts which are well worthy of consideration.

In the first place it is clear that Francis Meres's allusions to Shakespeare<sup>1</sup> do nothing whatever to support the idea that the Stratford player was the author of the plays and poems alluded to. There is nothing at all to show that Meres, native of Lincolnshire, graduate of Cambridge, and Divine, had any personal knowledge of Shakespeare. He knew that plays and poems were published under that name, and that some sonnets purporting to be "Shake-speare's" were being privately circulated, but on the question "Who was Shakespeare?" he throws no light. Drayton he seems to have known, for of him he says *quem toties honoris et amoris causa nomino*, where *amoris* would seem to imply personal affection; but as to Shakespeare there is no such implication. Meres gives lists of all the famous literary men of the time and compares them with the ancients. He refers to Shakespeare as "the most excellent" both for tragedy and comedy, and as to his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, and his "sugred sonnets among his private friends," he says that "the sweet wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare." He says, further, that "the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's *fine-filed phrase*, if they could speake English," an expression which is in agreement with Jonson's mention of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 334.

poet's "well turned and true-filéd lines." But Meres is certainly not to be trusted absolutely, for he names *Titus Andronicus* as a play of Shakespeare's, which we can say with "certainty," *pace* Mr. Collins, that it is not, though no doubt it had been ascribed to "Shakespeare," notwithstanding the fact that the 1594 Quarto had, like the subsequent editions, been published anonymously.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, we see that the Folio *canon* is not to be implicitly relied upon, for this, too, includes the non-Shakespearean *Titus*, as well as the three parts of *Henry VI*, of which we may surely affirm that Part I is certainly not Shakespearean, and that it is exceedingly difficult to say how much, if any, of the second and third parts is the work of Shakespeare.

Thirdly, let us take careful note of the number of plays which were published as by Shakespeare, though admitted to be none of his, and that, too, in the lifetime of Shakspeare. There were, for example, (1) *Locrine*, published in 1595, with a title-page setting forth that it had been "overseene and corrected by W. S." (2) *Sir John Oldcastle*, which first appeared in 1600, with a title-page which informed the reader that it was by "William Shakespeare." (3) *The London Prodigal*, published in 1605, under Shakespeare's name. (4) *The Puritan or the Widow of Watling Street*, given to the public in 1607 as written by "W. S." (5) *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, published in 1608 in the name of Shakespeare. (6) *Pericles*, published in 1609 as "by William Shakespeare." (7) *Thomas, Lord Cromwell*, published in 1613 as by "W. S."

Now whatever were the laws of copyright,<sup>2</sup> Shakspeare, if he were the man who wrote under the name of Shakespeare, might at least have raised some protest against works of this sort being thus fraudulently palmed off upon

<sup>1</sup> Meres is not always accurate. For instance, he seems to have confused Edward Ferrers who wrote for the stage (d. 1564) with George Ferrers who wrote six of the historical poems in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (d. 1579).

<sup>2</sup> As to which see chap. x.



the public under his name. It seems clear, however, that he stood by and said nothing, for not only is there no grain of evidence that he took action of any kind, but the pseudo-authorship still stood uncontradicted in 1664 when the Third Folio was issued including these seven plays among the works of Shakespeare. Nay, there have been found critics, so late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, to maintain stoutly that some of these works were, in fact, by Shakespeare. Thus Schlegel, speaking of *Sir John Oldcastle*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *Thomas, Lord Cromwell*, says, "The three last pieces are not only unquestionably Shakespeare's but, in my opinion, they deserve to be classed among his best and maturest works!" How this renowned critic could have arrived at such a conclusion I find it extremely difficult to conceive; but he had not before him the evidence since made available by the discovery of Henslowe's *Diary*, which would have opened his eyes to the danger of using such adverbs as "unquestionably" in such cases.<sup>1</sup> Anyhow, nobody at the present day ascribes these seven plays to Shakespeare, although many critics insist that Shakespearean work is to be found in *Pericles*, which is at this day commonly included among "the works of Shakespeare," although omitted by the editor of the First Folio.

In this connection we must note also that in 1599 W. Jaggard published *The Passionate Pilgrim* as "By W. Shakespeare," though, as he must have very well known, very few of the pieces which it contained were by Shakespeare. In 1612 another edition was issued augmented

<sup>1</sup> Henslowe's *Diary* (as to which see p. 352) has the entry: "This 16th October '99 [i.e. 1599] Received by me Thomas Downton of Phillip Henslow to pay Mr. Monday, Mr. Drayton, and Mr. Wilson and Hathway for the first prte of the lyfe of Sir John Ouldcastell and in earnest of the second pte, for the use of the company ten pownd. I say receved." It thus appears that Anthony Monday, Michael Drayton, Robert Wilson, and Richard Hathaway were the real authors of this "Shakespearean" play, to which, as it appears by a later entry, Thomas Dekker made additions in 1602.

by the addition of some poems by Thomas Heywood, viz. two love epistles, the first from Paris to Helen, the second Helen's answer to Paris. In the postscript to his *Apology for Actors*, 1612, Heywood, referring to his book called *Troia Britannica*, published in 1609,<sup>1</sup> says, "Here, likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that work, by taking the two epistles of Paris to Helen, and Helen to Paris, and printing them in a less volume under the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steal them from him, and he, to do himself right, hath since published them in his own name; but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage under whom he hath published them, so the author, I know, was much offended with Mr. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name."

Here we observe that Heywood does nothing to identify "the author" with the player. He is somebody of whom Heywood speaks in very deferential terms. "The author," says Heywood, "I know was much offended"; but nevertheless, "the author" does not seem to have raised any protest as Heywood did, whereby Mr. W. Jaggard was constrained to cancel the first title-page, and substitute a second, omitting Shakespeare's name. Had not Heywood thus interfered, we may conclude that, as in the case of the spurious plays and of the Sonnets, no action would have been taken, and *The Passionate Pilgrim* would have continued to be issued with "W. Shakespeare" on the title-page. Yet no reason can be suggested why the player (if he were the author) should not have interfered by protest or otherwise. If "Shakespeare" was some other personage, in an altogether different walk of life—a courtier, for instance, holding or aspiring to high office in the state—he might have thought it expedient in this, as

<sup>1</sup> In this volume Heywood had already published the two translations from Ovid, which Jaggard printed as Shakespeare's in 1612.

in other cases, to say nothing. There are times when silence is golden.

There is yet another play which was published as by Shakespeare in the life of Shakspeare, and which must on no account be omitted from our survey. I refer to *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, printed anonymously in 1591, but as "written by W. Sh." in the second edition, in 1611, and as "written by W. Shakespeare" in 1622, the year before the publication of the First Folio.

After Shakspeare's death several plays were published as by him, which very possibly passed as Shakespeare's long before that date. Thus, Humphrey Moseley, the publisher, in 1653, entered on the Stationers' Register two pieces which he represented to be by Shakespeare in whole or in part, viz. *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* and the *History of Cardenio*, a share of which was assigned to Fletcher. Earlier still, viz. in 1634, the play of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was attributed on the title-page to Fletcher and Shakespeare,<sup>1</sup> and, as is well known, in the library of Charles II was a volume containing *Mucedorus*, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, and *Fair Em*, purporting to be by Shakespeare.

We need not, however, delay over these later publications. More than enough has been said to show that not only was the name of "Shakespeare" very frequently made use of as a popular name under which publishers might appeal to the public, and under which many works were published as Shakespeare's in which he had no part, but also that the publishers were aware that they might so use it without let or hindrance, in the knowledge that "Shakespeare" was prepared to "take it lying down."

<sup>1</sup> The title-page states that it is "by the memorable worthies of their time, Mr. John Fletcher and Mr. William Shakespeare gentlemen." Mr. Lee thinks that "frequent signs of Shakespeare's workmanship are unmistakable" (p. 211). Charles Lamb, Coleridge, and Dyce assigned a substantial portion of the play to Shakespeare. Shelley, however, wrote: "I do not believe Shakspeare wrote a word of it"; and Hazlitt was of the same opinion.

And now, fourthly, let us return to the Folio of 1623. It stands admitted that a very large part of that volume consists of work that is not "Shakespeare's" at all. I have already dealt with *Titus* and *Henry VI*, but there are many other plays in that very doubtful "canon," which, by universal admission, contain much non-Shakespearean composition.

Such plays are *The Taming of the Shrew*, of which much is admittedly non-Shakespearean, if indeed any part of it can be confidently ascribed to the master; *Troilus and Cressida*, in which all critics recognise the work of at least two hands; *Timon of Athens*, of which Mr. Gollancz writes: "It is now generally agreed that *Timon* contains a good deal of non-Shakespearean alloy"; and *Henry VIII*, a large part of which we are told is by Fletcher. But this is by no means an exhaustive list, for modern critics tell us that there is non-Shakespearean work in *King John*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and some other plays.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is quite astonishing how much of "Shakespeare" turns out to be non-Shakespearean! This is a characteristic of the plays which has to be seriously considered.

There has recently been published in the United States a work entitled, *An Impartial Study of the Shakespeare Title*, by John H. Stotsenburg. The author, Judge Stotsenburg, has done well in calling special attention, first, to the system of collaboration in the writing of plays which so generally prevailed in Shakespearean times, and

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bertram Dobell claims to have proved that George Wilkins "collaborated with Shakespeare, not only in *Timon of Athens* and *Pericles* (which has been previously suspected, though never proved), but also in *Macbeth*." That the work of another and inferior hand appears in parts of the latter play is generally admitted. The distinguished Clarendon Press Editors, Messrs. W. G. Clark and Aldis Wright, came to the conclusion that these portions were interpolated "after Shakespeare's death, or at least after he had withdrawn from all connection with the theatre," and that "the interpolator was, not improbably, Thomas Middleton," whose play of *The Witch* contains many resemblances to *Macbeth*.



secondly to the importance of the entries to be found in Henslowe's Journal. Let us take Henslowe first.

Philip Henslowe was in partnership with Edward Alleyn the famous actor (who had married Henslowe's stepdaughter) in considerable theatrical speculations, and they appear to have been joint proprietors of several theatres, including the Rose, which he erected on the Bankside; and this partnership continued till his death in 1616, in which year William Shakspeare also was removed from life's fitful fever.

His so-called *Diary*, a large folio manuscript volume, containing valuable information concerning theatrical affairs from 1591 to 1609, was discovered by Malone at Dulwich College (founded by Alleyn) about the year 1790. It was reprinted by the Shakespeare Society in 1845, with a preface by J. Payne Collier. "Henslowe," says Collier, "wrote a bad hand, adopted any orthography that suited his notions of the sound of words, especially of proper names (necessarily of most frequent occurrence), and he kept his book, as respects dates in particular, in the most disorderly, negligent and confused manner. . . . He generally used his own pen, but in some places the hand of a scribe or clerk is visible; and here and there the dramatists and actors themselves (whom he employed) wrote the item in which they were concerned, for the sake perhaps of saving the old manager trouble; thus in various parts of the manuscript we meet with the handwriting, not merely the signatures, of Drayton, Chapman, Dekker, Chettle, Porter, Wilson, Hathaway, Day, S. Rowley, Haughton, Rankins, and Wadeson." Mr. Furness, who quotes this passage in the appendix to his new *Variorum Hamlet* (Vol II), justly adds: "Where the names of nearly all the dramatic poets of the age are to be frequently found, we might certainly count on finding that of Shakespeare, but the shadow in which Shakespeare's early life was spent envelops him here too, and his name, as Collier

says, is not met with in any part of the manuscript." And again: "Recollecting that the names of nearly all the other play-poets of the time occur, we cannot but wonder that that of Shaksper is not met with in any part of the manuscript. The notices of Ben Jonson, Dekker, Chettle, Marston, Wilson, Drayton, Monday, Heywood, Middleton, Porter, Hathaway, Rankins, Webster, Day, Rowley, Haughton, etc., are frequent, because they were all writers for Henslowe's theatre, but we must wait at all events for the discovery of some other similar record, before we can produce corresponding memoranda regarding Shaksper and his productions."

Now here is another most remarkable phenomenon. Here is a manuscript book, dating from 1591 to 1609, which embraces the period of Shakespeare's greatest activity; and in it we find mention of practically all the dramatic writers of that day with any claims to distinction—men whom Henslowe had employed to write plays for his theatre; yet nowhere is the name of Shakespeare to be found among them, or, indeed, at all. Yet if Shaksper the player had been a dramatist, surely Henslowe would have employed him also, like the others, for reward in that behalf! It is strange indeed, on the hypothesis of his being a successful playwright, as well as an actor, that the old manager should not so much as mention his name in all this large manuscript volume! Nevertheless it is quietly assumed by the Stratfordian editors that Shaksper commenced his career as a dramatist by writing plays for this very Henslowe who so completely ignores his existence. Thus we have an entry in the *Diary*: "R'd at titus and ondronicus the 23 of Jenewary (1593) iii<sup>ll</sup> viij<sup>s</sup>," i.e. three pounds eight shillings; which means that this sum represented the theatre receipts for the first presentation of the tragedy which Henslowe marks as new.<sup>1</sup> Now

<sup>1</sup> Henslowe placed *ne* in the outer margin to denote "new," according to his custom. *Diary*, as edited by Collier, p. 33. We must remember that a quarto edition of *Titus* appeared in 1594.

mark the Stratfordian argument! *Titus Andronicus* is included in the Folio, therefore it was written by Shakespeare, who is identical with Shakspeare the actor. From this, says Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. I, p. 97), "*it appears that Shakespeare up to this period had written all his dramas for Henslowe, and that they were acted under the sanction of that manager by the various companies performing from 1592 to 1594 at the Rose Theatre and Newington Butts.*"<sup>1</sup> The acting copies of *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* must, of course,<sup>1</sup> have been afterwards transferred by Henslowe to the Lord Chamberlain's company"! In similar strain writes Mr. Lee, "The Rose Theatre was *doubtless*<sup>1</sup> the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist"!

This is indeed a delightful specimen of Stratfordian reasoning. If Shakspeare had really commenced his dramatic career (at a time when money was certainly an object to him) by writing plays for Henslowe, it would be all the more extraordinary—indeed incredible—that the old manager should have made no mention of him in his *Diary*. That Henslowe made no mention of "Shakespeare" in connection with *Titus* or *Henry VI* is, however, not unnatural if, as I believe, these were not Shakespearean plays. But why did he not mention Shakespeare as the writer of other plays? I think the answer is simple enough. Neither Shakspeare nor "Shakespeare" ever wrote for Henslowe!<sup>2</sup> But "Shakespeare" was writing plays between 1591 and 1609? Certainly; but he did not write to anybody's order, nor, in my opinion, did he write "in collaboration" with anybody. Of this a word later. At present it is sufficient to remark that he was above Henslowe's "sky-line," and therefore this illiterate old manager had no reason to make mention of him.

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

<sup>2</sup> Shakspeare's early connection seems to have been with the Burbages. James Burbage, father of the actor, built the *Theatre* in 1576. His sons built the *Globe* in 1599.

Let us examine some other entries made by Henslowe. On page 34 of the *Diary* we have, "Re'd at King Leare the 6 of Aprell 1593 xxxviiij s.," showing that a play of *King Lear* was acted on April 6th, 1593. By an entry on page 26 it appears that a play of *Henry V* was acted for the first time on May 14, 1592. "This," writes Collier, "is the piece to which Nash alluded in his *Pierce Penniless*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1592; and *The Famous Victories of Henry V* was entered at Stationers' Hall to be printed in 1594."

Again, at page 36 we have this entry as to *The Taming of a Shrew*: "II of June 1594 R'd at the tamyng of a Shrowe ix s." Upon this Judge Stotsenburg asks, "But who wrote *The Taming of a Shrew* printed in 1594, and who wrote the *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry the Sixth*, or *King Lear*, referred to in the *Diary*?" And he continues: "Neither Collier nor any of the Shaksper commentators make any claim to their authorship in behalf of William Shaksper. Since these plays have the same names as those included in the Folio of 1623 the presumption is that they are the same plays until the contrary is shown. Of course it may be shown either that those in the Folio are entirely different, except in name, or that these plays were revised, improved, and dressed by some one whom they called Shakespeare." Well, if these and other old plays mentioned by Henslowe, and similar in name to those included in the Folio, were Shakespearean dramas, that fact would indeed be strong evidence against the *Shaksperian* authorship,<sup>2</sup> but my own conviction is that the

<sup>1</sup> "What a glorious thing it is to have Henry the Fifth represented on the stage, leading the French King prisoner," etc. It is sometimes assumed that Nash's allusion is to the old play, printed by Thomas Creede in 1598, whence Shakespeare took the young prince, Ned, Gadshill, the old tavern in Eastcheap, and some other ideas for his drama, of course "transmuting dross into gold." But Collier concludes that "our old stage was in possession of three dramas founded upon the events of the reign of Henry V, viz. that described by Nash, 'The Famous Victories' first printed in 1598, and Shakespeare's historical play.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. xvi.



hypothesis suggested in the last sentence of the above quotation is the true one. These plays were "revised, improved, and dressed by some one whom they called Shakespeare."<sup>1</sup>

As to the manner in which plays were written in Shakespearean times, I take the following from the appendix to the "New Variorum" *Hamlet* already referred to: "The rapidity with which plays must have been written at that time is most remarkable, and is testified beyond dispute by later portions of Henslowe's manuscript, where, among other charges, he registers the sums paid, the dates of payment, and the authors who receive the money. Nothing was more common than for dramatists to unite their abilities and resources, and when a piece on any account was to be brought out with peculiar despatch, three, four, five, and perhaps even six, poets engaged themselves on different portions of it. Evidence of this dramatic combination will be found of such frequent occurrence that it is vain here to point out particular pages where it is to be met with."<sup>2</sup>

Judge Stotsenburg draws attention to many instances of this collaboration, of which evidence is to be found in Henslowe's *Diary*. One interesting example is seen in the following extract (p. 221): "Lent unto the companye,

<sup>1</sup> In Note B to chap. v. I have discussed Professor Courthope's theory that the whole of *The Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, the trilogy of *Henry VI*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *The Troublesome Reign of King John* were the work of Shakespeare, and I have pointed out that if this be indeed the fact, Henslowe's silence becomes more extraordinary than ever, for he makes mention of *Titus*, *Henry VI*, and *The Taming of a Shrew* in his *Diary*, but says never a word of Shakespeare, though he names practically all the other dramatists of his day.

<sup>2</sup> Yet Professor Courthope writes (Vol IV, p. 462): "I venture to say that no dispassionate reader can peruse *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* without perceiving that—even admitting a practice of co-operation between dramatists at so early a date, of which, so far as I am aware, there is no proof whatever—these plays are the work of a single mind." Henslowe's *Diary* affords abundant "proof" of the practice in question between the years 1590 and 1610.

the 22 of May 1602, to geve unto Antoney Monday and Mikell Drayton, Webster, Mydelton, and the Rest, in earnest of a Booke called Sesers Falle, the some of five pounds." Here Collier's note is: "Malone passed over this important entry without notice; it shows that in May, 1602, four poets, who are named, viz. Monday, Drayton, Webster, and Middleton, and some others not named, were engaged in writing a play upon the subject of the fall of Cæsar." Judge Stotsenburg believes that this was the original of the play of *Julius Cæsar*, which appears in the Folio, and contends that it was for the most part written by Michael Drayton, who was nicknamed by Sir John Davies the "poet Decius," on account, as this writer thinks, of the mistake he made in writing "Decius" Brutus, instead of "Decimus." But I must refer the reader to Judge Stotsenburg's work if he wishes to consider the ingenious arguments put forward for Drayton's authorship, or part-authorship, of this Shakespearean play. Anyhow, the play to which Henslowe refers "had noble parents. Anthony Monday, 'our best plotter' (according to Meres), Thomas Middleton, and John Webster, three poets and dramatists of the first rank, were Drayton's coadjutors."<sup>1</sup>

The case of *Troilus and Cressida* is also interesting. This curious drama seems to have been inserted in the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee says, in his life of Webster (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*), that Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* had been successfully produced a year before *Cæsar's Fall* was "accepted by Henslowe from the joint pens of Webster, Drayton, Middleton, Munday, and 'the rest,'" viz. on May 22nd, 1602; and he suggests that Henslowe got these playwrights to produce their play in rivalry with that of the great poet whose name Henslowe never mentions. This seems to me an extremely improbable hypothesis, and there really is no sufficient evidence to show that *Julius Cæsar* was produced (successfully or otherwise) in 1601, for Weever's lines in the *Mirror of Martyrs* are by no means conclusive. Collier contended for 1603 as the date of production. The play was first published in the Folio of 1623. Henslowe's *Diary* shows that a *Tragedy of Cæsar and Pompey* was produced as early as 1594. I must not be taken as subscribing to Judge Stotsenburg's hypothesis, but these entries certainly provide abundant food for meditation.

Folio at the last moment. It is not mentioned in the table of contents. It was at first proposed to make it follow *Romeo and Juliet*, and the first three pages were actually numbered so as to follow that play, but *Timon of Athens* was subsequently put in its place, and a neutral position was assigned to it between the Histories and the Comedies, though it is styled a "Tragedie." As it stands, *Troilus* is unpagged, except in its second and third pages, which bear the numbers 79 and 80. The last page of *Romeo and Juliet* should bear the number 77, and the first of *Troilus* would thus be 78. But the Folio editor had, evidently, no little doubt about the latter play.

What light does Henslowe throw on the subject? On page 147 of Collier's edition of his *Diary* appears the note: "Lent unto Thomas Downton, to lende unto Mr. Dickers and Harey Cheattell in earneste of their boocke called Troyeles and Creassedaye the some of 3 pounds Aprell 7 day 1599." Following this entry is another: "Lent unto Harey Cheattell and Mr. Dickers in pte of payment of ther boocke called Troyelles and Cresseda the 16 of Aprell 1599 xx s."

In Judge Stotsenburg's opinion, "these remarkable entries not only refute the Shakespearean claim to the authorship of *Troilus and Cressida*, but the collaboration of two men in its composition tallies exactly with the opinion of the leading commentators that one part of the play of *Troilus and Cressida* is altogether different in style and method from the other part. Even the careless reader of the play of *Troilus and Cressida* will notice the difference in the style and composition of parts of the play, naturally evidencing that it was the work of more than one writer." Again, in a subsequent chapter, "The first fact to which I will call the reader's attention, as attested by reliable evidence, is that the play of *Troilus and Cressida* was originally written by Thomas Dekker and Henry Chettle. My authority for this statement of

fact is the *Diary* of Philip Henslowe, which, as heretofore shown, is recognised as a reliable authority by all the commentators. It is not only a reliable authority, but it is the very best authority on the subject of the original composition of some of the so-called Shakespeare plays. Henslowe's *Diary* is entitled to a high degree of credit, because it was kept by a disinterested man, who cared nothing for any poet or dramatist except in so far as he could buy his plays for the smallest amount of money, and his *Diary*, outside of his expense account and common transactions, is, in effect, a statement of the names of the plays, either by the actual name given to the play, badly spelled, or an identifying reference to the play by the use of the name of some one of the chief characters therein, together with the amount paid for the play, or book as it was then called, and very often the names of the several writers who composed the play. . . . The Henslowe *Diary* shows that Thomas Dekker and Henry Chettle, in the spring of the year 1599, wrote the play of *Troilus and Cressida*. Presumptively, therefore, this play was written by Dekker and Chettle, unless it can be shown by proof which would overcome that presumption that Henslowe's *Diary* was, as to that point, incorrect; or that there were two plays on that subject with the same name; or that some one took the play after Dekker and Chettle had written it, and added to or subtracted from the original composition. Collier, who edited and indexed the *Diary*, appends this note below Henslowe's entry: 'Malone quotes this remarkable entry (showing that Dekker and Chettle were engaged in April, 1599, on a play with the name and on the subject adopted by our great dramatist) in *Shaksper*, by Boswell, III, 331. Henslowe gets a little nearer the proper spelling of the title in a subsequent memorandum.' It is a fact not to be disputed that William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon never claimed that he was the author of this play. . . . In 1609 the name of 'William Shake-



speare' is attached to an edition of *Troilus and Cressida*. Such a publication might be of some avail to overcome the presumption that Dekker and Chettle wrote the play were it not for two facts : First, that the attaching of that name to plays which William Shaksper did not write renders such an ascription of no value. As Morgan, in his *Myth*, speaking of the plays ascribed to Shaksper, says, 'It is certainly a fact that none of these, from *Hamlet* to *Fair Em*, from *Lucrece* to the *Merry Devil of Edmonton*, did William Shaksper ever either deny or claim as progeny of his. He fathered them all as they came, and no questions asked; and had Ireland been at hand with his *Vortigern* it might have gone in with the rest.' His name was attached, as we have seen, to the play of Sir John Oldcastle, in 1600, but the discovery of Henslowe's *Diary* put an end to that falsehood, and there is no valid reason why the statements in the *Diary* as to the authorship of *Troilus and Cressida* should not also be accepted for truth. The second fact is that the careful reader of the play will find therein the style of two different persons," etc. The Judge then proceeds to give instances of words and expressions in the play confirmatory of the theory that it was in truth the work of these two writers, which will well repay perusing, and concludes as follows : "I cannot give adhesion to the view expressed by Webb and other gifted writers that Bacon wrote this play. It was, in my opinion, based upon the foregoing facts, originally the production of Dekker and Chettle, added to and philosophically dressed by Francis Bacon."

So Judge Stotsenburg. The Stratfordian reply is, of course, that the *Troilus and Cressida* of Dekker and Chettle had nothing whatever to do with the play subsequently written by Shakspeare of Stratford. Thus Mr. Lee writes : "In 1599 Dekker and Chettle were engaged by Henslowe to prepare for the Earl of Nottingham's company—a rival of Shakespeare's company—a play of

*Troilus and Cressida*, of which no trace survives. It doubtless<sup>1</sup> suggested the topic to Shakespeare." Therefore it is assumed that the play entered on the Stationers' Register in 1603 by James Roberts (viz. "the booke of Troilus and Cressida, as yt is acted by my Lord Chamberlen's men"), to be printed "when he had got sufficient authority for it," and subsequently re-entered (viz. on January 28th, 1609) before the publication of the Quarto edition of that year, is an entirely different play to that mentioned by Henslowe. Yet it is admitted not only that the different writing of two authors is apparent in the Folio play, but also that "Shakespeare" must have had at least some share in a play of *Troilus and Cressida* as early as this very year 1599, in the spring of which Dekker and Chettle are found engaged in writing their play of that name. For in the old anonymous play of *Histrionomastix*, supposed to have been written by Marston and others in or before that year, occurs the following burlesque passage:—

TROYLUS. Come, Cressida, my cresset light,  
 Thy face doth shine both day and night,  
 Behold, behold thy garter blue  
 Thy knight his valiant elbow wears,<sup>2</sup>  
 That when he SHAKES his furious SPEARE,  
 The foe in shivering fearful sort  
 May lay him down in death to snort.

In the face of all this, however, it is quietly assumed that the play written by Dekker and Chettle has no relation whatever to "Shakespeare's," except as, "doubtless," suggesting to Shakspeare a subject on which to write a new play, the composition of which is assigned by the Stratfordian critics to 1602. The play by Dekker and Chettle is supposed by these commentators to be entirely lost. The ordinary reader, however, will, I think, be inclined to

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

<sup>2</sup> The text is corrupt here. A line has dropped out ending in a word to rhyme with "blue," and "wears" should be "wear" to rhyme with "speare."

assume from the passage quoted above that a play of *Troilus and Cressida* had been published as by "Shakespeare" about 1599, and it is not altogether unreasonable to suppose that this play was the one to which Henslowe alludes.<sup>1</sup>

But we have other notable entries in Henslowe's *Diary*. This, for instance (p. 202): "Lent unto Roberte Shawe, to lend unto Hary Chettel and Antonye Mondaye and Mihell Drayton, in earnest of a boocke called the Rissenge of Carnowlle Wolsey the 10 of Octobr 1601 xxx s."; and again (p. 203): "Lent unto the companye the 9 of Novembr 1601 to pay unto Mr. Mondaye and Hary Chettell, in pt of payment of a boocke called the Risynge of Carnowlle Wollsey, the some of xs." And yet again (p. 204): "Lent unto the company the 12 of Novmbr 1601 to paye unto Antony mondaye and harey Chettell, mihell Drayton, and Smythe, in fulle paymente of the firste pt of Carnowll Wollsey, the some of iijl."

The play of *Cardinal Wolsey's Life* was evidently designed to make a fine show on the stage. The parsimonious Henslowe went to extraordinary expense over it. Upon the costumes only, says Collier, in the whole, considerably more than two hundred pounds were laid out, reckoning the value of money in 1601 at about five times its value at present.<sup>2</sup> The Shakespearean *Henry VIII* is also renowned as a pageant and gorgeous spectacle. It is, as Verplanck's editor says, "a drama of show and splendour." The versification has often been commented

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Fleay says that part, at least, of *Troilus and Cressida* is as early as 1597. See further as to this curious play p. 491 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Preface, p. xxiv. The play called *The Rising of Cardinal Wolsey* seems to have had its origin in the success of Chettle's *Cardinal Wolsey's Life*, generally called "Cardinal Wolsey" by Henslowe. Chettle, Monday, Drayton, and Wentworth Smith "were engaged upon *The Rising of Cardinal Wolsey*, for the greater despatch in bringing it out, in order to take advantage of the popularity of the drama, to which, in fact, it was introductory." (Collier's note, p. 202.) Thus the whole of the great Cardinal's career seems to have been dramatised.

upon. It is described by Verplanck, "as carefully avoiding the pause at the end of the lines, and overflowing the regular rhythm with added syllables—not as in other plays in a single line or two, here and there, but in long passages and apparently on some system." Spedding, whom most modern editors follow, assigns a great part of the play, including some of the speeches generally published among Shakespearean "gems," to John Fletcher, whereupon Judge Stotsenburg writes: "I think that he is clearly right in his opinion that the play was a collaborated play, but the facts disclosed in the *Diary* as to the making of the play of the *Rising of Cardinal Wolsey*, coupled with the extraordinary expense and pains taken to attract an audience, cause me to believe that Drayton, Chettle, and Smyth should receive the credit for the original composition of *Henry VIII.*"

Again we read (p. 121): "Lent unto the company to geve Mr. Willsons, Dickers, Drayton, and Cheattell, in parte payment of a boocke called Perce of Exstone, the some of forty shillings"; where Collier's note is, "Sir Piers of Exton killed Richard II, and this play was most likely connected with this historical incident." The date of the entry is 1598, and the month seems to be April, about the first. Now the Shakespearean play of *Richard II* was published anonymously in 1597, but in the following year it appeared with a title-page stating that it was "by William Shake-speare." Between that date and 1608 the additions of the parliament scene and the deposing of King Richard were added to the original play, and "since the new additions," says Stotsenburg, "to *Richard the Second*, published in 1608, embrace the story of Exton's villainous act, it is very likely that Henslowe paid Drayton, Wilson, Dekker, and Chettle for these very additions about the first of April, 1598. Henslowe, of course, was not very particular about the title of the plays which he bought. All that he cared to do was to write



some name, if only that of one of the characters of the play, by which he could identify his purchase."

Another entry in this interesting *Diary* is as follows (p. 240): "Lent unto John Ducke the 25 of Septmbr 1602 to bye a blacke sewt of satten for the play of *Burone* the some of vii." Collier's note here is: "In the *History of English Dramatic Poetry and the Stage*, III, 95, it is suggested that this entry, and others, may refer to Chapman's *Byron's Conspiracy and Tragedy*, printed in 1608, but this is questionable on a comparison of dates. See Collier's *Shakespeare*, I, p. 209, where it is shown that Chapman's two plays have not reached us as they were originally written, in consequence of the remonstrance of the French Ambassador against certain incidents in them."

But, says Stotsenburg, "the next entry in the *Diary*, at page 241, helps to identify the play," viz.: "Layd owt at the apoyntmente of the companye, to macke a scafowld and bare for the play of Berowne, and carpenter's wages xiijs." This, says the Judge, "indicates that there was a play or performance within the play which Henslowe calls *Berowne*, as there actually is in *Love's Labour's Lost*, namely in the presentation of the side show by Armado, Oostard, Nathaniel, and the rest of the Nine Worthies. A scaffold and bar are meant by the terms 'scafowld and bare,' and by the word 'Berowne,' Henslowe, this rich murderer of the King's English, probably meant to name the chief character 'Biron' in *Love's Labour's Lost*. This opinion of mine seems to be confirmed by the second note which the learned Verplanck, who edited an excellent edition of the plays, appends to the first scene of Act I. 'Biron,' he says, 'is in all the old editions printed "Berowne," which Rowe altered to "Biron". . . . It is to be pronounced with the accent on the last syllable.' . . . Henslowe, therefore, did not get very far out of the way in his spelling of the word."

Now, whether we are inclined to agree with Judge Stotsenburg's conclusions or not, it must be admitted that we have in the examples given from Henslowe's *Diary* (and others could be added) much food for serious consideration. Here we find references to, and records of the writing of, such plays as *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI*, *Titus Adronicus*, *Henry VIII* ("The Rising of Cardinal Wolsey"), *Julius Cæsar* ("Cæsar's Fall"), and, as it would seem, *Richard II*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*.<sup>1</sup>

Are we to suppose that, so soon as the various playwrights mentioned by Henslowe had produced these plays, Shakespeare was at once inspired by the idea of writing entirely different plays of his own on the same subjects—that these publications "doubtless" suggested to Shakespeare topics for plays of his own to be published under the same or very similar titles? That does not seem to me a very reasonable idea. Far more likely does it appear that there was a great man of the time whose genius was capable of "transforming dross into gold," who took these plays, and, in great part, rewrote and revised them, leaving sometimes more, and sometimes less of the original work; and that so rewritten, revised, and transformed they appeared as the plays of "Shake-speare."<sup>2</sup>

As to the player, Judge Stotsenburg writes: "As heretofore stated and shown by unimpeachable facts it is in evidence that Shaksper was never employed to write plays, either singly or in collaboration, by Philip Henslowe, the principal theatre-manager in London and the man who secured the services of the best playwrights of the

<sup>1</sup> There is also a note, p. 223: "Lent unto bengemy Johnsons, at the apoyntment of E. Alleyn and Wm Birde, the 24 of June 1602, in earneste of a boocke called Richard crockbacke, and for new adicyons for Jeronymo the some of xii." *Richard Crookback* must be a play of Richard III. See Stotsenburg, chap. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Not unfrequently, of course, plays were published under that well known and useful name without having received any touch from the master hand.

time for English audiences; and Shaksper's name is not even mentioned in the *Diary* kept by the manager, as it certainly would have been had Shaksper written plays for the theatre. There is no evidence, and none can be adduced, that Shaksper was ever employed by any one to write plays. It is also in evidence that he commended no contemporary although it was the custom of the poets and dramatists of his time to furnish commendatory and complimentary lines to accompany the books of brother poets, and during his lifetime no book was issued in his name, either with or without his authorisation, in which he was commended by any one, either in prose or poetry; and then there is the uncontradicted evidence that Shaksper was utterly indifferent to literary proprieties. Although books were issued which he did not and could not write, yet he neither claimed nor disclaimed the authorship, but stood mute."

The silence of Philip Henslowe is certainly a very remarkable phenomenon, and one which is, as it seems to me, very difficult to reconcile with the supposition that Player Shakspeare wrote plays. If, however, there was a man in high position, "a concealed poet," who took the works of others and rewrote and transformed them, besides bringing out original plays of his own (founded on Italian novels or whatever came to his hand—*The Tempest*, e.g.), then it is natural enough that his name should not appear among those for the most part impecunious dramatists to whom Henslowe paid money for play-writing. On this supposition, too, it is not difficult to see why he took the wrong in silence if plays not written or revised by him were brought out in the name of "Shakespeare."

Here, too, it is appropriate to mention that Edward Alleyne, the actor who stands pre-eminent among his fellows as being of a higher caste than the ordinary player, and who was not only an actor but a theatrical proprietor, and the founder of Dulwich College, left papers and

memoirs which were published in 1841 and 1843, and which "contain the names of all the notable actors and play-poets of Shaksper's time, as well as of every person who helped, directly or indirectly, or who paid out money, or received money, in connection with the production of the many plays at the Blackfriars Theatre, the Fortune, and other theatres. His accounts were very minutely stated, and a careful perusal of the two volumes shows that there is not one mention of such a poet as William Shaksper in his list of actors, poets, and theatrical comrades!"<sup>1</sup>

It may be urged that, whether mentioned or not, there was undoubtedly an actor called William Shaksper or Shakspere. That is true enough, and as he did not play with Alleyne, and if his top performance was the ghost in *Hamlet*, it is not, perhaps, very remarkable that Alleyne did not make mention of him. But if he had indeed been the great and successful dramatist, the man whom Ben Jonson intended to eulogise as "not of an age but for all time," then surely it would, in any case but "Shakespeare's," be thought extraordinary that Alleyne, like Henslowe, entirely ignores his existence!

What makes Henslowe's silence still more extraordinary is that the company with which he was so intimately connected at one time appears to have been united with the Lord Chamberlain's company, of which Shakspere was a member. "At various times," writes Mr. Collier,<sup>2</sup> "and for uncertain periods, Henslowe was more or less interested in the receipts obtained by players acting under the names of the Queen, Lord Nottingham, Lord Strange, Lord Sussex, Lord Worcester, and the Lord Chamberlain. The latter was the company of which Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspere] was a member, either as actor or author,

<sup>1</sup> Malone quoted a supposed memorandum by Alleyne to the effect that Shakspere lodged in 1596 near "the Bear Garden in Southwark," but there is good reason to think that this is a mythical document. Alleyne certainly does not refer to Shaksper as a poet or dramatist.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction, p. xvi.



from his first arrival in until his final retirement from London, which company subsequently to the accession of James I was allowed to assume the distinguishing title of the King's Players. . . . On page 35 [of the *Diary*] begins a highly valuable enumeration of all the dramas represented between 3rd June, 1594, and 18th July, 1596, during the whole of which two years and six weeks the Lord Admiral's Players were jointly occupying, or possibly playing in combination at, the Newington Theatre with the Lord Chamberlain's servants; and here we find, by Henslowe's usual indication, that no fewer than forty new plays were got up and acted. . . . We have already spoken of the union of the company to which Shakespeare belonged, and for which he wrote, with that so intimately connected with Philip Henslowe. This union (if such it were, and not merely the joint occupation of the same house while the Globe was in course of construction, and for some time afterwards) lasted for rather more than two years; and, as has been remarked in the *Memoirs* of Edward Alleyn (p. 22), it is singular that most of the old plays which our great dramatist is supposed more or less to have employed, and of the stories of which he availed himself, are found in Henslowe's list of this period. Here we find a *Titus Andronicus*, a *Lear*, a *Hamlet*, a *Henry V*, and a *Henry VI*, a *Buckingham*, the old *Taming of a Shrew*, and several others, the titles of which we need not enumerate, because they are inserted in their proper places, precisely as they stand in the manuscript. For aught we know Shakespeare may originally have had some share in their authorship, or, if he had not, as he probably acted in them, he may have felt himself authorised as a member of the company to use them to the extent that answered his purpose"!

How strange, how more than strange, that Henslowe should make no mention in all this long diary, embracing all the time from 1591 to 1609, of the "actor-author," who

"doubtless" (according to Mr. Lee), secured his earliest "pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist" in Henslowe's own theatre! No matter. *Credo, quia impossibile!*

But a further consideration arises in connection with the theory that Shakespeare revised, remodelled, rewrote, redressed, and transformed plays originally written by Dekker, Chettle, Monday, Heywood, and other playwrights of the time. If this hypothesis be adopted, the difficulty arising from the marvellous vocabulary of Shakespeare (far beyond that of any other mortal man) does not appear so formidable, for the vocabulary is not, in truth, the vocabulary of one, but of many.

The question of course remains, "Who was the great reviser?" That question we could answer if only we could say for certain who was the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has sometimes been said that if we could only know who wrote the Sonnets we should know the true Shakespeare. But the authorship of the Sonnets was never avowed or claimed by Shakespeare. They were published in 1609 as "*Shake-speares Sonnets*, Never before Imprinted. At London. By G. Eld for T. T.," etc. "T. T." stands for Thomas Thorpe, the "piratical publisher," as Mr. Lee calls him. The poems were published without any sanction from the author. Two of them, viz. Sonnets 138 and 144, had already seen the light (in rather varied form), having been printed in 1599 by that other "piratical publisher" William Jaggard, in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, purporting to be the work of "*W. Shakespeare*," but containing much work for which Shakespeare had no responsibility at all. The Sonnets, which, as Masson says in his *Essays* on Shakespeare and Goethe, are "autobiographic, distinctly, intensely, painfully autobiographic," were, in all probability, not intended for publication at any time. Meres alluded to them in 1598 as "Shakespeare's sugared sonnets among his private friends," which is certainly some authority in favour of their ascription to "Shakespeare"; but Meres's testimony, as we have already seen, is by no means infallible, and some critics maintain that the Sonnets are not by Shakespeare at all. As to their ascription to Shaksper, or Shakspeare, of Stratford, Judge Stotsenburg thus writes (p. 214): "In the year 1609 a book appeared in England called *Shake-speare's Sonnets never before imprinted*. The word 'Shake' and the suffix 'speare' were hyphenated, thereby distinguishing the hyphenated words from the surname 'Shaksper.' Mr. William Shaksper, the reputed author of the plays and poems, was living at that time, and he lived for more than six years thereafter, and he did not, so far as the world knows, either

before or after the publication of the Sonnets, claim to be the maker, begetter, furnisher, or author of them, or any of them; he did not take them to the publisher; he did not enter the book in the register of the Stationers' Company; he did not spell his name in the hyphenated way, and he did not dedicate his Sonnets to any one."

But were the Sonnets "Shakespeare's"? Judge Stotsenburg believes not, and ascribes their real authorship to Sir Philip Sidney. For his ingenious reasoning I must refer to chapters XXI. and XXII. of his work. Amongst other things, the reader will, I think, be interested in the Judge's very plausible identification of the

"Man in hue, all hues in his controlling,"

of the twentieth sonnet, with Sidney's bosom friend Sir Edmund Dyer, though a writer in *Baconiana* (July, 1906, and see also for January, 1907) with equal ingenuity contends that the reference is to Bacon's friend the Earl of Essex and Ewe.

I may here perhaps be allowed to note a very curious "Baconian" coincidence. In Sonnet 107 occurs the line—

"The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured."

Mr. George Stronach points out in *Baconiana* for January, 1906, that in Bacon's *History of Henry VII* is the following expression: "The Queen hath *endured* a strange eclipse." Mr. Stronach has not been able to find a third example of this expression—*enduring an eclipse*—nor have *Notes and Queries* been able to supply him with one. Bacon's allusion was to the Queen Dowager, but it much enforces those critics who make "the mortal moon" refer to Elizabeth, and the line in the Sonnets has, certainly, a very Baconian appearance! I must leave to others the task of unravelling the tangled web of the Sonnets, if they can, but that they were written by the Stratford player appears to me an incredible hypothesis. The more they are considered the more certain does it become that they are, for the most part, intensely autobiographical. I venture also to think it highly probable that the author of them was not unacquainted with Plato's *Phædrus*. Haply he had the soul of one not only φιλοσοφήσαντος ἀδύλως, but also παιδεραστήσαντος μετὰ φιλοσοφίας. But such things are not easily understood in days when

Folds of summer light enclose  
All that once was Anteros.

(See *ante*, p. 82, and see Plat. *Phædrus*, 249 A. and 255 D.)

## CHAPTER XIII

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LAWYER

THE *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare supply ample evidence that their author not only had a very extensive and accurate knowledge of law, but also that he was well acquainted with the manners and customs of members of the Inns of Court and with legal life generally.

"While novelists and dramatists are constantly making mistakes as to the laws of marriage, of wills and inheritance, to Shakespeare's law, lavishly as he expounds it, there can neither be demurrer, nor bill of exceptions, nor writ of error." Such was the testimony borne by one of the most distinguished lawyers of the nineteenth century who was raised to the high office of Lord Chief Justice in 1850, and subsequently became Lord Chancellor.<sup>1</sup> Its weight will, doubtless, be more appreciated by lawyers than by laymen, for only lawyers know how impossible it is for those who have not served an apprenticeship to the law to avoid displaying their ignorance if they venture to employ legal terms and to discuss legal doctrines. "There is nothing so dangerous," wrote Lord Campbell, "as for one not of the craft to tamper with our freemasonry." A layman is certain to betray himself by using some expression which a lawyer would never employ. Mr. Sidney Lee himself supplies us with an example of this. He writes (p. 164): "On February 15, 1609, Shakespeare . . . obtained judgment from a jury against Addenbroke for

<sup>1</sup> Lord Campbell. See *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements*.



the payment of £6, and £1. 5s. od. costs." Now a lawyer would never have spoken of obtaining "judgment from a jury," for it is the function of a jury not to deliver judgment (which is the prerogative of the court), but to find a verdict on the facts. The error is, indeed, a venial one, but it is just one of those little things which at once enable a lawyer to know if the writer is a layman or "one of the craft."<sup>1</sup>

But when a layman ventures to plunge deeply into legal subjects, he is naturally apt to make an exhibition of his incompetence. "Let a non-professional man, however acute," writes Lord Campbell again, "presume to talk law, or to draw illustrations from legal science in discussing other subjects, and he will speedily fall into laughable absurdity."

And what does the same high authority say about Shakespeare? He had "a deep technical knowledge of the law," and an easy familiarity with "some of the most abstruse proceedings in English jurisprudence." And again: "Whenever he indulges this propensity he uniformly lays down good law." Of *Henry IV*, Part 2, he says: "If Lord Eldon could be supposed to have written the play, I do not see how he could be chargeable with having forgotten any of his law while writing it." Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke speak of "the marvellous intimacy which he displays with legal terms, his frequent adoption of them in illustration, and his curiously technical know-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Abbott (not "LL.D.," but "D.D.") supplies us with another example. He writes (*Life of Bacon*, p. 145): "In our days Parliament can at once rectify, by a new Act, an injury arising from a judicial interpretation of statutes or *from the overriding of statutes by common law*." Now statutes can, and frequently do, override the common law, but the common law cannot override a statute of the realm. No lawyer, therefore, would have written the above sentence. I find yet another instance in Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Did Shakespeare write "Titus Andronicus"?* (p. 59). Mr. Robertson writes: "Let us formulate all the tests that the problem admits of, first putting a few necessary caveats." No lawyer would speak of "*putting* a caveat." The legal term is to "*enter* a caveat."

ledge of their form and force." Malone, himself a lawyer, wrote : " His knowledge of legal terms is not merely such as might be acquired by the casual observation of even his all-comprehending mind ; it has the appearance of technical skill." Another lawyer and well-known Shakespearean, Richard Grant White, says : " No dramatist of the time, not even Beaumont, who was the younger son of a judge of the Common Pleas, and who after studying in the Inns of Court abandoned law for the drama, used legal phrases with Shakespeare's readiness and exactness. And the significance of this fact is heightened by another, that it is only to the language of the law that he exhibits this inclination. The phrases peculiar to other occupations serve him on rare occasions by way of description, comparison or illustration, generally when something in the scene suggests them, but *legal phrases flow from his pen as part of his vocabulary, and parcel of his thought.* Take the word ' purchase ' for instance, which, in ordinary use, means to acquire by giving value, but applies in law to all legal modes of obtaining property except by inheritance or descent, and in this peculiar sense the word occurs five times in Shakespeare's thirty-four plays, and only in one single instance in the fifty-four plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. It has been suggested that it was in attendance upon the courts in London that he picked up his legal vocabulary. But this supposition not only fails to account for Shakespeare's peculiar freedom and exactness in the use of that phraseology, it does not even place him in the way of learning those terms his use of which is most remarkable, which are not such as he would have heard at ordinary proceedings at *nisi prius*, but such as refer to the tenure or transfer of real property, ' fine and recovery,' ' statutes merchant,' ' purchase,' ' indenture,' ' tenure,' ' double voucher,' ' fee simple,' ' fee farm,' ' remainder,' ' reversion,' ' forfeiture,' etc. This conveyancer's jargon could not have been picked up by hanging round the

courts of law in London two hundred and fifty years ago,<sup>1</sup> when suits as to the title of real property were comparatively rare. And beside, Shakespeare uses his law just as freely in his first plays, written in his first London years, as in those produced at a later period. Just as exactly, too; for the correctness and propriety with which these terms are introduced have compelled the admiration of a Chief Justice and a Lord Chancellor."

Senator Davis wrote: "We seem to have something more than a sciolist's temerity of indulgence in the terms of an unfamiliar art. No legal solecisms will be found. The abstrusest elements of the common law are impressed into a disciplined service. Over and over again, where such knowledge is unexampled in writers unlearned in the law, Shakespeare appears in perfect possession of it. In the law of real property, its rules of tenure and descents, its entails, its fines and recoveries, and their vouchers and double vouchers, in the procedure of the Courts, the method of bringing writs and arrests, the nature of actions, the rules of pleading, the law of escapes and of contempt of court, in the principles of evidence, both technical and philosophical, in the distinction between the temporal and spiritual tribunals, in the law of attainder and forfeiture, in the requisites of a valid marriage, in the presumption of legitimacy, in the learning of the law of prerogative, in the inalienable character of the Crown, this mastership appears with surprising authority."

To all this testimony (and there is much more which I have not cited) may now be added that of a great lawyer of our own times, viz. Sir James Plaisted Wilde, Q.C. 1855, created a Baron of the Exchequer in 1860, promoted to the post of Judge-Ordinary and Judge of the Courts of Probate and Divorce in 1863, and better known to the world as Lord Penzance, to which dignity he was raised in 1869. Lord Penzance, as all lawyers know, and as the late

<sup>1</sup> Now three hundred and twenty years ago.

Mr. Inderwick, K.C., has testified, was one of the first legal authorities of his day, famous for his "remarkable grasp of legal principles," and "endowed by nature with a remarkable facility for marshalling facts, and for a clear expression of his views."<sup>1</sup>

Lord Penzance speaks of Shakespeare's "perfect familiarity with not only the principles, axioms, and maxims, but the technicalities of English law, a knowledge so perfect and intimate that he was never incorrect and never at fault. . . . The mode in which this knowledge was pressed into service on all occasions to express his meaning and illustrate his thought, was quite unexampled. He seems to have had a special pleasure in his complete and ready mastership of it in all its branches. As manifested in the plays, this legal knowledge and learning had therefore a special character which places it on a wholly different footing from the rest of the multifarious knowledge which is exhibited in page after page of the plays. At every turn and point at which the author required a metaphor, simile, or illustration, his mind ever turned first to the law. He seems almost to have thought in legal phrases, the commonest of legal expressions were ever at the end of his pen in description or illustration. That he should have descanted in lawyer language when he had a forensic subject in hand, such as Shylock's bond, was to be expected, but the knowledge of law in 'Shakespeare' was exhibited in a far different manner: it protruded itself on all occasions, appropriate or inappropriate, and mingled itself with strains of thought widely divergent from forensic subjects." Again: "To acquire a perfect familiarity with legal principles, and an accurate and ready use of the technical terms and phrases not only of the conveyancer's office but of the pleader's chambers and the Courts at Westminster, nothing short of employment in some career

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *The Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy: A Judicial Summing-up*, by the Rt. Hon. Sir James Plaisted Wilde, Baron Penzance, 1902.



involving constant contact with legal questions and general legal work would be requisite. But a continuous employment involves the element of time, and time was just what the manager of two theatres had not at his disposal. In what portion of Shakespeare's [i.e. Shakspeare's] career would it be possible to point out that time could be found for the interposition of a legal employment in the chambers or offices of practising lawyers?"

Stratfordians, as is well known, casting about for some possible explanation of Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of law, have made the suggestion that Shakspeare might, conceivably, have been a clerk in an attorney's office before he came to London. Mr. Collier wrote to Lord Campbell to ask his opinion as to the probability of this being true. His answer was as follows: "You require us to believe implicitly a fact of which, if true, positive and irrefragable evidence in his own handwriting might have been forthcoming to establish it. Not having been actually enrolled as an attorney, neither the records of the local court at Stratford nor of the superior Courts at Westminster would present his name as being concerned in any suit as an attorney, but it might reasonably have been expected that there would have been deeds or wills witnessed by him still extant, and after a very diligent search none such can be discovered."

Upon this Lord Penzance comments: "It cannot be doubted but that Lord Campbell was right in this. No young man could have been at work in an attorney's office without being called upon continually to act as a witness, and in many other ways leaving traces of his work and name. There is not a single fact or incident in all that is known of Shakespeare, even by rumour or tradition, which supports this notion of a clerkship. And after much argument and surmise which has been indulged in on this subject, we may, I think, safely put the notion on one side, for no less an authority than Mr. Grant White

says finally that the idea of his having been clerk to an attorney has been 'blown to pieces.'"<sup>1</sup>

It is altogether characteristic of Mr. Churton Collins that he, nevertheless, adopts this exploded myth. "That Shakespeare was in early life employed as a clerk in an attorney's office, may be correct. At Stratford there was by royal charter a Court of Record sitting every fortnight, with six attorneys, beside the town clerk, belonging to it, and it is certainly not straining probability to suppose that the young Shakespeare may have had employment in the office of one of them. There is, it is true, no tradition to this effect, but such traditions as we have about Shakespeare's occupation between the time of leaving school and going to London are so loose and baseless that no confidence can be placed in them. It is, to say the least, more probable that he was in an attorney's office than that he was a butcher killing calves 'in a high style,' and making speeches over them."<sup>2</sup>

This is a charming specimen of Stratfordian argument. There is, as we have seen, a very old tradition to the effect that Shakspeare was a butcher's apprentice.<sup>3</sup> John Dowdall, who made a tour in Warwickshire in 1693, testifies to it as coming from the old clerk who showed him over the church, and it is unhesitatingly accepted as true by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps. (Vol. I, p. 11, and see Vol. II, p. 71, 72.) Mr. Sidney Lee sees nothing improbable in it, and it is supported by Aubrey, who must have written his account some time before 1680, when his manuscript was completed. Of the attorney's clerk hypothesis, on the other hand, there is not the faintest vestige of a tradition. It has been evolved out of the fertile imagina-

<sup>1</sup> "The worst of it is," said that ardent Shakespearean Gerald Massey, "for the theory of his having been an attorney's clerk, that it will not account for his insight into law; his knowledge is not office sweepings, but ripe fruits, mature, as though he had spent his life in their growth."

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> The "butcher" was, probably, his own father.

tions of embarrassed Stratfordians, seeking for some explanation of the Stratford rustic's marvellous acquaintance with law and legal terms and legal life. But Mr. Churton Collins has not the least hesitation in throwing over the tradition which has the warrant of antiquity and setting up in its stead this ridiculous invention, for which not only is there no shred of positive evidence, but which, as Lord Campbell and Lord Penzance point out, is really put out of court by the negative evidence, since "no young man could have been at work in an attorney's office without being called upon continually to act as a witness, and in many other ways leaving traces of his work and name." And, as Mr. Edwards further points out, since the day when Lord Campbell's book was published (between forty and fifty years ago), "every old deed or will, to say nothing of other legal papers, dated during the period of William Shaksper's youth, has been scrutinised over half a dozen shires, and not one signature of the young man has been found."

Moreover, if Shakspeare had served as clerk in an attorney's office it is clear that he must have so served for a considerable period in order to have gained (if indeed it is credible that he could have so gained) his remarkable knowledge of law. Can we then for a moment believe that, if this had been so, tradition would have been absolutely silent on the matter? That Dowdall's old clerk, over eighty years of age, should have never heard of it (though he was sure enough about the butcher's apprenticeship) and that all the other ancient witnesses should be in similar ignorance!

But such are the methods of Stratfordian controversy. Tradition is to be scouted when it is found inconvenient, but cited as irrefragable truth when it suits the case. Shakspeare of Stratford was the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, but the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* could not have been a butcher's apprentice. Away, therefore, with

tradition. But the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have had a very large and a very accurate knowledge of law. Therefore, Shakspeare of Stratford must have been an attorney's clerk! The method is simplicity itself. By similar reasoning Shakspeare has been made a country-schoolmaster, a soldier, a physician, a printer, and a good many other things beside, according to the inclination and the exigencies of the commentator. It would not be in the least surprising to find that he was studying Latin as a schoolmaster and law in an attorney's office at the same time.

However, we must do Mr. Collins the justice of saying that he has fully recognised, what is indeed tolerably obvious, that Shakespeare must have had a sound legal training. "It may, of course, be urged," he writes, "that Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine, and particularly of that branch of it which related to morbid psychology, is equally remarkable, and that no one has ever contended that he was a physician. [Here Mr. Collins is wrong; that contention also has been put forward].<sup>1</sup> It may be urged that his acquaintance with the technicalities of other crafts and callings, notably of marine and military affairs, was also extraordinary, and yet no one has suspected him of being a sailor or a soldier. [Wrong again. Why even Messrs. Garnett and Gosse "suspect" that he was a soldier!] This may be conceded, but the concession hardly furnishes an analogy. To these and all other subjects he recurs occasionally, and in season, *but with reminiscences of the law his memory, as is abundantly clear, was simply saturated.* In season and out of season, now in manifest, now in recondite application, he presses it into the service of expression and illustration. At least a third of his myriad metaphors are derived from it. It would indeed be difficult to find a single act in any of his dramas,

<sup>1</sup> Had Mr. Collins never heard of Dr. Bucknill's and Dr. Chesney's books?



nay, in some of them, a single scene, the diction and imagery of which is not coloured by it. Much of his law may have been acquired from three books easily accessible to him, namely Tottell's *Precedents* (1572), Pulton's *Statutes* (1578), and Fraunce's *Lawier's Logike* (1588), works with which he certainly seems to have been familiar ; but much of it could only have come from one who had an intimate acquaintance with legal proceedings. We quite agree with Mr. Castle that Shakespeare's legal knowledge is not what could have been picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance at the Courts, at a Pleader's Chambers, and on circuit, or by associating intimately with members of the Bench and Bar."

This is excellent. But what is Mr. Collins's explanation? "Perhaps the simplest solution of the problem is to accept the hypothesis that in early life he was in an attorney's office [!], that he there contracted a love for the law which never left him, that as a young man in London, he continued to study or dabble in it for his amusement, to stroll in leisure hours into the Courts, and to frequent the society of lawyers. *On no other supposition is it possible to explain the attraction which the law evidently had for him, and his minute and undeviating accuracy in a subject where no layman who has indulged in such copious and ostentatious display of legal technicalities has ever yet succeeded in keeping himself from tripping.*"<sup>1</sup>

A lame conclusion. "No other supposition" indeed! Yes, there is another, and a very obvious supposition, namely, that Shakespeare was himself a lawyer, well versed in his trade, versed in all the ways of the courts, and living in close intimacy with judges and members of the Inns of Court.

One is, of course, thankful that Mr. Collins has appreciated the fact that Shakespeare must have had a sound

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

legal training, but I may be forgiven if I do not attach quite so much importance to his pronouncements on this branch of the subject as to those of Malone, Lord Campbell, Judge Holmes, Mr. Castle, K.C., Lord Penzance, Mr. Grant White, and other lawyers, who have expressed their opinion on the matter of Shakespeare's legal acquirements. I cannot attach much weight to the judgment of a critic who sees the trained lawyer's hand in *Titus Andronicus* because he finds there such expressions as "*affy* in thy uprightness," "true nobility *warrants* these words," "*Suum cuique* is our Roman justice," "The Prince in justice *seizeth*<sup>1</sup> but his own," "rob my sweet sons of their *fee*," "*purchase* us thy lasting friends," "let me be their bail," "the end upon them should be *executed*," "do execution on my flesh and blood," "do shameful *execution on herself*," "and make a *mutual closure* of our house," "the *extent* of egal<sup>2</sup> justice," "a *precedent* and lively *warrant*," and "will *doom* her death."<sup>3</sup> It seems to me ridiculous to contend that such very ordinary expressions as these show the hand of the trained lawyer. But Mr. Collins is labouring to prove that this monstrous play is the work of Shakespeare, whereas that *Titus Andronicus* is *not* Shakespeare's is (*pace* Mr. Collins) "as certain as anything connected with him can be." Mr. Collins, however, has not, I believe, served an apprenticeship to the law, and, therefore, can hardly be taken as an authority where legal matters are concerned. Here I much prefer the judgment of Mr. Castle, K.C., a trained and experienced lawyer, who writes of *Titus*: "Whatever reason there is for thinking that it was not the work of Shakespeare, there is still greater reason for thinking it could not be the work of any lawyer, especially of one who has shown such accurate knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Collins appears to think "seizeth" must imply a reference to the legal "seisin"!

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Collins substitutes "legal" for "egal," but this may be a printer's error.

<sup>3</sup> *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 118. Original italics.

as we find in Shakespeare's other plays. The whole play is not only offensively written, but it outrages every feeling and idea that a lawyer would possess. It tramples upon all his notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice; it seems not to have an idea that no society could exist without some approach to law and a legal procedure, in fact, it seems to do everything that a lawyer would not do, and leave undone everything that he would. It does not read like a serious play, but a sort of a travesty that seems more like the work of one who had studied 'Jack the Giant Killer,' rather than the law books of the time, such as they were, or had gained his knowledge in the Courts. . . . Any one has only to see how differently the arrest and trial of a prisoner is treated in *Measure for Measure* or in *Henry the Fifth*, where the three conspirators are arrested in due form, and then compare these plays with the stuff given in *Titus Andronicus*, to at once see that the former plays show a knowledge of law and legal procedure, whilst the latter is the work of one who is remarkably ignorant of both." But, as Mr. Castle adds, "the fact that Shakespeare was the author of *Titus Andronicus* has been so much doubted [I would say so completely disproved] that it is not perhaps advisable to waste further time upon it . . . but it may be remarked that if *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's work, I think it effectually disposes of the suggestion that Shakespeare learned his law when a boy at Stratford, because this must be his earliest play, and it is the one that most conspicuously displays his ignorance of law, and want of legal training."

Mr. Collins, one may remark, occupies rather a peculiar place in Shakespearean criticism. Some of us have long looked upon it as axiomatic that Shakespeare was not only the representative of the highest culture of his time, but also that he had an extensive acquaintance with the ancient classics, not merely through translations but as a

result of study of the original authors—in fact, that Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek," if meant to be taken seriously, can only be applicable to Shakspere of Stratford and not to Shakespeare. This, we were convinced, sufficiently appeared from a perusal of "the works themselves." Now Mr. Collins, with much industry and ability, and no small learning, has presented us with a full and detailed demonstration of this part of our case. We naturally welcome this contribution to the argument, and are grateful for it. Mr. Collins, however, has nothing but contempt, reiterated *usque ad nauseam*, for those who pray in aid his essay on "Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar" in support of the contention that Shakspere could not possibly have been the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. He thinks it the most natural thing in the world that the Stratford rustic should have acquired all this learning by a supposed attendance for five years or so at the Stratford Free School. He unhesitatingly throws over the positive evidence of tradition which speaks with remarkable unanimity of an unlearned Shakespeare; he attaches no value to the equally cogent negative evidence which is clamant in the fact that none of the ancient witnesses had ever heard of quick-witted industrious Shakspere acquiring knowledge of the classics at the Grammar School; and he makes an attempt to explain away Jonson's description, which is so strongly contradictory of his theory. He next proceeds to add his opinion to that of Lord Campbell, Lord Penzance, Judge Holmes, Judge Webb, Mr. Castle, K.C., and other distinguished lawyers, who have pointed out with such force and ability, and, it must be added, with such authority, that Shakespeare had a very extensive and very accurate knowledge of the law, yet again he thinks that this may be explained quite naturally, and without any difficulty, by the entirely gratuitous assumption that Shakspere was an attorney's clerk at Stratford, and supplemented the



knowledge so acquired by "strolling in leisure hours into the Courts," and frequenting the society of lawyers! As to the general culture of this miraculous young provincial, Mr. Collins thinks it "highly probable" that the extraordinary poem of *Venus and Adonis* "was composed at Stratford before he came up to London, as early perhaps as 1585"!<sup>1</sup> It is not at all surprising that a commentator who can hold such theories as these should bespatter his pages with contemptuous epithets expressive of his superior scorn of the "absurdity" and "ignorance" of all those who venture to disagree with him, which nevertheless does not in any way affect their opinion that the "absurdity" is altogether on the side of this very petulant critic.<sup>2</sup>

Here it may, perhaps, be worth while to quote again

<sup>1</sup> In another place Mr. Collins, following Mr. Lee, who follows Dr. Gosse, has said that *Venus and Adonis* is plainly modelled on Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*, which was not published till 1589. "Mr. Collins has not even taken the trouble to reconcile his assertions—and this in an essay in which he imputes to his gainsayers perversity, paradox, sophistry, and illegitimate criticism." (*Did Shakespeare write "Titus Andronicus"?*, by J. M. Robertson, p. 22.)

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Collins's words really deserve to be quoted *in extenso* in order that we may see what is not considered "fantastic" or "absurd" or "fanatical" by ardent Stratfordian critics. "We quite agree with Mr. Castle that Shakespeare's legal knowledge is not what could have been picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance at the Courts, at a pleader's chambers, and on circuit, or by associating intimately with members of the Bench and Bar." Good. Now for the explanation. "Perhaps the *simplest solution* of the problem is to accept the hypothesis that in early life he was in an attorney's office, that he there contracted a love for the law which never left him; that as a young man in London he continued to study or *dabble in it for his amusement, to stroll in leisure hours into the Courts*, and to frequent the society of lawyers. On no other supposition [!] is it possible to explain the attraction which the law evidently had for him, and his minute and undeviating accuracy in a subject where no layman, who has indulged in such copious and ostentatious display of legal technicalities, has ever yet succeeded in keeping himself from tripping." Yes, indeed, a mighty "simple" explanation, and a mighty simpleton must he be who can accept it. I once heard the story of a man who could speak seven languages. "And the odd thing was he learnt them all from a drummer in a marching regiment." "My God, how he must have marched!" was the reply.

from Lord Penzance's book as to the suggestion that Shakspeare had somehow or other managed "to acquire a perfect familiarity with legal principles, and an accurate and ready use of the technical terms and phrases, not only of the conveyancer's office, but of the pleader's chambers and the courts at Westminster." This, as Lord Penzance points out, would require "nothing short of employment in some career involving constant contact with legal questions and general legal work." But "in what portion of Shakespeare's career would it be possible to point out that time could be found for the interposition of a legal employment in the chambers or offices of practising lawyers? . . . It is beyond doubt that at an early period he was called upon to abandon his attendance at school and assist his father, and was soon after, at the age of sixteen, bound apprentice to a trade. While under the obligation of this bond he could not have pursued any other employment. Then he leaves Stratford and comes to London. He has to provide himself with the means of a livelihood, and this he did in some capacity at the theatre. No one doubts that. The holding of horses is scouted by many, and perhaps with justice, as being unlikely and certainly unproved;<sup>1</sup> but whatever the nature of his employment was at the theatre, there is hardly room for the belief that it could have been other than continuous, for his progress there was so rapid. Ere long he had been taken into the company as an actor, and was soon spoken of as a 'Johannes Factotum.' His rapid accumulation of wealth speaks volumes for the constancy and activity of his services. One fails to see when there could be a break in the current of his life at this period of it, giving room or opportunity for legal or indeed any other employment. 'In 1589,' says Knight, 'we have undeniable evidence that he had not only a

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, a very ancient tradition and accepted by most Shakespearean biographers. There is, certainly, nothing improbable in it.

casual engagement, was not only a salaried servant, as many players were, but was a shareholder in the company of the Queen's players with other shareholders below him on the list.' This (1589) would be *within two years of his arrival in London*, which is placed by White and Halliwell-Phillipps about the year 1587. The difficulty in supposing that, starting with a state of ignorance in 1587, when he is supposed to have come to London, he was induced to enter upon a course of most extended study and mental culture, is almost insuperable. Still it was physically possible, provided always that he could have had access to the needful books. But this legal training seems to me to stand on a different footing. It is not only unaccountable and incredible, but it is actually negatived by the known facts of his career." Lord Penzance then refers to the fact that "by 1592 (according to the best authority, Mr. Grant White) several of the plays had been written. *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589, *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1589, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1589 or 1590,"<sup>1</sup> and so forth, and then asks, "with this catalogue of dramatic work on hand . . . was it possible that he could have taken a leading part in the management and conduct of two theatres, and, if Mr. Phillipps is to be relied upon, taken his share in the performances of the provincial tours of his company—and at the same time devoted himself to the study of the law in all its branches so efficiently as to make himself complete master of its principles and practice, and saturate his mind with all its most technical terms?"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These dates, of course, are questioned by those who, like Mr. J. M. Robertson, believe that *Venus and Adonis* was really and truly the "first heir" of the poet's "invention," but they will find it difficult to uphold their contention that Shakespeare wrote no plays before that date. The date of *Love's Labour's Lost* is generally put at about 1591-2, of *The Two Gentlemen* at 1590-92. Mr. Gollancz dates the composition of the *Dream* at about 1592, and of *Romeo and Juliet* at 1591.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy*, p. 89.

I have cited this passage from Lord Penzance's book, because it lay before me, and I had already quoted from it on the matter of Shakespeare's legal knowledge ; but other writers have still better set forth the insuperable difficulties, as they seem to me, which beset the idea that Shakspeare might have found time in some unknown period of early life, amid multifarious other occupations, for the study of classics, literature, and law, to say nothing of languages and a few other matters. Lord Penzance further asks his readers: " Did you ever meet with or hear of an instance in which a young man in this country gave himself up to legal studies and engaged in legal employments, which is the only way of becoming familiar with the technicalities of practice, unless with the view of practising in that profession? I do not believe that it would be easy, or indeed possible, to produce an instance in which the law has been seriously studied in all its branches, except as a qualification for practice in the legal profession." It may, of course, be said that some men study law sufficiently to enable them to pass the examination necessary for the call to the Bar, in order to qualify themselves for an appointment, or because they think that as barristers they will be better fitted to act as magistrates, and without any intention of " practising " ; but obviously these considerations detract nothing from the weight of Lord Penzance's criticism as applied to the case of William Shakspeare of Stratford.

Let us now consider a work by another lawyer of undoubted competence and long experience, E. T. Castle, K.C., to which I have already alluded. Mr. Castle appropriately puts upon his title-page the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury in *Henry V* (Act I, Scene 1):—

Miracles are ceast,  
And therefore we must needs admit the means  
How things are perfected ;

but, seeing that a general knowledge of legal terms may



be acquired from books (always supposing that serious and prolonged study be devoted to them), this writer, though impressed with "the vast range of legal subjects known to, or affected to be known by, the writer of these [Shakespeare's] works," lays even greater stress on "the familiarity with the habits and thoughts of counsel learned in the law," which, he thinks, "is the peculiar characteristic of the legal plays." In his opinion the constant occurrence in the works of Shakespeare of legal expressions, remarkable though it is as showing that the man who made use of them must have had a legal training, is less valuable as a test than "the more subtle evidence which points to the life and habits of a lawyer which may not happen to be clothed in legal language." Speaking of Malone and Lord Campbell, he writes: "Both these authors, I think, have taken too narrow a view of the subject, and have therefore failed to recognise the evidence of the social and professional life of an English barrister, which is to be found by those who look for it."

The point to which Mr. Castle directs our attention is an important one, and ought not to be overlooked. The argument, therefore, stands thus: Not only does Shakespeare's knowledge of law and constant and accurate use of legal terms compel us to assume that he must have had a sound legal training, but also there is unmistakable evidence in the *Plays* of familiarity with the habits and thoughts of counsel and members of the Inns of Court, indicating that the writer was leading "the social and professional life of an English barrister."

It would take too long were I to attempt to give a statement of the evidence upon which this conclusion rests. I can only refer the reader to Mr. Castle's book, and other works dealing with the subject.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is much interesting matter in Mr. Castle's book, but I fear few have accepted the curious conclusion at which he has arrived, viz. that Shakspeare and Bacon collaborated in what he calls "the Legal Plays,"

We have, therefore, a number of lawyers, some of great eminence, others of great experience and known competence, Lord Campbell, Lord Penzance, Judge Holmes, Judge Webb, Mr. Castle, K.C., and many others, who are convinced, after careful consideration of the *Plays* and *Poems*, that Shakespeare must have studied law in a regular and systematic manner, and it is to be observed that this opinion is by no means confined to the unorthodox, but is shared by, besides Lord Campbell, devout Stratfordians such as Malone, Grant White, Gerald Massey, Mr. Collins, and others of the faithful. What says Mr. Sidney Lee? After dismissing "the theory that Field found work in Vautrollier's printing-office for Shakespeare on his arrival in London" as "fanciful,"<sup>1</sup> he adds, very truly, that "no more can be said for the attempt to prove that he obtained employment as a lawyer's clerk," and then proceeds as follows: "In view of his general

Bacon supplying the player with the law. Mr. Castle seems to have been misled by the very mistaken notion that everybody—"even Baconians"—admit that the Sonnets and "the two Poems" were written by Shakespeare, i.e. by Shakspeare; whereas, of course, those who do not believe in the Stratfordian authorship insist most strongly on the impossibility of these poems having been written by the Stratford player. Mr. Castle, finding that "law is to be found equally in the two Poems as it is in the Sonnets or Plays," is driven to assume a combined authorship of these also. It is his opinion that some of the plays, which he classes as "non-legal," "show not only absence of law, but ignorance of it." In these, of course, Bacon had no hand. Among such are *Titus Andronicus*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*. As to *Titus*, I entirely agree with him, but it is not a Shakespearean play at all. As to the others, his argument seems to me unconvincing. Mr. Castle fares badly at the hands of Mr. Churton Collins. "Nothing could be more absurd" (p. 211), "Palpably absurd" (p. 213). I will not argue whether or not the epithets may be deserved, but Mr. Collins is about as well qualified to instruct Mr. Castle in law, as he affects to do, as I am to instruct a Senior Wrangler in the Differential Calculus.

<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare has been made a printer, as well as a schoolmaster, attorney's clerk, etc. etc. See Blade's *Shakespeare and Typography*. The author, quoting the *Winter's Tale*, II, 3, asks: "Is it conceivable that a sentence of four lines containing five distinct typographical words, three of which are especially technical, could have proceeded from the brains of one not intimately acquainted with typography?" (p. 42).

quickness of apprehension, Shakespeare's accurate use of legal terms, which deserves all the attention that has been paid to it, may be attributable in part to his observation of the many legal processes in which his father was involved, and in part to early intercourse with members of the Inns of Court" (p. 30).

This, then, is how it strikes the layman's mind, in Mr. Lee's case at all events. To Lord Campbell Shakespeare displays "a deep and technical knowledge of law," and a familiarity with "some of the most abstruse proceedings in English jurisprudence." Lord Penzance, in view of the legal knowledge displayed, considers that "he must have received the regular legal education which men ordinarily receive who desire and intend to practise the law as a profession," (p. 157). Mr. Lee, however, knows better. For him there is no difficulty whatever. It is simplicity itself. John Shakspeare of Stratford was involved in "legal processes"; he was, for instance, summoned for "not keeping the gutters clean," and for having a muck-heap in front of his house; he had actions brought against him, generally for debt (*in placito debiti* occurs again and again in Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's list of these proceedings); he was involved, with others, in a chancery suit respecting an estate, and so forth. Some of these were before his son William was born, others while he was living a busy life in London, actor, manager, and, of course, turning out plays at the rate of three or four a year,—but what of that? Such a man as Shakspeare had only to bestow his "observation" on these "processes," and have a few talks with members of the Inns of Court (Southampton and Bacon, for instance, both of Gray's Inn), and the rest would follow as a matter of course. In this way a young man of genius could easily "pick up" an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of law and legal principles! One's only fear is that in such case he might, perchance, have talked of getting "judgment from a jury," and of property in

animals *feræ naturæ*—deer, for example, when not in a forest, or park, or other place impaled, or have confounded “beasts of the forest” with “beasts of the chase”!<sup>1</sup> However, such is the stuff which passes among some Stratfordians—to do them justice, not all—as rational criticism.

But there is yet another argument advanced in explanation of Shakespeare's incessant use of legal terms. “Legal terminology abounded in all plays and poems of the period” (Lee, p. 30, n. 3.) The statement is characteristically hyperbolic. “*All* plays and poems of the period”! If Mr. Lee had said that many lay writers of the period, including poets and dramatists, were much more given to the use of “legal terminology” than such writers are at the present day, his assertion would have been within the bounds of truth and reason. We must admit that this use of legal jargon is frequently found in lay writers, poets, and others of the Elizabethan period—in sonnets, for example, where it seems to us intolerable. That is true, and by all means let due weight be given to the fact. Our contention, however, is that Shakespeare uses this legal terminology not only with a persistency but with an accuracy, and with a knowledge of the subject—that he displays a familiarity not only with legal terms and legal principles but with the life and habits of lawyers, judges, and members of the Inns of Court, which cannot be paralleled in the writings of any layman of the times.

Here we are once more confronted by His Honour Judge Willis, one of the few lawyers who think that Shakespeare's knowledge of law might have been picked up without any legal training. Having summoned up the spirit of Jonson as a witness at his imaginary trial, he makes his imaginary counsel put this question: “Did you, or do you know anybody, who was not a lawyer, have as great a knowledge of law as is displayed in this Folio volume?” To which the astral body of Ben makes

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 24 n.



answer, "Oh yes, many. It has been quite common for Divines, who to my knowledge have never been in any lawyer's office, to draw some of their happiest illustrations from legal proceedings. Why, there is my friend Thomas Adams. I know he has not been in a lawyer's office, because I heard him one Sunday morning in his discourse 'nonsuit the devil,' a thing a lawyer would never do." Here Mr. Willis is really rather too hard on his profession. I feel sure the late Lord Cairns, or the present Lord Halsbury, nay, even Judge Willis himself, would nonsuit his Satanic Majesty without hesitation, and there is, really, just as much evidence to show that Thomas Adams was an attorney's clerk as there is to show that either Shakspeare or Shakespeare was the professional colleague of Uriah Heap or Sampson Brass. However, this, of course, is Mr. Willis's little joke, and he is very welcome to it. Let us see what more he has to tell us of Thomas Adams. "In the same sermon he asked every one of the congregation whether God had *acknowledged a fine* to him. That's pretty technical, I think, and accurate. You 'suffer' a recovery, and you 'acknowledge' a fine.<sup>1</sup> I heard him one morning when he had not cleared a matter up quite to his satisfaction, say he must have a writ *ad melius inquirendum*; and on another occasion he said that when God cites men to judgment there will be no return to the writ *non est inventus*. Preaching at St. Paul's Cross [I am sure Ben would have said "Paul's Cross"! ] March 7th, 1612, to eight thousand people, he said, 'If no plummets except of unreasonable weight can set the wheels of the lawyers' tongues a-going, and then if a golden addition can make the hammer strike to our pleasure; if they keep their ears and mouths shut, till their purses be full, and will not

<sup>1</sup> Technical knowledge concerning the terminology of "fines" seems to us now something rather remarkable, but to the men of Adams's day these expressions were natural enough, since "fines" were in constant use for the conveyance of land; consequently every educated man would know that "you 'acknowledge' a fine," just as every educated man to-day knows that you "deliver" a deed.

understand a cause till they feel it ; then, to speak in their own language, *Noverint universi, be it known to all men by these presents*, that these are thieves ; though I could wish that, *Noverint ipsi*, they would know it themselves and reform this deformity.' On another occasion Thomas Adams said, ' The inheritance is ours already, not *in re* but *in spe*. Our common law distinguisheth between two manner of freeholds ; a freehold indeed, where a man hath made his entry upon lands and is therefore really seised ; a freehold in law, where a man hath a right to possession, but hath not made his actual entry.' I heard him exclaim, ' Do not complain, Esau : *Volenti non fit injuria.*' " <sup>1</sup>

Now my first comment is this. Here we have, it is true, a "divine" making use of certain legal terms, showing that he has probably looked into some law books, and perhaps been thrown into legal company. But let the intelligent and unprejudiced reader go through the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare, and "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the persistence, the accuracy, with which he makes use of legal terms and legal allusions, in season and out of season, not only by citing legal terms and maxims, but by subtle references,—let him mark further, if he has sufficient knowledge of law to appreciate it, the familiarity shown by Shakespeare with legal proceedings, and, as Lord Campbell puts it, "some of the most abstruse proceedings in English jurisprudence," and then say if he thinks these expressions, culled from the sermons of Thomas Adams, furnish anything like a parallel case to that which we have been considering. This legal terminology used by the preacher certainly does not prove that he had had a regular legal training, they are, however, examples of that "omnivorous learning and recondite reading" for which, as Dr. Grosart has told us (*Dict. of National Biography*), he was famous, and "the spoils" whereof he constantly "lays under con-

<sup>1</sup> *The Shake-speare-Bacon Controversy*, by William Willis, p. 53 *et seq.*

tribution." And this alone would be almost sufficient for our case, even although he had made use of much more recondite "legal terminology." For what time and opportunity had the young man from Stratford for "omnivorous learning and recondite reading"? But there is more than this to be said. How came it that Thomas Adams was so fond of displaying his familiarity with certain legal terms? The answer is that he was "observant chaplain" to Sir Henry Montague, Lord Chief Justice of England, and had dedicated to him a work on the "Spiritual Pre-rogatives" of the Church. That Thomas Adams, a man of omnivorous learning and recondite reading, observant chaplain to the Lord Chief Justice, thrown much among lawyers, and constantly preaching to them, should have affected the use of legal terminology in his sermons is not very remarkable. The only thing which, as it seems to me, can be inferred from the analogy is that Shakespeare also was a man "of omnivorous learning and recondite reading."

But Judge Willis has yet another case. "I have heard my friend Dr. Sibbes ask whether the congregation had a 'freehold' in the love of God or whether they were only 'tenants at will,' and whether they held all they possessed *in capite* of God."

Now who was Richard Sibbes? He was educated at the Grammar School, Bury St. Edmunds, was a scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge, was, in 1617, chosen *preacher at Gray's Inn*; and became, in 1623, Master of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, but still retained his post at Gray's Inn, where he died in 1635. He was a friend of Sir Henry Yelverton, who succeeded Bacon as Solicitor-General, and it was through Yelverton's influence that he was chosen preacher at the most celebrated of the Inns of Court (as Gray's Inn then was), which counted, by the way, both Bacon and Southampton among its members. That this learned man, preacher at Gray's Inn and friend

and companion of lawyers, should have thought it appropriate to address lawyers in some of their own jargon, taking, perhaps, a little pride in showing that he had acquired some familiarity with legal terminology, is, certainly, not very remarkable.

Mr. Willis cites yet a third case, that of the Dean of Worcester, who, "when preaching from 'Buy the truth,'" exclaimed, "Here, my friends, is a bargain and sale," which, says Mr. Willis, through the imaginary mouth of Jonson, is "highly technical." Then the Dean, as quoted by Mr. Willis, goes on to say that "in every bargain and sale there must be a thing, a subject, which the writers on Roman law called 'merx.'"

I confess I do not know anything about the Dean of Worcester, cited by Mr. Willis, nor have I taken the trouble to inquire. I cannot think that the occasional legal language of those learned divines (two of whom I have shown to have been specially associated with lawyers) furnishes any analogy with the case of Shakespeare. It is not a question of the mere use of legal phrases or maxims, such as "acknowledging a fine," "a writ *ad melius inquirendum*," "*non est inventus*," "*noverint universi*," "*seised*," "*volenti non fit injuria*," "tenants at will," "tenants *in capite*," "bargain and sale," and the like. The question is, whether Shakespeare, when we consider his works as a whole, does not exhibit such a sound and accurate knowledge of law, such a familiarity with legal life and customs, as could not possibly have been acquired (or "picked up") by the Stratford player; whether it be not the fact, as Richard Grant White puts it, that "legal phrases flow from his pen as part of his vocabulary, and parcel of his thought"? It is not to the purpose to compile mere lists of legal terms and expressions from the pages of other Elizabethan writers, and those who do so simply display an *ignoratio elenchi*, as the old philosophers would say.



Meantime we again note the edifying divergence of opinion which exists among the Stratfordians. We may be content to leave Mr. Lee and Judge Willis to fight it out with Mr. Churton Collins, to say nothing of the older critics such as Malone, the Cowden Clarkes, Grant White, Gerald Massey, and a few others.

I cannot conclude this chapter without adverting to some curious remarks made by Mr. J. M. Robertson, in his work on *Titus Andronicus* (p. 54), with regard to Mr. Collins's essay on the law of Shakespeare. "The general thesis as to Shakespeare's legal knowledge or proclivities," writes Mr. Robertson, "maintained by Professor Collins in a special essay, 'Was Shakespeare a lawyer?' in his volume of *Studies in Shakespeare*, was exhaustively dealt with five years before by Mr. Devecmon in a treatise to which the Professor makes no allusion." Now Mr. Devecmon's book is a little volume of fifty-one pages, and how a critic like Mr. Robertson can describe it as an exhaustive dealing with the subject I am at a loss to understand. To do the author justice, although he imagines he has shown "that Shakespeare had no knowledge of the technique of the law, and no just appreciation of those fundamental principles of justice which are the basis of the law," he owns that this has been done "in a very brief and imperfect way." To me, the book, so far from being an "exhaustive" treatise, appears not only inadequate and superficial, but altogether erroneous and misleading. "There was," says Mr. Devecmon, "a fortnightly court held at Stratford-on-Avon," and it appears that that worthy marksman, John Shakspeare, or Shaxpere (as Walter Roche, ex-master of the Grammar School, spelt the name)<sup>1</sup>, was not unfrequently before it, usually as defendant in some petty action of debt, though the first time we have mention of him, in 1552, he comes before the court charged, jointly with

<sup>1</sup> H.-P., II, 232.

Humphrey Reynoldes and Adrian Quiney, with having caused a nuisance by making a dung-heap in Henley Street, to which charge it appears they pleaded guilty.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, says Mr. Devecmon, "his son, the future poet, was thus brought up in an atmosphere of litigation," and "from these circumstances it can readily be seen how Shakespeare acquired his extensive knowledge of legal expressions, and his love of litigation which involved him in almost as many lawsuits as his father." One wonders what sort of an idea Mr. Devecmon, "of the Maryland Bar," had formed of this little "fortnightly court" in squalid Stratford! He speaks in grandiose fashion of "the arguments of the lawyers, the verdicts of the juries, and the judgments of the court," as though Coke had been sitting on the Bench with learned counsel pleading before him in some great civil or criminal cause. One might as well imagine Shakespeare getting his law from Mr. Nupkins, and his legal terminology from a court of *pie poudre*.

That any man after even the most cursory perusal of the *Plays* and *Poems* should imagine that Shakespeare's knowledge of law and lawyers was derived from such a tribunal as this, seems to me not a little extraordinary; that a lawyer should so conceive is more extraordinary still.

But then, says Mr. Robertson, Mr. Devecmon points out that in Webster's *The Devil's Law Case* there are "more legal expressions (some of them highly technical, and all correctly used) than are to be found in any single one of Shakespeare's works." Now if this statement were true, the answer would be that the subject of the play is a "Law Case," and that, therefore, the work was naturally full of legal expressions, and, further, that doubtless the brilliant author had well got up his subject for the purposes of the drama; whereas the proposition concerning

<sup>1</sup> See *John Shakespeare, Annals*, Halliwell-Phillipps, Vol. II, pp. 215-48. Where Mr. Devecmon gets his "nearly fifty lawsuits" in which John Shakespeare was engaged, I know not.

Shakespeare is that his knowledge not only of legal terminology, but of legal principles and of the habits and customs of lawyers, had become so much a part of his life and character and mental equipment that it was always showing itself even when very little appropriate to the subject on hand.<sup>1</sup>

But the fact is that the statement as to *The Devil's Law Case* is not only not true, but so preposterously contrary to the truth that one can hardly believe that Mr. Devecmon had read the drama in question. There is, incredible as it may sound, practically *no law at all* in Webster's play! There are, indeed, a few legal terms such as "livery and seisin,"<sup>2</sup> "a caveat," "tenements," "executors," thrown in here and there, and there is an absurd travesty of a trial where each and everybody—judge, counsel, witness, or spectator—seems to put in a word or two just as it pleases him; but to say that there are "more legal expressions" in the play "(and some of them highly technical and all correctly used) than are to be found in any single one of Shakespeare's works" is an astounding perversion of the fact, as any reader can see who chooses to peruse Webster's not very delicate drama. I cannot but think that Mr. Robertson had either not read the play, or had forgotten it when he quoted this amazing passage.

And now let us see what is Mr. Devecmon's own opinion as to Shakespeare's law. We have seen how he imagines that it had its origin in the little provincial court of squalid and illiterate Stratford, but he conceives (p. 5) that the poet supplemented it afterwards in London at drinking-bouts in taverns such as "The Mermaid," with actors and "lawyer-playwrights," and also by looking in at the law

<sup>1</sup> See the remarks of Malone, Lord Penzance, and Mr. Churton Collins quoted above.

<sup>2</sup> If Webster had been a lawyer, would he not have said "livery of seisin"?

courts. "But legal expressions are highly technical, and when Shakespeare attended those feasts of the law in courts and in gatherings of attorneys, and carried away *scraps* [my italics] it is not at all surprising that he should occasionally commit an error when he used them so frequently." Shakespeare, in fact, according to this theory, "picked up" his legal knowledge by "scraps"; but "when in a comparatively few instances, his applications of law terms are so highly technical and so correctly given as to suggest a lawyer's touch, can we not readily believe that here he took advice of some lawyer friend?"

Mr. Devecmon then proceeds to give us some instances of Shakespeare's "inaccuracy in the use of law terms," which he would have us think are fatal to the argument that the great poet had any real knowledge of law. Thus he quotes *Richard III*, Act IV, Scene 4, 247, where Queen Elizabeth asks of Richard—

Tell me what state, what dignity, what honour  
Canst thou demise to any child of mine?

But, observes Mr. Devecmon, "Dignities and honours could not be demised," and he cites *Comyn's Digest*, Tit. Dignity (E), in support of the proposition. "Q.E.D."

Let us consider this a little more closely. In the first place, I am not aware that it has ever been asserted that Shakespeare was not only such a hide-bound lawyer, but also so wanting in dramatic propriety as to make his ladies use legal expressions with the accuracy of the trained lawyer. But there is a good deal more to be said than this. What is it that that excellent old work known to all lawyers as *Comyn's Digest* really tells us? That "a dignity or nobility cannot be aliened or transferred to another." Not a very unreasonable proposition! If the king grants a title or "dignity" to a subject, it is natural enough that the grantee should not have the power to assign it away to another (perhaps for a round sum down),



or to put it up to auction. Therefore the Queen is right, *prima facie* at any rate, when she suggests to Richard that he has no power to "demise" any dignity or honour to a child of hers. Where is the legal error here? But there is this further observation to be made. It *was* possible for Richard to "demise" such dignities or honours, inasmuch as he was king, and even a subject could make a grant of such things "with the king's licence." (*Comyn's Dig., ad loc.*) Therefore the error is entirely on the side of Mr. Devecmon.<sup>1</sup>

Let us take another instance. Queen Catherine, in *Henry VIII*, Act II, Scene 4, says to Wolsey:—

I do believe,  
Induced by potent circumstances, that  
You are my enemy, and make my challenge.  
You shall not be my judge, etc.

But, says Mr. Devecmon, "To 'challenge' is to object or except to those who are returned to act as *jurors*, either individually or collectively as a body. The judge was not subject to challenge." Here the same curious idea is apparent, viz. that a dramatist cannot be a lawyer unless he makes his ladies and laymen speak in the language that a trained lawyer would employ. But, apart from this, it really seems to me no better than solemn trifling to argue from such an expression put into the Queen's mouth that the writer had no accurate knowledge of law. "Challenge" was constantly used in the sense of "objection," and even though the poet might have had the legal significance in his mind, it certainly does not argue the absence of legal training on his part that Catherine should apply, by a very natural analogy, to one of the Cardinals who were to act as judges in the case, a term which, in strict legal usage, was properly applicable only to a juror.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that Folios 2, 3, and 4 read "devise" instead of "demise," but there is no reason to suppose that the First Folio reading is not the correct one.

<sup>2</sup> I assume, of course, that Shakespeare, and not Fletcher, wrote this scene.

It would be quite as much to the purpose were I to accuse John Webster (who, according to Mr. Devecmon, is always correct in his legal terminology) of inaccuracy because in *The Devil's Law Case* he makes Contarino say, "I sent you the *evidence* of the piece of land, I motion'd to you for sale"; instead of saying "*the deeds*"!

What next? Well, Hamlet says (Act IV, Scene 2):—

Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! What replication should be made by the son of a King?

Why, says Mr. Devecmon, "a very few days, or at most, weeks of practical training in a lawyer's office, would have sufficed to teach Shakespeare that this is an incorrect use of the word replication. The plaintiff makes his demand on the defendant by a narratio or declaration; the defendant replies by a plea; and the plaintiff's reply to this plea is called a replication. Certainly comment is here unnecessary."

On the contrary, comment is very necessary. Certainly, in pleading, a "replication" is the document which answered to the modern "reply," and was put in by the plaintiff; but even here it was not always so, for in actions of Replevin it was the *defendant* who put in a "replication" to the plaintiff's plea in bar; so, not even if we are to take the word (absurdly enough) as used in a technical legal sense, is Mr. Devecmon correct. But the fact is that "replication" was constantly used in ordinary parlance in the sense of "reply." Thus in *Julius Cæsar* (Act I, Scene 1, 50) we have it of an echo:—

Have you not made an universal shout  
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks  
To hear the replication of your sounds  
Made in her concave shores?

With which we may compare Glover's

The echoes sighed  
In loving replication.

And we have the word in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (C. 988) in its simple sense of "reply."

My will is this, for plain conclusion  
Withouten any replication.

Mr. Devecmon must really try again.

But here, surely, is a gross inaccuracy! In *Henry V*, Act I, Scene 1, the Archbishop of Canterbury says:—

For all the temporal lands, which men devout  
By Testament have given to the church,  
Would they strip from us?

On which says the learned Devecmon: "The use of the word 'Testament' is here incorrect. A testator bequeaths *personal* property by a 'testament,' he devises real estate by a 'will.'"

"How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card"! Must the Archbishop speak by the card too, or the writer be set down as no lawyer? But really this is but another example in support of the proposition that a little learning is a dangerous thing. "A *testament* is the true declaration of our last Will; of that wee would to be done after our death," says the learned author of that famous old book *Termes de la Ley*. A "testament" includes a "will," said the Court in *Fuller v. Hooper* (2 Vesey Senior 242). Nay, more, Littleton, the great and learned Littleton, uses "testament" as applicable to a devise of lands and tenements; and all Coke has to say about it is that "in law *most commonly* 'ultima voluntas in scriptis' is used where lands or tenements are devised, testamentum when it concerneth chattels." But we know that "testator" is used of a man who has made a will, whether it be of lands or of personal property. So that again Mr. Devecmon's attempt fails.

But take this case. Mark Antony says (*Julius Cæsar*, Act III, Scene 2):—

Moreover he hath left you all his walks,  
His private arbors, and new planted orchards,  
On this side Tiber, he hath left them you,  
And to your heirs for ever.

Here Mr. Devecmon quotes Senator Davis to the effect that "Antony in speaking of the real estate left by Cæsar to the Roman people, does not use the appropriate word 'devise.'" Well, the fact is that Shakespeare was here just transcribing, *more suo*, from North's *Plutarch*, where he found the words, "*He left* his gardens and arbours unto the people, which he had on this side of the river Tiber," and he did not, as a dramatist, think it necessary, nor was he so absurdly pedantic as to alter these words in order to make Antony use the technically correct legal expression. Ah! but then, says the critic, "it was also unnecessary for Cæsar's will to have contained the expression 'to your heirs for ever,' in order to give the people a perpetual estate in the realty." Really, really! This is just a little irritating. Shakespeare does not say that the will *did* contain those words; Antony is telling the people the effect of the will. To pray in aid these words, "and to your heirs for ever," used with excellent dramatic effect, as though they upheld the proposition that Shakespeare was no lawyer, is surely an argument fit only for the least intelligent of readers.

I pass over two supposed instances of legal inaccuracy contained in *Pericles* and *3 Henry VI* respectively, because, as I have already argued, there is really no reason to suppose that Shakespeare was the author of either of these plays, and therefore it is not worth while to waste time over them; but I must notice an alleged case of legal inaccuracy in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I, Scene 1, where the King says of Biron, Dumain, and Longaville that they

Have sworn for three years term to live with me,  
My fellow students, and to keep those statutes  
That are recorded in this schedule here.

Says Mr. Devecmon: "The word 'statutes' is here used to mean simply articles of agreement. It has no such meaning in law. A statute is an act of the legislature."



He thinks that Shakespeare might have got his idea "that any agreement might be called a statute" from "statutes merchant" and "statutes staple." But the word is *not* used by him, in the passage cited, "to mean simply articles of agreement," but rather in the sense of "ordinances," as in the very usual case of the "statutes" of a college or school, or of a cathedral chapter. And so it is used in the Authorised Version of the Bible (1611), as in Psalm CIX. 8, "I will keep thy statutes." Therefore, to put forward this use of the word "statute" as a case of legal inaccuracy appears to me not a little absurd.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Devecmon concludes his work with what seems to me a very absurd criticism of *The Merchant of Venice*, by which he claims to prove that "Shakespeare not only manifests his lack of knowledge of the technique of the legal profession, he shows a profound ignorance of law and of the fundamental principles of justice,—unless we assume that the trial scene disregards all ideas of law, justice and morality for mere dramatic effect; but it has been repeatedly shown by many writers that equal dramatic effect could have been attained without such sacrifice."

I do not think many readers, on this side of the Atlantic at any rate, will be impressed by Mr. Devecmon's argument. It must not be forgotten that *The Merchant of Venice* is a *comedy*, although such actors as the late Sir Henry Irving used to send us away with the idea that we had been witnessing a tragedy. I conceive that audiences in Shakespeare's day, to whom "Jew baiting" was far from distasteful, used to laugh at the misfortunes of Shylock, where we now experience not a little sympathy for the poor old Jew, in spite of his insistence on his "pound of flesh." At any rate, it seems to me simply ridiculous to contend that the dramatist was in "profound ignorance

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take," of Sonnet 134, quoted at p. 411.

of law," and "of the fundamental principles of justice also" (alas for our immortal bard!), because, following an Italian romance, he has presented us in his comedy with a fantastic trial scene, in which he has not been either such a bad artist or, I may add, such a portentous pedant as to make his characters solemnly conform to the rules of British law and legal procedure.<sup>1</sup>

I here leave Mr. Devecmon's "exhaustive treatise" over which I feel I have already wasted too much time; but since a critic such as Mr. J. M. Robertson seems to have been unaccountably misled by it, it seemed necessary to warn others against this untrustworthy guide who affects to speak with all the authority of a lawyer.<sup>2</sup>

The case, then, stands thus: such a great lawyer as Lord Campbell, who filled the highest legal offices in our land, having been both Lord Chief Justice of England and Lord Chancellor, and who was withal an orthodox Stratfordian, after a careful examination of Shakespeare's *Plays* and *Poems* was brought to the conclusion that the author must have had a serious legal training. In this he is fully supported by another great lawyer of more recent times, viz. Lord Penzance. On the same side are amongst

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John T. Doyle has shown that a very similar procedure to that exhibited in Shakespeare's comedy used to prevail in Nicaragua, once a Spanish colony, and still under the sway of Spanish customs. *Shakespeareana*, 10, 57, cited in Reed's *Bacon v. Shakspeare*, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Devecmon quotes *King John*, Act II, Scene 1, "Till you compound whose right is worthiest, etc."; and *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act II, Scene 1, "I will compound this strife"; and contends, rightly enough, that "compound" here is not used, as seemingly Senator Davis will have it that it is, in a technical legal sense. "To compound is in all these cases used in the general sense of to settle or determine. . . . To-day in general literature the word is used in pretty much the same sense in which Shakespeare uses it, perhaps that is due to the force of his great example." I venture to think that Shakespeare's "great example" had not very much to do with it. Mr. Devecmon might have cited Webster in *The Devil's Law Case*, concerning which he has made such an amazing statement: "One that persuades men to peace, and compounds quarrels among his neighbours, without going to law" (Act II, Scene 1). But really the "great example" is Virgil's *tantas componere lites*.

others, Malone, Richard Grant White, Judge Webb (a lawyer of no mean reputation), Mr. Castle, K.C., and Judge Holmes of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Devecmon, however, tells us that the great poet got his legal "terminology wrong quite as often as he got it right," and that this "is apparent to any serious examination: certainly it is apparent to any lawyer not tempted by an appetite for *tours de force*, or burning to make a fellow-barrister out of the greatest of dramatists."

Such criticism is, I venture to think, hardly applicable to either of the two great legal lords above mentioned, both of whom (and especially Lord Campbell) certainly made a "serious examination." But I am content to leave the reader to judge between the authorities I have referred to on the one side and Mr. Devecmon and Judge Willis on the other. Certainly if the question is to be decided by authority there can be no doubt what the verdict must be. The fact seems to be that modern critics, like Mr. Devecmon, have become painfully aware that if Shakespeare was really a trained lawyer, then Shakespeare cannot have been the Stratford player. Hence these attempts to discredit the too ingenuous, though deeply learned, Lord Chancellor; and as those who are not learned in the law are, in most cases, quite unable to appreciate the argument, they naturally follow their own inclinations in the matter, and these, of course, lead them to the Stratfordian shrine.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, too, *Shakespeare as a Lawyer*, by Franklin Fiske Heard.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Henry Davey, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare* (Vol. X, p. 271), writes, "both his father and himself were so frequently concerned in legal transactions that he could have *picked up quite casually* all the law terms employed in his dramas and sonnets." As I have shown, it is not a question of the mere employment of "law terms," and really it is rather difficult to speak with patience of these airy pronouncements. Perhaps if Mr. Davey had served an apprenticeship to the law he might have appreciated the difficulties in the way of this casual picking-up theory! But he is himself another instance of a layman who betrays the fact that he is no lawyer, for he writes (p. 294), "New Place and all the Stratford properties . . . were *bequeathed* to

## NOTE TO CHAPTER XIII

## SHAKESPEARE AS A LAWYER

Mr. Sidney Lee, after telling us (p. 30, n. 3) that "legal terminology abounded in *all* plays and poems of the period" (the exaggeration of which statement I have already pointed out, and which, indeed, speaks for itself), refers to Barnabe Barnes's *Sonnets*, 1593, and *Zepheria*, 1594, as instances. That many of the sonnets of *Zepheria* "labour at conceits drawn from legal technicalities" (see Lee, Appendix IX) is certainly undeniable. Take the following for example (Canzon 37) :—

When last mine eyes dislodged from thy beauty,  
 Though served with process of a parent's writ ;  
 A *supersedeas* countermanding duty,  
 Even then, I saw upon thy smiles to sit !  
 Those smiles which me invited to a Party,  
 Dispeopling clouds of faint respecting fear ;  
 Against the summons which was served on me,  
 A lawyer priviledge of dispense did bear.  
 Thine eyes' edict the statute of Repeal  
 Doth other duties wholly abrogate,  
 Save such as thee endear in hearty zeal,  
 Then be it far from me that I should derogate,  
 From Nature's Law, enregistered in thee !  
 So might my love incur a *Praemunire*.

Now this is so very absurd that we hesitate to believe that it was put forward as serious poetry. But, however this may be,

Susanna Hall." Now no lawyer would speak of *bequeathing* real estate. It is true that the attorney who, presumably, drafted Shakspeare's will makes use of the word with reference to his houses and lands, but he does so in the common and comprehensive formula "I give, will, bequeath, and *devise*." He never uses the word "bequeath" alone with reference to land ; which of itself ought to have saved Mr. Lee and Mr. Davey from the error of saying that Shakspeare left the tenement in Chapel Lane to his daughter Judith. See p. 189 n. 2.



the example of *Zepheria* has no relevancy to our argument in Shakespeare's case, because the author is anonymous. I should think it highly probable that he was a lawyer, and what we are in search of is instances of familiarity with legal learning, and a legal life, in the writings of a layman without legal training, such as may fairly be put forward as parallel to the Shakespearean instances.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it was partly because the author was a lawyer that another lawyer poet—Sir John Davies—eminent both at the Bar and on the Bench, held him up to ridicule in his *Gullinge Sonnets* of 1595.

Let us, then, leave *Zepheria* as not to the point, and turn to Barnabe Barnes's *Sonnets*. "In these," says Mr. Lee, "legal metaphors abound"; yet if the reader will turn to the hundred and four sonnets and twenty-six madrigals of *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* he will, I think, only find legal allusions in nine of the sonnets and one madrigal, which can hardly be said to justify Mr. Lee's exuberant description.

Let us now examine these "legal metaphors." It seems (though the meaning is not always easy to follow) that the poet had been in bondage to a certain "light Laya," but seeing this nymph coquetting with "a youthful Squire," his heart flies back to Parthenophe and asks for pardon. Then follows Sonnet vi:—

Him when I caught, what chains had I provided !  
 What fetters had I framed ! What locks of Reason !  
 What keys of Continence had I devised  
 (Impatient of the breach) 'gainst any treason !  
 But fair Parthenophe did urge me still  
 To liberal pardon, for his former fault ;  
 Which, out alas ! prevailed with my will.  
 Yet moved I bonds, lest he should make default :  
 Which willingly she seemed to undertake,  
 And said "As I am virgin ! I will be  
 His bail for this offence ; and if he make  
 Another such vagary, take of me  
 A pawn, for more assurance unto thee !"  
 "Your love to me," quoth I, "your pawn shall make !  
 So that, for his default, I forfeit take."

Thereupon "her love to me, she forthwith did impawn," and

<sup>1</sup> On the supposition, of course, that Shakspeare = Shakespeare.

sets his heart at liberty, but the heart meditates another flight to the lady.

Then to Parthenophe, with all post haste  
 (As full assuréd of the pawn fore-pledged),  
 I made ; and, with these words disordered placed,  
 Smooth (though with fury's sharp outrages edged).  
 Quoth I, "Fair Mistress ! did I set my Heart  
 At liberty, and for that, made him free ;  
 That you should arm him for another start,  
 Whose certain bail you promiséd to be !"  
 "Tush !" quoth Parthenophe, "before he go,  
 I'll be his bail at last, and doubt it not !"  
 "Why then," said I, "that Mortgage must I show  
 Of your true love, which at your hands I got."  
 Ay me ! She was, and is his bail, I wot :  
 But when the Mortgage should have cured the sore  
 He passed it off, by Deed of Gift before.

The poet next complains that Parthenophe keeps his heart  
 "like a slavish martyr" (Sonnet x).

Ah me ! since merciless, she made that charter,  
 Sealed with the wax of steadfast continence,  
 Signed with those hands which never can unwrite it,  
 Writ with that pen, which (by pre-eminence)  
 Too sure confirms what's ever was indigitit.

He upbraids the lady for

Leaving thy love in pawn, till time did come on  
 When that thy trustless bonds were to be tried !  
 And when, through thy default, I thee did summon  
 Into the Court of Steadfast Love, then cried,  
 "As it was promised, here stands his Heart's bail !  
 And if in bonds to thee, my love be tied,  
 Then by those bonds, take Forfeit of the Sale !"

(Sonnet xi)

In Sonnets xv and xvi we have allusions to "thy love's large Charter and thy Bonds," and "that accursed Deed, before unsealed," and in Sonnet xx we find the following lines:—

These Eyes (thy Beauty's Tenants !) pay due tears  
 For occupation of mine Heart, thy Freehold,  
 In Tenure of Love's service ! If thou behold

With what exaction, it is held through fears ;  
 And yet thy Rents, extorted daily, bears.  
 Thou would not, thus, consume my quiet's gold !

Here the poet takes leave of law, and soon afterwards plunges into astronomy. It is rather a stretch of language, therefore, to say that "legal metaphors *abound*" in these poems ; neither can it be said that such as these exhibit so sound a knowledge of legal doctrines and technicalities as would make us imagine that the author must have had a legal training. What have we ? The common notion of going bail for a prisoner ; giving a pledge for his good behaviour ; a Bond ; a Mortgage ; a charter ; a Deed, signed and sealed ; Freehold ; Tenure ("of love's service") ; Rents ;—surely the introduction of such well-known terms as these, jumbled together with nothing to suggest that the writer had any special knowledge of the subject from which they are borrowed, but rather the contrary, cannot be seriously put forward as a parallel to Shakespeare's familiarity with law and lawyers, and the persistency and accuracy with which he makes use of legal phraseology !

Compare with these specimens from Barnabe Barnes Shakespeare's Sonnets xlvi and cxxxiv.

#### SONNET XLVI

Mine eye and heart are in a mortal war,  
 How to divide the conquest of thy sight ;  
 Mine eye mine heart thy picture's sight would bar,  
 My heart mine eye the freedom of that right.  
 My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,  
 A closet never pierced with crystal eyes,  
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,  
 And says in him thy fair appearance lies.  
 To 'cide this title is impanneled  
 A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart ;  
 And by their verdict is determined  
 The clear eyes moiety and the dear heart's part ;  
 As thus ; mine eye's due is thine outward part,  
 And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

A layman reads this sonnet, does not appreciate its meaning,

and thinks that it might perfectly well have been written by a man who had never had any legal training. What does the trained lawyer say? Lord Campbell's comment is as follows: "I need not go further than this sonnet, which is so intensely legal in its language and imagery, that without a considerable knowledge of English forensic procedure it cannot be fully understood. A lover being supposed to have made a *conquest* of (i.e. to have gained by *purchase*) his mistress, his EYE and his HEART holding as joint tenants, have a contest as to how she is to be partitioned between them, each moiety then to be held in severalty. There are regular pleadings in the suit, the HEART being represented as Plaintiff and the EYE as Defendant. At last issue is joined on what the one affirms and the other denies. Now a jury (in the nature of an inquest) is to be empanelled to decide, and by their verdict to apportion between the litigating parties the subject-matter to be decided. The jury fortunately are unanimous, and after due deliberation, find for the EYE in respect of the lady's outward form, and for the HEART in respect of her inward love. Surely Sonnet 46 smells as potently of the attorney's office as any of the stanzas penned by Lord Kenyon while an attorney's clerk in Wales."

In Sonnet cxxxiv Shakespeare makes play with the law of debtor and surety. It is a well-established rule of law, which holds good to-day as it did when Shakespeare wrote, that the payment of a debt by a surety releases the debtor so far as the creditor is concerned. The creditor has been satisfied, not by the debtor it is true, but by somebody else, and has no further claim; but the surety can sue the debtor for the sum which he has been called upon to pay on his behalf. In Sonnet cxxxiv the poet complains that this rule does not hold good in love as it does in law. He is, as Mr. Castle writes, "referring to some old love of his who has attracted the affections of a common friend, whereby he is deprived of his love and friend, and yet is not himself set free." In Sonnet cxxxiii the author complains the lady has captured both himself and his friend, and continues in cxxxiv thus:—

So now I have confessed that he is thine,  
And I myself am mortgaged to thy will;



Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine  
 Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still ;  
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,  
 For thou art covetous, and he is kind ;  
 He learn'd but surety-like to write for me,  
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.  
 The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,  
 Thou usurer, that putt'st forth all to use,  
 And sue a friend, came debtor for my sake ;  
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse.  
 Him have I lost ; thou hast both him and me ;  
*He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.*

Mr. Castle explains that by a "statute" here is meant "an old form of bond, whereby a man's body and lands were made liable to be taken in satisfaction of a debt incurred either as a merchant or in the staple market."

Then we have, in *Venus and Adonis*, the extraordinary and highly unpoetical allusion to what is known to lawyers as a common money-bond, which was "a contrivance by the English lawyers to enforce payment of a debt, or the fulfilment of some other obligation on a fixed day. Time was not considered by the law an element of the contract in many cases. Thus, if a debtor promised to repay a loan at a certain date, if he failed to do so the creditor, though he might be put to great inconvenience by the non-receipt of the money on the day named, could not recover any damages for the non-fulfilment of the promise beyond interest in certain cases. This might be a very inadequate remedy for the damage the creditor might suffer in being thus disappointed in his money at the proper time. He would have to proceed by action to recover, and might be delayed by the different proceedings in law. To remedy this the English lawyers contrived the plan of making the debtor enter into a bond in which he acknowledged that he was indebted to the creditor in a sum generally twice the original loan. This bond being under seal was binding, though not true ; but there was a condition attached to it, viz. that if the debtor paid or otherwise fulfilled his obligation on the day named the bond should become null and void. So that the creditor had the sanction of the penalty of a double payment to enforce the return of the sum

due on the day named. This penalty, as it was called, being a penalty, was very strictly construed by the Courts and was not always a money one. It may be remembered in *The Merchant of Venice* it was a pound of flesh, and Portia, well knowing the law, or rather, having the author's knowledge, saved Antonio's life by noticing the fact that flesh only was mentioned, so that not one drop of blood was to be taken, and a pound to a hair's weight, neither more nor less, was to be cut off. In *Venus and Adonis* the author, with his fondness for law, brings this money bond into use. He makes Venus, in the midst of her passion, being an Italian goddess, play upon the terms and conditions to be found in a bond, even to its sealing with wax:—

Pure lips! Sweet seals in my soft lips imprinted,  
What bargains may I make, still to be sealing?  
To sell myself I can be well contented,  
So thou wilt buy, and pay, and use good dealing;  
Which purchase, if thou make, for fear of slips  
Set thy seal-manual on my wax-red lips.

A thousand kisses buys my heart from me;  
And pay them at thy leisure, one by one.  
What is ten hundred touches unto thee?  
Are they not quickly told and quickly gone?  
*Say, for non-payment that the debt should double,  
Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?*

This allusion by Venus to an English common money bond is so incongruous that it is almost burlesque.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Castle further points out that “some of the most remarkable references to law are to be found in the *Rape of Lucrece*, where the author shows that he is familiar with a very technical and

<sup>1</sup> Castle on *Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson, and Greene*, pp. 16-18. In *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1, we have the well-known lines:—

“But yet I'll make assurance doubly sure,  
And take a bond of fate.”

Here every lawyer recognises legal terminology. “Assurance” is, of course, a legal term, and to make the instrument doubly sure he will take a bond, “referring,” says Mr. Rushton (*Shakespeare a Lawyer*, p. 20), “not to a single, but to a conditional bond, under or by virtue of which, when forfeited, double the principal sum was recoverable.” See, too, III, 2, 49, where the same figure is used with a different application.

intricate form of pleading, happily long obsolete, which for some time has ceased to be any part of modern practice. An ordinary writer might have known the conditions of a money bond, though I doubt if he would have thought of introducing it into a passionate poem like *Venus and Adonis*; but I doubt if any one but a lawyer would have been familiar with the example I am now about to refer to."

The writer then alludes to the use of the word "colour" in the *Rape of Lucrece*, as in the lines

But she with vehement prayers urgeth still,  
Under what colour he commits this ill,

which he shows to mean "under what title or justification he commits this trespass. If this were by a husband, the answer would be by colour of a husband's rights. If a favoured lover had to reply, his answer would be by colour of leave and licence. Tarquin had no colour—he is a trespasser pure and simple. He therefore plays upon the word as we so often find in our author's works."

The word "colour," as Mr. Castle points out, "as used in legal pleadings, has a very specialised meaning . . . the old English lawyer used it as something beyond an appearance, viz. a pretended title," and the writer gives an extract from a book well known to lawyers, *Viner's Abridgment*, explaining that "colour in pleading is a feigned matter which the defendant or tenant uses in his bar, when an action of trespass, or an assize, or entry *sur disseisin* for rent or forcible entry is brought against him, in which he gives the plaintiff or demandant some colourable pretence which seems at first sight to intimate that he hath good cause of defence, the intent whereof is to bring the action from the jury's giving their verdict upon it to be determined by the judges, and, therefore, it always consists of matter of law, and that which may be doubtful to the *lay people*." But I must refer to the work cited for further illustration on this point.

The plays, as is well known, teem with allusions to law and legal doctrines and life and customs and habits. For these I must refer to the works of Lord Campbell, Mr. Cushing Davis, Mr. Richard Grant White, Mr. Castle, K.C., Malone, Mr. Rushton,

Judge Holmes, Lord Penzance, Judge Webb, and others. The reader may also refer, if he will, to Mr. Churton Collins's essay, *Was Shakespeare a Lawyer?* but Mr. Collins not having himself any special knowledge of this part of the subject, is an unsafe guide, and is apt to see things altogether out of their proper proportion, as is shown by the quotations which he makes from *Titus Andronicus* in a quite ineffectual attempt to prove legal knowledge on the part of the author of that horrible tragedy. I will content myself with one or two instances. The first shall be the allusion in *Hamlet* to the famous case of *Hales v. Petit*, which was decided about the time when Shakspeare was born, reported by Plowden in Norman-French, and to be found in the black-letter reports bearing his name.<sup>1</sup> Sir James Hales, a puisne judge, was so worried by proceedings which had been brought against him, that in the year 1564 he committed suicide by drowning himself, and a jury had found a verdict of *felo de se*. He was a joint tenant with his wife of some land. If he had died a natural death she would have taken the whole by the right of survivorship; but as he died by his own hand the Crown claimed the whole of his property as forfeited by that felony, and had actually conferred it on the defendant, Cyriac Petit. Lady Hales, however, contended that no forfeiture had been incurred during her husband's lifetime, since the crime which involved the forfeiture was not complete so long as her husband was alive, for as long as he was alive he had not killed himself, and the moment he died the estate vested in the widow, his joint-tenant, by right of survivorship. The question, then, was whether the crime was committed in Sir James's lifetime. Counsel for the widow argued after this fashion: "Two things were to be considered, first, the cause of death; secondly, the death ensuing the cause, and these two make the felony, and without both the felony is not consummate, etc." For the defendant Serjeant Walsh argued thus: "The act of felony consists of three parts—the first is the imagination whether or not

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Castle seems to be in error in thinking that the report of this case was "not printed until after his [Shakspeare's] death." The Folio edition of Plowden's *Reports* was printed in 1571, and reprinted 1578. A later edition with a second part was printed in 1579, and both parts were reprinted in 1599 and 1613.



it is convenient for him to destroy himself, and what way it can be done; the second is the resolution, which is a determination of the mind to destroy himself; and the third is the perfection, which is the execution of what the mind had resolved to do."

The Court gave judgment for the defendant, that is, in favour of the contention of the Crown, delivering themselves thus: "Sir James Hales is dead. How came he to his death? By drowning. And who drowned him? Sir James Hales. And when did he drown him? In his lifetime; and the act of the living man was the death of the dead man, for Sir James Hales being alive caused Sir James Hales to die."<sup>1</sup>

Now the dialogue of the two clowns in "the grave-digger's scene" in *Hamlet* is, without doubt, intended as a travesty of this case. This dialogue is not to be found in the First or 1603 Quarto of *Hamlet*, but was added in the Second Quarto (published in the very next year, 1604), which is said to be "newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again, which shows much careful revision, and which contains some passages of the highest poetry omitted by the Folio of 1623. Everybody will remember the concluding words: "But is this law?—Ay, marry, is't, crowner's quest law." Lord Penzance cites this dialogue as "a very curious proof of the thorough legal studies which the author of the plays must have gone through." Yet, as Mr. Collins says, "it is not likely that Shakespeare (i.e. Shakspeare) had studied or was even acquainted with Plowden's *Commentaries and Reports*, which were only accessible to him in Norman-French." I trow not, but I have no doubt that the author of *Hamlet* knew his Plowden well enough.

I have already expressed the opinion that *Henry VI*, Part 1, is not the work of Shakespeare, but it is generally admitted that if Shakespeare's pen is to be found in it at all, it appears in the scene in the Temple Gardens (Act III, Scene 1), where much familiarity is shown with the habits of members of the Inns of Court. Here I will merely refer to Mr. Castle's book (p. 65).

<sup>1</sup> See Lord Campbell, *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements*, p. 33; Lord Penzance, *The Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy*, p. 90; Mr. Castle on *Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson, and Greene*, p. 83; Mr. Churton Collins's *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 223.

Mr. Castle thinks that the scene must have been written by a member of Gray's Inn, at that time the most famous of the legal inns.

One more instance. In *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act II, Sc. 1, 222) the grant of a kiss is compared to a grant of pasture:—

*Boyet.* So you grant pasture for me.

*Maria.* Not so, gentle beast;

My lips are no common, though several they be.

*Boyet.* Belonging to whom?

*Maria.* To my fortunes and me.

Common of pasture is, of course, a right of common with which lawyers are very familiar. Boyet desires a grant of pasture on Maria's lips, but she replies that there is "no common" there. This suggests the distinction between tenancy in common and "severalty" or individual ownership, and Maria, bethinking her that her lips are "several," or severed one from the other, adds "though several they be." The same idea appears in the Sonnets.

Why should my heart think that a *several* plot,  
Which my heart knows the world's wide *common* place?

In the play there seems, at first sight, to be some little confusion involved by the use of the word "though," for things which are "several" would naturally not be "common," but I think the explanation is to be found in a note of William Hazlitt's to *Sir John Oldcastle*, Part 1, Act III, Sc. 1, where the Earl of Cambridge says:—

Of late he broke into a *several*  
Which doth belong to me;

and the note explains "several" here as meaning "portions of common land assigned for a time to particular proprietors." Thus "severals" could be part of common lands, and so Maria might say that her lips, *though* "several" are "no common," though, even so, the conjunction seems rather forced.<sup>1</sup>

But examples from the plays could be multiplied almost *ad*

<sup>1</sup> Knight tells us that "Dr. James has attempted to show that *several*, or *severell*, in Warwickshire, meant the *common field*;—common to a few proprietors, but not common to all. In this way the word 'though' is not

*infinitum*. I have only given a few specimens. To compare with all this profusion of legal phraseology and wealth of legal knowledge the few feeble instances which can be cited from Barnabe Barnes is but to heighten by way of contrast the case for a legal Shakespeare. Meanwhile we may well ask, Did the provincial player, the "Stratford rustic," write such sonnets as those which I have quoted? Is it *his* law which appears in Venus's allusion to a common money bond, or in the various passages of *Lucrece*? Did *he* write the travesty of *Hales v. Petit* in *Hamlet*? Did *he* discourse of "common of pasture" and "severalty" in *Love's Labour's Lost*? Is it to *him* that we owe the thousands of legal allusions scattered throughout the *Plays*? I think not. *Credat Judæus*.

contradictory. Maria's lips are 'no common though several.' . . . 'I and my fortunes' are the co-proprietors of the common-field, but we will not 'grant pasture' to others." Unfortunately for this explanation no commons are "common to all"—the common rights are confined to a limited number of commoners. As to the supposed reference to Warwickshire, it may be remarked that "common-fields" were by no means peculiar to that county, but were *common* throughout England. Mr. Elton (p. 144) has yet another explanation. He tells us that "the farmers as a rule enjoyed the rights of pasture on the corn lands in fallow, the weeds providing an abundance of coarse food for the town-herd or common flock. But in some districts portions of the fallow were exempted from the general right, and were kept as 'severals' or 'sunder-lands' for the owner's private use." I cannot think that this interpretation (which, by the way, gives us no explanation of the word "though") is the right one. Mr. Elton seems to me to have been sometimes carried away by his love of finding some recondite antiquarian meaning where none had been suspected before. I may add, in further illustration of the fact that the word "several" does not always exclude the idea of "common-right," that there is near Midhurst, in Sussex, a large wood known as "The Severals," in which certain rights of common were once, I believe, enjoyed. The late Rev. H. D. Gordon writes, in his *History of Harting*, "'Severals,' not an uncommon name for a piece of land severed and enclosed from the Common," and he quotes in illustration the above passage from *Love's Labour's Lost* (chap. VIII. p. 207, n.). There is a farm known as "Severals" in West Norfolk, in the neighbourhood of Stoke Ferry. If we could ascertain the origin of these old names it might throw light upon the passage above quoted.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SHAKESPEARE AS NATURALIST AND SPORTSMAN

THE orthodox conception of Shakspeare's early life is that, except for the time when he was assiduously cramming himself with Latin at the Free School (as abundantly appears from his works, though his great industry and ability were, unfortunately, not marked or recorded by those with whom he was associated), he was wandering through the fields and woods of Stratford, and especially along the banks of the Avon, a thoughtful and contemplative student of nature, and especially observing the birds and the beasts in their natural habitats and taking careful note of their ways and manner of life. Thus Charles Knight has expressed his opinion that "Shakspeare was a naturalist in the very best sense of the word. He watched the great phenomena of nature, the economy of the animal creation, and the peculiarities of inanimate existence; and he set these down with almost undeviating exactness, in the language of the highest poetry."<sup>1</sup> And this dictum as to Shakspeare having been a great "naturalist" and a close observer of "the economy of the animal creation" has been repeated over and over again until it has come to be accepted as an axiomatic truth.

In April, 1894, however, there appeared in the *Quarterly Review* an article on "Shakespeare's Birds and Beasts," which caused some little flutter in the literary dovecots, because the writer appeared to speak as one in authority

<sup>1</sup> *Pictorial Shakspeare*. Illustrations of *1 Henry IV*, Act V.



and not as the scribes. This very able and instructive article has been a good deal quoted at second-hand, and has met with considerable animadversion from critics who evidently have not taken the trouble to read it. Thus Mr. G. A. B. Dewar, himself a naturalist and sportsman, after citing Mr. Bompas's reference to the *Quarterly Review*,<sup>1</sup> writes as follows: "I confess at once, with no sense of shame, that I write without having collated the various impugned or suspected passages in the plays bearing on Nature and natural history with their alleged originals. If they really so resemble these originals as to leave no doubt that the writer of the plays had read the various books referred to by the *Quarterly Review* and others, it may furnish an argument to those who contend that Bacon, not Shakespeare, wrote the plays, that is, if it can at the same time be shown that Shakespeare could have had no access to those books. *It does not in the least show that the writer of the plays had not earnestly observed, was not in true sympathy with Nature.* Evidently there are passages in Tennyson bearing on Nature which owe much in expression to Virgil; yet Tennyson, as we all know, did observe very closely and was in sympathy with Nature. *The truth is that the plays bear throughout, stamped with the utmost distinctness upon them, the hall-mark of the great-hearted lover of Nature.*"<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Dewar is here merely fighting with phantoms of his own creation. Nobody has ever made such an absurd assertion as that Shakespeare was not "in true sympathy with Nature," or that he was not a "great-hearted" lover of Nature. Had Mr. Dewar taken the trouble to see what the proposition really is which the *Quarterly Reviewer* has emphasised with so much acuteness, he might have spared us some arguments which, though put with admirable

<sup>1</sup> *Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> "Shakespeare's Nature" in the *New Liberal Review*, January, 1904. The italics are mine.

brevity and with much charm of style, are employed in support of a proposition which never has been impugned.

Let us see, then, what the argument really is. Dr. Johnson, in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1765), wrote: "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature." Here most readers seem to have stopped, and the above words are quoted as though Johnson's opinion was that Shakespeare was the great "Naturalist poet." But let us see how the passage continues: "The poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. . . . It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestick wisdom. It was said of Euripides that every verse was a precept, and it may be said of Shakespeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and œconomical prudence."<sup>1</sup> This is admirable; and it shows us in what sense Shakespeare was, in Johnson's opinion, "the poet of nature." He was the poet of *human* nature; a proposition which nobody, I imagine, has ever disputed or will dispute. It is very much akin to what Dryden said, viz. that Shakespeare "needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature, *for he looked inwards and found her there.*"

But Johnson does not stop here, for further on he says: "Nor was his attention confined to the actions of men; he was an exact surveyor of the *inanimate world*; his

<sup>1</sup> I quote from Nichol Smith's *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 114.

descriptions have always some peculiarities, gathered by contemplating things as they really exist." And now we have a complete statement of Johnson's meaning when he described Shakespeare as "the poet of nature." He is the poet of *human* nature and of *inanimate* nature. But, as the Quarterly Reviewer writes : " This phrase of Johnson's has been passed on by pen to pen, and in time his ' nature ' has become to be written ' Nature,' and his words to mean that Shakespeare was a born naturalist." And so it is that we find men like Charles Knight speaking of William Shakspeare as though he was a worthy precursor of White of Selborne ; a close observer of the life-habits of birds and beasts. And it is with this idea in their minds that men have been inspired to write elaborate but, I fear, quite useless treatises on Shakespeare's Entomology, and Shakespeare's Ornithology, and so forth.

Now the proposition which, following the Quarterly Reviewer, I confidently propound, is that Shakespeare, "great-hearted lover of Nature" though he was ; profoundly though he had studied human nature ; closely though he had observed, and deeply though he had contemplated the phenomena of the inanimate world,—had really devoted no close observation at all to the wild birds, and the wild animals, or, for the matter of that, to the fishes or the insects, whether of Stratford or elsewhere.

Here it may be as well to give in his own words what the Quarterly Reviewer has said as to Shakespeare's borrowing from books in the matter of "Natural History," but let it be clearly observed that the criticism relates to the poet's "familiarity with *animate* Nature," and to that alone. "Chaucer wrote of what he saw and heard in the animal life about him with a sense of personal delight that convinces the reader of his familiarity with animate Nature. So, too, with Spenser. Though the scholar in him was often led aside by classical precedent, we are certain that his swans were real swans upon the Thames

and 'the culvers on the bared boughs' actually upon trees in the poet's sight. Ben Jonson, again, was beyond any doubt very fond of Nature, and singularly well-informed: had he finished his *Sad Shepherd*, we should have possessed a most valuable and delightful document on the outdoor life of his time, for the fragment that we have is instinct with authentic observation and a fine fidelity to truth. Marlowe is quite different, preferring the bizarre and outlandish in natural history—the flying-fishes, remoras, and torpedosa of Pliny—to the more moderate fauna of his own neighbourhood. Shakespeare resembles none of them. He borrows from Gower and Chaucer and Spenser; from Drayton and Du Bartas and Lyly and William Browne; from Pliny, Ovid, Virgil, and the Bible; borrows, in fact, everywhere he can, but with a symmetry that makes his natural history harmonious as a whole, and a judgment that keeps it always moderate and possible. But with the exception of his treatment of the victims of the chase—an exception well worth the notice of those who claim him as an enthusiastic 'sportsman'—he is seldom so personally sympathetic as to convince us of his sincerity."

This seems to me an entirely accurate statement of the case. Take, for instance, Shakespeare's famous description of the horse in *Venus and Adonis*. The Reviewer points out that "it is borrowed word for word from Du Bartas," but as I have already shown,<sup>1</sup> the words appear to be taken directly from Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas, which it seems Shakespeare must have had before him whether in print or in manuscript. The fact seems to be that Du Bartas derived his description of the horse, or most of it, from Virgil,<sup>2</sup> and Shakespeare took *his* from Du Bartas, through Joshua Sylvester.

The Reviewer, who, however, had not apparently had his attention called to Sylvester's translation, thus sums

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 59 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Georgics*, III, 73 *seq.*



up the case as to "the ideal horse." "If Shakespeare did not borrow from Du Bartas, it is obvious that he borrowed from some other work to which Du Bartas had already been. And if critics will read the whole of Du Bartas' description, they cannot, in any honesty, deny that it is much superior to Shakespeare's summary of it. At all events, it is time that 'critics' gave over eulogizing it as 'Shakespeare's description' of an ideal horse."

The next example is that of the bee, and the Commentator quotes *Henry V*, Act I, Scene 2, 187-204, of which passage he says: "As poetry, it is a most beautiful passage; as a description of a hive, it is utter nonsense, with an error of fact in every other line, and instinct throughout with a total misconception of the great beeparable. Obviously, therefore, there could have been no personal observation. How, then, did the poet arrive at the beautiful conception? From the *Euphues* of Lyly. The passage will be found in a speech of Fidus by any one who will read from 'a kind of people; a commonwealth for Plato,' to 'whom they that tarry at home receive readily, easing their backs of so great burthens.' Was it original in Lyly? No, for any one who will turn to the fourth book of the *Georgics* will find there Virgil's description of a bee-hive, and if Shakespeare had, in his own matchless language, directly paraphrased the Latin poet's beautiful version, his description would have gained greatly in accuracy, and lost but little in originality.<sup>1</sup> And again; "Shakespeare's description of the hive owes its design to the fancies of others, and its details to the poet's own imagination. Not only is it full of errors (those, perhaps, would not matter), but Shakespeare has so perverted for his purpose—the Archbishop is holding

<sup>1</sup> For the passage in Lyly's *Euphues* see Arber's Reprint, pp. 262-4. Mr. Gollancz thinks that "the ultimate source is probably Pliny's *Natural History*, Bk. XI," of which, as he notes, Holland's translation did not appear till 1601.

forth before the King on the necessity of co-operation for the welfare of the Kingdom and his Majesty—the whole natural scheme of bee-economy as to show himself entirely out of sympathy with Nature's design. Shakespeare has a great many references to the bee, in metaphor and simile and moral, but his natural history of the insect is as limited as it is inaccurate. Thus, 'The old bees die, the young possess their hive';<sup>1</sup> a line which reads like a platitude or a truism, and seems hardly worth the saying. Yet it is so instinct with misconception that it would be hard to find its equal. Of anything else in the world it might be true, but said of the bee it is a monumental error, the most compendious misstatement possible. There are no 'generations' of bees; they are all the offspring of the same mother; and they possess the hive by mutual arrangement and not by hereditary succession, for when it gets too full the superfluous tenth goes off with a queen bee to 'the colonies,' leaving, as it were, the old folks at home. . . . What was Shakespeare's idea of the 'drone' bee? Suffolk says, 'Drones suck not eagle's blood, but rob bee-hives,'<sup>2</sup> and a fisherman in *Pericles* talks of misers as 'drones that rob the bee of her honey'—as if drones were some outside insects that plundered honey-bees. Again, Lucrece, confessing her ravishment, says:—

My honey lost, and I, a drone-like bee,  
Have no perfection of my summer left,  
But robbed and ransacked by injurious theft;  
In my weak hive a wandering wasp has crept  
And sucked the honey which thy chaste bee kept.

This, if literally translated, reads thus: 'I was a female

<sup>1</sup> *Lucrece*, 1769.

<sup>2</sup> But this is from *2 Henry VI*, and perhaps Shakespeare was not responsible for it. Neither, I think, are we justified in holding him responsible for what the fisherman in *Pericles* says, since it is generally considered that his hand cannot be traced in the first two acts of that play. In any case the alleged inaccuracy does not amount to much in this instance.

bee, but a wasp robbed me of my honey, and I am now like a male bee.' Again we have, 'We'll follow where thou lead'st, Like stinging bees in hottest summer's day, Led by their master to the flower'd fields.' The passage is of course ridiculous, but it is taken from Du Bartas (*The Furies*), Shakespeare using 'master' in the sense of 'King' in the original.<sup>1</sup> Again, Shakespeare, of bees returning to the hive, 'Our thighs packed with wax, our mouths with honey,' though bees do not carry their wax on their thighs, but in their 'tails,' and their honey, not in their mouths, but in their 'stomachs.' However, the line is borrowed from Lyly's *Euphues*.<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare, then, bestowed no personal observation upon the bee; he took the conventional description, whether he found it in Lyly or in Virgil or in Pliny or elsewhere. That need not excite our surprise, and it would be indeed foolish to find fault with him on that account. But a lover and observer of animate nature, whether by the side of the Avon or elsewhere, must surely have loved to watch the bees hovering over the flowers and to hear their humming in the summer air! Who does not recall those exquisite lines of Shelley's?

He would watch from dawn to gloom  
The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom.

Here we have the true note of a poet who loved to watch the bees and the birds, as well as the

Autumn evening, and the morn  
When the golden mists are born.

But how is it, asks our Reviewer, that with Shakespeare,

<sup>1</sup> But as this quotation is from *Titus Andronicus* (V. 1, 13), it is, in my opinion, of no argumentative value.

<sup>2</sup> *2 Hen. IV*, IV, v, 77. Wax, as we now know, is a secretion from the abdomen of the bee, and exudes from the rings which enclose the posterior part of the body.

"in all his sunshine there is not a single bee humming among the flowers?"

But did not Shakespeare watch the birds? Does he not speak to us about the birds? Does he not sing "his native woodnotes wild" about them? Take the cuckoo, for example. Did he not thoroughly understand its habits? Had he not closely observed it? Is it not true, as Charles Knight says, that "before White and Jenner and Montagu had described the remarkable proceedings of the cuckoo, Shakspeare described them," and "from what he saw"? Now, here is a definite instance of Shakespeare's alleged personal observation of a very familiar, but, at the same time, most curious and interesting bird. Let us, then, examine the passage over which the enthusiastic Charles Knight waxes so eloquent.

In *Henry IV*, Part I, Act 5, Scene I, Worcester says to the King:—

Being fed by us you used us so  
As that ungentle gull the cuckoo's bird  
Useth the sparrow: did oppress our nest,  
Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk  
That even our love durst not come near your sight  
For fear of swallowing; but with nimble wing  
We were enforced for safety sake, to fly  
Out of your sight.

It is on this passage that Knight makes the comment which I have already quoted that Shakespeare was "a naturalist in the very best sense." But the lines teem with error, and well indeed may the Quarterly Reviewer express his surprise that the editor of the *Henry Irving Shakespeare* should quote with approval this "most preposterous criticism." What observer of birds would suggest that when the young cuckoo grows to a "great bulk" the foster-parents are afraid to come near "for fear of swallowing," and take refuge in flight? The truth is, of course, that "the fascination of the young cuckoo over its little foster-parents is so curious and lasting that, long



after the cuckoo has left the nest and is able to forage for itself, its small guardians still continue to feed it, and industriously drop down its huge gullet their tiny morsels of food." Yet Knight actually quotes White of Selborne, who tells how he once teased with his finger a young cuckoo in a titlark's nest, and how the pugnacious nestling sparred and buffeted with its wings like a game-cock; "the dupe of a dam hovering about with meat in her mouth, and expressing the greatest solicitude." Exactly; the dam, so far from fearing or shunning its foster-child, was solicitous for its safety, and only anxious to continue to feed it. According to Shakespeare, it ought to have taken to flight "for fear of swallowing," the meaning of which is illustrated by another passage from *King Lear*: "The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, That it had its head bit off by its young"; upon which some sapient critic (noted by the Quarterly Reviewer) says: "Shakespeare seems to speak from his own observation, and to have been the first to notice how the hedge-sparrow was used by the young cuckoo"! Yet it is hardly necessary to say that "a cuckoo could not bite off a hedge-sparrow's head, and it certainly would not suicidally destroy its only food-provider."<sup>1</sup> In this way, then, has Shakespeare anticipated "White and Jenner and Montagu," viz. by imagining that the young cuckoo was in the habit of biting its foster-parents' heads off, and that the birds that have reared it with so much care dare not come near it when it grows big, but are "enforced, for safety's sake to fly" out of its sight!

What else does Shakespeare say about the cuckoo? "The cuckoo builds not for himself." This, says the

<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, merely a proverbial, though very inaccurate saying that is put into the fool's mouth. It is not, I trust, necessary to guard against misunderstanding by saying that nobody would be so foolish as to find fault with Shakespeare for not having devoted personal observation to the habits of the cuckoo. The fault lies with those commentators who, like Knight, will have it that he did.

Reviewer, "is true, but scarcely original." Again, "Hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests." Upon which the comment is, "True again, but only original in calling this universal favourite 'hateful.'"<sup>1</sup>

I must again quote from the *Quarterly*. "Let us in the same way take a beast at random—the weasel. What has Shakespeare to say about it? He calls it 'quarrelous,' 'night-wandering,' and 'egg-sucking,' and says, 'The eagle England being in prey, To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot Comes sneaking, and so sucks her princely eggs.' 'Suck-egg weasel' was a proverb, and so was 'quarelsome as a weasel.' Of the rest we need only remark that the weasel is not a night-wanderer, and that it does not plunder eagles' eyries. So that the total again amounts to two proverbs and two misstatements. Yet a critic tells us that 'the knowledge which Shakespeare displays of the habits of the weasel could only have been acquired by one accustomed to much observation by flood and field.' It is hardly credible that responsible writers will go to such lengths in order to mislead. Yet, as we have seen, they will. Nor is it really any wonder that very false impressions of Shakespeare's familiarity with Nature should generally prevail, when editors, critics, and professed students of Shakespeare betray such miserable lack of judgment and so indifferent a regard for facts. . . . We have shown by taking a bird, a beast, and an insect, the complexion of Shakespeare's natural history, and, without any thought of depreciating the matchless language in which he clothes his errors, have proved, by the most direct manner of proof, *quotation*, that the knowledge upon which a certain class of critics so pride themselves in exalting, does not exist. And so we might easily go, if we had the space, item by item, through his *animated Nature*, and prove, in the same indisputable way, how judicious

<sup>1</sup> It is true if by "sparrow" we mean the hedge-sparrow, or dunnoek, which is not in truth a sparrow at all.

Johnson was when he declined to commit himself to an opinion upon Shakespeare's Zoology."

But the extraordinary thing is, if Shakespeare had, in truth, been the poetical wanderer, and close observer of the animals *feræ naturæ* along the sweet banks of the Avon, that he gives us no indication that he loved these beasts and birds and other living things, which he is supposed to have watched and fondly contemplated. Of these he seems, as the Reviewer says, "to have seen very little." His works, "while they abound with beauties of fancy and imagination, are most disappointing to lovers of Nature by (their errors apart) their extraordinary omissions. Stratford-on-Avon was, in his day, enmeshed in streams, yet he has not got a single kingfisher. It is true, he refers to that mythic old sea-bird of antiquity, the halcyon, hung up by its beak as a kind of indoor weather-cock. But that is not the kingfisher. Nor on all his streams or pools is there an otter, a water-rat, a fish rising, a dragon-fly, a moor-hen, or a heron. . . . His boyhood was passed among woods, and yet in all the woods in his Plays there is neither woodpecker, nor wood-pigeon; we never hear or see a squirrel in the trees, nor a nightjar hawking over the bracken." This, he adds, "is surely extraordinary in a poet." Yes, in a poet such as Shakespeare is fondly supposed to have been—a child of Nature, whose fount of inspiration was his own observation as he roamed through the woods and fields of his native Stratford. Not quite so extraordinary if that idea be a myth, and if the real Shakespeare had been brought up in very different surroundings, and had for the most part confined his observation to men and manners, and to the inanimate world. But of this more anon; for, at this point, I seem to hear some critic triumphantly asking, What about the birds? Even if he goes astray in the matter of the cuckoo, what of the others? Had not Shakespeare listened to the nightingale, for example, and observed her ways? Think of *Romeo*

*and Juliet*. "Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree." Well, Shakespeare could hardly have observed a nightingale on a pomegranate tree. And *she* sings! Why, if I remember right, it is Mr. Dewar himself, in that charming work *Wild Life in Hampshire Highlands*, who compassionates the ignorant people who are unaware that it is only the male nightingale that sings, fondly imagining, if they think about it at all, that the hen-bird leaves her eggs to their fate while she chaunts to the moon, "most musical, most melancholy." But we might, perhaps, not be justified in expecting this amount of knowledge from Shakespeare. The point is that, as our Reviewer points out, "his nightingale is a beautiful poem, but its theme is 'Philomela,' not a bird, and when he does speak of the bird, he shows that he went to contemporary error or antiquated fancy for his facts, not to nature. . . . Ben Jonson's one line, 'Dear good angel of the Spring,' is enough to satisfy any lover of Nature. Shakespeare has not a kind word for the bird. Lucrece ravished, Lavinia outraged and mutilated,<sup>1</sup> the Passionate Pilgrim beguiled and left lamenting, find solace and sympathy in the lamentations of the victims of Tereus' cruelty. But the man Shakespeare never speaks to us from the Poet's lines to say that the bird-nightingale delighted him." This last criticism is, perhaps, a little overstated, for we hear love for the bird's song in such lines as:—

Except I be by Silvia in the night  
There is no music in the nightingale ;

but, after all, "the music of the nightingale" is common to many poets, so common as to be a conventional expression. What we want is some personal note. "As with Shelley's skylark (in which though there is no direct Natural History, there is a wonderful description of the actual song), a single stanza suffices to assure us that the

<sup>1</sup> But, as already said, I certainly think that Shakespeare had no hand in *Titus*.



poet really took a personal delight in a little bird that was singing overhead ; so in Keat's *Ode to the Nightingale* a single stanza is enough to convince us of the actual joy of the poet in listening to another little brown bird singing in its bower." But this personal touch we do not find in Shakespeare, though his nightingale is for ever associated with those immortal lovers in a warm Italian night.

But the lark ! Here, surely, we have Shakespeare the naturalist, the observer of birds ! " His treatment of the lark, the most important of his real birds, never fails to meet with special comment from his 'critics' when they are insisting upon his observations of Nature ; but how is it they have never concerned themselves to learn how much of Shakespeare's description was his own and how much borrowed ? We cannot find space to exhaust the subject, but may note here some of his most-quoted epithets, and distribute them among their sources. It is 'the morning lark' (so in Lyly), 'the mounting lark' (Wm. Browne), the 'merry lark' (Spenser), 'herald of the day' (Chaucer), 'shrill lark' (Spenser), 'summer's bird' (Spenser), 'the busy day waked by the lark' ('the busy lark, waker of the day,' Chester), 'Hark ! Hark ! the lark at Heaven's Gate sings, and Phœbus 'gins arise' ('At Heaven's Gate she claps her wings, The morn not waking till she sings,' Lyly.) These alone are enough to warn the critic that he should go very cautiously when he approaches the text of Shakespeare with the intention of proving the 'original' observation of the poet."

Again : " His contemporaries call the lark 'crested,' 'speckled,' 'long-heeled,' 'low-nested.' Shakespeare does not borrow these phrases : he cares apparently nothing about the real bird in Nature : he never refers to its appearance, its mate, its nest, or its young, which so delight some poets before him. This is distinctly worth noting, and extraordinary."

When Shakespeare writes (*Winter's Tale*, IV, 2), " The

lark that tirra-lirra chants," we seem to have another echo of Du Bartas :—

La gentille allouette avec son *tirè-lire*,  
*Tirè-lire a lirè et tirè-lirant tire*,  
*Vers la voute du ciel*, puis son vol vers ce lieu  
 Vire et desire dire adieu Dieu, adieu Dieu.<sup>1</sup>

While, therefore, yielding to none in my admiration for these lovely lyrics, I cannot think that they afford us any proof of Shakespeare's personal observation of bird-life.

Nor is it, as Mr. Dewar seems to suppose, that we "look to poets for the nice precision we must have in the man of science or the professional natural historian." I entirely agree with Mr. Dewar that no one "in his senses would demand it in supreme lyric such as Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* or *The Skylark*, though it does happen by some chance ["*chance*," quotha!] that the skylark's song and soar were in that latter poem described in a way that may delight the heart of the man who wants nothing but precision." No; we do *not* expect, or require precision from the poets. We do not expect it (though "by some chance," it seems, we find it) in Shelley's *Skylark*; nor do we expect it in Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*; nor do we expect it in Browning, though when we read

That's the wise thrush, he sings each song twice over,  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
 His first fine careless rapture,

we know that he must have listened attentively to and been deeply penetrated with the love of the thrush's vernal song.<sup>1</sup> Nay, we do not fail to recognise some measure of personal observation of birds even in Matthew Arnold, though he has so little of "nice precision" that he speaks of the nightingale as "tawny throated"! But

<sup>1</sup> Du Bartas, *Première Semaine*, Liv. 5. The Quarterly Reviewer has not noted this reference to Du Bartas.

<sup>1</sup> Burns had written before him, "while falling, *recalling*, The amorous thrush concludes his sang."

it is just this note of personal observation which is not found in Shakespeare where animated Nature is concerned; and which, nevertheless, is absurdly claimed for him by indiscriminating Shakespearialaters.

Again, we do not expect to find in Shakespeare that intense Nature worship which is a characteristic of a later age, and which may be said to have culminated in Shelley and in Wordsworth. It is not *that* we are seeking for, but for some evidence that he was in any real sense a "naturalist," as that term, which Knight so confidently claims for him, is usually understood; and this evidence we find conspicuous by its absence.

Let us take another instance from our Reviewer. "Again with the dove. Shakespeare's dove is an exquisite collation of all previous 'doves'—of fancy, and when he comes to facts, of the pigeon under domestication. The real dove, the bird that those whom he borrowed from meant, he leaves to them; for himself, the household pigeon, translated into 'classical' terms, is sufficient. For Shakespeare needed but little material with which to work his wonders; and the less he was compelled to use the better Shakespeare was pleased. It serves him, this 'dove,' as the emblem of 'patience,' 'modesty,' 'harmlessness,' 'pity,' and 'mildness,' 'maternal devotion,' 'innocence,' and is 'the very blessed spirit of peace.' It is white, snow-white, silver-white, and when it is a 'turtle' dove, it is the symbol of love, of lover's fidelity, of supreme constancy, of chastity, and when separated from its love is inconsolable. A very beautiful bird it is, and yet with all its virtues, it is not one that commends itself to a lover of birds. Compare it with Spenser's 'culvers' or the 'quists' of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and the difference is to be seen at once. Yet a certain critic goes into raptures over it, and because Shakespeare says 'it picks up peas' and 'feeds its young ones from its own crop,' eulogizes the description as being of 'almost photographic accuracy.' Any urchin who lives

within walking distance of St. Paul's or the Law Courts could have said as much, and in Shakespeare's own words; yet in Shakespeare it is 'almost photographic accuracy.' The poet again applauds the mother dove's patience when 'her golden couplets are disclosed.' Disclosed means 'hatched,' so we are told by the editors of the *Henry Irving Shakespeare*, and 'the young doves when hatched are covered with yellow down,' therefore the beauty of the phrase, 'golden couplets.' Now we might point out, as a matter of fact, that pigeons when first hatched are not covered with yellow down, that 'golden couplets' here means eggs, that 'disclosed' means 'revealed,' and that the notes of the *Henry Irving Shakespeare* are sheer nonsense—'Anon as *patient* as the female dove, When that her golden couplets are disclosed, His silence will sit drooping'—but there is no need to do so, so let it pass. But when the poet's very defective natural history has to depend for its accuracy upon such details as these 'critics and editors' suggest, it is surely worse off than it was before it had its house swept and garnished and was repossessed. Nor are the classic errors about the 'chaste' and 'mild' dove—the emblem, with the 'lecher-sparrow,' of the lascivious Paphian, and, for its constant quarrelling, 'the bird of war,' and 'dedicate to Mars'—worth referring to; for in Shakespeare's day they were less hackneyed by over two hundred years of use than they are to-day."

Mr. Dewar quotes :—

The ouzel-cock so black of hue  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill ;  
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark  
And dares him answer nay ;

and asks, "Is it not great and simple?" Yes ; great and



simple certainly. But are these lines really put forward in proof that Shakespeare was a close observer of birds? To notice that the ouzel is black, and has a bill which may be described as orange-tawny (it is, as Morris says, "more or less yellow and blackish brown" in the ring-ouzel, but I take it that Shakespeare by the "ouzel-cock" is really referring to the blackbird), is hardly to put oneself in competition with Gilbert White. "The plain-song cuckoo gray" certainly does not strengthen the case. "The plain-song" of the cuckoo is referred to by poets long before the time of Shakespeare, and his monotonous, though delightful call is the leading note of the oldest of plain-songs.

Summer is icumen in  
Lhude sing cu-cu.<sup>1</sup>

The rest, with the exception of the observation that the throstle has a note "so true," and that the wren has a "little quill," is mere enumeration.

Here it may be observed that many, if not most, of Shakespeare's most beautiful touches on the subject of birds or flowers occur among the lyrics. The authorship of these lyrics is sometimes very doubtful. They are occasionally old things adopted, with or without alteration and improvement. These lines, quoted by Mr. Dewar, are, I believe, echoes of an old song. However, I am quite content, for the sake of argument, to accept them as Shakespeare's.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapell's *Old English Popular Music* (Vol. I, p. 10), where the date of this old song is given as about 1240. We may note that while the cuckoo gives us an example of "plain-song," the nightingale, in Lyly's exquisite lyric (Trico's song in the *Campaspe*), is cited as an example of "prick-song":

Jug, jug, jug, jug, terew ! she cries,  
And still her woes at midnight rise,  
Brave prick-song !

The scholars in the Song Schools were required to learn both "plain-song" and "prick-song." See, for instance, the Statutes of the Song School at Newark.

A friend writes that the beautiful line in *Venus and Adonis*,

Like a dive-dapper, peering through a wave,"

shows personal observation on Shakespeare's part. He had doubtless, it is suggested, watched a dabchick, or other diver, in one of the pools of his native Stratford. On this I may remark, first, that "wave" is suggestive rather of the sea than a pool or inland lake. But had Shakespeare watched a diver in the sea, and is this his one solitary example of a sea-bird? To this it may be answered that, beautiful as the expression is, it was, in fact, a stock simile, and used, as Shakespeare uses it, to illustrate the raising of Adonis's chin, it does not seem very appropriate. But the motions of the dive-dapper (viz. any small diving water-fowl) were thus cited in illustration of anything that went up and down; and so much was this the case that there was actually a verb to "dive-dop," i.e. "to dive or duck like a dabchick." Thus Becon (1559), speaking slightly of the Catholic Mass, says, "Then once again kneel ye down, and up again like dive-doppels, and kiss the altar." And J. Stephens (1615), "He is worse than otter-hound for a dive-dopping alehouse keeper." Here, then, is very little indication of any personal observation of animated Nature.

It is not a little amusing to see how editors and "critics" are always finding Stratford-on-Avon in any allusion in Shakespeare's plays to the country or country matters. True, he never mentions the place, but he is supposed to have it, though "never on his lip," yet ever in his mind. Thus Caliban in the *Tempest* (II, 2. 180) says:—

I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow ;  
And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts ;  
Show thee a jay's nest, etc.

Upon which Mr. Elton's comment is, "The finding of a jay's nest shows that we are in the heart of some Midland

wood.”<sup>1</sup> Now why a *Midland* wood any more than a Surrey or Sussex or Hampshire or, for the matter of that, Middlesex wood? I have seen wild jays within twelve miles of London Bridge. No doubt they might have been frequently seen by Londoners in Shakespeare’s time.

Baconians have observed that Shakespeare never once mentions Stratford-on-Avon, whereas he on several occasions makes mention of St. Albans. To which the answer has been made that St. Albans figures prominently in that part of English History with which Shakespeare has dealt, whereas Stratford-on-Avon was an insignificant place and was historically quite unimportant. There is, it must be admitted, much force in that answer. And yet, if it were true that Shakespeare drew the inspiration for his “wood notes wild”—for his rural scenes, his birds, and his flowers—from Stratford; if his mind was ever turning to Stratford as the home of his romantic and contemplative boyhood—surely we might expect to find it, if not actually mentioned by name, at least alluded to in such a manner as that we might say here clearly is a reminiscence of the banks of the Avon! Is there any such allusion? No, there is none at all. Yet if we have a jay, a lark, a nightingale, an owl, a ladysmock, a cuckoo-bud, an adder, or even a horse-pond, they are at once hailed as Stratford memories, as though no other spot in England produced such things!<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Elton supplies us, too, with an entirely new interpretation of a well-known passage in *Macbeth*. Who does not remember those fine lines:—

Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood?

<sup>1</sup> *William Shakespeare, his Family, and Friends*, by the late C. J. Elton, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Morton Luce is more prudent in his introduction to *The Tempest*. Speaking of the Island (which, by the way, he terms “this New Atlantis”) he says, “there is the smallest possible proportion of local ‘fauna and flora,’ just enough to place the spot somewhere beyond the seas, and the rest is Stratford-on-Avon, or at most England”!

Here, at any rate, we may say, is a proof of personal observation ; not indeed a naturalist's but a poet's observation.

But Mr. Elton tells us we have all been mistaken as to the meaning of the lines. "Rooky," he says, "in Shakespeare's home meant vaporous, or reeking,"<sup>1</sup> and the crow "has nothing to do with Tennyson's 'black republic,' on the elms, or the crow 'that leads the clanging rookery home.' It is rather the night-crow preparing for deeds of rapine in the misty woods." Well then, all I can say is that if this piece of very much up-to-date criticism be accepted, it is only another, though very glaring, example of Shakespeare's want of personal observation in the matter of birds and beasts. For the simple fact is that there is no such thing as a "night-crow" that does "deeds of rapine in the misty woods" after dark. The crow feeds by day, and only "bats and owls," including the insectivorous so-called "fern-owl," are night feeders ; though, possibly, Mr. Elton was not aware of the fact.<sup>2</sup> But that most excellent and learned man seems to have always had a hankering after some new interpretation which would only manifest itself to one who had exceptional antiquarian, or other special, knowledge ; and I fear he was not infrequently, and in this case especially, misled by that rather unfortunate tendency. Whether, therefore, rooky means "reeky," or alludes to the "black republic," I believe, and am happy in the belief, that the passage refers to our old friend the rook winging his way home to the wood at sundown.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, nothing new in this interpretation, though some still think that "rooky wood" means "the wood frequented by rooks." See Messrs. Clark and Wright in their note on the passage. Shakespeare has the word "reechy" (=reeky) in *Much Ado*, III, 3, 143. Possibly the "rookery" is meant after all !

<sup>2</sup> One ought, perhaps, to mention the night-heron also.

<sup>3</sup> The author, or one of the authors, of *Troilus and Cressida* had at least the common knowledge of the habits of the crow :—

"the busy day

Waked by the lark, hath roused the ribald crows." (IV, 2, 9.)



And now let us turn to *As You Like It*, that play to which, according to some critics, Milton alludes when he talks of Shakespeare's "native wood notes wild." There was, we are told, a Warwickshire "Arden," and although "*the Arden of As You Like It* was," as Mr. Elton truly says, "a mere region of romance," the name being "derived from the Belgian Ardennes," still it may be "connected in some slight degree," and, by most of the critics, it *is* connected in a very strong degree, with this Warwickshire Arden.<sup>1</sup> Now, as the Quarterly Reviewer says, Shakespeare's characters in *As You Like It* "live in Arden Forest and yet they never hear or see a single bird or insect or flower all the time that they are there. As for animals, deer excepted (and these the poet was compelled to introduce for food), there is only a lioness, and 'a green and gilded snake.' The oak is the only forest tree in the play."<sup>2</sup> There is not a flower in it. Even the words 'flower' and 'leaf' are never mentioned in the play; nor the word 'bird,' except in an interpolated song. There is not even an indication of the time of year, except that the Duke and others talk of the bitter cold. Yet what do we find? The play is always illustrated as if the time of year were midsummer, and critics say: 'We hear the wind rustling in the fragrant leaves of the fairyland of Arden' (*Henry Irving Shakespeare*) and speak of 'leafy solitudes sweet with the song of birds'! Such is the magic potency of genius; it makes captive imagination, transports the mind to scenes that are never even hinted at by the poet, and makes us paint forests green, and fill them with happy animal life and summer flowers, when the

<sup>1</sup> But seeing that Shakespeare founded his play on Lodge's *Rosalynde*, where we find that the banished king "lived as an outlaw in the forest of Arden," i.e. the Ardennes, I venture to think that the supposed reference to this "Warwickshire Arden" is altogether imaginary.

<sup>2</sup> There is, indeed, a "palm tree" (Act III, Sc. 2, 186), but it has been charitably supposed that by this is meant the willow, the catkin-covered branches of which do duty for "palms," in this country, on Palm Sunday.

writer speaks only of 'the icy fang and churlish chiding of the winter's wind,' calls the forest always a 'desert,' and tenants it with lions and venomous serpents."

Not a flower, not a bird in the forest of Arden! Only a lioness and a snake! This hardly looks like reminiscences of the woods of Stratford! Was Shakespeare learned in forestry? Or, if not that, was he a lover of trees? Listen once more to our Reviewer. "It has been said of Shakespeare that he had 'a fine contempt for details,' and this contempt he carries into his treatment of animals. A bird is a bird, a beast is a beast, and it does not seriously matter what sort of bird or beast it is, so long as the touch of nature which the passage needs, or which affords a metaphor, is there. *He was supremely indifferent to that which all other writers prize so highly and call 'local colour.'* This is shown as conspicuously in his flora as in his fauna; for where, for instance, the names of individual trees would have greatly advantaged his text and brought the scenes in which they were mentioned more substantially before the eye, he is content with the word 'tree.' And as real trees that he knows of, he actually uses in his forest only the oak, the pine, and (very doubtfully) the sycamore. There are no elms, or beech-trees, no birch, ash, chestnut, walnut, poplar, alder, plane, fir, larch, lime, or hornbeam. Is not this extraordinary? So with animated Nature. Shakespeare took only what suited for the occasion and only just as much as would suffice. He does not employ animals to embellish or ornament his lines; they are there for the use they serve in illustration, or as a simile. He never lingers over a beast or bird longer than the quotation he is working on. When it has served his purpose, it goes. *If he is dealing with inanimate Nature* he delights to linger, to elaborate, to polish. But with an animal he never stays longer than to say just the one thing that serves to make it apt, and, as a rule, he does not even stop to choose a specific variety.

*He has no butterflies in his sunshine, no moths in his twilight, no crickets in his meadows, no bees in his flowers.* Living creatures do not slip naturally into his landscape. When he thought of being out in the field and garden and orchard he did not think of the small life that goes to gladden the scene, and makes 'the country' so blithe and beautiful for most of us."

When we come to one class of animals, however, the case is very different. I refer to the "beasts of the chase" and "beasts of the forest," namely the boar, the deer, and the hare. "Whether Shakespeare ever saw a boar-hunt is a matter for conjecture; but he gives a superb description of the animal and its chase in *Venus and Adonis*. Any one who chooses to do so could resolve this description into its original elements, and refer them respectively to Spenser and Drayton, Du Bartas, Chester, and others who wrote of the mighty boar before Shakespeare, and all of whom in turn borrowed from Ovid, Pliny, and Virgil. But the complete picture is Shakespeare's own, and it is very noteworthy as an illustration of the poet's treatment of a real animal in which he felt an actual personal interest."

His frequent references to deer need only to be mentioned. "Here he was perfectly at home, and thoroughly familiar, from personal observation, with the haunts and habits of the animal he was describing. The result is a detailed and most beautifully accurate natural history of the deer, whether stag, hart, or hind, buck or doe."

It is frequently said that Shakespeare writes as an enthusiastic sportsman, but such does not seem to me to be the fact. That he was perfectly familiar with "sport" as then practised, in all its branches, cannot be doubted, but he frequently writes more like a "humanitarian" than a sportsman. Who does not remember the Duke in the forest of Arden?

And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,  
 Being native burghers of this desert city,  
 Should in their own confines with forked heads  
 Have their round haunches gored.

Or Jaques and the

poor sequester'd stag,  
 That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,

and whose misery was such as to touch the other lords also?

The wretched animal heaved forth such groans  
 That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat  
 Almost to bursting, and the big round tears  
 Coursed one another down his innocent nose  
 In piteous chase.<sup>1</sup>

But especially does this humanitarian spirit manifest itself in the exquisite lines in *Venus and Adonis* concerning the hunted hare. Here we have a minute description of the chase of the hare, and Mr. Lee<sup>2</sup> finds "curious resemblances to the *Ode de la Chasse* (on a stag hunt) by the French dramatist, Estienne Jodelle, in his *Œuvres et Meslanges Poétiques*, 1574." But what we are here concerned with is the tender sympathy expressed for the

<sup>1</sup> Jaques, it seems, had actually arrived at the conception that animals have *rights*.

"Indeed, my lord,"

The melancholy Jaques grieves at that,  
 And, in that kind, swears *you do more usurp*  
 Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you.

There is a grand touch of humanitarian feeling in *Cymbeline*, Act I, Sc. v, where the Queen says to Cornelius—

I will try the forces

Of these thy compounds on such creatures as  
 We count not worth the hanging, but none human.

And the physician replies—

Your highness

Shall from this practice but make hard your heart ;  
 Besides, the seeing these effects will be  
 Both noisome and infectious.

<sup>2</sup> Page 66 n.



"poor wretch" whose "grief may be comparéd well to one sore sick that hears the passing bell":—

Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch  
Turn, and return, indenting<sup>1</sup> with the way ;  
Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,  
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay ;  
For misery is trodden on by many  
And being low never reliev'd by any.

But Shakespeare, I imagine, had read Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, where the hunter is told "thou shouldest rather be moved with pity to see a silly innocent hare murdered of a dog, the weak of the stronger, the fearful of the fierce, the innocent of the cruel and unmerciful."

With hawks and hawking, too, Shakespeare is, of course, thoroughly familiar, though whether he would have agreed with Sidney when he said, "Next to hunting I like hawking worst," we cannot say. He is constantly employing the language of falconry in a metaphorical sense. But one remembers how it was said: "Why, you know, an a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting languages now-a-days, I'll not give a rush for him: they are more studied than the Latin or the Greek."<sup>2</sup>

Whence is it that Shakspeare of Stratford is supposed to have derived his wonderful knowledge of sport? Hunting—more especially the chase of deer—and hawking were the recreations of the great. Thus we find Bacon saying, with regard to "Forests, Parks, and Chases": "It is a sport proper to the nobility and men of better rank; and it is to keep a difference between the gentry and the common sort."<sup>3</sup>

Sir Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, proposes to relegate hunting to the "bouchers" (i.e. butchers) among the Utopians. "Yet," he says, "this is nowe the exercise of most noble men." So the affected Amoretto, in the *Return*

<sup>1</sup> Note in passing the legal expression.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Return from Parnassus*.

<sup>3</sup> Notes for a speech in a case of deer-stealing. Abbott's *Life*, p. 223.

from *Parnassus*,<sup>1</sup> asks the scholar Academico: "Say, sweete Sir, do yee affect the most gentle-man-like game of hunting?" As to hawking it was, as we know, the sport of "Lords and Ladies gay." We have no indication whatever that Shakspeare had the opportunity of making himself familiar with these sports of the rich and noble. To account for the wonderful knowledge displayed in the *Plays* and *Poems* he has been made lawyer, schoolmaster, gardener, printer, soldier, and a great many other things besides; but I am not aware that he has ever yet been turned into a game-keeper. True it is that some of his admirers will have it that he was a poacher, and stole some of Lucy's "harts or does" (as Mr. Lee so quaintly puts it); but really that is hardly sufficient to account for all this familiarity with the ways and terms of falconry and the chase. Yet Shakspeare displays as much knowledge in these matters as must have been possessed by Bacon himself, of whom Francis Osborn says: "I have heard him entertain a Country Lord in the proper terms relating to hawks and dogs."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Part 2, Act II, Scene 5.

<sup>2</sup> Osborn, speaking of universal knowledge, or what he calls "an universall inspection," writes: "My memory neither doth, nor I believe possible ever can, direct me to an example more splendid in this kind than the Lord Bacon, Earle of St. Albanes, who in all companies did appear a good Proficient, if not a Master in those Arts entertained for the subject of every one's discourse. So as I dare maintaine, without the least affectation of Flattery or Hyperboly, that his most casuall talke deserved to be written. . . . So as I have heard him entertaine a Country Lord in the proper termes relating to Hawkes and Dogges, and at another time out-cant a London Chyrurgion. . . . The eares of the hearers receiving more gratification than trouble; and so no lesse sorry when he came to conclude than displeased with any did interrupt him." *Advice to a Son*, 1658, Second Part, p. 70. "As a matter of fact," writes Judge Webb, "the works of Bacon are as full of allusions to sport as the plays of Shakspeare." But, as the learned Judge further comments, "it would have been strange if the son of a Lord Keeper had never been taught to ride, stranger still if one who had resided for three years at the Court of France had never observed how French falconers flew at everything they saw, and how a French cavalier could grow into his seat." Bacon is particularly fond of metaphors from falconry. (See the *Mystery of William Shakspeare*, Note B, p. 255.)

Horses, too, notwithstanding the fact that he took the description of "the ideal horse" from Du Bartas, Shakespeare knew thoroughly and loved well. "He writes of them," says the Quarterly Reviewer, "as a Centaur might write, as participating in his own nature. He loved them, and the result is the noblest description ever written of the noblest of animals."

Dogs, also, he thoroughly understood, that is, dogs as used for hunting and bear-baiting. His hounds are well known to everybody, but even here he was wont to go to the classics for his descriptions. He speaks of hounds "bred out of the Spartan kind," and a "hound of Crete," evidently having in mind the line of Ovid (*Met.*, III, 208): *Gnosius Ichnobates, Spartana gente Melampus*.

But for all his humanitarian pity for the hunted beasts of the chase, he does not seem to have understood the dog as the dear, loving, and faithful friend of man. "Dog" is a term of reproach, and cats are "creatures we count not worth the hanging." As for the fox it had not yet been elevated into that position of dignity which man graciously assigns to the creatures whose sufferings in the chase are made to minister to his pleasures. True it is there was fox-hunting "of a sort" at that time. Academico, for instance, in the *Return from Parnassus*, says: "There is an excellent skill in blowing for the terriers; it is a word that we hunters use when the Fox is earthed." But *Vulpicide* had not as yet become a recognised crime, nor was Renard held sacred to the sport of the rich. Deer-hunting and hawking were the aristocratic sports. "Fox," therefore, with Shakespeare, is a term symbolical of stealth, and cunning, and theft.

"His lion is the chivalrous lion of Pliny and romance, his tiger is Hyrcanian; and so on. In a word, his natural history is commonplace when it is correct and 'Elizabethan' when it is wrong; but the manner of it is so

beautiful, incomparably beautiful, that the matter borrows a beauty from it.”<sup>1</sup>

Turning now from the animate to the inanimate world, we are at once struck by Shakespeare’s love and knowledge of flowers. Here there can be no difference of opinion. Mr. Dewar, still fighting shadows, writes: “He had his share, an ample one, we feel, as we read him, of ‘the glowing life that sunshine gives, and the south wind calls to being. The endless grass, the endless leaves, the immense strength of the oak expanding, the unalloyed joy of finch and blackbird’; from each he received something that became interwoven in his being. It is impossible that the man who had no share in these things could have written of that

Bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips, and the nodding violet grows.”

As though any one had ever asserted that Shakespeare had “no share in these things”!

As to his love of flowers, quotation could, of course, be piled upon quotation. The lyrics (whoever wrote them) are full of them. It is true that in *As You Like it*, where we should most have expected to find them, there is not one; but if we are content to imagine a leafless forest, save for the “green holly” swept by “the churlish chiding of the winter’s wind,” we may explain the deficiency by reference to “the seasons’ difference.” But let us turn to the *Winter’s Tale*. It has been frequently said that the author of this play must have been familiar with country life. Well, I have no doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with the country, whether he gained his knowledge at Stratford, or at Twickenham, or at Gorhambury, or elsewhere. But he nowhere writes as the simple countryman. Perdita, for instance, is the most delightful of shepherdesses, but it is highly characteristic of Shakespeare

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*.



that he makes a young girl, brought up from infancy in a rustic cottage, exclaim, "O Proserpina, For the flowers now that frightened thou let'st fall From Dis's waggon!" Her violets are "sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes, or Cytherea's breath." It is as though he could not keep clear of classical allusions even when least appropriate.

Comparison has frequently been made between Perdita's list of flowers and Bacon's in his *Essay on Gardens*. There is, for example, the extraordinarily close parallelism between "lilies of all kinds, the flower-de-luce being one," and Bacon's "flower-de-luces (or flower-de-lices) and lilies of all natures."<sup>1</sup> But the two lists are well worth comparing generally. They are both arranged according to the seasons. If Perdita speaks of "streak'd gillyvors," Bacon speaks of the "stock gillyflower." If Perdita says, "For you there's rosemary and rue, these keep seeming and savour all the winter long," Bacon says, "For December, and January and the latter part of November, you must take such things as are green all the winter, rosemary, lavender, sweet marjoram."<sup>2</sup> In the *Essay* we have the cowslip substituted for "bold oxlips." Primroses, violets, daffodils, marigolds, marjoram, besides those already mentioned, are common to both lists. Bacon gives us another list very much the same, and including gillyflowers and flower-de-luce, in his *Natural History*, Cent. VI, 577.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ellacomb (*Plant Lore of Shakespeare*, p. 99), after noticing that Shakespeare calls the flower-de-luce one of the lilies, and that another way of spelling it is fleur-de-lys, says that Bacon separates the two, as though the flower-de-luce was not a lily. I demur to this. If I speak of "spaniels and dogs of all natures," I do not treat "spaniels" as though they do not belong to the genus "dog." I merely name one species first, and make general mention of the others. This, as it seems to me, is what Bacon does, in full agreement with what Shakespeare says.

<sup>2</sup> "Our carnations and streak'd gillyvors." Gillyflower or gillyvor comes from *caryophyllus*, another name for the carnation or clove-carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*). *Caryophyllus* means "nut-leaved," and the name was first given to the Indian clove-tree, and thence transferred to the carnation on account of its scent. Bacon mentions "pinks and gillyflowers, specially the matted pink and clove-gillyflower." The French have *giroflee*, from *girofle*, a clove.

But whatever may be thought of these "parallelisms," the conclusions to which we are brought by a consideration of Shakespeare's Natural History are unaffected. What are those conclusions? In my judgment they are these. The idea of a young romantic Shakspeare who wandered by the "pioned and twilled" banks of Avon,<sup>1</sup> and through the woods and over the fields of Stratford, observing the birds, and the beasts, and the insects, with the eye of the poet, and the love of the naturalist, must be rejected as a mere myth called into being in order to meet the supposed exigencies of the case. But was not Shakespeare an observer of Nature? Yes, indeed. In the first place, he was a profound student of human nature, such a student and interpreter as perhaps the world has not seen before or since. In the second place he was deeply contemplative of inanimate Nature. He watched and profoundly meditated upon natural phenomena: the winds, the tides, the clouds, the waves beating "upon the pebbled

<sup>1</sup> "Thy banks with pioned and twilled brims" (*Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I, 64). Some explain "pioned" by reference to the "piony" or peony, and would read "lillied" for "twilled," comparing Milton's "By sandy Ladon's lillied banks." Or "twilled" is interpreted, very dubiously, as covered with sedge. But how "pioned"? The peony cannot be alluded to, although Sowerby says it once grew on an island in the Severn. A theory has been started, however, that *Warwickshire* rustics gave the name of peony or piony to the marsh marigold. If there were ever such usage I am confident it would be found not to be confined to Warwickshire. But the truth is there is no evidence of it whatsoever. Mr. Elton says (p. 146), as some others had said before him, that "pioned" means "raised by the spade, like mounds in war cast up by the labouring pioneers." As to "twilled," he says "it seems to be an allusion to the diagonal pattern on 'twilled cloth,' the bank being marked with parallel lines of 'binders' pegged down when the hedges were plashed to protect quick-sets, or boughs split and 'laid down' against the bite of cattle." We may possibly be excused if we remark that the word "pioner" in the above sense is a very favourite one with Bacon. (See Theobald's *Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light*, chap. x.) However, it is very doubtful if the masque in *The Tempest* is by Shakespeare at all. Mr. Henley, by the way, pointed out that there is no necessity to suppose that "brims" referred to rivers. He takes the "ditching and delving" explanation as appropriate to the banks of *Ceres*; and Dr. Furness, the editor of the *New Variorum Shakespeare*, adopts this theory, provisionally at any rate.

shore," the thunder, the lightning, and the rain. He well knew

the boundless store,  
Of charms that Nature to her votary yields ;  
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of grove, and garniture of fields ;  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even,  
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,  
And all the dread magnificence of heaven.

And thus it is that Johnson was justified in calling him "the poet of nature," and that Mr. Dewar is justified in saying that "the plays bear throughout . . . the hall-mark of the great-hearted lover of nature."

Flowers and gardens, particularly, he loved ; but flowers, it may be remembered, could in his day be well studied in London. Not only were there magnificent private gardens in London,<sup>1</sup> but there were fields within a short walk of the city where wild flowers were to be found in infinite variety, though this is not by any means to say that Shakespeare's study of flowers and gardening was confined to London and its suburbs.

But to say that Shakespeare was a "naturalist"—even a perfunctory one—to say that he was a close observer of *animated* Nature, is to say the thing that is not. He gives no indication of having lived a country life observant of the habits of birds, and beasts, and fishes, and insects. But horses and hounds and the beasts of the chase—these he had observed, and these and all their ways he well knew. With sport, the amusement of the great, he was perfectly familiar. Yet he does not seem to write of it as the sportsman, but rather as the thinker, with, sometimes, much sympathy for its victims ; and even of sport he cannot write without reference to classical authors, and more especially to Ovid.

<sup>1</sup> The City companies had beautiful gardens in London. The garden at Twickenham, too, was famous. Donne has a poem to it.

In connection with Perdita and her flowers, every reader will recall those exquisite lines :—

Daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.

Here, indeed, is mention of the swallow, but it is a mere mention. We look in vain for any reminiscence of a swallow skimming over the fields, or over the Thames, or over the much-appealed-to Avon ; such a reminiscence, for example, as Tennyson's when he speaks of

Short swallow-flights of song, that dip  
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

*Here* we have the swallow itself, painted for us to the life by one magic touch. We feel at once that the poet had watched the bird and loved it. But with Shakespeare the swallow seems to be little more than an emblem of swiftness. ("As swift as swallow flies," e.g., and other lines to the same effect.) As to the delightful passages about the "ruddock with charitable bill," in *Cymbeline*, the Quarterly Reviewer points out that similar expressions "occur in probably every preceding poet, and the 'charitable bill' appears to have been almost a proverbial saying."

No ; if we want the poetry of country life—the life of the woods and fields and streams—it is not to Shakspeare that we must go. And it was, doubtless, for this reason that Harrison Weir when he brought out his charming *Poetry of Nature* (meaning thereby *animated* Nature), did not include therein one example from Shakespeare, though he quotes a long passage from Ben Jonson.<sup>1</sup>

But as the poet of *human nature*, Shakespeare, of course, stands pre-eminent. Here he is "not of an age but for all time." I have quoted from a Quarterly Reviewer. Let

<sup>1</sup> Viz. the lines commencing "Mild breathing zephyr, father of the Spring," and ending :

The chirping swallow, call'd forth by the sun  
And crested lark doth her division run ;



me conclude with a quotation from an Edinburgh Reviewer. "Shakespeare's vision of life is so wide, his moral insight so profound, his knowledge and sympathies so vitalised and universal, and his command of language so absolute, that every part in the wide circle of contemporary learning and experience may throw some light on his pages. In particular, his birthright of pregnant speech is so imperial that he seems to appropriate by a kind of royal prerogative the more expressive elements of diction, in every department of human attainment and activity. No section of life or thought is too humble for his regard; none too lofty for his sympathetic appreciation. The day-spring of his serene and glorious intellect illuminates and vivifies the whole."<sup>1</sup>

Noble words. But to whom applicable? To the Stratford player, or to "that magnificent and universal genius" (as Mr. Begley styles him), "the philosopher of Gorhambury," or to yet another? To "Shakespeare" at any rate, whoever he was.

The yellow bees the air with music fill,  
The finches carol, and the turtles bill."

In the *Poetaster* (Act IV, Scene 6) Jonson speaks of the swallow flying low before rain and storms:—

Ay me, that virtue . . .  
Should like a swallow, preying towards storms,  
Fly close to earth.

Messrs. Nicholson and Herford completely miss the point of this little piece of Natural History. Their comment is: "Seemingly his way of saying that they (alone) prey flying"! *Quod est absurdum*.

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1872.

## CHAPTER XV

### JONSON, SHAKESPEARE, SHAKSPERE, AND BACON

**T**HE strength of the Stratfordian faith undoubtedly lies in certain utterances of Ben Jonson, and especially in the memorial verses written by him for the First Folio. It is all-important, therefore, to examine Jonson's testimony carefully, as a whole, and no matter which side we take in this vexed controversy, I think it will be admitted that the various Jonsonian utterances with regard to "Shakespeare" are by no means easy to reconcile one with the other, and that, considered all together, they provide us with an extremely hard nut to crack. Old Ben in this matter appears as a Sphinx, and if, like his prototype, he could have devoured all those who gave erroneous answers to his riddle, great would have been the mortality among the critics and commentators.

Malone, though an excellent Shakespearean critic, suffered his judgment with regard to Jonson to be warped and distorted by the *idée fixe* that Ben in all his dealings with "Shakespeare" was possessed by the spirit of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. He is for ever descanting upon "the malignity of Jonson." It is now, I think, generally admitted that in this matter Malone was the victim of a delusion. On the other hand, Jonson's champion, Gifford, not content with vindicating the conduct of his hero in temperate language, becomes almost hysterical when he has to speak of Malone, and wholly so when he is commenting on poor Drummond of

Hawthornden, whom he treats, as Colonel Cunningham says, "with more than rabid insolence and injustice."<sup>1</sup> In dealing, therefore, with old Ben let us endeavour to preserve an impartial mind, not allowing our judgment to be deflected either by Malone's prejudices or Gifford's panegyrics, and, above all, let us try to steer a safe course between the Scylla of Shakespearolatry and the Charybdis of Baconian infatuation.<sup>2</sup>

That Jonson, during a certain period of his life, thought himself justified in giving utterance to some very severe criticism of Shakspeare cannot, I think, be doubted. Let us examine some of these utterances which, it is contended, must have reference to the provincial player.

Jonson wrote a large number of short poems which he called epigrams. These epigrams are very interesting for many reasons, and amongst others because they give the names of many distinguished persons, men and women of rank, well-known literary men, and others with whom Jonson was on familiar terms. "What a thousand pities" it is that Shakspeare was never inspired to write just one or two of such poems, addressed, say, to Southampton, or Pembroke, or any others of the great personages of the day, the nobles and courtiers and men of genius who were, of course, intimate with the immortal Stratfordian, and eager for his society! But the master-mind, as we know, wrote for gain and not for glory, and there was but little hard cash to be got out of an epigram, so we must

<sup>1</sup> Gifford had not seen the *Conversations with Drummond* in their true form, as edited by David Laing, but "there is nothing in the conversation in their worst form, condensed and 'arranged' by some conceited clerk, and garbled by the unscrupulous Theophilus Cibber, to justify one-twentieth part of the abuse which Gifford has heaped upon their recorder, and even that twentieth is left without foundation, when we discover how much has been omitted, how much displaced, and how much interpolated" (Cunningham's Preface, p. ii).

<sup>2</sup> I do not mean by this to stigmatize the Baconian theory as necessarily "infatuation," but that *some* Baconians are infatuated will, I think, be generally admitted!

console ourselves with the thought that, notwithstanding this utter dearth of what I may call personal poetry, we know (for are we not told so by our priests and prophets?) more concerning the personal life of William Shakspeare than concerning the life of Benjamin Jonson, or any other contemporary poet!

But let us return to Jonson's epigrams. A licence for the publication of the First Book of these (apparently a further issue was contemplated) was obtained in 1612, and the collection was published in the Folio edition of Jonson's poems which appeared in 1616, the year of Shakspeare's death. I find upwards of 130 of these epigrams in Walley's Edition of Jonson's works. Epigram No. 56 "On Poet-Ape," is well known, and runs as follows:—

Poor Poet-ape, that would be thought our chief,  
 Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,<sup>1</sup>  
 From brokage is become so bold a thief,  
 As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.  
 At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,  
 Buy the reversion of old plays, now grown  
 To a little wealth, and credit in the scene,  
 He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own,  
 And told of this, he slights it. Tut, such crimes  
 The sluggish, gaping auditor devours;  
 He marks not whose 'twas first, and aftertimes  
 May judge it to be his, as well as ours.  
 Fool! as if half-eyes will not know a fleece  
 From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

Now that this refers to Shakspeare, if not undoubted, as Sir Theodore Martin assumes it to be, seems to me at least extremely probable. Compare the language with that

<sup>1</sup> "Frippery"—old clothes, cast-off garments, or a place where cast-off clothes are sold. The French *Fripier*—a dealer in old clothes. "We know what belongs to a frippier," says Trinculo in *The Tempest* (Act IV, Scene 1, 226), where Mr. Morton Luce's note is "Frippery: old-clothes shop. Old French 'fripper' to rub up and down, wear to rags. Cotgrave gives 'Friperie, broker's shop, street of brokers, or of Fripiers.' And 'Fripier' a mender or trimmer up of old garments, and a seller of them so mended."



of Green's celebrated denunciation of "the only Shakespeare." To Green Shakspeare (if the allusion be really to him) was "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers . . . an absolute *Johannes Factotum*," and addressing his fellow-playwrights he says, "Oh that I might intreate your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes [i.e. the players]<sup>1</sup> imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions." Poet-ape is, of course, the poet who appears in borrowed plumes; who is arrayed in garments stolen from others, "the frippery of wit." Thus in the Prologue to Jonson's *Poetaster* the figure of *Envy* is brought on to the stage and asks:—

Are there no *players* here? No *poet-apes*,  
That come with basilisk's eyes, whose forkéd tongues  
Are steeped in venom, as their hearts in gall?  
Either of these would help me! They could wrest,  
Pervert, and poison all they hear or see,  
With senseless glosses, and allusions.

And at the end of the play we find the line,

And apes are apes, though clothed in scarlet,

which reminds us that players belonging to the royal household were clad in scarlet cloth.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Theodore Martin quotes the *Poet-Ape* sonnet as undoubtedly written upon Shakspeare,<sup>3</sup> but says it was

<sup>1</sup> We are reminded of the passage in the *Return from Parnassus*, Act V, Scene 1:—

"Better it is mongst fidlers to be chiefe  
Than at a plaier's trencher beg reliefe.  
But ist not strange these mimick apes should prize  
Unhappy schollers at a hireling rate?"

<sup>2</sup> The *Poetaster* was entered on the Stationers' registers December 21st, 1601, and published in 1602. It was two years after this that Shakspeare, Burbage, Hemming, and Condell marched in the royal train from the Tower to Westminster on the occasion of James's entry into London, each of them having been presented with four yards and a half of scarlet cloth, the usual dress allowance to players belonging to the household (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 195).

<sup>3</sup> *Shakespeare or Bacon*, pp. 37, 68.

written in Jonson's early days, and that his opinion with regard to the object of his satire subsequently underwent an entire change, as evidenced by his later utterances. But, whatever may have been the date at which it was composed (it must have been after Shakspere had "grown to a little wealth and credit in the scene"), it was published, and apparently for the first time, in the Folio containing Jonson's collected works which was given to the world in 1616, the year of Shakspere's death. The "Epigrams" are dedicated to William Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain, etc., the elder of the "Incomparable Pair" of the Shakespeare Folio, and Jonson writes, "I here offer to your lordship the ripest of my studies, my Epigrams," so that he appears to have been entirely unrepentant.<sup>1</sup>

But there are, as I think, other allusions to Shakspere in that remarkable play *The Poetaster*. We have, for instance, a dialogue between Tucca, the braggart Captain, and Histrion, the player, of which the following is a sample :—

*Tucca.* There are some of you players honest, gent'manlike scoundrels, and suspected to ha' some wit, as well as your poets, both at drinking, and breaking of jests ; and are companions for gallants. A man may skelder ye, now and then, of half a dozen shillings, or so. Dost thou know that *Pantalabus* there ?

*Hist.* No, I assure you, Captain.

*Tucca.* Go, and be acquainted with him then, he is a gent'man parcel-poet, you slave : his father was a man of worship, I tell thee. Go, he pens high, lofty in a new stalking strain ;<sup>2</sup> bigger than half the rhymers i' the town again : he was born to fill thy mouth, Minotaurus, he was ; he will teach thee to tear and rand. Rascal, to him, cherish his muse, go ; thou hast forty—forty shillings, I mean,

<sup>1</sup> Note in the epigram the word "brokage," i.e. "the trade of dealing in old things" (Dr. Johnson), or the gain derived from acting as agent or middleman. Note also that Jonson thought that anybody "with half an eye" could be able to distinguish the "shreds" from the whole piece, just as he would not be deceived into confounding mere "locks of wool" with "a fleece."

<sup>2</sup> Stalkers were strolling players who, as Tucca presently explains, would "stalk upon boards and barrel heads to an old cracked trumpet."

stinkard;<sup>1</sup> give him in earnest do, he shall write for thee, slave! If he pen for thee once, thou shalt not need to travel with thy pumps full of gravel any more, after a blind jade and a hamper, and stalk upon boards and barrel-heads to an old cracked trumpet.<sup>2</sup>

We note here that *Pantalabus* was a player who had the reputation of writing "high, lofty, in a new stalking strain," and against whom Jonson is bitterly satirical. The name *Pantalabus* is, obviously, from πάντα λαμβάνειν, to take all, or to take up all, as in the *Poet-Ape* sonnet, "*He takes up all.*" He is, in fact, a *Johannes Factotum*, as Green said. Further, he is a "parcel-poet," i.e. like a parcel-gilt goblet, he is a poet on the surface only, but inwardly and truly base metal.<sup>3</sup>

That Jonson did not repent of this attack on *Pantalabus* seems clear from the fact that in the 1616 edition of the play he added a new scene (Act III, Scene 2) which was not in the 1602 quarto, where the old lawyer Trebatius suggests to Horace (Jonson) that he might do better,

Than with a sad and serious verse to wound  
*Pantalabus* railing in his saucy jests ;

to which Jonson replies that he loves peace,

But he that wrongs me, better, I proclaim,  
He never had assayed to touch my fame.  
For he shall weep, and walk, with ev'ry tongue  
Throughout the city, infamously sung.

To return to *Tucca* and *Histrion*, we may note that the Captain says to the player (Act III, Scene 1), "Thou art an honest shifter, I'll ha' the statute repealed to thee," allud-

<sup>1</sup> "Stinkard" is a name frequently applied to the "groundlings" of the public theatres. The contempt in which the common players were held is forcibly illustrated by many passages in this play.

<sup>2</sup> Act III, Scene 1.

<sup>3</sup> Herrick has a couplet on "Parcel-gilt Poetry":—

"Let's strive to be the best, the gods, we know it,  
Pillars and men, hate an indifferent poet."

*Tucca*, in Dekker's *Satiromastix*, threatens Horace (Jonson) that "the *Parcel-poets* shall sue thy wrangling Muse in the Court of Parnassus."

ing to the statute of Elizabeth previously referred to in Act I, Scene 1, where Tucça, speaking of the players, exclaims, "They are grown licentious, the rogues; libertines, flat libertines. They forget they are i' the statute,<sup>1</sup> the rascals, they are blazoned there, there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees; they need no other heralds, I wiss."

As I have already said, there seems to me strong reason to suppose that this is a reference to Shakspeare's newly acquired coat-of-arms, but I think there is yet another hint at this shady transaction in Act II, Scene 1, where *Crispinus* talks grandiloquently about his arms. Now, *Crispinus* is also a "parcel-poet,"<sup>2</sup> and the critics tell us that he is intended to impersonate Marston, the main object of the play, according to the received theory, being to ridicule him and Dekker (Demetrius Fannius).<sup>3</sup> It may be so, but that is no reason why Jonson should not have had a hit at "William Shakspeare gent." in the person of *Crispinus* when he boasts about his lineage. The following is the passage alluded to :—

*Chloe.* Are you a gentleman born?

*Crispinus.* That I am, lady; you shall see mine arms if't please you.

*Chloe.* No, your legs do sufficiently show you are a gentleman born, sir; for a man borne upon little legs is always a gentleman born.

<sup>1</sup> 14 Eliz. c. 5, and 39 Eliz. c. 4. *Ante*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> When Cæsar asks him what he is (Act IV, Scene 3), he replies, "Your gentleman parcel-poet, sir," whereupon Cæsar exclaims, "O, that profaned name," referring, I take it, to the

"Grand old name of gentleman,  
Defamed by every charlatan,  
And soiled with all ignoble use."

<sup>3</sup> It is objectionable, however, to place the names of Marston and Dekker in brackets after those of Crispinus and Demetrius in the *dramatis personæ*, as do Messrs. Nicholson and Herford in their edition of *Jonson's Plays*, because that which is, after all, only matter of inference should not be stated as though it were a fact vouched by the author. "*Crispinus* is *usually supposed* to be Marston," says Mr. Elton (p. 53 n.). The editors, too, have been guilty of a bad *lapsus calami* in putting Ben Jonson's name in a bracket after that of Pub. Ovidius, whereas it should, of course, have stood after the name of Horace, who represents the author.



*Cris.* Yet, I pray you, vouchsafe the sight of my arms, mistress, for I bear them about me, to have 'hem seen: My name is Crispinus, or "Cri-spinas" indeed; which is well expressed in my arms, a face crying *in chief*, and beneath it a bloody toe, between three thorns *pungent*.

If "Crispinus or Cri-spinas" is not a jest on Shakespeare, or "Shake-speare," as the name constantly appeared on the title-pages of the plays, it is difficult to suggest what the reference can be or how the joke comes in at all.<sup>1</sup> I think, therefore, that "Cry-thorns" here probably stands for "Shake-speare." Jonson, though he gives, as we have seen, an absurd explanation of the name, may in selecting it have had in his mind the Latin word *crispo*, to brandish, so frequently used by Virgil, and other writers, of a spear, as "*bina manu lato crispans hastilia ferro*" (*Æneid*, XII, 313). Moreover, the supposed allusion to Shakespeare seems to be confirmed by a reference to the *Satiromastix*, in which Dekker, as is well known, delivered a very vigorous counter-attack to Jonson's *Poetaster*. Here we find Jonson, as represented by *Horace*, delivering himself thus to his adoring disciple Asinius Bubo: "Why you *Rooke*, I have a set of letters readie starcht to my hands, which to any fresh suited gallant, that but newlie enters his name into my roll [i.e. becomes one of Jonson's sons, "sealed of the tribe of Ben"] I send the next morning, ere his ten a clock dreame has rize from him, onelie with clapping my hand to't, that my Novice shall start, ho, and his hair stand on end, when he sees the sudden flash of my writing:

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Fleay, indeed, tells us that the reference is to Marston, because "Mars is red or bloody (compare *Mars ochre*) and toen is toes." But (1) this interpretation is so absurdly far-fetched that it seems to me impossible to accept it. (2) It only affects to be an explanation of the "bloody toe," and (3) it leaves the name *Crispinus*, and, especially, the hyphenated form *Cri-spinas* entirely unexplained. As to the form "toen" I cannot recall an instance of its use, but I know that in the pictorial language of the time "ton" was usually represented by a barrel—a "tun." Thus on the roof of Peterborough Cathedral, and on a gateway close by, we have "Kirkton" represented by a church standing on a "tun."

what you pretty Diminutive rogue, we must have *false fiers* to amaze these spangle babies, these true heires of *Mr. Justice Shallow* . . . here be Epigrams upon Tucca, divulge these among the gallants; as for *Crispinus*, that *Crispin-asse*, and Fannius his Play-dresser; who (to make the Muses believe their subjects eares were starv'd, and that there was a dearth of Poesie) cut an Innocent Moor i' the middle, to serve him in twice, and when he had done made Poules-work of it, as for these Twynnes, these *Poet-apes*, their mimicke tricks shall serve with mirth to feast our Muse, whilst their owne starve." Here we have Crispinus (or Crispin-asse, instead of "Cri-spinas"), the *Poet-ape*, coupled with undoubted allusions to Shakespearean plays. Later on, Crispinus, pronouncing judgment against Horace-Jonson, thus delivers himself:—

Or should we minister strong pills to thee  
 What lumps of hard and indigested stuff,  
 Of bitter *Satirism*, of *Arrogance*,  
 Of *Self-Love*, of *Detraction*, of a blacke  
 And stinking *Insolence* should we fetch up!  
 But none of these; we give thee what's more fit.  
 With stinging nettles crown his stinging wit.

Then, having made Jonson swear to certain appropriate matters of reformation, Crispinus reverts to the "*Poet-ape*," which evidently rankles with him:—

That fearful wreath, this honour is your due,  
 All Poets shall be *Poet-apes* but you.

But unless I am greatly mistaken, there is an earlier hit at Shakspeare and his coat-of-arms to be found in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Act III, Scene 1. Here we have the following conversation between Sogliardo, Sir Puntarvolo, and Carlo Buffone the Jester:—

*Sogliardo*. Nay, I will have them, I am resolute for that. By this parchment, gentlemen, I have been so toiled among the harrots<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Herald's.

yonder, you will not believe ; they do speak i' the strangest language and give a man the hardest terms for his money, that ever you knew.

*Carlo.* But ha' you arms ? ha' you arms ?

*Sog.* I' faith, I thank God, *I can write myself a gentleman now ;* here's my patent, it cost me thirty pound, by this breath.

*Punt.* A very fair coat, well charged, and full of armory.

*Sog.* Nay, it has as much variety of colours in it, as you have seen a coat have ; how like you the crest, sir ?

*Punt.* I understand it not well, what is't ?

*Sog.* Marry, sir, it is your boar without a head, rampant.

*Punt.* A boor without a head, that's very rare !

*Car.* Ay, and rampant too ! [*To Puntarvolo*] troth, I commend the herald's wit, he has decyphered him well : a swine without a head, without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility.—You can blazon the rest, signior, can you not ?

*Sog.* O, ay, I have it in writing here of purpose, it cost me two shillings the tricking.

*Car.* Let's hear, let's hear.

*Punt.* (*aside*). It is the most vile, foolish, absurd, palpable, and ridiculous escutcheon that ever this eye surviced—'Save you, good Monsieur Fastidius.

*Car.* Silence, good Knight ;—on, on.

*Sog.* (*reads*). "Gyrony of eight pieces ; azure and gules, between three plates ; a chevron, engrailed checquy, or vert, and ermins ; on a chief argent, between two ann'lets sables, a boar's head, proper."

*Car.* How's that ? On a chief argent ?

*Sog.* (*reads*). "On a chief argent, a boar's head proper, between two ann'lets sables."

*Car.* (*to Puntarvolo*). 'Slud, it's a hog's cheek and puddings, in a pewter field, this.

*Sog.* How like you 'hem, signior ?

*Punt.* Let the word<sup>1</sup> be, "*Not without mustard*." Your crest is very rare, sir.

Now Shakspeare obtained his coat-of-arms after much toil "among the harrots." On October 20th, 1596, a draft was prepared under the direction of William Dethick, garter king-of-arms, granting the request made in the name of John Shakspeare. "Garter stated," says Mr. Lee (p. 149), "with characteristic vagueness, that he had been 'by credible report' informed that the applicant's 'parents and late antecessors were for their valeant and faithfull

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Motto.

service advanced and regarded by the most prudent prince King Henry the Seventh of famous memorie, by thence whiche tyme they have continewed at those partes (i.e. Warwickshire) in good reputacion and credit'; and that 'the said John (had) marryed Mary, daughter and heiress of Robert Arden, of Wilmcote, gent.'" After which bit of bunkum we read that, "In consideration of these titles to honour, Garter declared that he assigned to Shakespeare this shield, viz.: 'Gold, on a bend sable, a spear of the first the poynt steeled proper, and for his crest or cognizance a falcon, his wings displayed argent, standing on a wreath of his colours, supporting a spear gold steeled as aforesaid.'" And "in the margin of this draft-grant there is a pen sketch of the arms and crest [a *tricking*], and above them is written the words, 'Non sanz Droict.'" Thus Jonson appears to have thought that as Shakspeare's "word" was "Non sans Droit," Sogliardo's might appropriately be "Non sans Moutarde"! <sup>1</sup>

We may note that Sogliardo, who is laughed at as "a boor" by Sir Puntarvolo,<sup>2</sup> is the younger brother of Sordido, a farmer. Shakspeare's father was also a farmer, among other things, and (*pace* the Stratfordians) a Stratford boor also.<sup>3</sup>

John Shakspeare, acting no doubt on behalf of his son, had had long negotiations with "the harrots" before he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, Act II, Sc. 4, 261. "His wit's as thick as Tewksbury mustard."

<sup>2</sup> In "The Characters of the Persons," prefixed to the Folio edition of the play, Sogliardo is styled "An essential clown, brother to Sordido, yet so enamoured of the name of gentleman, that he will have it, though he buys it."

<sup>3</sup> Whether the "boar without a head" has any reference to Bacon's crest (Bacon shorn of his head, "without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility," in the person of a *boor*) I should not like to hazard a conjecture! I may add that the above had been written several years before the appearance of Monsieur Jusserand's essay in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare* (1907), in which he comes to the same conclusion as to the significance of "not without mustard." He points out that Shakspeare's negotiation with the heralds had been much talked about, and the subject of much criticism.



finally obtained his coveted coat-of-arms, entitling both him and his son to say with Sogliardo, "I thank God, I can write myself gentleman now; here's my patent." According to their own statement, which, however, as Mr. Lee says, may have been "a formal fiction designed to recommend their claim to the notice of the heralds," those negotiations commenced as early as 1568. The draft grant was drawn up, as we have seen, in 1596. In 1597, Jonson's old master, William Camden, became Clarenceux king-of-arms,<sup>1</sup> and not long afterwards, on the representation (not over-scrupulous) that the draft grants of 1596 had been definitely assigned to John Shakspeare when he was bailiff, the heralds seem to have granted him an exemplification of it.<sup>2</sup> *Every Man Out of His Humour* was entered on the Stationers' Register in April, 1600, and was published in 1601.

I lay no stress on the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, with its supposed satirical reference to Perdita in the *Winter's Tale*, and to the sorry flights of stage "supers" representing the armies of York and Lancaster,<sup>3</sup> because, first, it is not clear that this prologue was not written

<sup>1</sup> Jonson dedicated his first and greatest comedy, *Every Man in His Humour* "to the most learned and my honoured Friend, Master Camden, Clarenceux." It is quite possible that he and his old Master had talked—and laughed—together over Shakspeare's application for an escutcheon.

<sup>2</sup> So says Mr. Lee, but Halliwell-Phillipps writes (Vol. I, p. 162): "It does not appear that either of the proposed grants was ratified by the College." Shakspeare, however, had no doubt obtained a copy "on parchment," and the "tricking."

<sup>3</sup> The lines so often quoted are:—

To make a child, now swaddled, to proceed  
Man, and then shoot up, in one beard, and weed,  
Past threescore years: or, with three rusty swords,  
And help of some few foot and half-foot words,  
Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,  
And in the tiring-house bring wounds to scars,

and the last line, supposed to refer to *The Tempest*, "You that have so graced monsters may like men." The story that Jonson was indebted to Shakspeare for the production of his great comedy is called by Gifford, and I

before the *Winter's Tale* had been given to the public; and, secondly, because the "long jars" of York and Lancaster were portrayed at the theatres long before any of the plays of "Shakespeare's" Trilogy of *Henry VI* made its appearance; and, thirdly, because, as already indicated, it is very difficult to say how far Shakespeare's work enters into those plays at all. In the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), however, occurs a passage which is generally supposed to be aimed at Shakespeare: "If there be never a servant-monster in the Fair, who can help it, he [i.e. the author] says, nor a nest of antics? He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like Drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels." The "servant-monster" is supposed (and, I think, with great probability) to be an allusion to Caliban in *The Tempest*, and the "nest of antics" is taken as referring to the satyrs who dance in *A Winter's Tale*, though this latter allusion seems to me not a little doubtful. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. II, p. 310) expresses the opinion that there is no allusion to Shakespeare at all in this Prologue, since Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair* is ridiculing "those primitive dramatic exhibitions which, known as 'notions' or puppet-shows, were peculiar favourites with the public at that festival. In some of these tempests and monsters were introduced, as in the Motion of Jonah and the Whale. The 'nest of antics,' which is supposed to allude to the twelve satyrs who are introduced at the sheep-shearing festival, does not necessarily refer even to the spurious kind of drama here men-

think proved by him to be, an "arrant fable." According to Gifford, *Every Man in His Humour*, in its earliest form, was successfully produced by Henslowe, "at the Rose, a rival theatre with which Shakspeare had not the slightest concern." But the story bristles with improbabilities. See Gifford's *Memoirs of Ben Jonson*, p. xlvii *et seq* (Ed. Cunningham). As to the Prologue, see p. xxxix, xli and lii n. *Contra* see Ingleby's *Centurie of Prayse*, p. 118. Gifford brings forward strong arguments against the theory that the Prologue was not written till 1616.

tioned. The 'servant-monster' and the 'nest of antics' may merely mean individual exhibitions," as "in the masques of that period." Mr. Lee, however, and Dr. Ingleby think otherwise.<sup>1</sup> But, whatever may be thought of these supposed allusions in Jonson's Prologues, there is, I venture to say, very little doubt that old Ben, at one period of his life at any rate, looked upon Shakspeare as a "Poet-ape," a *Pantalabus*, a *Johannes Factotum*, a "parcel-poet," an "upstart crow," beautified with feathers stolen from others. Sir Theodore Martin, indeed, thinks that the "Poet-ape" Sonnet has "an incidental value" as showing that Jonson shared the belief that it was Shakspeare, "and nobody else" who "dressed up and put new life into old and faulty plays, and made them popular in their altered form." But the Epigram hardly goes so far as this. What it does prove is that Jonson looked upon Shakspeare (if, indeed, it refers to him) as one who put forward the writings of others as his own, or, in plain English, as an impostor. He is a writer who "takes up all, makes each man's wit his own," and does it so speciously that he fancies "aftertimes may judge it to be his, as well as ours." But the imposture is too transparent. "As if half-eyes will not know a fleece from locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece!" He has acted as somebody's "broker"—"from brokerage has become so bold a thief," etc.—and the work which goes in his name is, in truth, the work of somebody else. This agrees entirely with Greene's estimate; but the "incidental value" of Jonson's Epigram is, first, that it must have been composed much later than Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, for it speaks of Shakspeare (if Shakspeare be really intended) at a time when he had "grown to a little wealth and credit on the stage," and, secondly, that Jonson had apparently seen no reason to recant his opinion in 1616, for surely old Ben, who preferred to be called "honest" to

<sup>1</sup> Lee's *Life*, p. 207. Ingleby's *Centurie of Prayse*, p. 105.

all other epithets, would not have published this sonnet in cold blood, among "the ripest of his studies," his Epigrams, if he had recognised that his estimate had been entirely wrong, and that the Sonnet was a false libel on a great and original genius.

Let us now consider Jonson's celebrated utterances prefixed to the Folio of 1623. Fronting the title-page of that priceless volume is a most portentous "sign-board" known as the Droeshout engraving. I have already dealt with this monstrosity in the chapter on the various supposed portraits of Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup> It is sufficient to say here that this ridiculous caricature, though it be calculated to "make the angels weep," can but move to laughter a human being who is not prepared to prostrate himself before any Shakespearean idol, however hideous. In fact, this woodeny thing, with its hydrocephalous forehead, straight lank hair bunched over the ears, and idiotic stare is only fitted for a place in *Comic Cuts*. On this counterfeit presentment Ben Jonson writes a decade of lines. Here are the first four :—

This Figure that thou seest put,  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut ;  
Wherein the Graver had a strife  
With Nature to out-doo the life.

Here old Ben might seem to have in his mind the lines from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*,

Look, when a painter would surpass the life,  
In limning out a well-proportioned steed,  
His art with nature's workmanship at strife  
As if the dead the living should exceed. . . .<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> This sort of expression, says Mr. M. H. Spielmann, had become "almost a *cliché*." He points out that "more than thirty years before Malherbe had placed below de Leu's engraving of Montaigne a quatrain curiously suggestive of the same idea :

Voici du grand Montaigne une entière figure ;  
Le peintre a peint le corps, et lui son bel esprit ;  
Le premier, par son art, égale la nature ;  
Mais l'autre la surpasse en tout ce qu'il écrit.



But when one looks at the graven image the idea of the Graver here having had a strife with Nature to "out-doo the life" strikes one as extremely funny. *Solvuntur risu tabulæ*. The Graver has "out-done" life with a vengeance, and produced something that, happily, never was on sea or land. But comic as is the situation thus produced, the merriment of it is altogether eclipsed by Boaden's comment: "To me this portrait exhibits an aspect of calm benevolence and tender thought; great comprehension, and a kind of mixt feeling, as when melancholy yields to the suggestions of fancy"! Verily this unquestioning worshipper at the shrine would have seen "the consummation and the poet's dream" in a wooden image outside a tobacconist's shop if only he had been told it was "for gentle Shakespeare cut." Such is the power of imagination when we have surrendered our reason to an *idée fixe*. For my part, I think that though Jonson may have had in his mind the lines I have quoted from *Venus and Adonis*, he must also have had alongside them Hamlet's reproof to those who "imitated humanity so abominably."<sup>1</sup>

But let us hear what he has to say of "the Graver," and his portrait.

O, could he but have drawn his wit  
As well in brass as he hath hit  
His face, the Print would then surpass  
All that was ever writ in brass.  
But since he cannot, Reader, looke  
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

According to Mr. Corbin<sup>2</sup> there is nothing at all exagger-

<sup>1</sup> Steevens, quoted with approval by Dr. Drake, says "Shakespeare's countenance deformed by Droeshout resembles the sign of Sir Rôger de Coverley when it had been changed into a Saracen's head; on which occasion *The Spectator* observes that the features of the gentle knight were still apparent through the lineaments of the ferocious Mussulman." See Drake's *Shakespeare and his Times*, Vol. II, p. 623.

<sup>2</sup> *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*, p. 18.

ated about this. "It says that the graver has failed to express Shakespeare's mind as well as he has drawn his features, and advises the reader, if he wants to find the real Shakespeare, to turn to the plays." And, adds this writer, "Surely this is not the least of Ben Jonson's triumphs in commendatory epigram"! But Jonson does *not* say that the graver "has failed to express Shakespeare's mind," or anything so absurd. It would, indeed, be ridiculous to impute "failure" to the graver for not expressing a man's mind in a portrait. The graver did not do so, and did not make the attempt, because, of course, as Jonson says, the thing is impossible. But, says Ben, if he only *could* but have drawn his wit as well in brass as he has hit the likeness of his face, why then the print would certainly surpass "all that was ever writ *in brass*." The absurdity here is that if the graver *could* have drawn the mind as well as the face he would have produced a mental as well as a physical caricature. In that case the print would certainly have surpassed all that was ever writ *in brass*! Happily, however, that was beyond the graver's power.<sup>1</sup>

This interpretation does not, of course, exclude a further esoteric meaning, viz. that the reader, "if he wants to find the real Shakespeare," as Mr. Corbin says, "must turn to the plays," and if the artist could but have drawn "the wit" of "*the real Shakespeare*," then, indeed, the print would surpass all that was ever writ, whether in brass or anything else; thus bringing to our minds the often quoted words inscribed round Hill-

<sup>1</sup> "Brass." Thus in *Love's Labour's Lost* (V. 2, 395) we have, "Can any face of brasse hold longer out?" Cf. Fuller (1642), "His face is of brasse, which may be said either ever or never to blush." Judge Webb tells us that in the copy of the Folio of 1623, in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, the word "brass" is given in italics, and it is also given in italics in the College copy of the Folio of 1632. This, however, is, I imagine, a false point, for it will probably be found that other nouns in the sonnet are put in italics, according to a very general custom in printing at that day.

yard's miniature of Francis Bacon, "*Si tabula daretur digna animum mallet.*" If only his mind could be painted, then, indeed, there would be a worthy portrait of him!

Mr. Lee's comment is: "Jonson's testimony does no credit to his artistic discernment"; but it is impossible to believe that old Ben was not only so lacking in his perception of the grotesque, but also so deficient in the sense of humour as this would imply.<sup>1</sup> A far more probable solution of the difficulty, as it seems to me, is that he was writing "with his tongue in his cheek," knowing that while the multitude would complacently take his criticism *au pied de la lettre*, the enlightened few would recognise that it had an esoteric meaning.

It is quite possible that the "figure for gentle Shakespeare cut" is not the one which the editor of the Folio originally intended to prefix to the work, for there is a mystery about this engraving as about everything else connected with Shakespeare. How many copies of the first Folio were originally issued it is impossible to say, but a very large number must have been lost or perished in the 280 years which have elapsed since the publication of that famous volume. "It seems," however, as Mr. Lee tells us, "that about 200 copies have been traced within the past century." But "of these fewer than 20 are in a

<sup>1</sup> Jonson writes enthusiastically of painting. "Whosoever loves not picture is injurious to truth and all the wisdom of poetry. Picture is the invention of heaven, the most ancient and most akin to Nature." See *Discoveries* CIX. and CX., *Poesis et pictura* and *De Pictura*. Mrs. Stopes (*Monthly Review*, April, 1904) thinks that "we may be justified in considering Ben Jonson's fulsome praise of Droeshout, in his desire to help the editors, as only possible through his deficiency in artistic sense." I think there is a much simpler, and a much more probable explanation. Mr. M. H. Spielmann, in his *Essay on the Portraits of Shakespeare*, in the *Stratford Town* edition (p. 374), more than hints that in his opinion Jonson's lines are not "to be taken seriously." After quoting the first two lines, he writes, "Does this mean, it has been asked, that the engraving was cut to represent Shakespeare—or that it was cut to his order, long before, and possibly rejected by him?"

perfect state, that is with the portrait *printed* (*not inlaid*) on the title-page and the fly-leaf facing it, with all the pages succeeding it, intact and uninjured."<sup>1</sup> In the copy in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, for example, we are told by Judge Webb that "the Flyleaf is a manuscript facsimile of print, the Figure is pasted upon the title-page, and the Dedication, the Address, and the Verses to the memory of the Author, are literally *inlaid* in the following pages by a species of typographical mosaic, the centre of the pages being cut away so as to leave a framework of paper, in which the documents are inserted." (p. 126.)<sup>2</sup> It is possible, therefore, that the word "for" in Jonson's sonnet may have a double meaning, since "for" was often used in the sense of "instead of," as in Jonson's line in his verses to the author, where he says that a poet who desires his work to live must "strike the second heat upon the Muses anvil,"

Or *for* the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne.

It is conceivable, therefore, that the editors of the Folio originally intended to illustrate the work with a portrait more resembling the *original* bust in Stratford-on-Avon Church, which, as we have already seen, appears to have been very different from the present one.

But let us now consider Ben's lines,

To the Memory of my Beloved,  
THE AUTHOR  
Mr. William Shakespeare :  
And  
What he hath left Us.

Jonson begins by protesting that though he is lavish in

<sup>1</sup> Lee's *Life*, p. 258. Original italics.

<sup>2</sup> In one, at any rate, of the copies of the Folio in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, the engraving appears to have been very skilfully inlaid. I pointed this out to Mr. Aldis Wright, who said there was no doubt of the fact.



praise, confessing Shakespeare's "writings to be such, as neither Man nor Muse, can praise too much," (which style of panegyric might proceed from mere ignorance, or blind affection, or crafty malice, such as

. . . might pretend this praise,  
And think to ruine, where it seem'd to raise),

yet he was not thus "ample" in eulogy in order to draw upon Shakespeare's name the detraction of "envy," the constant effect of excessive and indiscriminate praise, for in Shakespeare's case "*'Tis true, and all men's suffrage.*" Then he proceeds to his famous address to the poet:—

. . . Soul of the Age !  
The Applause ! delight ! the wonder of our Stage !  
My Shakespeare rise ; I will not lodge thee by  
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye  
A little further, to make thee a roome :  
Thou art a moniment, without a tombe,  
And art alive still, while thy Booke doth live,  
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

Here we have, in the first place, what a reviewer in *The Speaker* (April 16th, 1904) calls a "little difference of opinion about Shakespeare's tomb" between Jonson and William Basse, for Basse (whose title to fame seems to consist in this, that instead of waiting, as Jonson did, for seven years after Shakspeare's death, he wrote some lines "on Mr. William Shakespeare" only *six* years after that event !) had in 1622 written somewhat as follows:—

Renowned Spenser lye a thought more nye  
To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lye  
A little nearer Spenser, to make roome  
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fowerfold tombe  
To lodge all fowre in one bed make a shift  
Until Doomesdaye, for hardly will a fift  
Betwixt *this* day and *that* by Fate be slayne,  
For whom your Curtaines may be drawne againe.  
If your precedency in death doth barre  
A fourth place in your sacred sepulcher,

Under this carved marble of thine owne,  
 Sleepe, rare Tragedian,<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, sleep alone ;  
 Thy unmolested peace, unshared cave,  
 Possesse as Lord, not Tenant, of thy Grave,  
 That unto us and others it may be  
 Honor hereafter to be layde by thee.

Of these lines there are, Dr. Ingleby tells us, "so many discrepant versions, manuscript as well as printed, that it is difficult to determine their original or their finished form." The above-quoted version is the one preferred by the Editor of the Second Edition of the *Centurie of Prayse*, Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, who also has "a little difference of opinion" with Dr. Ingleby as to this curious epitaph. The lines, says Ingleby, are "usually attributed to the elder W. Basse," but the evidence of authorship seems somewhat doubtful. How the date is determined I do not know, but Malone says, "the MS. appears to have been written soon after the year 1621." Anyhow, the epitaph (so called) was presumably written before Jonson composed his lines, for he apparently alludes to them, and has "a little difference of opinion" with Basse, saying that he, at any rate, will not lodge Shakespeare by Chaucer or Spenser, or ask Beaumont to be so kind as to "lye a little further" to make room for him ; which is very sensible on Jonson's part, seeing that Shakespeare was not buried in Westminster Abbey, as Basse seems to have thought he was, or was to be, for otherwise there is no sense in his allusions, which, in any case, would appear to be not a little mixed.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, if Jonson had seen the

<sup>1</sup> "Tragedian" originally meant, of course, a writer of tragedy, but in Shakespeare's time it was usually employed to mean an actor of tragedy, or *an actor in general*. At any rate, Shakespeare himself always uses the word with this signification. See *Schmidt's Shakespearean Lexicon*, and *The Imperial Dictionary sub voce*. See too *Hamlet*, II, 2, 342 ; *All's Well*, IV, 3, 299 ; *Richard III*, III, 5, 5 ; and *ante*, p. 211. As to Basse, see *ante*, pp. 201 and 336.

<sup>2</sup> I think Basse must have had in his mind the Latin distich which Camden

epitaph which, as William Hall tells us, Shakspeare in his lifetime directed to be cut upon his tombstone, he would have known that it was quite useless to ask him to make room for anybody, his last thought being to imprecate a curse on any one who should move his bones! It seems that one or two of the copies of Basse's lines bear the words "on Mr. William Shakespeare, he died in April, 1616," or other words to that effect; but whether W. Basse was responsible for this identification of his Shakespeare, the "rare tragedian," or "brave tragedian" (who was, if the other poets were not so obliging as to make room for him, to enjoy "unmolested peace" under some "carved marble" or "uncarved marble," as some versions have it, of his own), with William Shakspeare of Stratford, does not appear. It is rather curious that Jonson should say of Shakespeare "thou art a Monument without a tomb," seeing that Shakspeare, at any rate, had a tomb and a monument of his own in Stratford Church. Jonson, however, prefers to speak of the poet as still alive, if not physically at any rate in his works, and therefore he need not trouble Spenser and Chaucer and Beaumont in the manner proposed by Basse.

Then follows those memorable words which I have already discussed:—

And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek—

words which those who see how singularly inappropriate they really are to the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare have been at such infinite pains to explain away, if possible, without impeaching the credit of the

tells us (*Reges Reginae*, 1600) was on the gravestone first placed on Spenser's tomb.

Hic prope Chaucerum, Spensere, poeta poetam

Conderis, et versu quam tumulo propior.

Spenser was to be near Chaucer in his tomb, and was even nearer to him in his verse. If only Shakspeare had been buried in the Abbey (and why was he not?) Basse's lines would have been appropriate.

witness, or assuming that he is here indulging in a little Socratic irony.<sup>1</sup> It may be as well to quote the lines once more :—

And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,  
 From thence to honour thee I would not seek  
 For names ; but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,  
 Euripides, and Sophocles to us,  
 Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,  
 To life again, to hear thy Buskin tread,  
 And shake a stage : or when thy Sockes were on,  
 Leave thee alone, for the comparison  
 Of all that insolent Greece, or haughtie Rome  
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Shortly after follow that noble line, so often misquoted :—

He was not of an age, but for all time.

And then these :—

Nature herself was proud of his designs,  
 And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines !

Yet must I not give Nature all : Thy Art,  
 My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.

<sup>1</sup> It has recently been suggested by a learned German, Dr. Konrad Meier, that an entirely wrong interpretation has been habitually given of Jonson's celebrated words. The line "And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek," has been constantly quoted without the context, as though it were a bare statement of fact. But the passage continues :—

"From thence to honour thee I *would* not seek  
 For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus, etc."

Upon this, says Dr. Meier, "the conditional word *would* in the principal sentence, indicates that we have here a conceded relation, annexed to a conditional one ; and, as in every conditional sentence, the conditional word *would* points to the *unreal* alternative, which is to be taken as the opposite of the actual fact." Adopting this interpretation the sense is, "even had it been true that thou hadst but small Latin and less Greek, even so I should not be at a loss (cf. Porson's 'The Germans in Greek are sadly *to seek*') for names, but would still place thee side by side with the great poets of antiquity." If this be, indeed, the right interpretation (and it seems worthy of consideration), Jonson can no longer be quoted as an authority for an unlearned "Shakespeare"! See *Baconiana* for October, 1907, where Mr. Theobald has given a translation (into which, by the way, an error seems to have crept) of Dr. Meier's German.



For though the Poet's matter, Nature be,  
 His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,  
 Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,  
 (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat  
 Upon the Muses' anvil : turn the same,  
 (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame ;  
 Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn,  
 For a good Poet's made, as well as born.  
 And such wert thou. Look how the father's face  
 Lives in his issue, even so, the race  
 Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
 In his well-turned and true-filed lines :  
 In each of which he seems to shake a Lance,  
 As brandisht at the eyes of Ignorance.

Here, then, we have Jonson's opinion that so far is it from being true of Shakespeare that "Nature only helpt him," as Digges absurdly wrote, in reality he owed much to that *Ars Poetica* which the greatest of all poets could hardly fail to possess. For, says Jonson, it is not true without qualification that *Poeta nascitur non fit*. A poet has to be "*made*" as well as "*born*," and if he desires to write anything worthy of immortality he must "sweat" as did Shakespeare, and "strike the second heat upon the Muses' anvil," turning his lines and himself with them; or in other words, he must bear in mind Horace's advice, "*Saepe stilum vertas*"; he must amend and polish, reconsider, recast, rewrite, and revise. And such a poet was Shakespeare ("And such wert thou"), whose "well-turned and true-filed lines" are themselves the mirror of his "mind and manners."<sup>1</sup> Now this is precisely what he says in his *Discoveries* as to the requisites of a poet. "But that which we especially require in him is an exactness of study

<sup>1</sup> How in the face of all this Professor Herford could write (*Ben Jonson*, "The Mermaid Series," p. lxvii) "What chiefly struck him (Jonson) in Shakespeare was his 'want of art' and absence of effort," is one of those things which pass all understanding. It is curious to find Dryden asserting that Jonson learnt "Art" of Shakespeare.

Shakespear who taught by none, did first impart  
 To Fletcher Wit, to lab'ring Jonson ART !

and multiplicity of reading, *lectio*, which maketh a full man,<sup>1</sup> not alone enabling him to know the history or argument of a poem and to report it, but so to master the matter and style as to show he knows how to handle, place, or dispose of either with elegance when need shall be. And not to think he can leap forth suddenly a poet by dreaming he hath been in Parnassus, or having washed his lips, as they say, in Helicon. There goes more to his making than so; for to nature, exercise, imitation, and study *art* must be added to make all these perfect. *Ars coronat opus*. And though these challenge to themselves much in the making up of our maker,<sup>2</sup> it is art only can lead him to perfection, and leave him there in possession as planted by her hand.”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Jonson, in his First Folio verses, addresses Shakespeare as “sweet Swan of Avon,” thus, undoubtedly, identifying him, to all outward appearance, with Shakspeare of Stratford.

“One could wish,” comments Dr. Ingleby, “that Ben had said all this in Shakespeare’s lifetime,” and it is certainly curious to contrast this splendid eulogy with what Jonson said of Shakspere at other times, both these utterances concerning the Poet-Ape, Pantalabus, etc., which we have already referred to, as probable allusions, and other criticism now to be mentioned. Jonson died in August, 1637, having outlived Shakspere by twenty-one years. Among his papers was found the work to which I have just alluded, which bears the title, “*Timber, or Discoveries, made upon men and Matter, as they have flowed out of his daily Readings; or had their reflux to his peculiar Notion of the Times.*” This work was published in 1641. At what dates the various sections of it were written we cannot tell, but it is clear that the work was commenced quite

<sup>1</sup> “Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man” (Bacon, *Essay on Studies*).

<sup>2</sup> i.e. poet (ποιητής).

<sup>3</sup> *Discoveries*, CXXX.

late in life, for at an early page, Jonson writes, under the heading "*Memoria*," "I myself could in my youth have repeated all that ever I made, and so continued till I was past forty; since, it is much decayed in me. . . . It was wont to be faithful to me, but shaken with age now . . . it may perform somewhat but cannot promise much."

Taking the year of Jonson's birth as 1572-3, and assuming that he was upwards of fifty when he wrote of himself as "shaken with age," we are brought to the year 1623, the date of the publication of the First Folio, as the earliest date at which the above sentences could have been written. A little further on, however, he alludes to Bacon as then deceased,<sup>1</sup> and as Bacon died in 1626, this part of the work must have been written after that date. It seems, then, safe to assume that the references to Shakespeare (No. LXIV) which are to be found shortly before the allusion to *Dominus Verulamius* (No. LXXI) were written about the same time, viz. subsequently to the year 1626.<sup>2</sup> I will now set forth this famous and often-quoted passage *in extenso*. The heading, or marginal note, is *de Shakespeare nostrati*, i.e. concerning our fellow-countryman Shakespeare.<sup>3</sup>

The passage runs thus: "I remember the players have

<sup>1</sup> Mr. I. Gollancz says, "The reference to Lord Bacon points to a date after his fall in 1621." Temple Classics Edition, p. 139. It obviously points to a date after his death. In No. CXXIII Jonson speaks of the late Lord St. Albans.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ingleby gives the limits of date as 1630-7, the latter being the year of Jonson's death, and this appears to be correct, for in a passage which occurs early in the work as it now stands (some pages before the heading *Memoria* above alluded to) Jonson mentions the date 1630. It seems impossible, therefore, that the reference to Shakespeare could have "preceded" the writing of the First Folio Eulogy, as Mr. I. Gollancz imagines (Temple Classics Edition, p. 139).

<sup>3</sup> Why Jonson thought it necessary to describe Shakespeare as "our fellow-countryman" is not very clear, for, as Judge Webb observes, "whoever Shakespeare was, he was an Englishman and everybody must have known it." (See *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 136 note.) Perhaps Ben merely meant "our fellow Shakespeare." But it is to be noticed that

often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, 'Would he had blotted a thousand,' which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this but for their ignorance who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour, for I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped. '*Sufflaminandus erat*,' as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too! Many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause'; and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned."

Now whatever side we take in the Shakespearean controversy, we must, surely, admit that this is a very remarkable and not a little perplexing utterance. According to Jonson, "the players," by which name we may take it he refers to Hemminge and Condell, thought to commend "their friend," viz. player Shakspeare, by saying that "in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line." Player Shakspeare is here identified with author Shakespeare, and we thus have it on Jonson's testimony that the players looked upon William Shakspeare the actor as the author of the plays, and praised him for never

Abraham Sturley, writing to his brother-in-law Richard Quiney (whose son Thomas married Shakspeare's daughter Judith) speaks of "*our countriman*, Mr. Shaksper," January 1597-8, and again, in November, 1598, "*our countriman* Mr. Wm. Shak." (H.-P., Vol. II, 57-9). Jonson, however, was not of the same *county* as Shakspeare, as were Sturley and Quiney.



blotting out a line. Here we are brought back at once to the Folio address *To the Great Variety of Readers*, which, as I have already shown,<sup>1</sup> was almost undoubtedly written by Jonson himself; "What he thought, he uttered with that easinesse that wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." But we now know that this statement is ridiculous; that if the players had any unblotted manuscripts in their hands (which is by no means probable) they were merely fair copies; that if they really thought that the author of the plays wrote them off *currente calamo*, and never blotted a line, never revised, never made any alterations, they knew nothing whatever concerning the real Shakespeare. It seems strange, too, that Jonson should say that they "chose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted," for Ben knew well enough that Shakespeare did not "fault" in this way. He knew

. . . that he  
Who casts to write a living line must sweat  
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat  
Upon the Muses anvil, turne the same,  
(And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame.

And such he tells us was Shakespeare. How, then, can he affect to believe the players' statement that he never blotted out a line? Judge Webb suggests that Jonson "regretted, as every sober student of Shakespeare must regret, that the incomparable writer who, in his laborious revision of his work had blotted out so much, had not blotted out still more"; but this hardly seems a satisfactory explanation. Then compare this description of Shakespeare with the magnificent eulogy of the First Folio verses. *There* he is the greatest of all poets, the

Soul of the age!  
The applause, delight, the wonder of our Stage!

*Here* he is, "indeed, honest, and of an open and free

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 264 *et seq.*

nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions," but "flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." *Sufflaminandus erat*, i.e. in modern English, he had to be shut up! He was like Aterius, whose volubility was so great that he ought to have been closed. *Tanta illi erat velocitas orationis, ut vitium fierat. Itaque D. Augustus optime dixit, Aterius noster sufflaminandus est.*<sup>1</sup> This surely is hardly the description which we should have expected from Jonson of the great bard who "was not of an age, but for all time"! Very remarkable, too, is the criticism to the effect that "many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause'; and such like, which were ridiculous." Is Jonson here speaking of the player or the playwright? *Julius Cæsar* was first published in the Folio of 1623, and the passage alluded to there stands:—

Know Cæsar doth not wrong, nor without cause  
Will he be satisfied.

It may, of course, have originally stood as quoted by Jonson, or it may have been, as some have suggested, that Shakspeare the player misquoted the passage on the stage. There seems some plausibility about the latter suggestion, for it is difficult to imagine that Jonson would have dismissed the great dramatist with such a niggling "two-penny-halfpenny" criticism as this. And surely it is of the player, not the poet, that Jonson speaks when he says that his volubility was such that, like Aterius, he had to be (or ought to have been) shut up! In any case the contrast between this passage of the *Discoveries* and the panegyric of the Folio is so remarkable as to give

<sup>1</sup> Seneca, *Exc. Controv.*, IV, *Proam.* 7.

rise to much doubt, much perplexity, and much consideration.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now go back a few years and see what Jonson said of Shakespeare only three years after player Shakspeare's death. In January, 1619, Jonson was staying with William Drummond of Hawthornden. Drummond as everybody knows, made notes of his conversation with old Ben, and he thus records what his illustrious guest said about Shakespeare. "His censure<sup>2</sup> of the English Poets was this . . . That Shakspeer wanted arte. . . . Shakspeer, in a play, brought in a number of men saying they had suffered ship-wrack in Bohemia, wher y<sup>r</sup> is no sea neer by some 100 miles."

Could anything be more astonishing and at the same time more unsatisfactory than this? Here we have Jonson unbosoming himself in private conversation with his host and friend—"a chiel" who was "takin' notes"—and this, apparently, is all he has to say about the great bard who, only four years afterwards, he was to laud to the skies as the

Soul of the age!

The applause, delight, the wonder of our Stage!

One would have expected to find whole pages of eulogy, in Drummond's notes, of the poet who was "not of an age, but for all time"; instead of which we have only these two carping little bits of criticism: "That Shakspeer wanted (i.e. lacked) arte"—a curious remark to

<sup>1</sup> As has been already said, there is every reason to believe that Jonson himself wrote the address *To the great Variety of Readers* prefixed to the Folio. We see the same thoughts emerging here when he speaks, "*De Shakespeare nostrati*," not only in the imaginary never-blotted manuscripts, but also in such sentences as these, "What he thought he uttered with that easinesse" (First Folio); "Wherein he flowed with that facility," etc. (*Discoveries*). It is natural enough that Jonson, when he wrote in the character of the players, should have preferred the more homely word "easiness" to the Latin "facility," which he employed when writing *in propria personâ*.

<sup>2</sup> *Censure* here means opinion or judgment.

have proceeded from the mouth of him who wrote in the Folio lines that a poet must be "made, as well as born," that Nature must be supplemented by art, and that in Shakespeare's case such art was *not* lacking, but was conspicuous "in his well-turned and true-filed lines"! And then that niggling bit of criticism concerning the coast of Bohemia in the *Winter's Tale*, which may be compared with the depreciatory allusion to *Julius Cæsar* in the *Discoveries*!<sup>1</sup>

Why is it that Jonson appears on one occasion only in the character of eulogist of Shakespeare as a poet, viz. when he comes forward, seven years after Shakspere's death, as an inspired sponsor to bless the undertaking of 1623? Why is it that in private conversation, or in his own observations upon "Men and Matter," he has no word of praise, but only carping criticism to bestow upon the writings of the great poet for whose posthumously published works he composed that splendid panegyric? We seem driven to reply in the words of the immortal "J. K. S." :—

These are the questions nobody can answer,  
 These are the problems nobody can solve,  
 Only we know that man is an advancer ;  
 Only we know the centuries revolve !

It would appear, however, that, for some reason or another, Jonson looked upon the issue of the First Folio as a very special occasion, and that, if we could only get to the back of his mind, we should find that there was some efficient cause operating to induce him to give the best possible send-off to that celebrated venture.

Here it becomes necessary to consider some of Jonson's allusions to Bacon, and particularly those in the *Discoveries*. As already mentioned, No. lxiv (Temple Classics

<sup>1</sup> As to the Bohemian coast Shakespeare merely followed Greene's *Pandosto* (or *Dorastus and Fawnia*), on which he seems to have founded his play.



Edition) contains the famous reference to Shakespeare. No. lxx is headed *De claris oratoribus*, and No. lxxi *Dominus Verulamius*. The latter runs thus: "One, though he be excellent and the chief, is not to be imitated alone; for never no imitator ever grew up to his author; likeness is always on this side truth. Yet there happened in my time, one noble speaker who was full of gravity in his speaking; his language, where he could spare or pass by a jest,<sup>1</sup> was nobly censorious. No man ever spoke more neatly, more presly,<sup>2</sup> more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end."<sup>3</sup>

After this high tribute to Bacon as an orator (from which we learn that<sup>4</sup> he so loved a jest that he found it difficult to spare one or pass it by), comes paragraph No. lxxii, headed *Scriptorum catalogus*. This must be quoted *in extenso* :—

"Cicero is said to be the only wit that the people of Rome had equalled to their empire: *Ingenium par imperio*. We have had many, and in their several ages (to take in but the former *seculum*), Sir Thomas More, the elder Wyatt, Henry, Earl of Surrey, Chaloner, Smith, Eliot, Bishop Gardiner, were for their times admirable; and the more, because they began eloquence with us. Sir Nicolas Bacon was singular, and almost alone, in the beginning of Queen

<sup>1</sup> We are reminded of what had been said of Shakespeare: "His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too"!

<sup>2</sup> i.e. concisely.

<sup>3</sup> This agrees with what Francis Osborn wrote as to Bacon's hearers being "no less sorry when he came to conclude than displeased with any did interrupt him." *Ante*, p. 445 n.

Elizabeth's time. Sir Philip Sidney and Mr. Hooker (in different matter) grew great masters of wit and language, and in whom all vigour of invention and strength of judgment met. The Earl of Essex, noble and high; and Sir Walter Raleigh, not to be contemned, either for judgment or style; Sir Henry Savile, grave and truly lettered; Sir Edwin Sandys, excellent in both; Lord Egerton, the Chancellor, a grave and great orator, and best when he was provoked; but his learned and able, though unfortunate, successor is he who hath *filled up all numbers*, and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to *insolent Greece or haughty Rome*. In short, within his view, and about his times, were all the wits born that could honour a language or help study. Now things daily fall, wits grow downward, and eloquence grows backward; so that he may be named and stand as the mark and ἀκμή of our language."

It has frequently been said, with reference to this passage, that Jonson compiled a catalogue of all the best writers of his time, and put Bacon at the head of it, while he omitted Shakespeare altogether. It will be seen, however, that this is to attribute to the above quotation a much wider significance than can properly be ascribed to it. It is true that the passage is headed *Scriptorum catalogus*, and that the editor of the Temple Classics Edition has inserted the sidenote, "a bead-roll of English writers," but, as in the interpretation of statutes, when general expressions follow the mention of specific things, such expressions must be construed as having reference only to things *ejusdem generis* with those expressly mentioned, so here, when we consider the names specified by Jonson, it rather seems that he is thinking mainly of wits and orators of his own and the preceding generation, than compiling a list in which we should expect to find mention made of all the best writers, whether of prose or poetry, of the time. Still, after making full allowance for such

considerations, it does seem remarkable that in "a bead-roll of English writers," including such names as those of Philip Sidney and Walter Raleigh, and speaking of times wherein "were all the wits born that could honour a language or help study," no mention should be made of the great dramatist whom Jonson in 1623 characterised as the "Soul of the Age." The plea has been put forward that he had already dealt with Shakespeare in the paragraph which I have quoted *de Shakespeare nostrati*, but this seems an altogether inadequate explanation, for that paragraph is miserably unsatisfactory if it is to be considered as the only notice of the great poet which Jonson thought it necessary to give, in his observations on "Men and Matter." More remarkable still is his splendid eulogy of Bacon as the man who had attained perfection in his literary works, who had "filled up all numbers,"<sup>1</sup> and who was to be named as "the mark and ἀκμὴ" of the English language. And most remarkable of all is the fact that Jonson applies the same language indiscriminately to Shakespeare and Bacon. Of Shakespeare he had said that "his wit was in his own power" and that he wished "the rule of it had been so too." Of Bacon he had said that "his language, where he could spare or pass by a jest, was nobly censorious." To Shakespeare in 1623 he had addressed the lines:—

Leave thee alone, for the comparison  
Of all that *insolent Greece or haughty Rome*  
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Of Bacon he now writes that he "had performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred to *insolent Greece or haughty Rome*." It is certainly not surprising that the Baconians should dwell on this extraordinary coincidence of expression. Were there, then, they ask,

<sup>1</sup> Petronius Arbiter has (caput lxviii), "Duo tamen vitia habet, quae si non haberet, esset *omnium numerum*," i.e. he would have been perfect. See p. 285 n.

two writers of whom this description was appropriate—both of whom might be properly compared, and even advantageously compared, to the best writers of “insolent Greece” and “haughty Rome”; or was there in truth but one who went under two names (using a *nom de plume* in the field of drama and poetry), and had old Ben forgotten that in speaking of that writer, under cover of the pseudonym, he had used precisely the same expressions as he now applies to him in this noble outburst of posthumous praise?

But Jonson’s eulogy of Bacon does not stop here. After noticing his *Novum organum* as a work “which, though by the most of superficial men, who cannot get beyond the title of nominals, it is not penetrated nor understood, it really openeth all defects of learning whatsoever, and is a book

“*Qui longum noto scriptori porriget ævum*,”<sup>1</sup>

he goes on to utter memorable words on the true greatness of the man whom he knew so well. “My conceit of his person was never increased toward him by his place or honour. But I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength; for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllable for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue, but rather help to make it manifest.”

Had ever man nobler testimony than this which is here borne to the memory of Bacon by one of the greatest of his contemporaries? Homage such as this, posthumously

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph lxxiii. *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. Is there perchance an emphasis on *noto*? Was there another book “*qui longum ignoto scriptori porriget ævum*”?



offered by one so thoroughly qualified to pronounce judgment, and who was writing for posterity, is surely sufficient justification for Tennyson's description of those "two god-like faces" of

Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulam,  
The first of those who know.

The extraordinary thing is that nowhere in his prose works, or in his recorded conversations, has Jonson left us any noble eulogy of this sort consecrated to the memory of Shakespeare. If it could be said that Jonson had failed to appreciate the greatness of Shakespeare's works, the explanation might be accepted as satisfactory, though at the expense of Jonson's judgment. But we have the Folio lines to show that such a theory cannot for a moment be advanced. These celebrated verses make it clear that no one had a more lofty appreciation of "the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare; and what he hath left us," than had old Ben. Why was it, then, that, except in this one instance, his utterances fall so miserably short of what we have a right to expect? Why, in fact, does he speak with two voices? Those who are not wedded to the orthodox faith would, of course, explain the difficulty by saying that, however sphinx-like were Jonson's utterances, he had clearly distinct in his own mind two different personages, viz. Shakspeare the player, and Shakespeare the real author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, and that if in the perplexing passage quoted from the *Discoveries* he appears to confound one with the other, it is because the solemn seal of secrecy had been imposed upon him.

It is impossible to say when Jonson first became acquainted with Bacon. *Every Man Out of his Humour*, which was produced in 1599, was dedicated "To the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom, the Inns of Court,"<sup>1</sup> to whom, says Jonson, "When I wrote

This dedication is not given in the Quarto.

this poem I had friendship with divers in your societies ; who, as they were great names in learning, so they were no less examples of living." We can hardly doubt that among these learned lawyers alluded to was Francis Bacon, who is known to have taken, from his earliest days at Gray's Inn, such a keen interest in the drama. The passage quoted from the *Discoveries* (No. lxxi) shows that Jonson must have heard Bacon speak either in Parliament or at the Bar.<sup>1</sup> "In any case," writes Judge Webb, "Bacon was on intimate terms with Jonson long before he was created Lord St. Albans. In 1617, when he was Lord Keeper, he engaged Jonson to compose a masque for the Christmas Revels of his Inn. In the summer of 1618, when Jonson was setting out on his pedestrian tour to Scotland, Bacon told him that he loved not to see poesie going on any feet but the dactyl and the spondee." On January 22nd, 1621, Bacon celebrated his sixtieth birthday with great state at York House.<sup>2</sup> Jonson was present on that occasion and wrote the following ode "On Lord Bacon's Birthday."

Hail, happy genius of this ancient pile !  
 How comes it all things so about thee smile ?  
 The fire, the wine, the men ! and in the midst  
 Thou stand'st as if some mystery thou didst !  
 Pardon, I read it in thy face, the day  
 For whose returns, and many, all these pray ;  
 And so do I. This is the sixtieth year,  
 Since Bacon, and thy lord was born, and here ;  
 Son to the grave wise keeper of the Seal,

<sup>1</sup> "His judges" does not necessarily mean "the judges" in a court of law as assumed by Judge Webb (p. 121).

<sup>2</sup> This date is given by Judge Webb, and many others, as January, 1620, and if a man's first birthday is the day on which he is born then Bacon's sixtieth birthday would be on this date ; but it is common practice to speak of the day on which a child having completed its first year enters upon its second, as its first birthday. Moreover, Jonson expressly writes : "This is the sixtieth year since Bacon and thy Lord was born." Professor Fowler in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states the date as I have given it.

Fame and foundation of the English weal.  
 What then his father was, that since is he,  
 Now with a title more to the degree ;  
 England's high Chancellor ; the destin'd heir,  
 In his soft cradle, to his father's chair :  
 Whose even thread the fates spin round and full,  
 Out of their choicest and their whitest wool.  
 'Tis a brave cause of joy, let it be known,  
 For 'twere a narrow gladness kept thine own.  
 Give me a deep-crown'd bowl, that I may sing,  
 In raising him, the wisdom of my king.

Here, again, there certainly seems to be some esoteric meaning which it is not easy to grasp. Why does the genius of the place seem to stand as if he were doing some mystery? What was that mystery? What was "the brave cause of joy" of which Jonson writes "let it be known, for 'twere a narrow gladness kept thine own"? Not the mere fact that this was Bacon's sixtieth birthday, for that was known to everybody and was being publicly celebrated. What, then, was the secret "cause of joy" which the genius of the spot was implored not to keep to himself, but to publish to the world? What was the "mystery" which was being performed? The Baconians assert that here is an allusion to the secret Shakespearean authorship, a secret known to Jonson, and which he hoped might soon be published to the world. The Stratfordians, of course, reject this interpretation with scorn, but they are unable to give any plausible explanation of Jonson's meaning, and the mystery remains a mystery still.

Jonson, it appears, was Bacon's guest at Gorhambury, and was one of those "good pens" which were employed by him to translate the *Advancement of Learning* and other works into Latin. Writing to Toby Mathew, on June 26th, 1623, Bacon says: "My labours are now most set to have those works which I had formerly published, as that of *Advancement of Learning*, that of *Henry VII*, that of *The Essays*, being retractate and made more per-

fect, well translated into Latin by the help of some good pens which forsake me not." The best of these "good pens," it seems, was Jonson. "It is probable that he assisted him (Bacon) in the preparation of the *Novum organum*, which was published in 1620, and it is an undoubted fact that the Latin of the *De Augmentis*, which was published in 1623, was the work of Jonson. It may be assumed, therefore, that Jonson was assisting Bacon in the publication of his works in 1623, when the Shakespeare Folio appeared; and it is absolutely certain that he assisted in the publication of that memorable volume. We have every reason to believe that he was the writer of the address to the great "variety of Readers," and we know that he was the writer of the verses to the memory of 'The Author,' and of the lines to 'The Reader' which face the title-page of the famous book."<sup>1</sup>

There is yet another passage where I think we can trace Jonson's pen in connection with one of the Shakespearean plays, and that as early as the year 1609; for in that year appeared a quarto edition of *Troilus and Cressida*, which has the unique distinction among the plays of Shakespeare that it contains a preface; and a "very extraordinary preface" it is, as Charles Knight remarked. It may be well to give it *in extenso*. It runs thus:—

"A NEVER WRITER TO AN EVER READER.

"NEWS.

"Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical; for it is a birth of your brain, that never undertook anything comical vainly; and were but the vain names of comedies changed for the titles of commodities, or of plays for pleas, you should see all those grand censors, that now style

<sup>1</sup> Judge Webb (p. 123).



them such vanities, flock to them for the main grace of their gravities ; especially this author's comedies, that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit, that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies. And all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings as were never capable of the wit of a comedy, coming by report of them to his representations, have found that wit there that they never found in themselves, and have parted better witted than they came ; feeling an edge of wit set upon them more than ever they dreamed they had brain to grind it on. So much and such favoured salt of wit is in his comedies, that they seem (for their height of pleasure) to be born in that sea that brought forth Venus. Amongst all there is none more witty than this : and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not (for so much as will make you think your testern well bestowed), but for so much worth as even poor I know to be stuffed in it. It deserves such a labour, as well as the best comedy in Terence or Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone, and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasure's loss and judgments, refuse not, nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude ; but thank Fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you, since by the grand possessors' wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave all such to be prayed for (for the states of their wits' healths) that will not praise it. Vale."

Now, there were two Quarto editions of *Troilus and Cressida* published in 1609. Both were "imprinted by G. Eld for R. Bonian and H. Walley," but one contains this preface, while the other does not, and the edition which omits the preface bears on the title-page the statement

that the play is printed "as it was acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe." The text of the two Quartos is identical. Which of them was first published? *Prima facie* one would say the one with the preface, for it would have been absurd to print a preface saying that the play was "a new play, never staled with the stage . . . not sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude," etc., after an edition had already appeared stating that the play had been acted by the King's servants at the Globe. And this is the view taken by Charles Knight, who thought that *Troilus and Cressida* was in fact a new play, and that it had not been publicly acted when the original edition, with the preface, appeared. It is true that in the Stationers' books there is an entry of February 7th, 1602-3 in the name of Roberts, of "the booke of Troilus and Cresseda, as yt is acted by my Lo. Chamberlain's men," but Knight contends that this was a different play, probably by Dekker and Chettle, which subsequently appeared under the name of *Agamemnon*. If it were not so, how came there to be an entry on January 28, 1608-9 in the names of Richard Bonian and Hen. Walley, of "A booke called the History of Troylus and Cressuda"? For if this latter play was the play originally entered to Roberts, the copyright was in Roberts, and there must have been an assignment from Roberts to Bonian and Walley which we do not find.<sup>1</sup> "After the piece has thus been published," says Knight, "it is publicly acted; and then the preface which states that it has not been acted is naturally suppressed, in a new edition of which the title-page bears the additional recommendation of 'As it was acted by the

<sup>1</sup> In the 1602-3 entry the book is entered for James Roberts to be printed "when he had got sufficient authority for it." Some assume, therefore, that he never did get "sufficient authority," and therefore never printed the play. Mr. Lee says (p. 183) that Roberts's "effort to publish 'Troilus' proved abortive owing to the interposition of the players," but this seems to be mere assumption.

King's Majesty's servants at the Globe.'” According to this critic, the expressions “never staled with the stage,” etc., mean what most people would take them to mean, viz. that the play had not been acted on the public stage; but he quotes the conjecture of Tieck that “in the palace of some great personage, for whom it was probably expressly written, it was first represented,—according to my belief for the king himself. . . . But whether the king or someone else of whom we have not received the name, it is sufficient to know that for this person, and not for the public, Shakspeare wrote this wonderful comedy.” Some persons have supposed that the proprietors of the Globe were the “grand possessors” who might have stood in the way of the publication of the play; but to imagine that such persons would have had such a high-sounding title bestowed upon them seems absurd. “But suppose,” says Knight, “the grand possessors to be, as Tieck has conjectured, some great personage, probably the king himself, for whom the play was expressly written, and a great deal of the obscurity of the preface vanishes.” This does not seem unreasonable. At any rate, it is well to bear in mind that many of Shakespeare's plays were written with the view to their performance in some royal palace, such as Greenwich or Whitehall, or in some nobleman's mansion, such as Wilton, or in the Hall of one of the Inns of Court. For such places and to such cultured audiences these great dramas seem especially appropriate, whereas it is hard indeed to conceive *Hamlet*, for instance, as we know it, being performed in one of the public theatres, such as they then were, with arena open to the sky, before a standing audience of “groundlings” and “stinkards,” drinking beer, cracking nuts, eating fruit, howling and fighting, or burning the juniper when the smell becomes too overpowering.<sup>1</sup>

This, however, by the way; but it is right to mention that here, as usual, there is much disagreement among the

<sup>1</sup> See Taine's *English Literature*, chap. II.

commentators. Those who are curious on the subject may consult the Cambridge editors, Mr. Sidney Lee,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Israel Gollancz, and others.

But who wrote the Preface? "An anonymous scribe," says Mr. Lee. There seems good reason to suppose that that anonymous scribe was none other than Ben Jonson. This opinion rests, first, on considerations of style. Consider the heading, "A never writer to an ever reader." Mark the expression "never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical," . . . "plays for pleas," etc., and above all that characteristic allusion to the "testern" which the reader will, says the writer, not fail to think "well bestowed."<sup>2</sup> Mr. E. W. Smithson, author of an able and very suggestive essay on *Shakespeare-Bacon*, writes (p. 10, note 2): "In my opinion, founded at first on mere considerations of style, Jonson is responsible for the quickly suppressed preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, as well as for the Heminge and Condell addresses to the First Folio." Of the same opinion is Judge Webb, who points to the admirably true and sagacious statement of the writer of the preface that "this author's comedies are so framed to the life that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives." With these words the Judge compares the answer of Tibullus in *The Poetaster*, when Augustus asks him for his "true thought of Virgil." "Tibullus, anticipating the remark of Dr.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee (p. 148) apparently thinks that the "grand possessors" were the players; but why these worthies should be so styled is by no means apparent; indeed, the supposition seems not a little ridiculous. The play by Dekker and Chettle has been lost, unless, indeed, it was published under the name of "Shakespeare"! See *ante*, p. 357, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> The tester or testern was a coin of the value of about sixpence. Jonson is fond of speaking of a man's right to get his sixpennyworth, to judge his sixpennyworth, etc. See passages cited chap. ix, pp. 265-6. As to "the palm comical," Jonson frequently uses "palm" in the sense of "praise," as in *The Poetaster* (Vol. I): "Well said! This carries palm with it," i.e. is worthy of praise.



Johnson that a system of civil and economical prudence might be collected from the works of Shakespeare, observes :—

That which he hath writ  
Is with such judgment labour'd and distill'd  
Through all the needful uses of our lives,  
That could a man remember but his lines  
He should not touch at any specious point  
But he might breathe his spirit out of him."<sup>1</sup>

Judge Webb, therefore, thinks, as many others have thought, that Jonson was, under the name of Virgil, referring to the *true author* of the Shakespearean plays.

But the argument does not stop here. In the Folio, *Troilus and Cressida* is preceded by a prologue "non-Shakespearean," as the critics tell us, and apparently inserted in order to fill up a space. The speaker of a prologue generally wore a black cloak, but in this case the speaker was in armour.

And hither am I come  
A prologue arm'd.

In Jonson's *Poetaster* we have the same thing, viz. "An armed Prologue."<sup>2</sup> Here seem to be many indications of the same "good pen" that was translating Bacon's works into Latin, and writing dedicatory verses (to say nothing of prefaces) for the Shakespearean Folio.

Whether or not Jonson had the great dramatist in his mind when he wrote the above-quoted lines concerning Virgil of *The Poetaster*, every modern must admit that they find their true application in Shakespeare only. As Jonson goes on to say, through the mouth of Cæsar, a man

might repeat part of his works  
As fit for any conference he can use ;

and Horace (i.e. Jonson himself) makes the prophecy, which has been so amply fulfilled if it refers to Shakespeare :—

<sup>1</sup> *Poetaster*, Act V, Scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> If any muse why I salute the stage,  
An armed Prologue ; know 'tis a dangerous age.

And for his poesy, 'tis so rammed with life,  
That it shall gather strength of life with being,  
And live hereafter more admired than now.

But if Jonson in all this was really referring to Shakespeare, it can, I think, hardly be doubted that Shakespeare the dramatist and Shakspeare the player were for him distinct personages. Whether or not it be true, as I have contended, that in *The Poetaster* Jonson has a hit or two at the player (concerning his coat-of-arms and other matters already referred to), it is, in any case, extremely improbable that he would have written this magnificent eulogy of Shakspeare in the year 1601. The critics, therefore, generally search for some other application. Thus Messrs. Nicholson and Herford suppose that the lines are intended to refer to George Chapman. But if *he* be intended, Jonson's prophecy has failed to find fulfilment. And who would say of Chapman's poetry that

. . . 'Tis so rammed with life,  
That it shall gather strength of life with being?

Again, if Jonson really wrote the 1609 preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, the unorthodox would, of course, contend that Jonson had already been admitted "behind the scenes"; that he knew well enough the difference between Shakespeare and Shakspeare, and that while he eulogises the one, he had many a hit at the other.<sup>1</sup>

The Stratfordians, however, of course deny both that Jonson wrote the preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, and that the lines to Virgil have any application to the bard who in very truth "was not of an age but for all time." Thus,

<sup>1</sup> Substitute the word "pleas" for that of "plays," says the writer of the preface, and all the "grand censors" that affect to look upon comedies as "vanities" would flock to them. Why this legal reference? Did, perhaps, the writer think that "when the gown and cap is off, and the lord of liberty reigns, then, to take it in your hands, perhaps may make some benches, tinted with humanity, read—and not repent him," as Jonson wrote in his dedication of *Every Man Out of His Humour* to the Inns of Court? And was the preface so quickly suppressed because it might be indicative of a "concealed poet"?

as I have before pointed out, we are left face to face with this extraordinary fact, viz. that Jonson, on one occasion, and on one occasion only, bursts out in inspired praise of the poet Shakespeare, that occasion being the publication of the Folio seven years after Shakspeare's death; while on other occasions, both before and after that date, he has but a few words of carping criticism for the work of the great dramatist.

I here leave the Jonsonian riddle. I repeat that it presents much difficulty whichever side of the controversy we adopt. In the case of the anti-Stratfordian theory the difficulty lies not so much in the verses prefixed to the Folio, as in the passage quoted from the *Discoveries*. It is easy enough to conceive how the dedicatory verses might have been written by one who knew the secret of the true authorship. Moreover, the Stratfordians themselves have to put their own peculiar gloss upon them. "Small Latin and less Greek," for example, may be true enough of the "Stratford rustic," but is found to be entirely inappropriate to the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. It has therefore to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously, explained away. Moreover, the Stratfordians are put to their choice between the allegation that "Shakspeare wanted art" of the Drummond conversations, and the ascription to Shakespeare, in the Folio lines, of that art in a large measure, together with that care and industry in the matter of revision, which are so indispensable for him who "casts to write a living line." As to the lines on the Droeshout engraving they really help the case of the unorthodox. The passage in the *Discoveries* itself presents no little difficulty to the Stratfordians, not only because what is there said about Shakespeare is altogether inconsistent with the Folio panegyric, but also, among other things, because of its reference to the imaginary unblotted manuscripts, the existence of which all critics (except perhaps the enthusiastic Mr. Willis) have long

since given up as a vain thing fondly imagined.<sup>1</sup> In any case we may confidently say that this remarkable passage is very far from being conclusive of the matter at issue. *Et adhuc sub judice lis est.*

But some good person will exclaim, with an air of much virtuous indignation, do you mean to suggest that Ben Jonson, "honest Ben," would have deliberately made himself party to a lie? I reply once more that Jonson's namesake, the great lexicographer, defined a lie as "a criminal falsehood," meaning thereby, of course, an unjustifiable, or immoral falsehood; that justifiable falsehoods are not lies; that whether or not a particular false statement is or is not justifiable is a matter for the individual conscience (Scott, for instance, thought he was quite justified in denying the authorship of *Waverley* when questioned on the subject); that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so"; that, for all we know, Jonson might have seen nothing in the least degree objectionable in the publication by some great personage of his dramatic works under a pseudonym, even though that pseudonym led to a wrong conception as to the authorship; and that if, being a friend of that great personage, and working in his service, he had solemnly engaged to preserve the secret inviolate, and not to reveal it even to posterity, then, doubtless ("I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word"!) he would have remained true to that solemn pledge.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See especially Mr. Lee's introduction to the Folio Facsimile.

<sup>2</sup> Jonson sometimes indulges in a good-humoured laugh at Shakespeare's expense, as when in *Every Man out of his Humour*, III, 3, he makes a little fun out of Sonnet 128 concerning

Those jacks that nimble leap  
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand.

Mons. Jusserand, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 318, says he makes the sonnet "the subject of his sneers," but I see "no sneer" at all, or when he parodies the description of the "ideal horse" (*ante*, p. 60 n.), but I think if his undoubted references to the *works* of Shakespeare are carefully examined any charge of "malignity" will be found to vanish. The unorthodox suggestion, of course, is that Jonson spoke with two voices—he eulogizes the poet, he sneers at the "poet-ape."



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE "EARLY AUTHORSHIP" ARGUMENT

SOME Baconians put forward as an argument against the supposed identity of "Shakespeare" and Shakspere of Stratford that Shakespearean plays were before the public at a date so early as to preclude the idea that the player could have been the author of them. Mr. Edwin Reed (e.g.) gives us a list of thirteen plays, which he says must have been written before 1592. These are *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *King John*, *Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *King Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2, and 3.<sup>1</sup>

I have already dealt with *Titus* and *Henry VI*, which in my judgment are not Shakespearean plays, though the Master may have added a few touches to Parts 2 and 3 of the trilogy. *Pericles* I set aside as too doubtful.<sup>2</sup> Of the other plays mentioned I propose now to consider two only with reference to this argument for "early authorship," viz. *Hamlet* and *King John*.

When "Shakespeare" composed his *Hamlet* it is by no means easy to determine. "There is evidence that as early as 1587 a drama on this subject had been written and performed in England. In the preface by Thomas

<sup>1</sup> *Francis Bacon our Shakespeare*, chap. II.

<sup>2</sup> The first two acts, the critics tell us, are certainly not Shakespeare's, but Dr. Garnett and others consider that the third act is "unquestionably" his—probably the whole of it, but, at any rate, the greater part.

Nash to Robert Greene's *Menaphon*, the first edition of which, according to Dyce, was printed in 1587, though no copy appears to be known of an earlier date than 1589, occurs a passage which certainly refers to a play of *Hamlet*, and has been thought to contain an attack on Shakespeare." I quote from the preface to the Clarendon Press edition of the play by Mr. Aldis Wright and the late W. G. Clark, names which must command respect among Shakespeareans. The passage alluded to is as follows: "It is a common practice now-a-days amongst a sort of shifting companions that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *noverint*, whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavours of art, that could scarcely latinise their neck-verse if they should have need: yet English Seneca read by candle-light yields many good sentences, as 'Blood is a beggar,' and so forth; and if you intreat him fair in a frosty morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets*; I should say handfulls of tragical speeches." Now if this old *Hamlet*, performed as early as 1587, was written by *Shakespeare*, it would be a very strong argument indeed for those who contend that *Shakespeare* and *Shakspere* the "Stratford rustic" were different persons. For the play referred to in 1587 must have been written some time before that date, but in 1587 Shakspere was only in his twenty-third year, and either had not left, or had only just left Stratford, and not even the most fanatical of Stratfordian enthusiasts has yet ventured to assert that he came from his provincial birthplace with *Hamlet*, as well as *Venus and Adonis*, already written in his pocket; though, of course, there is no saying what "genius" may be capable of! And even if we take the date of Greene's *Menaphon* as 1589, the argument against the Stratfordian authorship is almost as strong, and would, indeed, as it seems to me, be conclusive.

"That this early *Hamlet* was Shake-speare's," writes

Mr. Reed, "no unprejudiced person can entertain a doubt, for we are able to trace it in contemporary notices all along from 1589, as above shown, to its appearance in print in the Shakespearean Quarto of 1603."<sup>1</sup> I certainly cannot subscribe to this dictum, although I am confident that I am quite "unprejudiced" in the matter. Most critics are of opinion that the drama alluded to by Nash was not Shakespeare's work, but an old play, perhaps written by Thomas Kyd ("doubtless Thomas Kyd," says Mr. Lee, just because there is no evidence and much doubt), upon which, together with the *Histoires Tragiques* of Belleforest, Shakespeare is supposed to have founded his immortal work.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable, however, that this old play had apparently a soliloquy commencing "to be or not to be," and also a ghost, although, says Mr. Reed, "this was not in the original prose legend of *Hamlet* as given by Saxo Grammaticus nor in any subsequent version, down to the time of the drama, the murder having previously been represented as an open one, and therefore not requiring a messenger from the dead to reveal it." Mr. Reed believes that "so important a change as this must be ascribed to the creative genius of the dramatist himself"; but I see no reason why the old playwright should not have conceived of the ghost. The presence of the soliloquy with the famous words "to be or not to be," is, to my mind, much more remarkable. The evidence for the latter is to be found in Nash's preface to Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*: "Nor hath my prose any skill to imitate the almond leaf verse, or sit taboring five years together nothing but 'to be, to be' on a paper drum"; where "paper drum" is, we are told, a slang expression meaning "dramatic poetry." This was published

<sup>1</sup> *Francis Bacon our Shakespeare*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> The *Histoires Tragiques* were not translated till 1608, but, says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare doubtless read it in French," and for once we may accept the adverb here.

in 1591, and means, according to Mr. Reed, that the soliloquy had been "the subject of declamation on the public stage for five years preceding, or since 1586." It cannot, however, be said with certainty that the reference is to a soliloquy in a play of *Hamlet*, and even if it were so, it is far from conclusive that that play was the work of Shakespeare.

The reference to the ghost is contained in Lodge's *Wits Misery*, printed in 1596, where the fiend "Hate-Virtue" is thus described: "He walks for the most part in black under cover of gravity, and looks as pale as the vizard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the theatre, like an oyster wife, 'Hamlet, revenge.'" But in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as we know it, the ghost does not cry, "Hamlet, revenge," though he lays upon his son the injunction "Revenge my foul and most unnatural murder"; so that, unless the players introduced the words quoted from Lodge, as "gag," the play must have been a different one from that with which we are so familiar.

Again, in 1594, Henslowe makes a note in his *Diary* of a play called *Hamlet* (which he does not mark as "new," as was his custom on the occasion of a first performance), acted at the Newington Theatre, which the Lord Chamberlain's men (Shakspeare's company) were then, as it is supposed, temporarily occupying. But this affords no proof that the play was Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is usually supposed to be "the old *Hamlet*."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Henslowe's *Diary*, as edited by Payne Collier (1845), at p. 35. Henslowe's note, as the heading of his entries for June, 1594, is: "In the name of God Amen, beginninge at Newington, my Lord Admeralle and my Lorde chamberlen men, as foloweth, 1594." Then, after five other entries, we have "9 of June 1594, Rd at hamlet viij<sup>s</sup>," i.e. received at the performance of *Hamlet* eight shillings. It seems from Henslowe's note, as Collier remarks, that the Lord Chamberlain's players were at this date acting at the Newington Theatre with the Lord Admiral's men. "The companies may have occupied the house on alternate days, but this is the less likely, because Henslowe received a share of the takings every day. Perhaps they acted twice a day, each company once." So Collier, but neither hypothesis seems very probable. The Lord Chamberlain's, it will be borne in mind, was Shakspeare's Company.



At what date, then, did Shakespeare produce his play? Well, on July 26th, 1602, "A Book called the Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants" was entered on the Stationers' Company's registers by the printer, James Roberts. This apparently refers to "The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmark, by William Shakespeare," which was published next year (1603) by N. L. (identified as Nicholas Ling) and John Trundell, and known as the First Quarto Hamlet. According to the commonly accepted hypothesis, therefore, the year 1602 marks the production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

An argument, however, has been adduced to prove that Shakespeare must have produced his play of *Hamlet* much earlier than this, viz. before the year 1598. It appears that Gabriel Harvey in this year (1598) purchased a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, and in it he inscribed the following manuscript note: "The younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, but his *Lucrece* and his tragedy of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, have it in them to please the wiser sort." It has been urged that this entry could not have been made before 1600, because Harvey also speaks of *translated Tasso*, and the first edition of Fairfax, to which he is assumed to allude, appeared in 1600. To this it has been answered that five books of the *Jerusalem*, translated into English, were published by R. Carew in 1594. Moreover, Bishop Percy, who was the owner of Harvey's book in 1803, wrote to Malone: "In the passage which extols Shakespeare's tragedy, Spenser is quoted by name among our flourishing metricians. Now this edition of Chaucer was published in 1598, and Spenser's death is ascertained to have been in January, 1598-99, so that these passages were all written in 1598, and prove that *Hamlet* [i.e. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*] was written before that year." Notwithstanding this, Malone, who inspected the book in

the possession of Dr. Percy, says: "I have found reason to believe that the note in question may have been written in the latter end of the year 1600." He does not, however, state his reasons, except the reference to the translated Tasso, which he says was doubtless the first edition of Fairfax; neither does he say if the date, 1598, was written, as some have supposed, at the end of the note, and in Harvey's own handwriting. Steevens, however, says: "I have seen a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, which formerly belonged to Dr. Gabriel Harvey (the antagonist of Nash), who, in his own handwriting, has set down the play as a performance with which he was well acquainted in the year 1598. His words are these: 'The younger sort,' etc., as above.<sup>1</sup>

If this note of Gabriel Harvey's is to be received as proving that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was written before 1598, i.e. more than five years before the publication of the First Quarto (and it seems strong evidence to that effect), this is, undoubtedly, a fact which "gives furiously to think"!

Malone thought there could be very little doubt that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was first performed in the autumn of 1600, "from the reference which is made in it to the 'inhibition' of the players, which 'comes by means of the late innovation.' All the theatres, except the Fortune and the Globe, were inhibited by an order of Council, in June, 1600 . . . and so the other city tragedians were forced to travel." Messrs. Clark and Aldis Wright, however, doubt the validity of this argument, because the passage in question appears for the first time in the 1604 Quarto, and is not in the edition of 1603. But however that may be, it seems clear that the play published in 1603 had been

<sup>1</sup> I take this quotation from Judge Stotsenburg's *Shakespeare Title*, p. 479. The author refers to the "Variorum of 1773." I have not verified the quotation. The extract from Malone's note will be found in his edition of Shakespeare, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 369.

known upon the stage for a considerable time previously to that year, since the title-page bears upon it the words, "As it hath been diverse times acted by his Highnesse servants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Universities of Cambridge, and Oxford, and elsewhere."

Let us now more particularly consider the Quartos of 1603 and 1604. As already mentioned, the "Book called the Revenge of Hamlet," etc., was entered on the Stationers' Register in July, 1602, by James Roberts. Then came the First Quarto, published in 1603, and printed for N. L. (Nicholas Ling), by John Trundell. This was succeeded next year (1604) by the publication of the Second Quarto, printed, as the title-page informs us, by I. R. for N. L., i.e. as one may infer, printed by the same James Roberts for Nicholas Ling. This Second Quarto edition, which, as the title-page also informs us, had been "newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was according to the true and perfect coppie," is our *Hamlet*, as we know it, and by its aid the editors have been able to enrich the shorter version of the Folio with many passages which we could indeed ill afford to lose. At the same time there are a few passages in the Folio which are not in either of the Quartos.<sup>1</sup> The 1603 Quarto is a very curious work, and three theories have been advanced concerning it, which can be taken either separately, or, as is more usual, in combination. It is said that the play is (1) a piracy, printed from a copy which was hastily taken down, and perhaps surreptitiously obtained, either from shorthand notes made during the representation, or privately from the actors themselves. (2) Shakespeare's first sketch of the play. (3) An old play which Shakespeare had begun to remodel, and retouched by him to a certain extent, but before his alterations were complete. As to (1). The hypothesis that

<sup>1</sup> According to Messrs. G. W. Clark and Aldis Wright, "The text of the play as it is found in the First Folio of 1623, and the subsequent Folio editions, is from sources independent of the Quartos."

this Quarto represents an imperfect version of the play, taken down in shorthand and surreptitiously printed, cannot in my judgment be sustained. The differences between this and the Second Quarto are not such as can be accounted for by the theory that it was put together from the notes of an inefficient shorthand writer. The Second Quarto, as Mr. Edwin Reed truly says, "presents to us exactly the same state of things which we have found in the later history of so many other of the Shakespeare plays—a revision so radical, and in most respects so vastly improved, as to make this form of the play almost an independent work." To mention one or two only of the features in which the earlier differs from the later version, we may remark that the scene with Ophelia, as Messrs. Clark and Wright point out, which in the modern play occurs in III, 1, is, in the older form, introduced in the middle of II, 2. Further, "Polonius is Corambis in the older play, and Reynaldo is Montano. The madness of Hamlet is much more pronounced, and the Queen's innocence of her husband's murder much more explicitly stated in the earlier than in the later play. In fact, the earlier play in these respects corresponds more closely with the original story." Moreover, the 1603 Quarto contains passages which are not to be found in the 1604 version, "a fact," says Mr. Edwin Reed, "which ought to settle the question at once." This writer believes that the First Quarto represents a very early production. "The difference in mental power between the two is so great that nothing but the intervention of a comparatively long period of development in the life of the author can account for it." This is in harmony with Mr. Swinburne's theory of long and patient revision.

Mr. Knight maintained that the Quarto of 1603 represents the original sketch of the play, and that this was an early work of the poet. Messrs. Clark and Wright, however, differ in respect of this last conclusion, because they



doubt Shakespeare's connection with the play before 1602, basing their scepticism mainly upon the fact that Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, published in 1598, makes no mention of *Hamlet*. This, however, seems inconclusive, because Meres did not pretend to give an exhaustive catalogue of Shakespeare's plays, and it may be that the superiority of Shakespeare's version to the older play was not at that time sufficiently apparent to constrain him to mention it among typical Shakespearean tragedies. Or maybe it had not at that time been published as Shakespeare's. But now let us see what is the theory put forward by these distinguished critics in the Clarendon Press Edition of the play (p. x). "It is this:—That there was an old play on the story of *Hamlet*, some portions of which are still preserved in the quarto of 1603; that about the year 1602 Shakespeare took this and began to remodel it for the stage, as he had done with other plays; that the quarto of 1603 represents the play after it had been retouched by him to a certain extent, but before his alterations were complete; and that in the quarto of 1604 we have for the first time the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. It is quite true, as Mr. Knight has remarked, that in the quarto of 1603 we have the whole 'action' of the play; that is to say, the events follow very much the same order, and the catastrophe is the same. There are, however, some important modifications even in this respect. . . . In fact, the earlier play in these respects corresponds more closely with the original story. In the earlier form it appears to us that Shakespeare's modification of the play had not gone much beyond the second act. Certainly in the third act we find very great unlikeness and very great inferiority to the later play. In fact, in the first, third, and fourth scenes there is hardly a trace of Shakespeare,<sup>1</sup> and in the second, which is the scene where the play is introduced, there are very remarkable differences. The fourth act in lan-

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

guage has very little in common with its present form, and in the first scene of the fifth act there are still some traces of the original play. In the second scene of this act the dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio is not found, and the interview with Osric in its old dress may fairly be put down to the earlier writer. The rest of the scene is much altered, and of course improved, and wherever these improvements come it strikes us with irresistible force that in comparing the later with the earlier form of the play we are not comparing the work of Shakespeare at two different periods of his life, but the work of Shakespeare with that of a very inferior artist. If any one desires to be convinced of this, let him read the interview of Hamlet with his mother in the two quartos of 1603 and 1604." As to Hamlet's soliloquy, as it appears in the 1603 quarto, these critics write that it is "sadly mutilated, as if written down in fragments from memory"; but to that last opinion I cannot subscribe, if it be meant to imply that it may have been written from memory of the speech as we now know it. A writer from memory or a transcriber of shorthand notes would not have produced,

For in that sleep of death, when we awake,  
And borne before an everlasting Judge . . .  
The undiscovered country, at whose sight  
The happy smile . . .  
But for this, the joyful hope of this," etc.

"The joyful hope" is an entirely different idea to that of "the dread of something after death"—in fact, it is a substitution of hope for fear (suggesting that it is the hope of a better life which enables us to bear the ills that flesh is heir to), which is indicative of a quite different version of the speech, and not of the imperfect memory or notes of the transcriber.

"In conclusion," say Messrs. Clark and Wright, "we

venture to think that a close examination of the quarto of 1603 will convince any one that it contains some of Shakespeare's undoubted work, mixed with a great deal that is not his, and will confirm our theory that the text, imperfect as it is, represents an older play in a transition state, while it was undergoing a remodelling, but had not received more than the first rough touches of the great master's hands."

Mr. Sidney Lee is of opinion that "Shakespeare's tragedy owed much to the lost version of *Hamlet*," which he believes was written by Thomas Kyd, "whose tragedies of blood, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Jeronimo*, long held the Elizabethan stage" (p. 177).

If Messrs. Clark and Wright are correct in their opinion that, in the 1603 version, "Shakespeare's modification of the play had not gone much beyond the second act," and that "certainly in the third act we find very great unlikeness and very great inferiority to the later play," a good deal of criticism will have to be accepted *cum grano salis*. Thus Dr. Garnett thinks that the writer of the scene where Hamlet gives directions to the players must have been "in the constant habit of giving instructions to performers." Even if we accept that inference (which to me seems altogether untenable), the conclusion which the learned critic seeks to draw from it is not a little doubtful, since these directions to the players are to be found in the third act of the play as it appears in the 1603 edition, and, according to the theory put forward by those eminent Shakespeareans, Messrs. Clark and Wright, they may very possibly belong to the old play.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now leave our old friend *Hamlet* for the nonce

<sup>1</sup> See *English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 201. The real truth seems to be that Shakespeare got the suggestion for Hamlet's address to the players from Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*, translated out of French by George Pettie (1581). See "A Forgotten Volume in Shakespeare's Library," by Edward Sullivan (*Nineteenth Century*, February, 1904). If this be so, it effectually disposes of Dr. Garnett's curious inference, which, in any case, seems to me quite unwarranted.

and turn to the play of *King John*. Here the argument for "early authorship" seems at first sight very striking. In 1591 was published a play entitled *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*. It was published in two parts, each in a separate volume, with a distinct title-page. Part I is "The Troublesome Raigne of *John* King of England, with the *discoverie of King* Richard Cordelion's Base sonne (vulgarly named, The Bastard Fawconbridge): also the death of King *John* at *Swinstead Abbey*." Part II is "The Second part of the troublesome Raigne of King *John*, *containing the death* of Arthur Plantaginet, the landing of Lewes, and the poysning of King John at *Swinstead Abbey*." Both title-pages bear the inscription, "As it was (sundry times) publikely acted by the Queenes Maiesties Players, in the honourable Citie of London." A unique copy of this first edition of the play is preserved in the Capell Collection at Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1611 the two parts of the old play were put together in an edition published in one volume. The title-page of this second edition (1611) bore the words, "*written by W. Sh.*" In 1622 appeared a third edition, and here the title-page informs us that the work was written by "W. Shakespeare." Now if these title-pages contain truthful statements, it is clear that the old play of 1591, which had been "sundry times" before that date publicly acted by the Queen's players, was written by Shakespeare, in which case his declaration in 1593 that the *Venus and Adonis* was the first heir of his invention must be taken with many grains of salt, and we must be asked to believe, on the assumption that Shakespeare and Shakspeare are identical, that the Stratford player had stepped into the ranks of successful playwrights, and had produced a very popular historical drama, some three or four years after he left his native town.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Francis

<sup>1</sup> As I have already said, I do not think it possible to construe the phrase "the first heir of my invention" strictly, as implying that Shakespeare had written no play before 1593.



Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), mentions *King John* among Shakespeare's tragedies, although the play which is now known as Shakespeare's *King John* made its first appearance in the Folio of 1623. Added to which many critics, including Tieck and most of the Germans, contend that the original play bears the impress of Shakespearean authorship. "In the folio of 1623," writes Mr. Edwin Reed, "the play appeared rewritten and enlarged as we now have it (under the title of *King John*), but in such a manner as to demonstrate beyond all serious doubt that the two versions were the product of the same hand, at different stages of the author's intellectual development."

Here again I find myself compelled, most reluctantly, to dissent from Mr. Reed's pronouncement. It appears to me that the theory of the Shakespearean authorship of *The Troublesome Reign* falls to pieces upon perusal of the old play. I find it impossible to believe that the same man was the author of the drama published in 1591 and that which, so far as we know, first saw the light in the Folio of 1623. What "Shakespeare" did, as it seems to me, was to take an old play (which he did not "enlarge" but compress, converting ten acts into five), and to metamorphose it in his own marvellous manner. It is as though he had said to the public, "Here is one of the plays which has succeeded in gaining your favour. I will show you what such a work ought to be, and what it may become in the hands of a Master." The old play is altogether transformed. Hardly a single line of the original version reappears in the *King John* of Shakespeare. The style is entirely different. It is not only that the verses of the old play have the monotonous pause at the end of each line, but we feel that we are in a different atmosphere altogether. I cannot find the touch of the master hand in *The Troublesome Reign*. Let the reader compare the Bastard's abuse of Lymoges in the old play:—

Shamst thou not coystrell, loathsome dunghill swad,  
To grace thy carkasse with an ornament  
Too precious for a Monarch's coverture? etc.

with Constance's invective in Act III, Scene I of the Folio play :

Thou wear a lion's hide ! Doff it for shame,  
And hang a calf's skin on those recreant limbs—

and I am confident that he will appreciate my meaning. Then let him set side by side John's scenes with Pandulph in the old and the Folio dramas, and consider the following magnificent lines, and especially the last nine of them :—

What earthly name to interrogatories  
Can task the free breath of a sacred king ?  
Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name  
So slight, unworthy and ridiculous,  
To charge me to an answer, as the pope.  
Tell him this tale ; and from the mouth of England  
Add this much more, that no Italian priest  
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions ;  
But as we, under heaven, are supreme head,  
So, under Him that great supremacy,  
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,  
Without the assistance of a mortal hand :  
So tell the pope, all reverence set apart  
To him and his usurp'd authority.

He will not find a trace of this sort of thing in the old play. It is not, as I submit, the work of the same writer in a later stage of development ; it is the work of a different hand, and a hand guided by the inspiration of genius. The old play has many merits and many fine passages, but it is not, surely, Shakespeare's. It belongs to an earlier style, bringing reminiscences of such writers as Greene and Peele ; as, for instance, in such words as "hugie,"<sup>1</sup> and "triúmph," with the accent on the last syllable, and in the insertion of Latin lines, as "*Quicquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi*," and "*Multa cadunt inter calicem supremaque labro*."

<sup>1</sup> "Spying the hugie whale," Part II, Act 2, Scene 1. This word, and "triúmphs," "triúmph," occur also in the non-Shakespearean *Titus*. "Hugy" also occurs in *Edward III*.

I believe, then, that Shakespeare here, as frequently, took an old play, and, as Mr. Gollancz says, "alchemised" it. I think that *The Troublesome Reign* was not by Shakespeare, although the second and third editions were, like so many other old plays not by him, published in his name. I think that Meres's mention of *King John* probably had reference to the old play which had been wrongly ascribed to Shakespeare, Meres being in error in this case as he was in the case of *Titus Adronicus*; and I think it possible that nothing had been seen of Shakespeare's *King John* till the publication of the Folio of 1623. I think it was the same in the case of *Hamlet*. Here, too, Shakespeare took an old play, and transmuted all the inferior metal into gold. Shakespeare was, I take it, a busy man whose aim it was to use the stage as a means to convey instruction to the people, and to teach them a certain measure of philosophy through the medium of the theatre. "The purpose of playing," as he says in *Hamlet*, "is to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." It was not for him to consume his time in the invention of plots. He took what lay nearest to his hand—old novels, old chronicles, and old plays, and transformed them, making them all golden in the process of transformation. I do not for a moment believe that the Stratford player was, or could possibly have been, this "Shakespeare," but I think it is a mistake to endeavour to fortify the argument against him by ascribing to Shakespeare such old plays as the *King John* of 1591 or the primitive *Hamlet*.

It is not necessary to discuss the other plays mentioned by Mr. Reed, as evidencing "early authorship," at length. I cannot think, as does Mr. Reed, that the author of the old play of the *Taming of a Shrew* was also author of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The difficulty seems to be to say how much, if any, of the latter play is in truth by "Shake-

speare." Nor can I think that *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, which was acted before 1588, and apparently alluded to by Nash in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592), was written by the author of the Shakespearean *Henry V*.<sup>1</sup> That the old play of *Leir* was Shakespeare's is an assumption that few will accept. As to *Titus Andronicus* and *King Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2, and 3, I have already dealt with them. *Pericles* is altogether too doubtful a composition to found an argument upon in support of the "early authorship" theory, and it is very unsafe to assume that *The History of Felix and Philomena*, which was acted before the Queen at Greenwich in 1584-5, "on the Sondae next after newe yeares daie at night," was the work of Shakespeare.

A word may be said as to the *Comedy of Errors*. In Act III, Scene 2, Dromio of Syracuse, speaking of the "countries" which he could "find out" in the fat kitchen-wench, when asked by Antipholus of Syracuse, "Where France"? replies: "In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir." Here is undoubtedly a play on the words "heir" and "hair," and an allusion to the civil war in France. "There is," writes Mr. Gollancz, "evidently an allusion to the civil war in France between Henry III and Henry of Navarre, which lasted from August 1589 to July 1593."<sup>2</sup> But this is obviously a mistake, for Henry III was assassinated in 1589! I think Mr. Reed is also mistaken when he says, "The war against him [Henry of Navarre], as 'heir,' began in April 1585, and terminated at the death of Henry III in August 1589." Rather, I think, Knight is right in referring the

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 355. I am very much inclined to agree with the critic quoted by Mr. Gollancz, "Never before did genius ever transmute so base a *caput mortuum* into ore so precious."

<sup>2</sup> Preface to the "Temple" edition, p. vi. Mr. J. M. Robertson (p. 27) says that this allusion "might be retrospective, since the time of a play may be any period prior to the production." But the dramatist would certainly not make a stale reference to a long gone event.



allusion to the contest between Henry of Navarre and the Leaguers, which commenced after the assassination of Henry III, and "was in effect concluded by Henry's renunciation of the Protestant faith in 1593." However, Mr. Gollancz seems to be not far wrong in putting the date of the play about 1589-91. As to *Love's Labour's Lost* all we can say is that it is an early play, in which again we find the allusions to the Civil War of France (1589-93), and if Mr. Lee is right in thinking that to this play "may reasonably be assigned priority in point of time of all Shakespeare's dramatic productions," then, assuming that Mr. Gollancz is also right as to the date of the *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost* must have been written about 1590-91.

I think, then, that Mr. Reed's attempt to prove the very early authorship of Shakespearean drama, by assuming that the old plays alluded to were the work of Shakespeare, cannot be said to have succeeded. Nevertheless the dates, when fairly considered, are sufficiently remarkable. Francis Meres, writing in 1598, makes the following statement: "Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his Gentlemen of Verona, his Errors, his Love labors lost, his Love Labors Wonne, his Midsummer's night Dreame, and his Merchant of Venice: for Tragedy his Richard the Second, Richard the 3, Henry the 4, King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet." Here we have twelve,<sup>1</sup> or omitting Titus, as to which Meres was, I think, clearly in error, eleven dramas (one of them in two parts, so that we may still count twelve plays),<sup>2</sup> composed by Shakespeare before 1598, besides his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, and "his sugred Sonnets

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Reed says (p. 81): "In 1598 Francis Meres published a list of thirteen plays (seven tragedies and six comedies) as Shakespeare's." Mr. Reed doubtless counts the two parts of *Henry IV* as two "tragedies."

<sup>2</sup> Subject, however, to what I have already said as to *King John*.

among his private friends," if these are really Shakespearean. Moreover, Meres's artificially framed lists (six comedies and six tragedies) are obviously not meant to be exhaustive. We have seen that *Hamlet*, if we may trust Gabriel Harvey's note, was written before 1598, as were probably others of the plays, though not mentioned by Meres. I lay little stress on his omission of *Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2, and 3, for reasons already fully explained, but it is certainly a large order to suppose that the Stratford rustic, coming to town possibly in 1586, but probably in 1587 or 1588, had accomplished all this marvellous work before 1598. When we reflect upon all the culture, all the learning, all the experience, and all the philosophy which must have been acquired by the author of these wonderful plays and poems, surely we must admit that all other literary marvels fade into utter insignificance by the side of this! Mr. J. M. Robertson, too, roundly asserts that we must take Shakespeare strictly at his word, and believes, since *Venus and Adonis* was the first heir of his invention, that all the plays were written subsequently to that date.<sup>1</sup> If so, these eleven, twelve, or more dramas must have been composed by Shakespeare, and brought upon the stage (if not also published) between 1593 and 1598. If Mr. Robertson can believe this, he has, indeed, great faith, which seems to be reserved for the Stratfordian Gospel only. *Credat Judæus non ego!*

<sup>1</sup> With this alternative, however, viz. that "Shakespeare for the best of reasons would not regard as heirs of his invention plays in which he used other men's drafts or shared with others the task of composition" (p. 29). It is suggested, therefore, that he had collaborators for *The Two Gentlemen*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, the *Comedy of Errors*, the *Dream*, *Richard II*, and other early plays. I do not myself attach the same strict significance to the phrase "the first heir of my invention." *Venus and Adonis* was the first work published by "Shakespeare" under that name, and I think it is quite likely that he might style it the first *heir* of his invention, even although he had not actually composed it before the earlier plays, which had not been published in his name. We do not know, however, at what date the poem was composed, except that it must, apparently, have been after 1589. See p. 64.

But, if certain enthusiastic Stratfordians are to be believed, Shakespeare was writing poems and plays in very early days, long before the publication of the alleged first heir of his invention. Thus we have Spenser's allusion to "our pleasant Willy," in the *Tears of the Muses*, published in 1591 :—

And he the man whom Nature's self had made  
To mock herself, and truth to imitate,  
With kindly counter under mimic shade  
Our pleasant Willy, oh ! is dead of late ;  
With whom all joy and jolly merriment  
Is also deaded, and in dolor drent.

Mr. Collier, in his *Life of Shaksper*, has no hesitation in saying that here is a reference to Shakespeare. In his opinion there was no other dramatist of the time to whom the lines were applicable. Modern Stratfordians, however, have perceived the danger of admitting that this is a testimony to "the admirable dramatic talents which he [Shakespeare] had already displayed, and which had enabled him even before 1591 to outstrip all living rivalry." This is too early fame for the young provincial who came from Stratford to London, "destitute of polite accomplishments," in 1587 or thereabouts. So the supposed allusion is scoffed at as absurd. How could "our pleasant Willy" be referred to as dead in 1591 if Shaksper were he, seeing that Shaksper lived some five-and-twenty years after this was published? They carefully suppress the lines which follow, showing that Spenser did not allude to physical death, but to the cessation of authorship :—

But that same gentle spirit from whose pen  
Large streams of honnie and sweete nectar flowe,  
Scorning the boldness of such base born men  
Which dare their follies forth so rashly throwe,  
Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell  
Than so himself to mockerie to sell.

Now if this is an allusion to Shakespeare, as Collier and others affirm, it furnishes an additional argument in sup-

port of the contention that Shakespeare and Shakspeare are not identical, for it requires blind faith to believe that the young man from Stratford had before 1591 (and a considerable time, as we must suppose) outstripped all living rivalry. However, it is of course quite possible that Spenser was referring to some other author, though "honey and sweet nectar" are highly suggestive of "sweet" Mr. Shakespeare of the "sugred sonnets."

There is another supposed allusion to Shakespeare in Spenser's works, viz. the lines in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* :

And there, though last not least, is Ætion ;  
A gentler Shepheard may no where be found,  
Whose muse, full of high thought's invention,  
Doth, like himselfe, heroically sound.

Now Fuller, in his *Worthies of Warwickshire* (1662), speaks of the poet as "martial in the warlike sound of his sur-name, whence some may conjecture him of military extraction, *hasti-vibrans* or Shake-speare." Spenser's poem, *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, was completed in 1594, and if Ætion stands for Shake-speare (as Mr. Lee and others assume), the poet must have won fame for his heroically sounding Muse some considerable time before that date. The description would not apply to such a poem as *Venus and Adonis*, so we must suppose that Shakespeare was writing heroic poems—dramas I presume—before 1593.<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible, indeed highly probable, that such was the fact; but I do not fancy it was the fact with Shakspeare !

So, again, if Greene's famous allusion to "Shake-scene," in 1592, has reference to Shakespeare, and is to be taken, as some enthusiastic Stratfordians, Mr. Churton Collins for one, will have it, as implying that Shakespeare was at that early date known as a writer of plays, the allusion

<sup>1</sup> In the *Dictionary of National Biography* Mr. Lee gives 1591 as the date of Spenser's allusion.



really makes strongly in favour of those who believe that the dramatist was not the Stratford player. Mr. J. M. Robertson, with more caution, asserts that Greene's words import no more than that Shakespeare "had had a hand *in* plays before 1593; but certainly not that he had written one."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written, Professor Courthope has published the fourth volume of his *History of English Poetry*, containing the Appendix which I have already discussed in Note B to chap. v. The Professor, as I have pointed out, upholds the "early authorship" theory in the case of *Titus Andronicus*, the *Contention*, and *True Tragedy*, all three parts of *Henry VI*, the *Troublesome Raigne*, and the *Taming of A Shrew*. Mr. Reed has, therefore, found a powerful ally (although, of course, Professor Courthope would entirely repudiate his conclusions), and the case for those who disbelieve in the Stratfordian authorship of the plays is (for those who can accept the Professor's contention) immensely strengthened.

## APPENDIX

### THE "PHŒNIX AND TURTLE"

I HAD written a chapter on that very curious poem *The Phoenix and Turtle* which I had proposed to add by way of appendix to this work; but the book has, I fear, grown beyond the bounds of the reader's patience, and therefore I must content myself with a short note on these quaint lines, of which Mr. Sidney Lee says it is fortunate that Shakespeare wrote nothing else of like character (p. 147).

*The Phoenix and Turtle*, signed "William Shake-speare," first appeared in a collection published by Robert Chester in 1601 under the following title: "Love's Martyr; or Rosalin's Complaint. Allegorically shadowing the truth of Love in the constant Fate of the Phœnix and Turtle. A Poem enterlaced with much varietie and raritie; now first translated out of the venerable Italian Torquato Caeliano by Robert Chester. With the true legend of famous King Arthur, the last of the nine Worthies, being the first Essay of a new British poet; collected out of diverse authentical Records. To these are added some new compositions, of several modern writers whose names are subscribed to their several works, upon the first subject: viz., The Phœnix and Turtle." These "new compositions" are prefaced by the following title: "Here after follow divers Poetical Essaies on the former Subject, viz: the Turtle and Phœnix, done by the best and chiefest of our moderne writers, with their names subscribed to their particular works: never before extant. And (now first) consecrated by them all generally, to the love and merite of the true noble knight, Sir John Salisburie. *Dignum laude virum*

*Musa vetat mori*, MDCL." "Torquato Caeliano" is only a "mask" name, Chester having, as Dr. Grosart points out, combined the Christian name of Tasso, and the surname of one of the minor poets of Italy of the same period. Emerson in his Preface to *Parnassus* (1875), wrote, "I should like to have the Academy of Letters propose a prize for an essay on Shakespeare's poem, *Let the bird of loudest lay*, and the *Threnos* with which it closes, the aim of the essay being to explain, by a historical research into the poetic myths and tendencies of the age in which it was written, the frame and allusions of the poem." This explanation, however, has never been given, and although Dr. Grosart made, in 1878, an attempt to solve the problem, the riddle cannot yet be said to have been answered. The idea of the loves of the Phoenix and Turtle seems to have been formed on the analogy of the Ovidian fable ("Shake-speare," as we know, was saturated with Ovid) of the love between the Turtle and the Parrot (*Amores*, II, 6), where also the Phoenix is mentioned ("vivax phoenix, unica semper avis") as an inhabitant of that Avian Elysium whither the good birds go at death. It was constantly said of a high-placed lady, whom it was intended to eulogize as the ideal representative of her sex, that she was a "Phoenix." Thus in Camden's *Remains* (1614) we find (p. 371) "Queen Jane who died in child-birth of King Edward the sixth and used for her devise a Phoenix, being her paternal crest, had this thereunto alluding for her epitaph:—

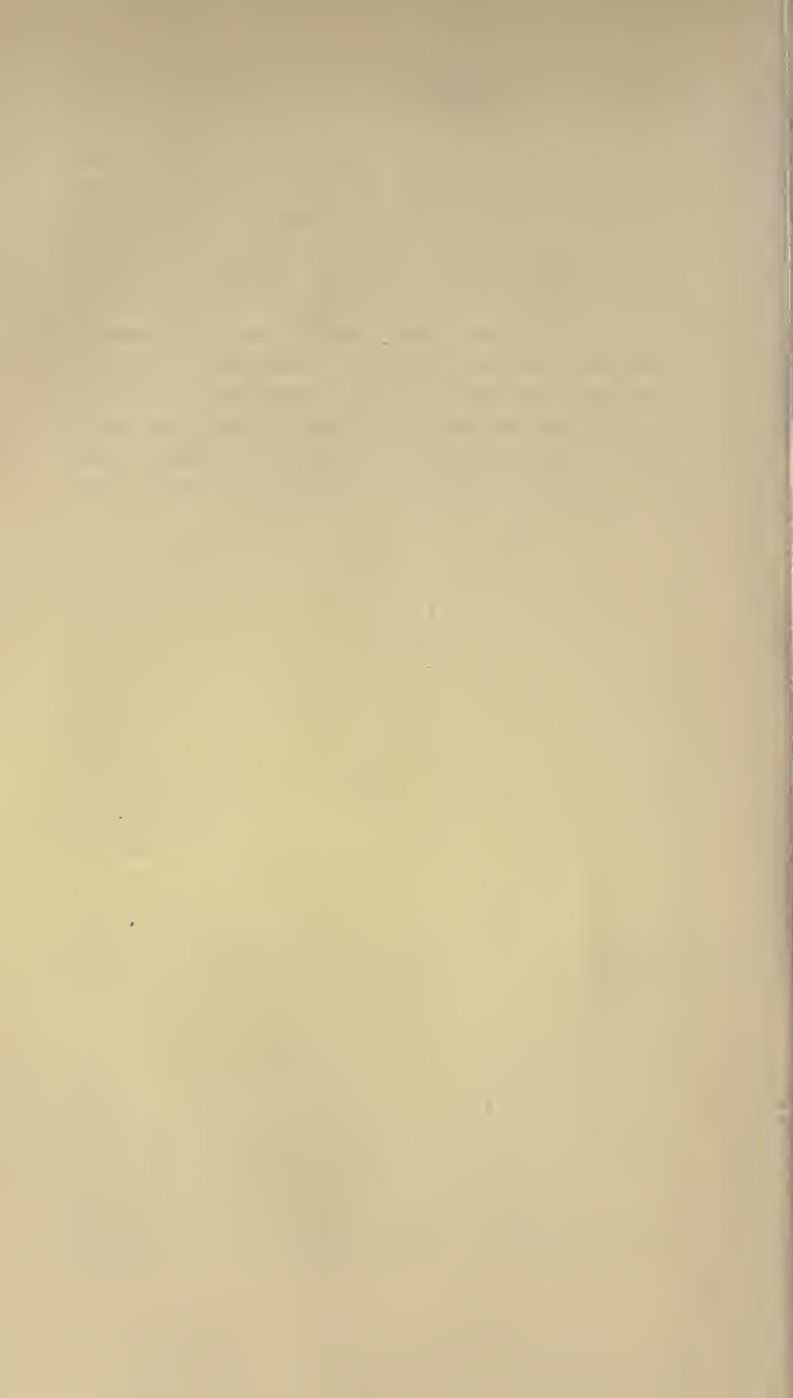
Phoenix Jana jacet nato Phœnice, dolendum  
Sæcula Phœnices nulla tulisse duos."

Some suppose that by Shake-speare's Phoenix Queen Elizabeth was intended, in support of which hypothesis they cite Cranmer's speech (now generally assigned to Fletcher) in *Henry VIII*, Act 5, sc. 5, alluding to "the maiden phoenix."

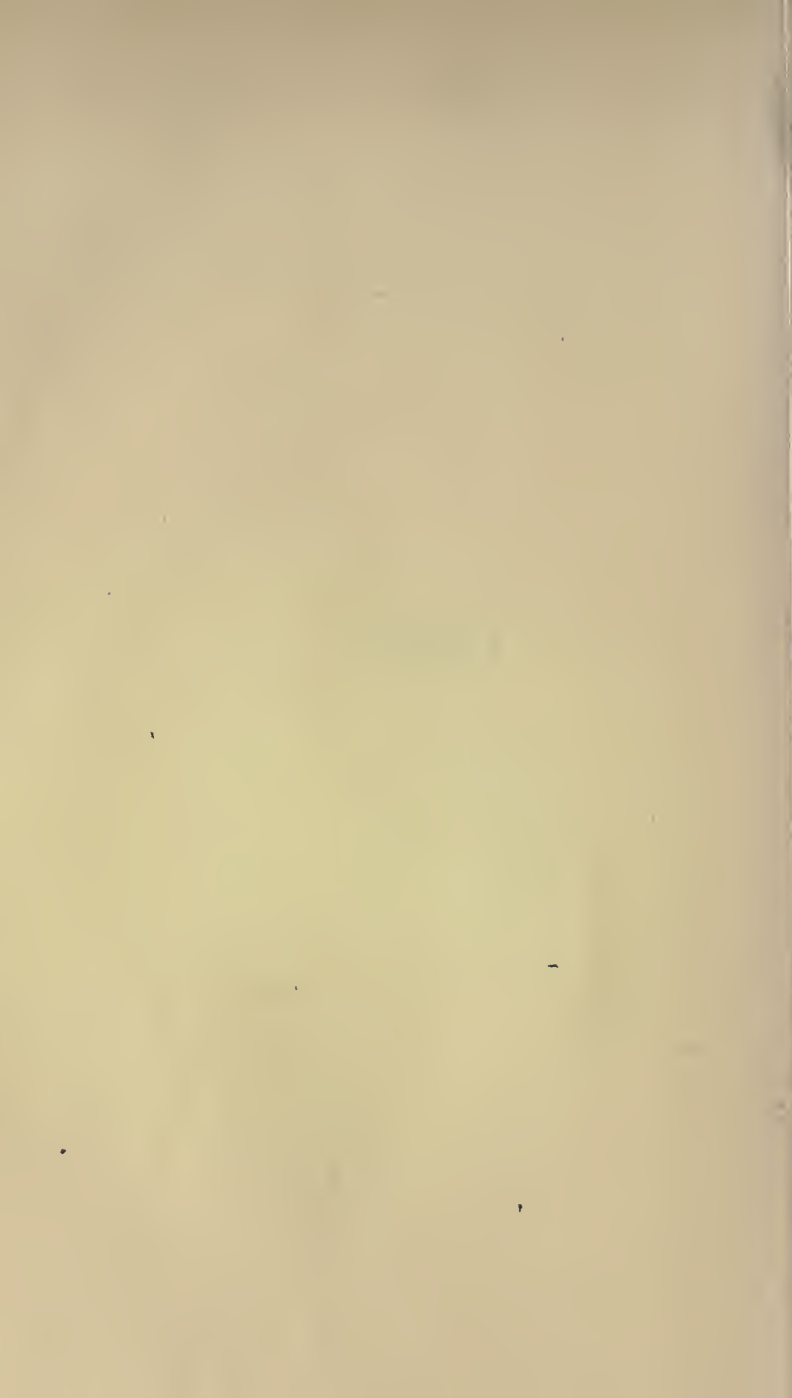
Of the poem published in Robert Chester's "Love's Martyr," and signed "William Shake-speare," Emerson writes: "I consider this piece a good example of the rule that there is a poetry for bards proper as well as a poetry for the world of readers. This poem if published for the first time and without a known author's name would find no general reception." This last criticism is undoubtedly true. Nay, even if it had been published in a

known author's name—say in his who wrote “The world's a bubble,” etc.—can we for a moment believe that this poem would have been eulogized by the critics? I think I know the way in which Sir Theodore Martin (e.g.) would have written about it in that case! But anything that bears the signature of “Shakespeare” is, of course, perfection in the eyes of some of his worshippers, and, accordingly, Dr. Grosart writes: “I discern a sense of personal heart-ache and loss in these gifted and attuned stanzas, unutterably precious.” Others, it may be said, discern in them the touch of a highly-cultured philosophic poet, who was assuredly *not* a provincial player, and who, also, wrote under a “mask” name, just as a fellow-contributor wrote under the *nom de plume* of “Ignoto.”





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Page 9, note, *for* A. R. D. Anders, *read* H. R. D. Anders.

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