# BACON OR SHAKESPEARE?

# BACON OR SHAKESPEARE?

*AN HISTORICAL ENQUIRY.*

BY

E. MARRIOTT.

---

"My Shakespeare, rise."—Ben Jonson.

---

London:
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1898.

# NOTICE.

The Writers referred to in the following pages are :—

Mr. R. M. Bucke, 'Shakespeare Dethroned,' *Pearson's Magazine*, Christmas, 1897.

Mr. W. Theobald, M.R.A.S., M.N.E.L., 'A Lecture delivered at Budleigh Salterton, April 3rd, 1894.'

Mrs. Henry Pott, Edition of Bacon's 'Promus,' 1883.

Mr. J. A. Truesdell, Article in the *Washington Post*, April 12th, 1885, on Mr. Ignatius Donnelly's Theory of a Cypher imbedded in Shakespeare's Plays.

# ERRATA.

| Page. | | Line. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | .. | 13 | (from bottom) | dele "in England." |
| " | .. | 12 | " " | dele "in America." |
| 33 | .. | | Foot Note—after "Verona" | add "Act ii., Sc. 3." |
| 38 | .. | 21 and 27 | | for "Collis" read "Abbott." |
| 38 | .. | 22 | before "London" | insert "City of." |
| 43 | .. | 22 | | for "Thomas" read "George." |

# BACON OR SHAKESPEARE?

WHO wrote Shakespeare's Plays? This question has of late years been so often asked and answered that it might be deemed not merely superfluous, but impertinent, to offer a further word on the subject. I myself hoped and believed that the new theory was dying out, at least on this side of the Atlantic.

But my attention has been recently called to an article, by Mr. R. M. Bucke, in the last Christmas number of *Pearson's Magazine*, not only reviving the question, but, as the writer believes, so triumphantly and finally closing it in favour of Bacon that one more patient review of the matter seems to be still called for—the more so because Mr. Bucke has stated his case plausibly enough to mislead cursory readers (that is to say some three-fourths of all readers), who take it for granted that any one who sets forth his arguments in a confident and telling manner must have good reasons for his conclusions, and accept them accordingly, without taking the trouble to sift them.

I have also seen and carefully read a lecture published in pamphlet form about four years ago by Mr. W. Theobald on the same side.

Neither of these writers, however, has done much more than reproduce the old arguments first brought forward in America some fifty years ago, without taking the slightest notice of the answers again and again made to them.

But the Baconians appear to have started their theory under the immediate patronage of the famous St. Gingul-

phus, better known in the vulgar tongue, thanks to the legendary story of his martyrdom, as "the living Jingo," for, cut him to pieces as often as they would, he always came to life again. If the process was repeated as often in his case as it has been in the latter instance, Gingulphus himself must have had a bad time of it. But doubtless, in our advanced days, Baconians enjoy the privilege of a free use of anæsthetics, for they do not seem to mind it in the least.

To leave figure and come to fact. The theory was, as we have said, first started in America about the middle of the present century.* But within its ninth decade two new lines of argument were brought strongly forward both in America and England by Mrs. Henry Pott, drawn from an analysis of Bacon's 'Promus' (of which we shall speak more particularly further on), and on the authority of a concealed cypher, or rather of two cyphers, cryptograms as they were called, which Mrs. F. C. A. Windle, of San Francisco, and Mr. Ignatius Donnelly find imbedded—in the Plays, says Mr. Donnelly —in all Bacon's prose writings, including his private correspondence (!), as well as in the Plays, says Mrs. Windle—whereby each believes that Bacon makes his own claim to their authorship. Mrs. Windle, indeed, disclaims any *discovery* on her own part, being confidently persuaded that *her* cypher was a mysterious communication from the spirit of Bacon himself "from the unseen world"; while Mr. Donnelly learns from *his* cypher that "the intention of the [historical] Plays was to familiarize the public mind with the fact that kings were only men, and a very base kind of men, and that when their folly or their sins became too great, the people had power to dethrone them." With much more to the same monstrous effect.

---

* In a small 12mo. volume, entitled 'Romance of Yachting,' by J. C. Hart, United States Consul at Vera Cruz. (New York, 1848.)

Compare this with the whole tone of Bacon's acknowledged writings. Can any one imagine him to have held such ideas of the place of kings, either in the Providential order of the world or in actual history?

But the *primâ facie* objection to all Baconian theories is that they are grounded solely upon inferences. From first to last there is no direct external evidence whatever as to the authorship of the Plays.

Inferences and conjectures, right or wrong as others may deem them, are still matters of opinion, upon which every man has a right to his own. But such questions as whether or no Ben Jonson has named Shakespeare in a particular work, or whether or no the Folio of 1623 be "the foundation upon which the verdict of Shakespearian authorship is based," as Mr. Theobald has stated in one of his papers, are matters of fact which cannot with truth be answered negatively in the first case, or affirmatively in the second, by any one who has looked carefully through the pages of Ben Jonson's 'Discoveries,' or been made aware that, as one among numerous collateral witnesses, Francis Meres, a man of much literary note in his day, in the midst of an enthusiastic eulogy of Shakespeare's language and style, names twelve of the Plays as his, *five-and-twenty* years before the appearance of the Folio, viz. in 1598.

It would take us too far afield to go fully into Mr. Theobald's pamphlet; I must restrict myself to answering Mr. Bucke, and in so doing the main points in both will be inclusively answered at the same time.

Mr. Bucke begins by a comparison between "known facts" respecting the two men for whom the authorship of the Plays is claimed.

A communication from the unseen world in the form of the ghost of the old President of Magdalen, Dr. Routh, repeating his famous dictum "verify your references," might have been very useful to Mr. Bucke and some other of our Baconian critics; compliance with the

counsel might have saved them from some very awkward misstatements.

All that "three hundred years' rigorous research" has been able to discover concerning Shakespeare Mr. Bucke enumerates in something less than two columns of a magazine page, in the course of which only one contemporary witness is quoted, in the following sentence: "In 1592 his name was parodied in London as 'Shakescene' in Greene's 'Groat's Worth of Wit.'"

Greene was a well-known contemporary dramatist of some talent, but a coarse-minded man of very dissipated life, and in his 'Groat's Worth of Wit' had spoken in scurrilous (and oft quoted) words of Marlowe and Shakespeare. The work was published posthumously by Chettle, who at that time knew neither of them; but three months later, in the preface to a work of his own, having meanwhile become personally acquainted with Shakespeare, he wrote of him :—

"I am as sorry as though the originall fault had beene my fault, because myself have seene his demeanour, no less civile than he exelent, 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 which approves his art."

But more than this, looking at Mr. Bucke's words, could any reader imagine that one of Shakespeare's advocates* has collected testimonies to his general character, to his marvellous genius, as exhibited in the Plays and Poems attributed to him, from more than thirty well-known literary men of his own day—some of them his personal friends—and more than another thirty within the first half century after his death? Of these want of space only allows me to adduce two or three :—

* Mrs. C. Stopes in her only too elaborate, but exhaustive treatise 'Bacon-Shakespere Controversy,' now out of print.

"And first, as showing how early his dawning genius was recognized, Aubrey (whose notice of his life is the first known to exist) in a letter to Antony-a-Wood, the celebrated antiquary at Oxford, speaks of him in these terms: 'This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, and was an actor at one of the Playhouses, and did act exceeding well.....He began early to make essays at dramatic poetry, which at that time was very low, and his plays took well.....I have heard Sir William Davenant and Mr. Thos. Shadwell (who is counted the best comedian we have now) say that he had a most prodigious wit."

Francis Meres (above referred to) in his 'Palladium' (a survey of the literature of his own day) writes: "As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare." And six of the tragedies and six of the comedies are severally named to prove, with another classical allusion, that the Muses "would speak with Shakespeare's fine-filed phrases if they would speak English."

Again Camden, in his 'Remaines concerning Britaine' (1605), after speaking of "our ancient poets," adds, "If I would come to our time, what a world could I present to you out of Sir Philip Sidney.....William Shakespeare, and other pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire."

But the most important of all contemporary witnesses is Ben Jonson, on whose testimony Mr. Bucke lays, and rightly lays, the greatest stress (however much we may differ as to the conclusion he draws from it). The eighth and ninth of the ten heads under which Mr. Bucke arranges his arguments are respectively headed 'The Testimony of Ben Jonson' and 'Bacon and his Contemporaries.'

With these, therefore, as the crucial ones, on the right understanding of which the value of all the others depends, I will begin, and I think that we shall agree that a more trustworthy witness than Jonson in reference to Bacon and Shakespeare could not be brought forward

—scholar, poet, and intimate friend of both. First then I take

THE TESTIMONY OF BEN JONSON.

Lest I should be suspected of minimizing this part of the argument, I will give the paragraph so headed all but in full.

After telling us that Jonson was private secretary to Bacon, that he was a fine Latinist, and is supposed to have had a part in the translation of Bacon's works into Latin, Mr. Bucke goes on to say:—

"There cannot be a doubt that Jonson knew where the Plays came from—at least he knew, beyond a peradventure, whether or no Bacon wrote them. In the preface to the great Folio, Jonson (in a most elaborate eulogy) pronounced the works of Shakespeare superior to 'all that insolent Greece and haughty Rome sent forth.' A few years afterwards in his 'Discoveries' he said of certain works by Bacon that they were to be preferred to those of 'insolent Greece or haughty Rome.' In the same connexion he tells us that Bacon had 'filled up all numbers,' that is, that he was a great poet."

The entire passage here referred to occurs in the second of three consecutive paragraphs devoted to Bacon in the 'Discoveries'*—written after his death, for in the first of the series he is spoken of as "the late Lord St. Albans." This second is entitled the "Catalogus Scriptorum" (of the sixteenth century) "who were great masters of wit and language." The list gives sixteen names, ending with that of "Lord Egerton the Chancellor, a great and grave Orator."

Then follow the words:—

"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 time, 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 ἀχμή of our language."

* See Jonson's works, vol. ix. pp. 184–5.

"Jonson, therefore," continues Mr. Bucke, "used the same language in praising Bacon that he had used in praising Shakespeare—which last would seem to have been a pen-name for Bacon. Not only so, but he tells us explicitly [!] that Bacon was a great poet. ....'To fill up all numbers' is to be not only a poet, but a supreme poet. If Bacon wrote the plays he was that; if he did not write the plays it was an absurd misnomer."

I pause to ask why. Not only do the words, read with their context, plainly show that Jonson was referring to Bacon's published and acknowledged works, but the phrase "filled up all numbers" is surely applicable to the man who hesitated not to say of himself, "I have taken all knowledge for my province"*—"the daring enterprise," to use Dean Church's words, "in which Bacon and Aristotle—'the masters of those who know'—stood alone."

The idea that Bacon's wide intellectual sphere was the thought Jonson had in his mind is strongly confirmed by the remark made by a very good classical scholar to whom I showed the passage in question. He said to this effect:—

"To *fill up all numbers* is a distinctly different idea from *writing in numbers*. Seventeenth-century English was impregnated with Latin thought and expression. Ben Jonson's assertion that Bacon 'filled up all numbers' is probably an adaptation—conscious or unconscious—of Cicero's 'Mundus expletus omnibus suis numeris et partibus,' the world complete in all its numbers and parts—words in which there is no reference to *metrical* numbers at all, and which as applied to Bacon might be paraphrased, 'His set purpose was the perfecting of knowledge in all its numerous departments,' the exact counterpart of 'I have taken all knowledge for my province.'"

Mr. Bucke, however, is of a different opinion, for after quoting another, and that the most tender and beautiful of the three eulogistic paragraphs, in order "to show how deeply Jonson reverenced Bacon's character," and "how impossible it would have been to him to write hastily or recklessly about him," he continues:—

* Letter to Lord Burghley (Dean Church's 'Bacon,' p. 16).

"But if, as I think, we are right in supposing that Jonson knew who wrote the Plays, and if further we do right to give his words in this connection their full meaning, then I claim we have a right to say Jonson knew who wrote the Plays, and he says that their author was Francis Bacon."

We must award Mr. Bucke the merit of having the courage of his opinions, for a bolder assertion (save for courtesy's sake I could use a stronger word) on a more slender foundation can rarely have been uttered.

I, too, call Ben Jonson into court, as the strongest, most incontrovertible witness *on the other side.* Let us hear what he did "explicitly" say.

Bear in mind that the advocates of the Baconian authorship all agree that the fact of Shakespeare's having held unchallenged fame as the author of the Plays during his life, and for some 250 years after, can only be accounted for by Bacon's extreme anxiety to conceal his own authorship.

Assuming then for the moment that Bacon was the true author, but that rather than that he should be known to have had any connection with the stage he was willing to give away world-wide fame to an obscure illiterate actor such as they represent Shakespeare to have been—if, I say, all this were so, the appearance of the great Folio published by Heminge and Condell in 1623 must have satisfied him that his secret was secured not only in his own age, but through all generations to come.* It was entitled

'The Plays of William Shakespeare.'

It shows Shakespeare's portrait on its first page subscribed by a ten-line panegyric signed "Ben Jonson," which began and ended thus:—

> This figure that thou seest cut
> Was for the gentle Shakespeare put,
> .....Reader, looke
> Not on his picture but his booke.

* In treating the evidence of the Folio in this place I designedly confine myself to Ben Jonson's share in it; but I shall have occasion to recur to the subject further on.

It is startling enough to be asked to regard all this as a hoax intended to mislead the world as to the authorship of the Plays! There was no call for an honest man like Ben Jonson to have done so much, but to go further was utterly superfluous.

But if we must indeed suppose that his extreme desire to eulogize the true author of the Plays, although under a false name, induced Jonson to add the "elaborate eulogy" Mr. Bucke refers to, he would surely have taken care that its wording should be as far as possible applicable to the genius, character, and circumstances of the man for whom (we are assuming) he intended them. Is it conceivable that Jonson could go out of his way to support such a wholesale imposture as to dedicate a panegyric on a living author "to the memory" of a man who had been dead seven years? or to perpetuate so grotesque a falsehood as the representing the stately Francis Bacon treading the stage in buskins and the actor's socks? The eighty lines of the panegyric are headed thus :—

To the memory of my beloved
MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
And what he left us,

and they contain, *inter alia*, the following lines, sufficient, one would have thought, to daunt the boldest theorist from assigning the authorship of the Plays to Bacon :—

I therefore will begin, Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, and wonder of our Stage...
My Shakespeare, rise!.....
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee I will not seek
For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles.....
To live again to hear thy buskins tread
And shake the Stage, or when thy socks are on
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come...

Sweet Swan of Avon, what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear.....
Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage
Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage,
Which since thy flight fro hence hath mourned the night
And despairs day but for thy volume's light.

This is a long extract, but less would scarcely have done justice to the astounding assertion on the part of Messrs. Theobald & Co. that the panegyric was intended for Bacon. Considering the difficulty of discerning the greatest scholar of the age in the disguise of a man apostrophized as having "small Latin and less Greek," it would be not more unreasonable to argue that Bacon was really the disguised actor as well as the concealed author of the Plays. Or if—to drop irony—we are asked gravely to admit the Baconian hypothesis, imagine the feelings of the already humbled ex-Chancellor, with his alleged dread of any association with the stage, on reading such lines as I have quoted, from the pen of the man who (according to our critics) *knew* him to be the author! The idea is so preposterous in its incongruity that one is almost ashamed to treat it as worth serious refutation.

But I have a more serious charge to bring against the advocates of the Baconian theory—such as Messrs. Theobald and Bucke in England, and Mrs. Henry Pott in America—than mere weak arguments or unwarrantable deductions: I mean the reckless carelessness with which some of their most important statements are made.

All three quote Ben Jonson's eulogies of Bacon in the 'Discoveries'—all three overlook his equally fervent praise of Shakespeare a few pages back (175) in the same volume. Mr. Bucke does not allude to Shakespeare in this place at all, but the other two triumphantly point out that Ben Jonson omits his name in the list of eminent literary men of the age.

Now in the particular paragraph from which they quote, naming some of the "great masters of wit and

language of the sixteenth century," Shakespeare is not named (and, strange to say, but proving the incompleteness of the list, neither is Spenser); and if the paragraph stood alone, the omission would be hard to account for. But it does not stand alone.

A few pages back (175) Shakespeare is named—just where we should expect to find him—among the poets, and named in terms of the highest encomium.

For the sake of its bearing upon our whole subject, I give the paragraph in full. It is headed thus: "De Shakespeare Nostrat [*sic*] Augustus in Hat.":—

"I remember that the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that he never blotted a line. I have said, 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."

Now mark what follows:—

"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 never did wrong but with just cause,' and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more of him to be praised than to be pardoned."*

At this point, then, I sum up the "testimony" of Ben Jonson, and, adopting Mr. Bucke's method of argument, venture to conclude that, reading the panegyric in the Folio in connexion with the eulogy in the 'Discoveries,' "we have a right to say Jonson knew who wrote the Plays, and he says that their author was"—William Shakespeare.

* Ben Jonson's works, vol. xi. pp. 175-6.

We have now seen the sort of ingenious sophistry by which Mr. Bucke draws what he regards as "explicit" evidence from Ben Jonson's "testimony." Let us now see how he applies the same logical screw to draw confirmation of his theory out of Bacon's own words.

The ninth of Mr. Bucke's ten heads of argument begins by asking, "What do Bacon's intimate friends, what does Bacon himself, say upon the point?" The point, that is, of the authorship of the Plays.

We know what one intimate friend—Ben Jonson—says about it, and we have glanced at what two or three out of some twenty or thirty other contemporaries have said about it also.

The instances brought forward by Mr. Bucke himself are really not worth pausing upon, nor, to do him justice, does he lay stress upon them. He feels, and rightly, that what Bacon says of himself is the important point at this moment, and on this head this *partisan quand même* scruples not to say that "Bacon *distinctly claims* that the Plays proceeded from him."

The "phrase" on which Mr. Bucke grounds this audacious assertion is found in a prayer written by Bacon just after his fall in 1621. The prayer, which Dean Church gives in full, is an extremely affecting one, too long to be reproduced here. In the small portion which Mr. Bucke was able to quote, the broken-hearted man prays God to "remember" how he had "walked before" Him; and among other instances of his fidelity he adds, "The state and bread of the poor and the oppressed have been ever precious in my eyes. I have hated all cruelty and hardness of heart. I have, though in a despised weed, procured the good of all men."

"This last clause," says Mr. Bucke, "has never been explained, and I say boldly," he continues, "that it cannot be explained, except on the supposition that it refers to the Plays. It is something vast that he is speaking of, something that is to benefit the race." Mr. Bucke

goes on to admit that "Bacon's prose has done that"; but he says, "it never appeared in a despised dress or weed. It was nobly composed—put into the best Latin," &c., "nobody ever dreamed of despising it." But the Plays, he argues, "though they have done ten times more for the race than the prose works," were—at least in Bacon's own day—distinctly and unmistakably in a "despised weed"; and he concludes that "the Plays, and the Plays alone, fulfil the conditions: they were in a despised weed, and they are calculated to procure the good of all men." Mr. Bucke sets the Plays at a high level; he could hardly say more for the Old and New Testaments.

Statements more false to fact than are contained in the above paragraph could hardly have been made.

In the first place, what were the kind of writings by which Bacon hoped to procure the good of all men he has himself more than once fully revealed. The first instance occurs in a paper originally written "in stately Latin." It never appeared in a separate form. "It retains," says Mr. Spedding, "a peculiar interest for us on account of the passage in which he explains the plans and purposes of his life, and the estimate he had formed of his own character and abilities." And what does he say? Mr. Spedding shall tell us (the italics in all the ensuing passages are mine, to point their connexion with the words of the prayer):

"He began by conceiving that a wise method of studying Nature would give man the key to all her secrets and therewith the mastery of all her powers. If so, *what boon so great could a man bestow upon his fellow-men?*"

Again, in 1621, immediately after his fall, he wrote to his intimate friend Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester.* The letter is very interesting and characteristic, both in its religious tone and its classical allusions.

* It was written as an "Epistle Dedicatory" for a treatise on the relations between England and Spain, never completed.

Though, he thanks God, he has as a Christian higher consolations, yet he finds comfort too in thinking how others have borne themselves under the like calamities; and taking example from Demosthenes and Seneca, he resolves to spend his time wholly in writing. And then he gives an account of the works he intends to set himself to do—such as the completion of the 'Advancement of Learning' and of the 'Instauration,' a digest of laws, &c.: "Now having," he says, "in my work of my 'Instauration' had in contemplation the *general good of all men* in their very being, and the dowries of nature—and in my work of laws *the general good of men*, likewise in society, and dowries of government," &c.

Then he goes on to say that, being no longer able to do his country service, it remained to him to do her honour, as he hopes to do by his life of King Henry VII. He adds that he purposes also to continue his 'Essays,' "and some other particulars of that nature," as recreations from other studies.*

If further proof were needed that the purposes which Bacon set before himself—the subjects with which his thoughts were occupied—left absolutely no inch of mental ground for the composition of such a bulk of dramatic literature as the six-and-thirty "Shakespeare" Plays—let alone all else which has been claimed as his work—let the reader look at the remarkable record called 'Commentarius Solutus,' discovered by Mr. Spedding, and quoted and remarked upon by Dean Church, p. 82.

And I ask, Who, reading all the above, can for a moment believe that the thought of writing *Plays* ever entered his thoughts, or can have been referred to in his prayer?

---

* These recreations cannot have included the Plays as he goes on to say, "I am not ignorant that those kind of writings would with more pains.....(perhaps) yield more lustre and reputation to my name than those other I have in hand."

If Mr. Bucke will refer to Dean Church's book, he will find himself greatly mistaken in supposing that no one ever despised the prose writings.

In a splendid passage which I can but briefly here refer to, he says that the hopes and aspirations of the age after a larger science "embodied themselves in Bacon in the form of a great and absorbing idea which took possession of the whole man," an idea, he adds, which has "long become a commonplace to us, but strange and perplexing to his own generation, which probably shared Coke's opinion that it qualified its champion for a place in the company of the 'Ship of Fools,' and expressed its opinion of the 'Novum Organum' in the sentiment that 'a fool could not have written it, and a wise man would not.'" *

And although no one probably, save Bacon himself in the hour of his deep humiliation, would have used such a phrase as "a despised weed" of any of his writings, yet it is evident from words here and there dropped from his pen that he was conscious that his highest speculations were not appreciated by his own countrymen. In the letter to Bishop Andrewes above quoted, while he acknowledges gratifying testimony from "many *beyond seas*" to the value of his great work the 'Instauration,' he adds that he has "just cause to doubt that it flies over men's heads"; and we have already seen that he believed a lighter style of writing would have added more to his reputation.

But if "despised weed" be an exaggerated term for the estimation in which some may have held the prose writings, it is nothing short of absolute untruth in regard to the Plays.

So far from being despised, the Plays were performed before Royalty at Court, before scholars at the Universities, year after year before admiring audiences in

* Church's 'Bacon,' pp. 200–202.

London. They won for their author (who that author may have been does not affect this part of the question)—they won, I say, for their author enthusiastic eulogiums in prose and verse from literary men of the day. Two or three specimens of such have been already given, and they might have been multiplied tenfold.

But of all unexpected utterances of men in those "next ages" to which Bacon in his will confided his "name and memory,"* surely not one would have been more surprising to himself than the interpretation put upon his prayer, and to learn that when, humbly on his knees imploring mercy, he had ventured to plead before Almighty God that he had sought "the good of all men," he was praying Him to remember that he had—written "Shakespeare's Plays"!

Another instance of the extreme untrustworthiness of Mr. Bucke's statements and inferences is too significant to be omitted. He is giving a conjectural explanation of the dates at which the Plays appeared (assuming their author to be Bacon), and he says :—

"From 1590 to 1605 Bacon, having ample leisure, wrote and issued under a pen-name twenty-one Plays, and under his own name two small prose works."

During this period of "ample leisure" Bacon was studying law and conducting a considerable legal practice, was a Member of Parliament, was Reader at Gray's Inn, wrote *numerous* legal treatises not published in his lifetime, and wrote and published the two "small prose works"—the 'Essays' and the first part of the 'Advancement of Learning.'

Mr. Bucke continues :—

"From 1606 to 1621, being in office and his time fully taken up, he wrote and published almost nothing, either in his own or any other name, till the publication of the 'Novum Organum' in 1620."

---

* "For my name and memory I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next ages."

Now, not to mention that this "almost nothing" comprised the writing and the publishing in 1610 of his famous (and in his own day his most popular) work 'The Wisdom of the Ancients,' besides some minor matters, let the reader remember that the 'Novum Organum,' thus slightly referred to, as though the writing as well as the publishing belonged to the same year, is the work upon which, says Dean Church, Bacon "concentrated all his care," which was twelve years in progress, twelve times revised by his own hand,* and written in Latin, which answers to it in "conciseness, breadth, and lordliness."

But whatever the "almost nothing" may, or may not, have included, Bacon, according to Mr. Bucke, made up for it within the next four years, for he goes on to tell us:—

"After his fall in 1621, having nothing else to do.....he set to work in good earnest to finish what he had in hand or had partly thought out."

So far is quite true, and what the work actually was that he set before his own mind we may learn from his letter to Bishop Andrewes. †

"And so," Mr. Bucke tells us, "he passed through the press in four years the enlargement of the 'Advancement of Learning' and some five other books with his own name on their title-pages."

All this—in four of those five years of "misery" and "expiation," as he himself wrote, which intervened between his impeachment in March, 1621, and his death in April, 1626—was a vast intellectual achievement. But Mr. Bucke adds an "and" as unhesitatingly as though the MSS. were all existing in Bacon's own handwriting

---

* "My great work goeth forward," Bacon wrote to his friend Matthew, 17 February, 1610, "and after my manner I alter ever when I add, so that nothing is finished till all is finished."

† See *ante*, p. 20.

—"*and*—the Plays as above," *i.e.* "eight or ten new Plays and twelve rewritten ones." *

And note that the Plays are the supposed additional work of only *two* years, for the Folio was published in 1623.

And within these same two years the broken-hearted, but still undaunted man brought out the 'History of the Winds' and the 'History of Life and Death,' in 1622, and a greatly enlarged recasting of the 'Advancement,' and the nine books of the 'De Augmentis,' in 1623.

Such a mass of work within so brief a time and under such circumstances is sufficiently astonishing, but with the alleged addition would have been alike such a physical and intellectual impossibility, that if the words were not standing in printer's ink before our eyes, it would have been incredible that any one could have the assurance to ask us to accept it.

As to the argument which at this point Mr. Bucke draws from the fact that the folio edition of the Plays, and the 'De Augmentis,' and an edition of Bacon's works published at Frankfort much about the same time, are all of the same size, type, and kind of paper, it is really too ridiculous to adduce all this as evidence that the works named were "projected and carried through by the same mind."

The folio size, with suitable type and paper, was the fashion of the time, when not more books were printed in a year than are now in a week! I have in my own possession a copy of Bishop Andrewes's sermon of precisely the dimensions Mr. Bucke gives, viz., foolscap, measuring eight and a quarter by thirteen inches, and the bookshelves of every public library in the kingdom could afford similar instances.

---

* To which Mr. Donnelly would fain have us add the enormous labour of rearranging the entire text of the whole thirty-six Dramas, with additions, omissions, alterations, "sometimes making his characters talk nonsense" in order to "lug in some word required for the Cypher"!

There is one more strong presumption against the idea that Bacon would at any time of his life have been willing to bestow such a large portion of time and of intellectual labour upon writing English Plays: I refer to his avowed mean estimate of vernacular speech as a vehicle for any permanent literature.

"It is a curious defect in Bacon," writes Dean Church, "that he should not have been more alive to the powers and future of his own language." Again he says: "It is strange that he should not have seen that the new ideas and widening thoughts of which he was the herald would want a more elastic and more freely-working instrument than Latin could ever become;.....but so great a change was beyond even his daring thought. To him, as to his age, the only safe language was the Latin."

"For these modern languages"—so he writes towards the close of his life to Sir Toby Matthew—"these modern languages will one time or another play the bankrowte with books, and since I have lost much time with this age I would be glad if God would give me leave to recover it with posterity."

And this was written "towards the close of his life," the very time to which some attribute such an amount of English composition.

This seems a fitting place to touch upon the comparative literary style of the Plays * and Bacon's prose works, between which Mr. Bucke claims a close resemblance on the sole ground that Bacon's prose can readily be arranged and pronounced as blank verse, and has a tendency to fall into threefold clauses.

---

* I cannot too strongly recommend my readers, if they seek trustworthy evidence, direct and indirect, on the subject of Shakespeare's character, literary and personal, to study the extremely interesting articles by Prof. Spencer Baynes in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' ed. 1886, and by Mr. Sidney Lee in the 'Dictionary of National Biography.'

All rhetorical writing can readily supply blank verse if we may take a line at a time, and the force and rhythmical euphony of the triplet are universally recognized and of frequent recurrence in our standard literature —*e.g.*, in the Scriptures, and in Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' the book, we may stop to remark, beside which Dean Church says 'The Advancement of Learning' is the first which can claim a place as "one of the landmarks of what high thought and rich imagination have made of the English language." But—*pace* Mr. Bucke —what resemblance is there between Bacon's stately periods and sustained gravity of expression, and the ever-varying sympathetic feeling, the sparkling wit, still less the broad humour which brim over in Shakespeare?

Imagine Francis Bacon at any period of his life writing the Falstaff scenes in 'Henry IV.,' or any scene at all of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'!

But more than all this. Where is there a trace in Bacon's avowed writings, or in his biography, of that delicate, discriminating knowledge and vivid though never exaggerated portraiture of womanhood in its tenderest, its noblest, its most passionate, or its most commonplace aspects which form so leading a characteristic of the Plays?

He has spoken of the passion of love, but—notwithstanding the purity of his life, and the elevation of his mind and sentiment—he seems to have been incapable of the very idea of love in those high developments which make

> The world's great bridals chaste and calm.

It is this defect which was so conclusive to the mind of Lord Tennyson. In the second volume (p. 424) of the delightful biography which his son has given us, it appears that some one had written to ask if he thought that Bacon wrote the Plays, and he says:—

> "I felt inclined to write back, 'Sir, don't be a fool. The way in which Bacon speaks of love is enough to prove that he is not

Shakespeare: "I know not how, but martial men are given to love. I think it is but as they are given to wine, for perils like to be paid with pleasure." How could a man with such an idea of love have written "Romeo and Juliet"?'"

The passage Tennyson quotes occurs in the brief No. X. of the 'Essays,' and throughout is at the literary antipodes to Shakespeare's idea, and ideals, of love.

If Baconians could ever be induced to give heed to the plain words of the friends and collaborators among whom Shakespeare lived his life and wrought his work, difficulties arising out of varying editions and uncertain dates and missing manuscripts would shrink into their proper insignificant proportions.

Listen to what Heminge and Condell, co-managers with Shakespeare for years of all theatrical matters in the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, who must therefore have known what manner of man he was, and what work he was capable of producing—listen, I repeat, to what they have recorded in their prefatory words to the famous First Folio:—

"It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the Author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he, by death, departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his friends the office of their care and pain to have collected and published them; and so to have published them, as where, before, you were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them—even those are now offered to your view cured, and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them, who, as he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

And here I might have stopped, so far as the main question is concerned. For, after all, the two cardinal points upon which the whole argument turns, and by which the rival claims to the authorship of the Plays

must stand or fall, are the testimony of Ben Jonson and other contemporaries to Shakespeare, and the utterances of Bacon himself concerning his own literary aims and literary life's work.

But for the sake of the large class of readers who fail to distinguish between ingenious conjecture and direct evidence, I will endeavour specifically to answer the most important of Mr. Bucke's remaining "arguments," touching here and there on Mr. Theobald's.

I begin with their assumption of Shakespeare's lack of even the most elementary education, extending to a doubt whether he ever learned to write.

On this subject Baconians are specially unfair. Every social disadvantage attached to Shakespeare's circumstances is stated in exaggerated terms. His parents are "illiterate," his mother of "the peasant class," and so forth, to all which Mr. Theobald adds gossiping tales raked out of the compilation which goes by the name of 'Cibber's Lives of the Poets,' published 120 years after Shakespeare's death, and in an age so incapable of appreciating the mind of Shakespeare that Rymer (pronounced by Pope to be "one of the best critics England ever had") wrote that in tragedy Shakespeare appears quite out of his element—"his brains are turned—he raves and rambles without any coherence, any spark of reason.....to set bounds to his phrensy," and that "the shouting of his battle scenes is necessary to keep the audience awake, otherwise no sermon would be so strong an opiate."*

To the gossip of such an age Mr. Theobald yields implicit credence, while to the reiterated testimony of eye and ear witnesses he pays not even the attention of an attempted refutation, but passes it all by as if non-existent.

It is true that Shakespeare's father was a tradesman in a country town, but a town considerable enough to

* See Moulton's 'Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist,' p. 8.

have its own civic corporation, every grade of which, up to its "chief Alderman" or "Bailiff," he at one time or other filled in turn. A coat of arms was granted to him in 1596, a thing of far more significance at the end of the sixteenth than of our nineteenth century; and in the grant, which may be seen to this day in the Heralds' Office, John Shakespeare is styled "gentleman," and his great-grandfather referred to as having rendered faithful and valiant service to Henry VIII.*

Shakespeare's mother was the daughter and heiress of Robert Arden, of Wilnecote or Wilmcote, more commonly written Wincot, whose family had for some generations been reckoned among the landed gentry of Warwickshire. All this does not look like being utterly illiterate themselves, or allowing the eldest of their four sons to be so, when they had the right to gratuitous education for them in the Free Grammar School of Stratford—a fifteenth-century foundation recently re-established by Edward VI.

The books in use at such schools at that period included Homer, Horace, Virgil, &c., for the elder boys, and among those for the junior classes were the 'Puerilis Sententiæ' and 'Lily's Grammar.' In this last are found the *ipsissima verba* Shakespeare puts into the mouth of his two schoolmasters, Holofernes in 'Love's Labour Lost,' and Sir Hugh Evans in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.'

On this subject the late Rev. Henry Dale, himself an accomplished scholar, in an interesting lecture on the authorship of the Plays which I have been kindly permitted to make free use of,† aptly quotes from 'Titus Andronicus,' Act IV. sc. ii., where Demetrius reads from a scroll:—

* C. Stopes's 'Bacon-Shakespere Controversy,' p. 142.

† The lecture remains in manuscript, the day fixed for its delivery at Budleigh Salterton having been mournfully anticipated by the death of the writer after very brief illness.

> Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus
> Non eget Mauri jaculis, nec arcu

(the only classical *distinct quotation*, so far as he could remember, to be found in the Plays), and Chiron answers :—

> Oh ! 'tis a verse in Horace ; I know it well,
> I read it in the grammar long ago.

Moreover, numerous translations as well as collections of brief extracts from classic authors, such as Baudwin's 'Collections of the Sayings of all the Wise,' 1547, were much in vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Numerous instances of recurrence to such aids to learning are to be found among Jeremy Taylor's quaint illustrations and out-of-the-way bits of knowledge.

Such collections would easily account for the occurrence of similar passages in the Plays and in Bacon's prose works and the 'Promus' (of which last we shall speak more particularly presently)—such, for instance, as the much noted false quotation of "moral" instead of "political" philosophy from Aristotle, of which mistake another curious example is found (as the learned editor of Bacon's philosophical works discovered) in a work of Virgilio Maivezzi published in 1622,* which strongly points to some common source from which all derived it. But can we believe that Bacon would commit such a solecism as to make Hector quote an author born some eight hundred years after the siege of Troy ? There are several similar inaccuracies, such as introducing a "Frenchman" into the *dramatis personæ* of 'Cymbeline,' and making Imogen refer to the Christian hours of prayer in a play chronologically placed in the pagan times of Britain, and localizing a shipwreck on

* "Non è discordante da questa mia opinione Aristotele il qual dice, che io giovani non sono buoni ascultatori delle morale Discorsi sopra Cornelio Tacito." Quoted in Lord Bacon's works, vol. iii. p. 436.

the coast of Bohemia—all natural enough in a man who had to pick up his information here and there as he could, and whose poetic faculty would seize upon every picturesque incident and turn it to dramatic use, regardless of chronological or topographical accuracy, but certainly not like the carefully accurate Bacon.

As to the reiterated assertion that Shakespeare can hardly have learned to write, grounded upon the fact of there being no existing manuscripts—only one letter addressed to him—and no specimen of his handwriting save five almost illegible signatures, in which his name is spelt in various ways, the first statement is sufficiently disproved by the assertion of the players that he never blotted a line, and Ben Jonson's wish that he had blotted a thousand. Mr. Theobald's suggestion that the unblotted manuscripts were the work of Bacon's secretary will not hold, as it is impossible but that Jonson and the players during the intercourse of years knew whether Shakespeare could write them or no.

Mr. Theobald also states as a positive fact that Shakespeare's family never claimed the authorship on his behalf. How does he know that they never did, except on the negative evidence that their doing so is not on record? But as far as negative evidence goes neither did they contradict it. One might as reasonably argue that the wife and the two daughters were dumb, because there is no record of a single word uttered by any of them.

And for the illegible handwriting and the varied orthography, in which he is more than rivalled by Sir Walter Ralegh, the correspondents of Dean Stanley, to mention no other, could bear witness that illegible handwriting is not absolute proof of illiterate vulgarity in the writer.

The fact of there being no existing letters or manuscripts may to a great extent be accounted for by the Globe Theatre and Ben Jonson's house having each been

burnt to the ground, the one being a very probable depository for manuscripts of the Plays, and Jonson more likely than any one else to have had private letters.

But when all exaggeration has been set aside, undoubtedly the fact remains that the circumstances surrounding Shakespeare's early years were most unfavourable to literary eminence.

But what does this but enhance our sense of the mighty genius which, coupled with what Webster, a fellow-dramatist, calls his "happy copious industry," enabled him to overcome all his social disadvantages, and to supply during the years of his London residence the defective teaching of his brief school days?

And think of the rapidity with which a youth of such extra-ordinary gifts (I mark the etymological force of the word) would gather up knowledge on all hands.

What in truth he did make of himself, and of the marvellous faculties with which God had endowed him, the authentic unanimous verdict of one friend after another bears witness.

And yet, in face of the reiterated praises and loving admiration lavished upon him in his own day, there are those to be found in our day who, shutting eyes and closing ears to all this, persist in speaking of him as a "vulgar," "illiterate," "very commonplace fellow," vying with each other to find terms mean enough to express their contempt of him.

But I must hasten on. Mr. Bucke's next point is that "it is certain that the man who wrote the Plays had seen many of the houses," &c., described in the dramas whose scenes are laid in foreign countries.

(In Bacon's case it suffices for Mr. Bucke to assume that his brother had seen them for him—admissible, perhaps, had Antony Bacon ever been in Italy. But during his twelve years' residence abroad, mainly in the South of France, he never proceeded further than Geneva.)

But there neither is nor does there need to be any such certainty whatever, since it is notorious that the plots of many of the Plays—notably of 'Romeo and Juliet' and of 'The Merchant of Venice'—were drawn from foreign sources. The latter had already been embodied in a ballad preserved to us in the 'Percy Reliques,' beginning:

> In Venice towne not long agoe
> A cruel Jew did dwell,
> Which lived all on usurie,
> As *Italian* writers tell.

And to fear losing the tide before embarking at Verona* does not look much like travelling in Lombardy.

Then we come to the mention of places which were interesting to Bacon, contrasted with the absence of any mention of Stratford, upon which both critics, but especially Mr. Theobald, lay such unaccountable stress, in contrast to the silence of the Plays in regard to places of Shakespearian interest. Mr. Bucke begins with two inaccuracies: he calls St. Albans Bacon's "home," and says it is named twenty-three times instead of twelve,† and such a phrase as "by St. Albans" and the like occurs three times.

But Bacon never lived at St. Albans itself at all. The country home so greatly loved by him was Gorhambury, a family property in Hertfordshire, near St. Albans, inherited from his brother Antony in 1601, and upon its spacious mansion and its woods and gardens he lavished large sums of money. But Gorhambury is not named in the Plays. And considering that ten out of the twelve times St. Albans is named occur in 'Henry VI.' and one in 'Richard III.'—that is to say, during the thirty years of the Wars of the Roses, in which St. Albans played such a conspicuous part—the wonder would have been if it had not been frequently mentioned in these particular Plays.

---

* 'Two Gentlemen of Verona.'

† See 'Shakespeare Concordance.'

And unless the supposed author deliberately chose that period of history in anticipated hopes of being made first a baron, then an earl, some nineteen or twenty years later, and determined beforehand that in such a case he would choose Verulam for the one title and St. Albans for the other, one does not see how any very strong argument as to authorship is deducible from the mere recurrence of the name.

And as to York Place—"twice tenderly named," Mr. Bucke tells us, in the play of 'Henry VIII.'—that, too, was almost unavoidable in describing the splendid coronation of Anne Boleyn, as the wedding feast being held in its banqueting hall is an historical fact. Of the tenderness characterizing its mention the reader may judge for himself by referring to 'Henry VIII.,' Act IV. sc. i.

And this is the amount of reference to localities which in one paper of Mr. Theobald's is called "crushing evidence"; while Ben Jonson's, Chettle's, and other testimonies, to which his attention, in the manuscript he is answering, was especially called, are passed by without a single syllable.

With regard to Stratford, Shakespeare's birthplace, or any house or place associated with him, both critics pointedly remark that no mention whatever is made of them in the Plays. True Stratford itself is not named, but Mr. Dale, "as a Warwickshire man," calls particular attention "to the many local references and verbal usages which afford internal evidence that the Plays were written by a native of that county." Wincot, Mary Arden's birthplace, is recalled by the mention of "Wincot ale" in 'The Taming of the Shrew':—

"The Forest of Arden, which is the chief scene of 'As You Like It,' he writes, not as a Frenchman or a travelled Englishman would, 'Ardennes,' but Arden, familiar to him as the name of the woodland district which in his time extended over a large part of the county, and still survives in 'Henley-in-Arden,' 'Hampton-in-Arden.'"

Mr. Dale gives numerous other instances of Warwickshire words still in use. A peculiar and almost obsolete word is "dowle," in the sense of a feather, which it means in 'The Tempest,'

> One dowle that's in my plume.

To "colly" is to blacken, as with a coal, and so in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' we have

> Brief as the lightning in the collied night.

To "make the doors" still means to close them, as in 'As You Like It,' "Make the doors upon a woman's wit, and it will out at the casement."

Lastly, a "sheep" is by every Warwickshire farm servant and by almost every farmer called a "ship," and "I have no doubt," says Mr. Dale, "that Shakespeare, to make room for his favourite play on words, intended it to be so pronounced in 'The Comedy of Errors,' where Dromio of Syracuse says to Antipholus of Ephesus :—

> Why, thou peevish *sheep*,
> What *ship* of Epidamnum stays for me?

Many other such instances might be found, and I venture to ask" (I am still quoting Mr. Dale) "whether any one of them occurs in Bacon's 'Promus' or in any other of his writings?"

I will only mention one more which the writer of the very interesting article in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' (fifth edition), while enlarging on the evidence the Plays afford of the local influences under which Shakespeare grew up, instances as found in a restored line of 'Timon of Athens,'

> It is the pasture lards the rother's sides,

*rother* being an old Anglo-Saxon word for any kind of horned cattle, which remained in use longer in the Midlands than in any other part of England. There was a "Rother Market" at Stratford in Shakespeare's time.

Now I am well aware that these and similar instances were adduced ten years ago and were met by the assertion that Bacon's universal knowledge made him master of all provincial dialects and customs.

Be it so. But we are not arguing that the presence of such Warwickshire provincialisms is proof that the Plays must have been written by Shakespeare—only that no argument can be drawn against his having done so from any absence of such.

Before I leave this part of the subject there is one passage in the article in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' above quoted so interesting that I must ask my reader's pardon for stepping aside from my main subject to quote it:—

"Mr. J. Greene," says the writer of the article in question, "referring to the moral effects arising from the mixture of races in the Midland districts, adds, 'It is not without significance that the highest type of the race, the one Englishman who has combined in their largest measure the mobility and fancy of the Celt with the depth and energy of the Teutonic temper, was born on the old border-land in the Forest of Arden!' And from the purely critical side Mr. Matthew Arnold has clearly brought out the same points. He traces some of the finest qualities of Shakespeare's poetry to the Celtic spirit which touched his imagination as with the enchanter's wand, and thus helped to brighten and enrich the profounder elements of his creative genius."

In the next paragraph Mr. Bucke says that Shakespeare left London in 1610, adding: "No one pretends that he wrote any Plays after his retirement into the country."

The Rev. J. Ward, Vicar of Stratford during the middle half of the seventeenth century, who, though not a contemporary, at all events must have had ample opportunities for learning all the traditions of the place, records in his diary that Shakespeare supplied the stage with two Plays a year.

Next, for various assertions concerning the chronology of some of the Plays Mr. Bucke is not answerable, as he

speaks on the authority of the anonymous editors of 'The Temple Shakespeare.' It is they who must reckon with Collier, Knight, and others who bring "conclusive evidence" that 'Winter's Tale' was acted at Shakespeare's own theatre, the Globe, on May 15th, 1611, in presence of Dr. Symon Forman, whose curious 'Book of Plays and Notes thereof for common policy' (whatever that last phrase may mean) was a few years ago discovered in the Bodleian Library. It was written in 1610 and 1611, and, says Mr. Knight, "distinctly gives the plots of 'Winter's Tale,' 'Macbeth,' and 'Cymbeline,'" proving that 'Cymbeline' existed several years before 1623.*

Of 'Julius Cæsar' it is also said that it was never heard of before 1623, and though no record of it has as yet been found, that Ben Jonson made no doubt of its having been written by Shakespeare we have already learned from his reference to it in his testimony to Shakespeare in the 'Discoveries.'

My remarks have already run to greater length than I intended. But there are two portions of the subject in hand to which I must give a prominent place. I mean the 'Promus' and the Sonnets. Some trivial points I may be excused for passing by, but these two and the Anagram (the last of the ten arguments) demand distinct attention.

We will begin with the 'Promus.' This was a common-place book (the word signifies a storehouse), and is entitled thus, 'The Promus of Formularies and Elegancies.' It was begun Christmas, 1594, and continued through several years, chiefly, but not entirely, in Bacon's own handwriting, and containing, says Mr. Bucke, "some 1,700 passages in six different languages, from all sorts of books, on all sorts of subjects"—proverbs, French and English, quotations from Virgil, Erasmus, the English

* See introduction to 'Winter's Tale' and 'Cymbeline,' in Knight's edition of Shakespeare.

Bible, &c. Sometimes the entries are so seemingly trivial—now and then only single words—that both Dean Church and Mr. Spedding conjecture, with great probability, that they were jotted down as memoranda to serve as a sort of *memoria technica*.* This curious collection of heterogeneous material, such as Bacon was in the habit of making, stands foremost in Mr. Bucke's plea for the Baconian authorship ; and Mrs. Henry Pott lays so much stress upon it as evidence, that she published a costly volume, with illustrations from the Plays, to prove — as she believed — that the collector of the 'Promus' and the author of the Plays must be identical. And not only so, but, as Mr. Bucke sums up the matter by saying, "the literature of England preceding the issue of the Plays has been almost exhaustively examined, and it appears that in almost every instance the expressions and thoughts found in the 'Promus' and transferred to the Plays are new in the language."

It is quite true that there are some very curious coincidences between the entries in the 'Promus' and the Plays—so much so that Dr. Collis, Head Master of the London School, in his Preface to Mrs. Henry Pott's edition of the 'Promus,' says some instances lead to the irresistible conclusion either that both Bacon and Shakespeare drew from a common source, or that the one borrowed from the other. Mrs. Henry Pott thinks the Plays borrowed from the 'Promus'; Dr. Collis that the 'Promus' borrowed from the Plays.

* This idea of the 'Promus' is so strikingly illustrated by the known practice of one of the greater contemporary scholars of Bacon's own day that the following passage from Mark Pattison's 'Casaubon' (second edition, p. 428) cannot be omitted :—"He read pen in hand, with a sheet of paper by his side, on which he noted much, but wrote out nothing. What he jots down is not a remark of his own on what he reads, nor is it even the words he has read ; it is a mark, a key, a catchword, by which the point of what he has read may be recorded in memory. The notes are not notes *on* the book, but memoranda *of* it for his own use."

The idea that Bacon occasionally borrowed from the Plays is very applicable to the phrase "Discourse of Reason," upon which Mr. Bucke lays great stress in his fifth argument, 'Identical or Similar Expressions.' Bacon uses it in the 'Advancement' and Shakespeare uses it in 'Hamlet.' Now the first specimen portion of the 'Advancement' was published in 1603; and the first edition of 'Hamlet,' also in 1603, was thus entitled: "The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke by William Shakespeare, as it hath beene diverse times acted by His Highnesse servants in the cittie of London, as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford." So that Bacon may have had ample opportunity for learning the phrase, and transferring it to his own pages.

But a very large proportion of the alleged resemblances are of the most trivial character, and Mr. Bucke's assertion that the thoughts and expressions were "in almost every instance new in the language" is disproved by the very extracts themselves. "Proverbs" of necessity embody popular thoughts or words, and the fact of their being found in the English translations of the Bible proves the same thing. The earlier ones, especially, were studiously written "in the spoken language of the people."

Out of scores of Mrs. Henry Pott's non-sequiturs I can only quote two or three. I assure the reader they are typical specimens. In Appendix D, p. 529, Mrs. Pott says (I copy verbatim): "The change of colour in hair by age has only been noticed by Bacon (Nat. Hist. Cen. IX. 851) and in the Plays of Shakespeare," and she gives seven references for "silver" as applied to head or beard.

The patriarch Jacob seems to have observed the phenomenon; nor did it escape the keen observation of King Solomon or the poetic eye of the prophet Isaiah. Should the reader's memory fail for references, Cruden's 'Concordance,' under 'Gray hairs' and

'Hoary head,' will assist him. Nearer to Bacon's own age, his friend Bishop Andrewes gives evidence of being aware of it when in his 'Præces Quotidianæ' he prays "usque ad canos porta me," "even to hoar hairs carry me": but then, to be sure, being on such intimate terms, Bacon himself may have called the bishop's attention to it.

Again, in No. 703 of the entries in the 'Promus,' authority apparently of Erasmus: "Wyld thyme in the grownd hath a sent like a cypresse chest," paralleled by

> I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows.
> 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' II. ii.

1603 gives a French proverb—"Joyeuse comme souris en graine," illustrated—not very obviously to the general reader—by

> Sleep'st thou or wak'st thou, jolly shepherd,
> Thy sheep be in the corn;
> And for one blast of thy minikin mouth
> Thy sheep shall take no harm.
> 'King Lear,' III. v.

No. 293, "You have," and No. 211, "Cocke," afford but slight grounds on which to establish identity of authorship. However, Mrs. Henry Pott thinks it worth while to give us the following quotations:—

> I cannot tell what *you* have done—I HAVE.
> 'Antony and Cleopatra,' II. ii.
>
> And have you (done it)?
> I have. 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' II. i.

There are four other equally forcible references for the use of "you" and "have," but these may suffice.

For "cocke" we have quotations from eight Plays, including 'Hamlet' and 'Othello.' I select that from Ariel's song in 'The Tempest,' Act I. sc. ii.:—

> Hark, hark! I hear
> The strain of strutting Chanticlere
> Cry Cock-a-dowdle-do.

Humbler walks of literature might furnish similar parallels. There are many nursery rhymes handed down

to us from an obscure antiquity which still remain anonymous. Who shall say but what we may, after all, be indebted to the great Lord Verulam for

Cock-a-doodle-do,
My dame has lost her shoe,

and for the pathetic story of the kittens who lost their mittens and incurred their mother's penal sentence—

Then you can *have* no pie?

I should like to be serious when such names as Bacon and Shakespeare are "the theme of our discourse," but it is really impossible to be serious in the face of such use of the 'Promus' as the foregoing.

We come now to the Anagram, with some amusement at the flourish of trumpets with which Mr. Bucke introduces it as the clencher of his argument, and pledge of literary immortality for Dr. Platt, of New Jersey, who discovered it.

This formidable thirteen-syllabled word

"Honorificabilitudinitatibus,"

put into the mouth of Costard the Clown in the Play of 'Love's Labour Lost,' is the lengthened form of "Honorificabilitudino," scribbled outside a collection of papers found at Northumberland House, claimed as Bacon's property on the sole ground that his masque 'The Conference of Pleasure' is one among other manuscripts copied in some clerk's hand. Outside the packet is the following list, apparently of what were once its contents, though some are no longer there:—

| | |
|---|---|
| Richard II. | Asmund and Cornelia. |
| Richard III. | Isle of Dogs, by Nash. |

Then, over the page,

Shakespeare, Bacon, Neville. Ne vile velis, &c.,

and scrawled across it the word given above. But all this neither proves that the collection was Bacon's property nor identifies him with Shakespeare more than

with any of the other writers whose names appear on the cover.

It is not necessary to enter fully into what Mr. Bucke calls the history of the word. But we may just mention that when referring to the scene in 'Love's Labour Lost,' in which the full word occurs (Act V. sc. i.), he quotes "Are you not lettered? Yes, yes, he teaches boys the horn-book. What is a, b, spelt backward, with the horn on his head?" The answer to that of course is "Ba, with a horn added." "Now ba," continues Mr. Bucke, "with a horn added, is Bacornu, which is not, but suggests, and was probably meant to suggest, Bacon."

And from another part of the word, also spelt backward, is obtained Bacifironoh, "from which it is not hard to pick Bacon."

This precious specimen of ingenious argument leads up to, and we must do Dr. Platt the justice to acknowledge is improved upon by the discovery he thinks himself so fortunate to have made, that the exact twenty-seven letters of the full word "honorificabilitudinitatibus" would render up *hi ludi tuiti sibi, Fr. Bacono nati*, a specimen of Latin composition which it would scarcely have flattered its supposed author to have fathered upon him, and the English construing is upon the same linguistic level: *These Plays intrusted to themselves proceeded from Fr. Bacon.* The results of several well-known anagrams are not only ingenious, but really very interesting; such, for instance, as the "Cras ero lux" ("To-morrow I shall be light") to which Charles I. is said to have given utterance when, on the night before his execution, his eye fell upon the "Carolus Rex" inscribed beneath his own portrait at Whitehall! And again, "Honor est a Nilo," from Horatio Nelson, and from "La révolution Française" "ôtez le mot *veto* et il nous reste *Un Corse la finira.*" But till it shall be thought proof of a prophetical spirit in Lord Nelson's

sponsors, when in answer to "Name this child" they pronounced a name designedly indicating the battle destined to win an earldom for the infant then presented at the font; or again, of a providentially ordained connexion between the birthplace of the first Napoleon and the anagram just quoted, Dr. Platt and his admiring friends must excuse us from accepting "Honorificabilitudinitatibus" for authentic evidence as to the authorship of the Plays.

## THE SONNETS.

Lastly, having to his own satisfaction disposed of the Plays, Mr. Bucke proceeds to confiscate some more of Shakespeare's literary property for his hero's benefit. But, indeed, there seem to be no bounds to the belief in Bacon's powers, time, and opportunity for literary production. Mr. Donnelly and Mrs. Windle claim for him the authorship of Montaigne's 'Essays,' Mr. Theobald of Marlowe's plays, while Mrs. Henry Pott and Mr. Bucke quietly assume the Sonnets* also to be his, without an attempt to show cause for so doing.

In curious contrast to the taste of a former age, when Thomas Steevens omitted the Sonnets from his edition of Shakespeare's works, on the ground that the strongest Act of Parliament would fail to compel readers into their service (!), Mr. Bucke falls into rhapsodies over "those little lakes of purest, most ætherial beauty, those exquisite Psalms of the most profound spirituality." Though far as may be from sharing Thomas Steevens's sentiment in the matter, I own I stop short of this last phrase. But to attribute them to Bacon!

The Sonnets! the original edition of which bore

---

* Mr. Theobald assigns these—at least mainly—to Sir Philip Sidney, who never put in any claim to them himself, nor was any trace of them found among his papers so carefully collected and published by his sister, the famous "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother," of Ben Jonson's epitaph. But these are trifling difficulties to modern criticism.

Shakespeare's name on the title-page,* which contain the writer's own wail over his position and calling (CXI.) :—

> Oh, for my sake do thou with Fortune chide,
> The guilty Goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means—which public manners breeds.
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand
> And almost thence my nature is subdued
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

And let no one fancy that the "brand" can refer to the charges under which Bacon came to dishonour. In 1609, the date of the first publication of the Sonnets, Bacon was high in royal and popular favour, and not till twelve years later did that shadow fall on his great name.

And the language of some other of the sonnets, as XCIII. and XCIV., while intelligible enough as addressed by a man in Shakespeare's position to a noble friend and patron, even though his junior in years, is ludicrously inappropriate from Sir Francis Bacon—high in office, moving in the same Court circles with the Earl of Southampton, or whosoever it were to whom they were addressed :—

> Oh ! if (I say) you look upon this verse,
> When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
> Do not so much as my poor name rehearse ;
> But let your love even with my life decay ;
> Lest the wise world should look into your moan
> And mock you with me after I am gone.

Or, again, could Bacon in lighter mood possibly have played upon the name of "Will," emphasized by italics, in three several Sonnets? As thus :—

> Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy will,
> And will to boot and will in overplus.
> More than enough am I that vex thee still,
> To thy sweet will making addition thus.

---

* "Shakespeare's Sonnets—Never before imprinted. At London by G. W. for T. T. and are to be sold by John Wright dwelling at Christchurch Gate. 1609."

Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
Shall will in others seem right gracious,
And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
* * * * *
So thou, being rich in will, add to thy will
One will of mine, to make thy large will more.
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one and me in that one *Will.*

Sonnet CXXXV.

And again in one of them (CXXXVI.) three times, thus:

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy *Will.*
* * * * *
Thus far for love my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.
*Will* will fulfil the treasure of thy love.
* * * * *
Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
And then thou lov'st me – for my name is *Will.*

In the two concluding paragraphs in which, in the most inflated language, Mr. Bucke sums up his homage to Francis Bacon, he can speak of him as the "almost Godlike and inspired man reported to us by Jonson," and "set forth by Spedding after a lifetime's study." But he does not tell us that this same Ben Jonson wrote of William Shakespeare as the man he "loved and honoured this side idolatry as much as any," and he willingly forgets that Spedding's thirty years' study of Francis Bacon resulted in his treating the idea of his having written the Plays as an intellectual impossibility. He says:—

"Nature is always individual. I doubt whether there are five lines together to be found in Bacon which could be mistaken for Shakespeare, or five lines in Shakespeare which could be mistaken for Bacon, by one who was familiar with their several styles, and practised in such observations."

And now one question in conclusion I cannot forbear asking before I close my plea in character of counsel for the defendant.

If William Shakespeare were indeed the "vulgar, commonplace, illiterate fellow" some would have us believe, how came Bacon to fix upon him, of all men in the world, to stand sponsor for works of the highest dramatic merit? How was Shakespeare able, throughout his whole life, to pass himself off among his contemporaries as the author, not of the Plays only, but of the 'Venus and Adonis' and the 'Lucrece' (published in his lifetime with his name in their title-pages) and of the Sonnets? How came he to be in favour with Queen Elizabeth and King James? How was it that, neither among the friends of Bacon on the one side, nor his own theatrical partners and boon companions on the other, no suspicion ever arose—no hint ever transpired—that all his attributed literary fame was an absurd fiction, utterly out of keeping with all that was known of him? How came his fellow townsmen, after his death, to show their pride in him by erecting a monument to his memory, whereon his title to literary fame is symbolized by the pen in his right hand and the scroll in his left?

These questions I leave others to answer, while for a final judicial verdict on the two men whose names have been put forth as rival claimants for the poet's crown, I gladly avail myself of better and more trustworthy words than my own, by adopting those in which Dean Church, when eulogizing Bacon, practically passes judgment on Shakespeare also. After relating the time and manner of Bacon's death, he says :—

"So he died, the brightest, richest, largest mind but one, in the age which had seen Shakespeare and his fellows; so bright and rich and large that there have been found those who identify him with the writer of 'Hamlet' and 'Othello.' That is idle. Bacon could no more have written the Plays than Shakespeare could have prophesied the triumphs of natural Philosophy."

FINIS.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOHN EDWARD FRANCIS,
ATHENÆUM PRESS, BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.