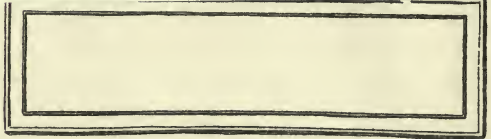
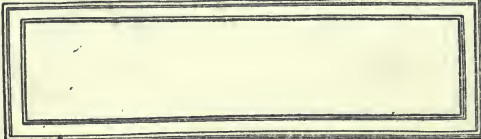


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IS IT SHAKESPEARE?



The right Hon^{ble} Francis Lo: Verulam, Viscount S^t Alban. mortuus 9 Aprilis, Anno Dⁿⁱ. 1626. Annosq; Aetat 66.

PORTRAIT OF BACON

From the First Edition of "Sylva Sylvarum"

IS IT SHAKESPEARE?

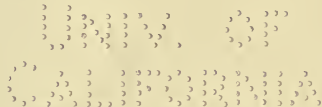
THE GREAT QUESTION OF ELIZABETHAN
LITERATURE. ANSWERED IN THE LIGHT
OF NEW REVELATIONS AND IMPORTANT
CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE HITHERTO
UNNOTICED

BY A CAMBRIDGE GRADUATE

(Walter Beqley)

"They have their exits and their entrances"

WITH FACSIMILES



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & CO.

1903

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TO . ALL . SERIOVS . STVDENTS .
OF . ELIZABETHAN . LITERATVRE .
SHAKESPEARIANS . OR . BACONIANS .
CIPHERERS . DECIPHERERS .
OR . REVIEWERS .
THE . AVTHOR .
WISHETH .
HAPPINESSE . AND . VNITIE .
VNDER .
ONE . HEAD . ONE . MOTTO . AND .
ONE . TRILITERAL . BANNER .

THVS . SVBSCRIBING . HIMSELF .

*So, Reviewers, save my Bacon ;
O let not Folly mar Delight :
These my name and claim unriddle
To all who set the Rubric right.*

M758107


00001

P R E F A C E

WHO knows not how difficult it always is to get people to alter their preconceived ideas or their traditional beliefs? But whenever sufficient evidence has been discovered in support of a change of current opinion, then it is, I think, just as well that some one should collect it and present it to the public, making, at the same time, such additions from his own researches as may help to settle the question. That is my excuse for this volume. If people were afraid to offer rebutting evidence because all the leading literary authorities had declared that there was no evidence against them that was not "irrational," we should make very slow progress in research.

Look at theology; how often have the big guns and canons of the Church declared that the evidence for the antipodes and the motion of the earth was "irrational." If no one had ventured to oppose this idea in the face of their tremendous authority, we might still all be holding the apparently very sensible opinion that the earth is fixed and flat.

To me the question of the authorship of those immortal works which have so long borne on them the name of William Shakespeare is one of the most interesting we can discuss in literary criticism. I hold in addition, that the whole matter should be discussed without heat, without prejudice (though that is very hard), and without

vituperation. The last requisite ought to be very easy, for surely vituperation is no argument, neither is it any assistance to argument with right-judging people. But the orthodox Shakespearians have not as a rule fulfilled the last literary requisite, and I hope I shall not be reckoned uncourteous if now and then in the following pages I take occasion to notice it.

For the literary services of Mr. Sidney Lee, who is the generalissimo of the orthodox party, I have the highest esteem and respect. His numerous articles in the "Dictionary of National Biography" are the models of what such notices should be; but when he writes in the *Times* or elsewhere on the Bacon-Shakespeare question he seems a different man, and has no expressions too severe to use against "irrational" Baconians.

I have been obliged to point out the errors and inconsistencies of the chief Shakespearians whereby they often refute each other. Of course this is an accessory to my argument, and I have a right to avail myself of it, but I shall be indeed sorry if it can be shown that I have spoken discourteously of any one, for this reason, if for none other, that such a method defeats its own object.

We must not forget, however, that this great literary question is still *sub judice*; neither party is out of the wood yet, or out of court either. All the talents may yet prove to be only blind leaders of the blind, and the ditch they are to fall into may not be very far off.

Remember the *cognoscenti* in the witchcraft delusions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and what a big ditch they are all buried in now. They were the "big battalions" with a vengeance, and only a stolid champion

here and there could be found to oppose them. Their arguments were irresistible, even as the Shakespearian arguments are irresistible—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. xxii. 18). If that was not a final and unimpeachable argument, where could there be any possibility of one? The Word of God definitely states that witches exist, and are to be killed off-hand.

So that question was settled.

In our matter Ben Jonson, who knew Shakespeare as well as any man living, and knew Bacon equally well, declared in black and white again and again in the first collected edition of the Shakespeare-Plays that Shakespeare, the Swan of Avon, was the man who wrote them, and several other contemporary writers virtually said the same thing. If we have not here a final and convincing argument, where can one be found better? So that question is settled, and the only question that no one seems able to settle is, "Why on earth do not the Baconians give up their folly?"

Now, what are we to say to such things? Well, surely this much; that in literary judgments, and in our judgment of other matters as well, the most cultivated and judicious men of the age may be both right and wrong. That is to say, they may be right according to the lights and knowledge of their age, and their judgment quite a sane one according to *the evidence before them*; but—and there is everything in this *but*—there may be a great deal of evidence not before them; many facts which cannot, at the time, be brought into court because they are then unknown; facts which throw a totally different light on the testimony to be dealt with.

Up till now I have been altogether an outsider, a non-combatant without the slightest wound or scratch that

could fester or rankle, but herewith I join the ranks and the fight and shall look out for blows.

Besides the ordinary weapons of this Forty Years' War I have accoutred myself with a few new and fancy weapons of my own, and this is my chief excuse for 'listing for the fray. I want to prove my arms. My fear is, that being a raw recruit I may shoot, through want of discipline, some of my own side.

My arguments and illustrations are mainly based on the Sonnets and the Poems as being fresher and, as I hope to show, more productive ground.

This ground has been avoided by most Baconians, and triumphantly claimed as Shakespeare's by all the orthodox talent. However, I hope to show clearly that both Poems and Sonnets alike came from the marvellous brain of Francis Bacon.

There is really no need for much preface. We must not stay too long in this vestibule, or some cryptograms may be discovered. I will therefore only say here what I have also repeated at the back door or finis of this book. I wish this work to be considered tentative, and not the creation of a predominant idea. I would give up my Rival Poets, my loose-legged Lais, my Dark Lady, together with dancing Mary Fitton, and all the Adonis-like young damsels in doublet, hose, and codpiece, who may have taken Bacon's curious fancy;—I would renounce them all, or any other false or irregular moves I may have made in this difficult game;—nay, I would suffer fools gladly, and take a checkmate from wise critics with a joyful countenance, if they would only treat this interesting matter seriously, and play fair.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. BACON "SHOWS HIS HEAD"	I
II. MARSTON AND HALL REVEAL BACON	12
III. THE SCANDAL: EXTERNAL EVIDENCE	32
IV. THE SCANDAL: INTERNAL EVIDENCE	53
✓ V. WAS THE AUTHOR OF THE SHAKESPEARE POEMS AND SONNETS A SCHOLAR?	66
VI. BEN JONSON AND BACON	81
VII. PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE	107
VIII. SOME ORTHODOX SHAKESPEARIANS PUT IN THE WITNESS-BOX	116
IX. THE PROOFS OF BACONIAN AUTHORSHIP AS DEDUCED FROM THE HISTORY OF THE THREE PROMINENT ELIZABETHAN EARLS — SOUTHAMPTON, PEM- BROKE, AND ESSEX	129
✓ X. THE PROOF FROM CONTEMPORARY LETTERS AND BOOKS	169
XI. THE SONNETS	190
XII. OF THE PARALLELISMS AND IDENTITIES BETWEEN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE AND THE ACKNOW- LEDGED WORKS OF BACON	251
XIII. HAD BACON A MISTRESS, OR WAS HE INCLINED TO BE A MISOGYNIST?	253
XIV. BACON AS A POET	267

CHAP.	PAGE
XV. NEW EVIDENCE CONNECTING BACON WITH PALLAS AND THE HYPHENATED SHAKE-SPEARE . . .	281
XVI. SOME NOTABLE MEGALOMANIC FEATURES IN THE CHARACTER OF FRANCIS BACON	293
XVII. CERTAIN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND HINTS CONNECTED WITH THE POEMS AND PLAYS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	307
XVIII. WHY DID FRANCIS BACON CONCEAL HIS IDENTITY? SUMMARY OF DIFFICULTIES AND OBJECTIONS .	320
APPENDIX	351
INDEX	371

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS BACON, FROM THE FIRST EDITION OF <i>Sylva Sylvarum</i> <i>Frontispiece</i>	
FACSIMILE OF THE OPENING STANZAS OF THE "RAPE OF LUCRECE" (FIRST EDITION) <i>To face page</i>	4
FACSIMILE OF THE LAST STANZAS OF THE "RAPE OF LUCRECE" (FIRST EDITION)	6

IS IT SHAKESPEARE ?

CHAPTER I

BACON "SHOWS HIS HEAD"

I HAVE often thought that the Sonnets were the real keys wherewith the great secret of the true authorship might perchance be discovered, and I have been extremely surprised that all the prominent Baconians for the most part confined their researches and attacks to the ground occupied by the immortal Plays of William Shakespeare.

And yet the Sonnets have every appearance of being autobiographical. They seem to be genuine though artfully-concealed presentiments of striking events and passionate feelings that had occurred again and again in the author's personal experience ; whereas we do not expect a tragedy or a comedy, or indeed any dramatic work put on the boards of a public theatre, to contain direct and emphatic allusions to the author's life. Moreover, a very cursory survey of special phrases and parallel expressions in the Sonnets and the Plays, will show at once that both the Sonnets and the Plays are undoubtedly the work of one and the same author. Yet, strange to say, the Baconians, who might reasonably expect here a rich mine for their explorations, have passed by the Sonnets and Poems with hardly a glance, and have left the many personal incidents in them to the tender mercies of thorough-paced Shakespearians, by whom they have been rent almost limb by limb in order to give to the mysterious "sole begetter," Mr. W. H., a local habitation and a name.

I hope to show that the Sonnets are much better keys to unlock the secret than the Plays, and contain by far the strongest and clearest indications of the true author.

For instance, we will take Sonnet xxvi., and see how it reveals the very name of the hidden author.

XXVI

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
 Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
 To thee I send this written embassy,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit :
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seem bare in wanting words to show it,
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In thy soul's thought (all naked) will bestow it ;
 Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
 Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
 And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect :
 Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
 Till then not show my head where thou may'st prove me.

This Sonnet, as all critics admit, has an interesting and remarkable resemblance to the dedication of *Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton in 1594, which was signed by William Shakespeare. This Sonnet is certainly addressed to some one in high position ; the words *vassalage* and *embassage* settle that. It also seems to be the concluding Sonnet (L'envoi) of a sequence (xviii.—xxvi.), where deep love and admiration are expressed for a high-born youth, and where the author, although he rather audaciously claims immortality for his verse (S. xvii.), still for "fear of trust" does not go the whole length of expressing his love, or, as it appears, even his name as yet, but the verses or "books" that he sends are to be the "dumb presagers" of his "speaking breast" (S. xxiii.). And he finishes, in this last Sonnet of the sequence (xxvi.), by hoping that his young friend will have such a "good conceit" of the bare verses sent, that he will take them in and cherish them in their nakedness ; and

then, the author hints, if his stars lend auspicious help to his future movements—

“Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
Till then not *show my head* where thou may'st prove me.”

Now we shall see how the author lets out the great secret in those words *show my head*.

This Sonnet (xxvi.) naturally leads us to make a closer examination of the dedication of *Lucrece*, with which it is evidently connected.

The dedication reads as follows :

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLEY

Earle of Southampton, and Baron of Titchfield

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end : whereof this Pamphlet without beginning is but a superfluous Moity. The warrant I have of your Honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored Lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater ; meane time, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship : to whom I wish long life still lengthned with all happinesse.

Your Lordship's in all duety,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Now all this seems plain and straightforward enough, except the apparently unmeaning and unnecessary remark about “this Pamphlet without beginning” being “but a superfluous Moity.”

Such a curious statement naturally leads one to examine the “beginning” of the Pamphlet in its first edition as presented and dedicated to Southampton, and lo ! Bacon “shows his head” at once, for the *first two* lines are headed by this monogram FR_B , *i.e.* Fr. B., which may well be called also a *superfluous moiety* of Fr. B|acon, Fr. representing one half of his name with the superfluous B flowing over from the other half.

This seems promising, but the first few words of the dedication seem to harp on the antitheses "without end" and "without beginning." Let us therefore, since we have taken away the author's head from the first two lines where he showed it, and so have rendered the Pamphlet without beginning, let us take away the endings of the *last two* lines, and see if we can find whose is the love that is "without end." We do this, and out comes BACON, neither more nor less. By itself, without the index finger of the last line of Sonnet xxvi., this is a neat and curious discovery, and the credit of it is due to a German publisher and printer who has devoted much time to the Bacon-Shakespeare secret, and has recently written several books on the subject. I claim to have rendered the discovery much more valid and probable, nay, almost certain, by connecting it with the promise of the author, in a Sonnet that was evidently connected with *Lucrece*, to "show his head" if things turned out well and his friend wished to prove his identity.

The first two lines of *Lucrece* are :

FROM the besiged Ardea all in post
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire.

The last two are :

The Romans plausibly did give *consent*
To TARQUIN'S everlasting *banishment*.

FINIS

If we take all the larger capitals in the first two lines we get "Fra. B.," which is another way of signing Bacon's name, and is *exactly* the moiety of the whole signature, viz. "Fra. B|acon," and is again, as before, a superfluous or overflowing moiety.

There is another "undesigned coincidence" which lends a great air of probability to this little cipher device at the beginning of *Lucrece*. It is this. No doubt Bacon shows his head pretty plainly, or seems to do so, when



THE RAPE OF
LUCRECE.

FROM the besieged Ardea all in post,
Borne by the trustlesse wings of false desire,
Lust-breathed TARQUIN, leaues the Roman host,
And to Colatium beares the lightlesse fire,
VVhich in pale embers hid, lurkes to aspire,
And girdle with embracing flames, the wast
Of COLATINES fair loue, LVCRECE the chaste.

Hap'ly that name of chaste, vnhap'ly set
This batelesse edge on his keene appetite:
VVhen COLATINE vnwisely did not let,
To praise the cleare vnmached red and white,
VVhich triumpht in that skie of his delight:
VVhere mortal stars as bright as heauē's Beauties,
VVith pure aspects did him peculiar dueties.

B

we take the hints of the dedication and the Sonnet xxvi. in connection with it: but some one might say, "Oh, it's nothing, no proof at all, merely a coincidence, a mere chance arrangement of letters;" and then another objector might add, "Fra. B. is not the usual signature of Bacon to his correspondents or his lovers;" and another, would exclaim, "I can safely say, and you may take my word for it, that Bacon never signed a letter in the absurd form Fra B. in his life."

In reply to such assertions, I would simply adduce the following remarkable coincidence, viz., that when Francis Bacon was about twenty (c. 1580) he wrote several letters to his uncle and aunt (Lord and Lady Burghley) all signed B. FRA.

This additional piece of corroborative evidence was unknown to the German investigator, nor did he bring in the Sonnet as an auxiliary, so that now the force of the Baconian proof is considerably strengthened. However, as no one took any heed of it when he produced it in 1900, I do not suppose any one will deign to notice it now, or if they do, it will be deemed quite sufficient to say that the printer put it so by accident, that the author's MS. began so by accident and finished so by accident, that the "moiety" and "duety" and "beginning" and "end" were all expressions of no particular significance, tending rather to confuse than elucidate the poem, and that as for Fra. B. being like Bacon's "head," it was no more like it than an Aunt Sally at a fair. However, such criticisms have now somewhat lost their edge, and are too common and blunt to disturb our equanimity. But before they begin to slash, I would ask them to consider also the following points connected with this same piece of evidence. The Northumberland Manuscript, which is about the only piece of documentary evidence we possess that connects the two names Shakespeare and Bacon, has among other scribblings this line from *Lucrece* :

"Revealing day through everie Crany peepes."

It is not scribbled down quite correctly, because line 1086 of *Lucrece* is :

"Revealing day through everie Crany *spies*."

This shows that the writer quoted it from memory. But is it not also a hint from some one that the revealing light of day would peep out of some cranny, some hole or corner of *Lucrece*, one of these days ?

Strange to say, though Spedding notices the MS. at some length, and quotes the line, he does not say where the line came from originally. Possibly he did not know. Certainly *Lucrece* had no revealing light to throw on *his* Bacon, and yet he knew Bacon better than any one else in the whole world !

The other point is, that if we include the word FINIS which is placed underneath the last two lines, and take its first letter F, and draw a line at an angle upwards through the last two lines in the direction of *ba* and *con*, we get F. BACON, thus :

The Romaines plausibly did give con sent
 TO TARQUINS everlasting ba nishment.

F INIS



And this is a way that some writers have used to get their names upon the title-pages of their works in such a manner as to be there without any one noticing them.

Some of the Shakespeare Quartos have words oddly divided on their title-pages, and the syllable *con*, the latter part of Bacon, is often prominently put forward there, but the general result is too fanciful at present to attach much importance to it, unless it be considerably improved.

Nor must I omit another circumstance which is at least rather suggestive.

Ben Jonson in 1616 dedicated his *Epigrams* to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and plainly insinuated that in some dedications titles had been changed in a more audacious manner than Ben Jonson ventured to imitate,

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE.

This sayd, he strooke his hand vpon his breast,
And kist the fatall knife to end his vow:
And to his protestation vrg'd the rest,
VWho wondring at him, did his words allow.
Then ioyntlie to the ground their knees they bow,
And that deepe vow which BRVTVS made before,
He doth againe repeat, and that they swore.

VWhen they had sworne to this aduised doome,
They did conclude to beare dead LUCRECE thence,
To shew her bleeding bodie thorough Roome,
And so to publish TARQVINS fowle offence;
VWhich being done, with speedie diligence,
The Romaines plaussibly did giue consent,
To TARQVINS euerlasting banishment.

N
F I N I S.

and also that some authors' consciences caused them of necessity to employ a cipher for concealment. This may be a hit at the cipher and dedication of *Lucrece* before noticed, for I verily believe Jonson knew far more of the Bacon-Shakespeare secret than any of his contemporaries, as I hope to show further on.

The dedication of the *Epigrams* in 1616 is :

“MY LORD,—While you cannot change your merit I dare not change your title; it was that made it, not I. Under which name I here offer to your Lordship the ripest of my studies, my EPIGRAMS; which though they carry danger in the sound, do not therefore seek your shelter; for when I made them, I had nothing in my conscience to expressing of which I did need a cipher.”

The “head” or beginning of *Lucrece* is strictly a cipher in one of the senses of the word, for the definition of the N. E. D. gives us “(6) An intertexture of letters, especially the initials of a name, a literal device, monogram,” and quotes an example from Massinger of date 1631.

While on this word *cipher* let me say plainly that I am an utter disbeliever in the cryptograms and biliteral ciphers of certain well-advertised American authors, Mrs. Gallup to wit, and others. They are hardly worthy of notice, and have done more to discredit the discussion of an unusually interesting literary problem than anything else I can call to mind.

Whether there is or is not a cipher in the first folio Shakespeare remains for the present a question certainly not to be determined off-hand. But I must say that the likelihood of finding one there is by no means to be dogmatically set aside. Mr. Sidney Lee is not justified in saying positively there is no cipher in the folio Shakespeare. I am surprised that he ventures on so bold and dogmatic an assertion, seeing that he is a member of the Bibliographical Society, and therefore in a good position to be acquainted with a neat little monograph on *Some Elizabethan Cipher-books* to be found in the

Transactions of that Society, and read 18th March 1901. We learn there that the politicians of the parties of Essex and Burghley lived in an atmosphere, so to speak, of ciphers, and such men as the two brothers Anthony and Francis Bacon would be thorough experts of the art. The ciphers were of the most varied kinds—astronomical, zodiacal, multi-literal, cabalistic, and cryptogrammatic.* It seems that Lord Burghley's favourite device was the zodiacal, *i.e.* using the signs of the zodiac for the names of persons referred to. This reminds me that when looking at the well-known Baconian relic called the Valerius Terminus MS., I noticed some signs of this kind scribbled at the foot of a page; but whether an attempt has been made to translate them, I know not. These were supposed only to refer to the date of the MS. But the reading of this little monograph is apt to make one less of a scoffer at those who work on the Bacon-cipher treadmill. I fear these workers are in many cases mere "cranks," but the theory itself is certainly not an "empty delusion." Neither do I believe that the italicised words in the Sonnets are without some hidden allusion.

This monogram cipher of *Lucrece* is one of the very few direct, external, and visible proofs that we have as to the authorship of the Sonnets. It is surprising, as we shall see, to what a degree this Baconian evidence simplifies the Sonnets controversy, and the question of the youth to whom they were addressed. There has been for many years almost a pitched battle between the Herbertites and the Southamptonites, and the most prominent general of the contending armies has completely changed his colours, or rather his camp, at least once, and perhaps more often, for I have only lately come on the field and go by hearsay. I hear, too, that his last dictum is that Shakespeare had never any

* Sir Robert Cecil writes to Anth. Bacon 19th May 1592: "My lord desires you to send a cipher which you may make yourself—especially for his advertising of Names—which will serve, though the alphabets of Letters often be discovered."

intimate acquaintance with William Herbert at all, or at most nothing much beyond official recognition.

Well then, in that case, who in the world wrote the Sonnets?

The amount of labour and ingenuity that devoted and learned Shakespearians have bestowed upon elucidating the Sonnets has been enormous. For instance, in 1888 Gerald Massey sends forth a huge quarto of nearly 500 pages, entitled *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and proves without a shadow of doubt in his own mind, when and where Shakespeare wrote the Sonnets, to whom and for whom they were addressed, and without hesitation fixes on the Dark Lady and the Rival Poet.

Two years later, in 1890, Mr. Thomas Tyler, with equal, if not greater, knowledge of the subject, writes another most learned, careful, and exhaustive book on these same Sonnets, proving conclusively (?) that Shakespeare wrote *all* the Sonnets to one young man, Mr. W. H., whose Christian name was William, and his full title William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and that Shakespeare hardly had any intimacy with the young nobleman that Gerald Massey had backed through thick and thin for 500 pages. Moreover, he brings forward a totally different Dark Lady and a different Rival Poet.

Then the general comes on the scene (having recently changed his tactics), and authoritatively declares, that as for Mr. Tyler's young man William Herbert, and his Dark Lady, Mistress Fitton, he, Sidney Lee, could say with confidence that Shakespeare had no acquaintance with either of them, except of a most distant and reserved nature. Now, when great experts and men perfectly competent to deal with the question annihilate each other in this ridiculous fashion, lookers-on naturally conclude that there must be something rotten in the state of Denmark—something radically wrong with all three elucidators—and so, I contend, there was. They were all three building on a wrong foundation, arguing from false premises, and assuming the wrong author

for the very subject-matter they were dealing with. They assumed a plebeian to be the author instead of a patrician, they argued on the primary supposition of William Shakespeare, backed up by a long line of traditional authority, to which they attached such overwhelming importance, that the very mention of the patrician Bacon was left by them to the half-educated and the irrational! Their mutually-destructive theories ought to have made them less dictatorial; but some people are too confident either to take advice or to learn that they can possibly be wrong. But, of all people, I ought to be least angry with these magisterial and self-sufficient Shakespearians, for it was the unpleasantly contemptuous tone of certain letters to the *Times* not very long ago, which first induced me to buy a few more special books and to give some pleasant hours to a subject in which I had previously only a passing interest, and which I thought could not yet be decided for want of sufficient evidence.

I by no means assert that there is absolutely complete evidence now. Indeed, for people who are prejudiced no evidence can be complete. But I claim to have added a few more bricks to the Baconian building, and also to have somewhat strengthened the foundation, which to so many sane and sensible people of my own acquaintance seems an absolutely rotten and foolishly impossible one.

But before I quite leave this important evidence from *Lucrece* and the Sonnet corresponding to it, I will bring forward some hints from Bacon's acknowledged works which seem to favour the reality and genuineness of this Lucretian discovery, and later on will attack the still more curious problem of the "Scandal" in the Sonnets, after I have shown that there can be little doubt that two contemporary satirists had discovered Bacon's secret as early as 1598. Both these chapters of evidence will be quite new.

Enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said of this first item of evidence that I adduce.

The next chapter, I hope, will be even more novel and convincing. Shakespearians are always dwelling on their great stock argument that "all the poet's contemporaries recognised him as the author of his own works, and that they, if any are to judge, ought to be best able to decide the question of authorship. They did decide it unanimously, and there's an end of the controversy to all who are not 'irrational,' or are not 'cranks' best in an asylum."

This, or something like it, is their favourite *pièce de résistance*. I shall now try to show that two well-known contemporaries, at least, knew that Bacon wrote the Shakespeare Poems, and whispered the secret pretty distinctly, but no one seemed to hear it.

CHAPTER II

MARSTON AND HALL REVEAL BACON

IT is an odd circumstance that we cannot be at all certain what manner of man Shakespeare was in facial expression. The arguments and controversies about the various portraits of him which have come down to us, have filled hundreds of pages without much positive result. He seems to have had a reddish hue (Rufus) and to have been a man of good presence; that seems about as much as we can say, and that is not positively agreed upon. Of course this "personal matter" is very interesting to some people. As late as July 26, 1902, a contributor to *Notes and Queries* thought he had made a discovery in this direction at last—Shakespeare was a man with large lips. Here is his evidence.

Marston in 1598, at the end of *Pigmalion's Image*, gives to some contemporary writer the nickname "Labeo," in these words :

"So Labeo did complain his love was stone,
Obdurate, flinty, so relentless none ;"

which certainly looks like a reference to *Venus and Adonis* (lines 200-201).

The discoverer then tells us : "According to Smith's *Latin - English Dictionary*, 'Labeo' = 'the one who has large lips.'" He leaves it so, virtually considering it a Q.E.D. and that he has added a feature to Shakespeare's face. But I fear he has done nothing of the kind. He should have looked up his Horace. He would have found Labeo there,* and a note would most likely have told him that M. Antistius Labeo was a rather

* "Labeone insanior inter
Sanos dicatur."—I. Sat., iii. 82.

famous lawyer who by his free and perverse tongue had offended his emperor, the sensitive Augustus. This will not help us much to the features of Shakespeare's face! Moreover, the critics who have often enough exercised their ingenuity in trying to find out who this Labeo might be, who is mentioned more than once both by Hall and Marston, have generally said that Hall's Labeo was Marston, and as for Marston's Labeo have ignored him altogether. Then Dr. Grosart long ago showed that Hall's Labeo could not be Marston, for the good reason that Marston had not written anything then for Hall to refer to. Then it was suggested that Labeo was Chapman, a nasty thrust if really the case, for there was also a Labeo in classic times who translated Homer and made a frightful and unreadable hash of it. And now we have Labeo, a thick-lipped man generally, and Shakespeare the thick-lipped one in particular.

This will never do; and it shows us the danger of playing with the names, chiefly of classic origin, with which Hall and Marston, and Ben Jonson and others of that age, interlarded their satires, comedies, and epigrams. These University wits were steeped in Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Ovid, and thence brought forth a nickname from their retentive memory whenever an occasion required it. But we must be cautious in our attempts to unveil the personages satirised, for it does not always follow that because they are satirised under the same borrowed name, they are therefore the same persons. For instance, Marston has a Tubrio in one place, who is a very different character from a Tubrio he mentions in another place; but any two lewd-living, boisterous, military braggarts could be included under the generic name Tubrio. Indeed, many of the names constantly met with, such as Luxurio, Gullio, Fortunio, &c., are simply generic, and unless a striking detail is added, it is useless to try and decipher them. Thus in the *Poetaster* we hear a good deal about Crispinus or Cri-spinas, and some think Jonson is girding at Shakespeare, and some that Marston is the man meant. In

fact he sometimes means one and sometimes the other, and so shields himself from direct libel. Once or twice he gives Crispinus his full name, Rufus Laberius Crispinus or Cri-spinas, and it has been thought that *Rufus* referred to Shakespeare's red hair, that Laberius referred to Shakespeare also, because Laberius was a playwright (*mimographus*) who used new and bombastic words. And as for the hyphenated Cri-spinas, that was clearly the hyphenated Shake-speare.

There may be something in all this, but we must beware of carrying it too far. I would rather take Laberius to belong to Martial, Lib. vi. 14, which is a short epigram very appropriate to Shakespeare, and is a most likely source for Jonson to draw upon. But such things are mere details. They often, however, are useful (if we can be sure of them), in giving us Jonson's earlier views as to Shakespeare and Bacon. And the same may be said of Marston and Hall's use of Labeo, if what they meant could be clearly ascertained.

Fortunately I have been able to make an identification of one of the personages in the Satires of Hall and Marston, which will prove of great value for deciding the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. It is not mere guess-work, or a probable solution, as so many of the so-called identities are, but direct, neat, and lucid. The veil was artfully adjusted 300 years ago, but I rather wonder that no one has lifted up even the corner of it, or even touched it until now.

Its importance will be admitted when I say that it points out in a singularly clear manner that it was known to contemporaries that Bacon was the author of *Venus and Adonis*.

The proof comes out in the literary war between Hall and Marston, our very early English satirists. Hall was first in the field with his *Toothless Satires* in 1597; they had been written perhaps some years earlier. Then came Marston in 1598 with his *Pigmalion's Image and certain Satires* (May 27), which he called his

“first bloome of Poesy.” He is bitter against his predecessor Hall, but for what reason does not appear, unless he felt forestalled by Hall in his own favourite vocation.

Both satirists adopted the incisive method of Juvenal and Persius, being really the first of our nation thus to imitate the ancients. They were both very severe upon the vices of the court gallants and others in high place, especially Marston in his *Scourge of Villainy* which followed his Satires, shortly afterwards in the same year 1598 (Sept. 8).

The consequence was that on the 1st June 1599, Marston's *Pigmalion* (spelled Pygmalion in the Registers) and *The Scourge of Villainy*, and Hall's *Satyres* and several others, were suppressed and ordered to be burnt at the instance of Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Barlow, Bishop of London. And on June 4, Marston's books were burnt in the garden of the Stationers' Company with Davies' *Epigrams* and some others, and Hall's *Satyres* were stayed and *Willobies Avis* called in. This looks as if Whitgift (Bacon's friend and old tutor) had had some high influence brought on him to stop these libels, as they would certainly be very scandalous to those who knew the persons aimed at, and Bacon wanted publicity as little as possible.

Now for the evidence that both these satirists knew Bacon's secret.

Hall in the second book of his *Satires*, which he called (after Plautus) *Virgidemiæ*, *i.e.* a bundle of rods or harvest of blows, brings on the scene a character for castigation whom he names Labeo, and attacks him thus :

“For shame write better, Labeo, or write none,
Or better write, or Labeo write alone ;”

—Bk. II., Sat. i., 1.

and finishes the satire by a refrain :

“For shame write cleanly, Labeo, or write none.”

There is not much here to discover who Labeo is

intended for, and, as I have said, some have thought Marston suited the satire, and some Chapman, but all were doubtful. The inference from the lines quoted amounted to no more than this, (1) Labeo did not write alone, but in conjunction with or under cover of another author; (2) he was not a pure or moral writer, but of the impure and salacious school. Of course these inferences would suit many contemporaries, and Labeo still remains so far *incognito*, and unidentified.

Early next year, 1598, three other books (IV.-VI.) of the *Virgidemiae* were issued by Hall, just before Marston had published his *Satires*, and in Book IV., Sat. i., line 37, we find :

“*Labeo* is whip't, and laughs me in the face ;
 Why? for I smite and hide the gallèd place.
 Gird but the *Cynicks* Helmet on his head,
 Cares he for *Talus* or his flayle of lead?
 Long as the crafty *Cuttle* lieth sure
 In the black *Cloude* of his thick vomiture ;
 Who list complain of wrongèd faith or fame
 When he may shift it to another's name?”

Dr. Grosart quotes this in his edition of Hall's Poems, and calls it “Sphinxian,” but he does not attempt the part of Œdipus, nor do I know any one that has. What can be inferred from the lines seems to be that Labeo was a man of mystery who had hidden himself from curious or pursuing eyes by the tactics of a cuttlefish, that is, by getting behind his own dark unwholesome productions, and by shifting them to another's name. Also that Hall had hidden or not revealed fully the galling secret of Labeo, and that therefore Labeo could laugh the matter off.

These inferences did not lead to much, for there were many anonymous and mysterious writers of unwholesome literature in that age. There are one or two other references to Labeo, but they are even less distinct than those quoted.

But these are by no means all the inferences that can be drawn from this Sphinxian passage, and I shall venture next, though with somewhat of stage-fright,

to assume myself the rôle of Œdipus before an audience which I know is, up to the present, preponderatingly Shakespearian and orthodox. My solution will, I hope, forge another link in the chain that shall bind Labeo to Bacon.

It turns on the word "Helmet."

"Gird but the Cynicks Helmet on his head,
Cares he for Talus or his flayle of lead?"

The Cynic, whether Diogenes in particular or his imitators as a class, used no Helmet as far as we know; what then can be the allusion? What was this Helmet that made Labeo so careless about the blows of that terrible smasher Talus? I suggest that it was "The Honourable Order of the Knights of the Helmet," of which we hear so much in Francis Bacon's *Gesta Grayorum*, that Hall hinted at. It is now admitted by Spedding and the best authorities that Bacon is responsible for this Device performed at his own Gray's Inn during the year 1594, and that he was the undoubted sole author of the Counsellors' speeches therein given. The Second Counsellor makes a fine oration, "advising the study of Philosophy," and if we want an accurate description of the innermost views and hopes of Francis Bacon, when in his megalomaniac mood, we shall find them there. He ends his speech as follows:

"Thus, when your Excellency shall have added depth of knowledge to the fineness of [your] spirits and greatness of your power, then indeed shall you be a Trismegistus; and then when all other miracles and wonders shall cease by reason that you shall have discovered their natural causes, yourself shall be left the only miracle and wonder of the world."

If a man has such a Helmet on what need he fear? and Bacon, I believe, when cogitating on his schemes of power over Nature, often thought that he had that within him which might make him the wonder of the world, a second Trismegistus. When this Order of the Helmet was instituted, the name was taken, we are told, "in regard that as the Helmet defendeth the chiefest

part of the body, the head, so did he (the member) defend the head of the state." Each member kissed the Helmet when he took his vow, before girding it on. The articles of the Order are given at length in the *Gesta Grayorum*, and are worth reading in this connection, and indeed if any Knight of the Helmet kept them all, or even the greater part of them, he might well care nothing for Talus and his flail.

This allusion may seem very far-fetched and improbable to my adverse critics now, but it should be remembered that it was not far-fetched *then*, for it was only about four years or less since the *Gesta* had been performed, and the learned humours of the Knights of the Helmet would still be in the memory and on the tongues of London literary men.*

I have another strong passage (from Hall) which is best noticed here. We have already seen several reasons for coupling the Cynick of the *Satires* with Bacon; the following lines give further corroboration:

"Nay, call the Cynick but a wittie foole,
Hence to abjure his handsome drinking bol
Because the thirstie swain with hollow hand
Conveyed the stream to weet his drie weasand.
Write they that can, tho' those that cannot doe,
But who knowes that, but they that do not know."

—Bk. II., Sat. i., 3.

This too is Sphinxian, but I think that the original Latin distich prefixed to *Venus and Adonis* by the author, will enable us to play the part of Œdipus:

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

Here we have the "handsome drinking bowl" (*pocula plena*) which the Cynick author abjured (Bacon), while the "thirstie swain" (Shakespeare) "conveyed the stream" (of the Castalian fount) "with hollow hand to weet his drie weasand."

The last two lines are written in riddling vein, but

* For the best account see Spedding's *Life*, vol. i. pp. 325-343.

they seem to mean: "They who can write, should write, although some who cannot write are esteemed as authors. But who knows about these last pseudo-authors and their secret? Why, no one but a few privileged ones, and they all profess ignorance of the secret; if asked, they do not know." If I prove correct in my suggestion, we have here a pretty clear reference to *the mystery of William Shakespeare*, and the full draughts of Castalian water in the Latin distich.

Next then we come to Marston's satires, beginning with his *Pigmalion's Image*, which he strangely spells in piggish (Baconian?) fashion, though an excellent classical scholar who ought to know the proper spelling.

Here we have a poem founded on the model and lines of *Venus and Adonis*. It is a love-poem and not a satire, and we have naturally nothing helping us to find out Labeo here, but as an appendix to it the author writes some lines in "praise of his precedent Poem."

Here we find Labeo again :

"And in the end (the end of love, I wot),
 Pigmalion hath a jolly boy begot.
 So Labeo did complain his love was stone,
 Obdurate, flinty, so relentless none ;
 Yet Lynceus knows that in the end of this
 He wrought as strange a metamorphosis."

Now this is helpful to us, for it shows us, or rather Lynceus shows us, what poem is referred to and who Labeo stands for. For it was *Venus and Adonis* that had the strange metamorphosis at the end, that of Adonis into a flower, quite as strange as the metamorphosis of *Pigmalion's Image*, and it was the author of *Venus and Adonis* who wrote or complained :

"Art thou obdurate, flinty hard as steel—
 Nay, more than flint, for stone at rain relenteth?"

—*Venus and Adonis*, ll. 199-200.

And this is Labeo's complaint almost word for word; so we arrive at the pretty certain conclusion, thanks to far-seeing Lynceus, that Labeo is intended for the author

of *Venus and Adonis*, of which Marston had evidently a favourable opinion or he would not have used that sincerest of all flatteries—imitation.

We have thus made a good step forward—Labeo is the writer of *Venus and Adonis*; and as there is every reason to think that Marston used the name Labeo because Hall had used it, we are therefore able to infer that Hall and Marston both mean the same man. We therefore advance another step and infer that the author of *Venus and Adonis* did not write alone, that he shifted his work to “another’s name,” and acted like a cuttlefish by interposing a dark cloud between himself and his pursuers.

Our next step is a surer one still, it is nothing less than showing, by a clear, direct, and unmistakable piece of evidence, that Labeo, the author of *Venus and Adonis*, is no less a personage than Bacon.

This strong proof is derived from Marston’s *Satires*, published with his *Pigmalion’s Image* in 1598, several months after Hall’s first three books of *Virgidemiæ* had appeared. Marston’s Satire iv. is entitled *Reactio*, and is full of railing and censure on Hall’s “toothless” snarls, and ridicules his prefatory *Defiance to Envy* through many lines and quotations. Marston in this *Reactio* goes through pretty well all the literary celebrities that Hall had aimed at, and defends them :

“O daring hardiment !
At Bartas’ sweet *Semains* rail impudent ;
At Hopkins, Sternhold, and the Scottish King.”

Sat. iv., 39-41.

This was his “reaction” against Hall’s satirical remarks on sacred poets, and sacred sonnets, against which, as Marston says, [He] “like a fierce enraged boar doth foam.” He defends several other authors and books against the envious and spiteful satire of Hall, as he terms it. He defends the *Magistrates’ Mirror*, which Hall had ridiculed in his Book I., Sat. 5, but he seems to take no notice of Hall’s attack on Labeo, although that attack was a marked and recurrent one.

Labeo seems to be omitted from the list in the *Reactio* altogether.

But it is not so really; *Labeo is there*, but concealed in an ingenious way by Marston, and passed over in a line that few would notice or comprehend. But when it is noticed it becomes one of the most direct proofs we have on the Bacon-Shakespeare question, and what is more, a genuine and undoubted contemporary proof. The missing Labeo, the author of *Venus and Adonis*, appears under a Latin veil in the following interrogatory line addressed to Hall:

“What, not *mediocria firma* from thy spite?”

—Sat. iv., 77.

that is to say, “What, did not even *mediocria firma* escape thy spite?” That Latin veil is thin and transparent enough in all conscience. It's BACON'S OWN MOTTO, and I am gazing at it now, finely engraved over that well-known portrait of *Franciscus Baconus Baro de Verulam*, which faces the frontispiece of my early edition of his *Sylva Sylvarum*.* “Surely you have blundered like the rest of the cranks,” I seem to hear the Shakespearians say; “surely it was a motto common to many families and proves nothing.” The thought made me refer to our Smart Society's Bible, edited by Burke, and there I found that no one but the Earls of Verulam or the Bacon family has used that motto. I am reassured,† and I come to the strange conclusion that after three hundred years of mistaken identity the true author of

* This motto apparently came from Sir Nicholas Bacon, for at the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603, the Lord Chief Justice (Popham) said: “It was the posy of the wisest and greatest counsellor of his time in England.” *In medio spatio mediocria firma locantur*. So it seems that part of the posy formed a motto for arms.

† In the matter of general acceptance by its readers, Burke's Bible may be said to be superior to its time-honoured namesake which begins with the Pentateuch. For Burke is opposed by far fewer heretics and free-thinkers, and has never yet been printed in a Polychrome edition, of varying authority. Hence my reassurance.

Venus and Adonis is discovered under the very thin device of his own heraldic motto.

Marston has been edited and reprinted and annotated again and again, but this odd line has never received, as far as I know, a single word of notice. What shall we say to all this? I can think of nothing more appropriate than the expression Professor Dowden used when he referred to one of Judge Webb's Baconian errors—"Did you ever?"

But I have another unnoticed piece of evidence from Marston's *Scourge of Villainy*. Unfortunately it is rather of the nature of "crank" or "cipher" evidence, and therefore those who believe that Bacon never used any alphabetical devices in any part of his works, had better skip this evidence.

For the sake of those who have not pre-judged the case of Bacon's literary concealments, I will produce it.

It is a pleasant episode in the midst of Marston's biting and libellous satires. He suddenly breaks off while apparently speaking against the affected and senseless character of much of the contemporary drama and poetry, and addresses an unnamed *littérateur* of those days in the following strain:

"Far fly thy fame,
Most, most of me beloved! whose silent name
One letter bounds. Thy true judicial style
I ever honour; and, if my love beguile
Not much my hopes, then thy unvalued worth
Shall mount fair place, when apes are turned forth."

—*Scourge of Villainy*, Sat. ix.

Who can this be? Praise from Marston, the severe satirist, is most unusual. Who was this genius that was to rise by his own "unvalued worth when apes (*i.e.* actors or imitators) are turned forth"? I thought at once of Marston's known appreciation of Shakespeare; he evidently knew the works that went by his name well, and imitation of *Hamlet* and other Shakespeare plays, or rather reminiscences of them, can be frequently traced in Marston's dramas. It has also been stated

before that his *Pigmalion* was both in metre and style an imitation of the *Venus and Adonis*. Therefore it did not seem unlikely that in this rising genius "most, most of me beloved," Marston might refer to Shakespeare. Did the passage afford any clue? Yes, one of a very Sphinx-like character. His name is alluded to, "one letter bounds" it, and it is a "silent name," *i.e.* I suppose, an "unuttered name." Is there a name of one letter? Well, there are several such—Dee, Jay, Kaye, &c., but not one suitable to the case. At last it struck me that F was the one enclosing letter, and that Marston knew much more than I thought. For F is the letter that "bounds" the other two where Bacon "shows his head" in the beginning of *Lucrece*, **F^R_B**, and it bounds his name at the end also, where the F of *Finis* bounds the *BA CON* of the two last lines. And that name was a "silent name," not uttered either in the vestibule or any other part of *Lucrece*.

Indeed, as far as that vestibule was concerned, an "ape" or "poet-ape" was in possession, and Marston plainly says that he did not expect the man he addresses, and whose "judicial style" he did "ever honour," would mount to his right position till the "apes are turned forth." All this, I say, *looks* as if Marston knew the Baconian secret thoroughly, and had either recognised Bacon's head and tail or had been told of it. Of course, I know well enough that all I have been bringing forward in this last page or two *may* be nothing but fantastical rubbish, and I shall certainly *not* call any one irrational who won't believe it. But though I admit that this last "one letter" proof stands on a much weaker foundation than does the hidden allusion to Bacon's motto, I do not think it quite unworthy of being offered to the critics. But both these proofs may be utterly demolished without interfering at all with the general argument and force of my present work.

Judge Webb introduced one argument about the "noted weed," which was demolished as soon as seen by every critic. It was this that brought out Professor

Dowden's "Did you ever?" and it has gone a long way towards depreciating his excellent summary. But one mistake no more damns a book than one swallow makes a summer. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*, and it is true that I am rather doubtful about my last "one letter" discovery. But if not Bacon, who on earth can Marston mean? Was there another fellow of the same name and the same motto? Oh yes, there was his brother Anthony. Well, I will accept any one on sufficient evidence, and will be pleased to hear of it. As for the Marston evidence, there is this that I can say with certainty—he alludes more than once to a rising literary genius whom he loves, so he says, as his own self. He expresses a personal literary devotion in stronger terms than were usual even in those days of adulation.

Take this further example from his play of *What You Will*, Act. II., Sc. I. :

"Or the deere spirit acute Canaidos
 (That Aretine, that most of me beloved
 Who in the rich esteeme I prize his soul
 I terme myself)."

Taking this and comparing it with the identical expressions in the "one letter" passage from the *Scourge of Villainy* above, there can be little hesitation in asserting that they refer to the same man. That man is Bacon surely. The appellation of "Aretine" is quite proper to the author of *Venus and Adonis*, for he appears throughout the poem to be trying "his hand with Aretine on a licentious canvas," as Boswell remarked of Shakespeare long ago.

The fact is both Marston and Hall were "moral" satirists, and were genuine doubtless in their detestation of the vices of the age. Indeed, Hall became an excellent bishop, and Marston, as it seems, spent the latter years of his life in a vicarage and with the cure of souls. I believe they both, especially Marston, admired and esteemed the lofty genius and soul of the "concealed" poet, but they thought he had prostituted it by the lascivious and unclean nature of his beautiful verse.

"For shame write *cleanly*, Labeo, or write none," says Hall, and Marston, if I am correct in my surmise, calls him an "Aretine" and dubs him *Canaidos*, though he loves him. It is within my knowledge that Nash was thought to be the "Aretine" of that day by his fellows, and that he himself almost assumed that title, and therefore it may be that Marston was referring to him. But there is no evidence that Marston was a student of Nash and an imitator of him, as we know was the case with Marston in regard to the Shakespeare poems and plays.* Moreover, I think Nash appears in the *Scourge of Villainy* branded with the vilest opprobrium, and so I hold to Bacon as being most likely the man Marston means.

Many of that age who admired Bacon's other sterling qualities, regretted his early licence of love, and his "phantasticall" devotion to such "toys" as plays and sonnets. Such were Sir Thomas Bodley, the Cecils, father and son, and the Queen herself. I often think that it was from causes of this kind mainly, that Bacon's promotion in his uncongenial career was so long delayed.

And then there was the Scandal too. What does Marston mean by *Canaidos*? It is not without some hidden meaning, for it is an invented name, and not borrowed out of the common stock of Juvenal, Persius, or Horace, whence the University wits drew their nicknames for the most part. What if it implies the similarly sounding word "Kunaidos," which would lead us to "Cynædus," and some vile form of "Cynicism"? I hope not. But about this time or a bit later, according to my theory of the Sonnets, Bacon was undoubtedly "vile esteemed," and there were many *mendacia famæ* rolled like a sweet morsel under the tongues of the envious vulgar. Those connected with the garrulous theatrical

* "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!
Looke thee, I speak play scraps."

—MARSTON'S *What You Will*, Act II., Sc. i.

Marston has several other instances, especially from *Hamlet*, which latter give a plausibility to an earlier *Hamlet* than we now possess. He also has a quotation from *Richard III.*, Act I., i. 32: "Plots ha' you laid? inductions dangerous."

world, which always has its touch of a cynicism of some kind, would be sure to hear of it. Neither Ben Jonson in his early days, or when supreme at the "Mermaid" later on, nor yet his literary "sons" who viewed him as a dictator, would be so delicate as to taboo this unpleasant subject over their sack and pickled herring, and I am surprised we have not heard *more* about this scandal in contemporary satires. But there was the Star Chamber and the censors, and Bacon's powerful friends, to suppress and eradicate such references. *Pigmalion*, the *Satires*, and the *Scourge of Villainy* were all burnt, and others were "stayed," as we know. This partly accounts for the reticence.

But Marston elsewhere speaks more pointedly of the two great Shakespeare Poems; there can be no doubt about the passage I shall next quote. A sense of personal pique at unfair treatment is plainly exhibited here. Is he (Marston) to be muzzled while the freedom of the press is readily granted to lewd poems fathered and signed by a William Shakespeare, a mere trencher-slave? Shall poems which "magnificate" the lust of a goddess of Jove's Olympian court, or tell the suggestive story of "Lucrece rape," be endorsed by archiepiscopal sign-manual, while his own, the production of a scholar and a gentleman, are muzzled and threatened? That was the sore point, as he clearly states:

"Nay, shall a trencher-slave extenuate
Some Lucrece rape and straight magnificate
Lewd Jovian lust, whilst my satiric vein
Shall muzzled be, not daring out to strain
His tearing paw?"

—*Scourge of Villainie*, iii. *ad finem*.

If it be thought strange or contradictory that a poet should be first praised and called "most beloved" "deere spirit," with other friendly epithets, and then vilified almost in the same breath, it should be remembered that the satirists of that age made it their object to lash current vices irrespective of personal friendship or even ties of blood. The rather free frontispiece of the *Scourge*

of *Folly* (1611) shows this. Here we have Folly represented as hoisted on Time's back, untrussed and ready for castigation by a wit who is flourishing his lash, and saying, "Nay, up with him, if he were my brother." The wit was John Davies of Hereford, author of many other poems besides the rare *Scourge of Folly*, and with a large circle of acquaintance among the upper and middle classes, whom he did not spare.

It must be admitted, that if we examine closely the possible allusions to the Shakespearian drama in Hall and Marston's satires, we shall find signs of condemnation rather than approval. But their condemnation is mainly in one direction only, in fact it amounts to the same dispraise which Jonson expressed when he said to Drummond that Shakespeare wanted *art*. Ben meant, I think, classical art and the Aristotelian Unities, and it was the same with the twin University scholars, Hall and Marston.

Hall says (of the Shakespeare plays, as it seems):

"A goodly hoch-poch ; when vile Russettings
Are matched with Monarchs and with mighty kings.
A goodly grace to sober *Tragick Muse*
When each base clowne his clumsie fist doth bruise,
And show his teeth in double rotten row
For laughter at his self-resembled showe."

—*Virgidem.*, Lib. I., Sat. i. 39.

Hall, Marston, and Jonson, all seem to be of the same opinion, that Shakespeare over-edited very considerably the plays he obtained by brokerage—"his huge long scrapèd stock," as Marston calls them. They thought he added far too many "shreds" of his own of a rough, rustic, railing, jesting, clownish character—for there must be rude clownage for the gallery; it was a tradition of the old stage right away from the time of the miracle-plays, and Shakespeare as an actor-manager, with an eye to the main chance rather than to strict chaste classic art, could not or would not dispense with it.

Even when Ben's severely classic *Sejanus* was brought out by Shakespeare's company at the Globe Theatre

in 1603, we find from Ben Jonson's preface to the play, that it was "not the same with that which was acted on the public stage," the fact seeming to be that Shakespeare or some of the company, but Shakespeare for choice, had inserted gags, or additions, or alterations differing from Ben's MS. He says "a second pen had good share in it," and adds, perhaps satirically, that he was unwilling "to defraud so happy a genius of his right" by publishing his additional ornaments, and that he has replaced his own original composition and words in the published play.

Surely this throws a flood of light on the Shakespearian authorship of the plays. Shall we be thought absurd if we suppose that Shakespeare of Stratford was a good practical playwright, with a rough and ready trenchant humour, acceptable on traditional lines with the greater part of the less cultured among the audience, but an eyesore to the better-instructed University critics, who looked for classic art; and this Shakespeare wanted. But not only in the low-comedy scenes could Shakespeare insert his "shreds"; he was a veritable *factotum*, and could bombast out a bragging blank verse—that is, he could fill up the lines he wrote, as well, in his own opinion, as the best of his fellow-writers. This was just the kind of man to over-edit a MS. obtained by brokerage, and to be unable to restrain himself from adding to and patching up even such high-class work as Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, and Francis Bacon's immortal creations. We should read in connection with this the whole passage concerning Luscus—"Luscus, what's play'd to-day?"—in the *Scourge of Villainy*. As I have said elsewhere, I hold Luscus, both here and in Jonson's *Poetaster*, to be Shakespeare the actor.

Marston says, referring to Luscus :

"Now I have him that ne'er of ought did speak
 But when of plays and players he did treat—
 Hath made a common-place book out of plays,
 And speaks in print : at least what e'er he says
 Is warranted by curtain plaudities.
 If e'er you hear him courting Lesbia's eyes,

Say (courteous sir) speaks he not movingly,
 From out some new pathetic tragedy?
 He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts (what not?)
 And all from out his huge long-scrapèd stock
 Of well-penn'd plays."

—*Scourge of Villanie*, Sat. xi., 41.

Here there seems a good biographical passage connected with the real original Stratford Shakespeare, and as they are so uncommonly rare, I make no excuse for quoting it. It is such passages as the above, which make me deprecate and detest the assertion that "Bacon wrote Shakespeare." It is not true, and it is not likely to be true. That Bacon wrote the Poems and Sonnets in their entirety absolutely, I fully believe, but the Plays are on another footing. I do not call to mind any part of the Poems or Sonnets that does not bear the well-defined stamp of a born aristocrat, who was the equal social companion of court gallants and maids of honour. A very large proportion of the contents of the Shakespeare Plays equally bear this well-defined stamp; such early plays as *Love's Labour's Lost* seeming to me indubitably the work of a well-born and highly educated genius. But there is a not inconsiderable percentage of the matter of the Shakespeare Plays which seems unworthy (if I may be pardoned the blasphemy) of that philosophic, aristocratic, and megalomaniac genius, by whose wondrous alchemy words that were dead, blossomed into living pictures; and who, according to my contention, was the true original author of the immortal plays. But Shakespeare of Stratford edited them, gagged for them, arranged the stage machinery (though the true author was no novice at that business), produced them before the public, and very likely paid something for them, so they might well be called and esteemed Shakespeare's Plays. And when Ben Jonson, somewhat like Sir Walter Scott, threw dust in the eyes of the whole reading world by his ingenious prevarications in 1623, that appellation remained stereotyped in the minds of all till less than fifty years ago.

There are several other passages in Marston's *Satires*

where Bacon seems pretty clearly alluded to, and I shall refer to them in their proper connection later on. Marston spares him not, though he admires his intellect; and if we are surprised at the unfeeling censure displayed now and then, we must remember that the office of a satirist is not to praise the virtues but to lash the vices of the masked contemporaries whom he puts into his verse. He calls Bacon, as I am inclined to think, a "Cynic" in several different passages. In one he addresses him, "Thou Cynic dog," and as a "currish mad Athenian," by this last word meaning a University man by education. Marston insinuates elsewhere that his wits were rather "flighty," as we say:

"Why in thy wits half capreal
Let's thou a superscribèd letter fall?
And from thyself unto thyself dost send,
And in the same thyself thyself commend?"

—Sat. i., 7, &c.

Now this letter-trick was almost peculiar to Bacon. He was constantly using it, as we see by what Spedding unfolds. "Capreal," a rather uncommon word, seems here to mean "fantastical," which was a term of obloquy often applied to poets, especially if they were high-born. Thus Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie* tells us: "Whoso is studious in the Arte, or shewes himself excellent in it, they call him in disdayne a *phantasticall*" (edition Arber, p. 33). The word is doubtless connected with *capriole*, the high-leaping or curvetting of a horse or goat. In fact, Marston in his *Antonio and Mellida* (Act V., i. 94) exclaims:

"Now, cap'ring wits
Rise to your highest mount."

But Marston most of all seems to dislike the comic low characters, and the "tricksy, learned, nicking strain" of the immortal plays. He says:

"My soul adores judicial scholarship;
But when to servile imitatorship
Some spruce Athenian pen is prenticèd,
'Tis worse than apish;"

—*Scourge of Villanie*, Sat. ix.

and again a few lines further on :

“How ill methought such wanton jiggings skips
Besemed his graver speech.”

All this looks very like Baconian allusion, for in the next lines comes the eulogy “Far fly thy fame,” &c., quoted above, and the only eulogy in the whole of the *Satires*—where we get the “silent name one letter bounds,” or F^R_B .

Such passages as are quoted in this chapter, and other new passages even stronger than these that I shall give in the chapter on Jonson and Bacon, should considerably invalidate the force of that great orthodox argument: “All Shakespeare’s contemporaries acknowledged him to be the true author of his own works, and that irrevocably settles the question.”

I now approach, as promised, the unpleasant subject of the Scandal connected with the author of the Sonnets and with Bacon.

CHAPTER III

THE SCANDAL : EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

THE next evidence which I shall bring into open court in the following pages, is, what I fear some people will call the kind of evidence that should only be heard *in camera*. But a literary question can hardly be discussed under such restrictions, and even were it possible to nominate a joint-committee of well-known Shakespearians and Baconians to discuss privately "the Scandal of the Sonnets," and simply report the decision arrived at, without communicating the evidence that led to it, I do not for one moment suppose that any of the public, literate or illiterate, would be satisfied with such a bare result.

So if we are to settle this *quæstio vexata*, we must take the savoury with the unsavoury, and make as few wry faces over it as possible. I think it will be more satisfactory, both to myself and my readers, if I introduce this unpleasant, but necessary, subject in the words of an orthodox Shakespearian, who is a fine scholar, and I suppose knew the Sonnets, backwards and forwards, better than any man in the world. I refer to the late Samuel Butler, who in 1899, being then so little a novice in difficult problems of literature that he had already discovered the writer of the Odyssey to be a woman, tried his experienced hand on Shakespeare's Sonnets.

He began with a good will, there is no doubt of that, for he tells us that before taking any steps to tackle the problem on its merits, he committed the whole body of the Sonnets to his memory, and thus became independent of his book, and had not the trouble of constantly turning over its leaves. Such a beginning, if

it did not end in success, at least deserved it. But alas, being a Shakespearian pure and simple, he found the problem, as they all find it, a much more awkward one than at first it seems. In his case, after a deal of honest hard work, he succeeded, so his friends said, in imparting additional obscurity to several of the plainer and more obvious Sonnets, and by a curious arrangement of earlier dates than had been ever tried before, he rendered some of the Sonnets perfectly unintelligible. But he was one of the very few who have ventured to hint at the tabooed subject of the "Great Scandal," and it is for that reason that I quote him before I cross the threshold myself.

In his book, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (pp. 86, 87), he says :

"No person can begin to read the Sonnets without feeling there is a story of some sort staring them in the face. They cannot apprehend it, but they feel that behind some four or five Sonnets there is a riddle which more or less taints the series, with a vague feeling as though the answer if found would be unwholesome. Their date is the very essence of the whole matter; for the verdict that we are to pass upon some few of them—and these colour the others—depends in great measure on the age of the writer. . . . If we date them early, we suppose a severe wound in youth, but one that was soon healed to perfect wholesomeness. If we date them at any age later than extreme youth, there is no escape from supposing what is really a malignant cancer.

"Those who date the Sonnets as the Southamptonites and still worse the Herbertites do, cannot escape from leaving Shakespeare suffering, as I have said, from a leprous or cancerous taint, for they do not even attempt to show that he was lured into a trap, and if they did he was too old for the excuse to be admitted as much palliation."

Mr. Butler grants that the story is a squalid one, but thinks Shakespeare's first few years in London were passed in squalid surroundings, and he ends by an appeal :

"Considering his extreme youth, his poetic temper, considering his repentance, and the perfect sanity of all his later work, considering further that all of us who read the Sonnets are

as men who are looking over another's shoulder and reading a very private letter which was intended for the recipient's eyes and for no one else's, considering all these things, I believe that those whose judgment we should respect will refuse to take Shakespeare's grave indiscretion more to heart than they do the story of Noah's drunkenness."

And further on (p. 122) he says :

"One word more. Fresh from the study of the other great work in which the love that passeth the love of women is portrayed as nowhere else save in the Sonnets, I cannot but be struck with the fact that it is in the two greatest of all poets that we find this subject treated with the greatest intensity of feeling. The marvel, however, is this, that whereas the love of Achilles for Patroclus depicted by the Greek poet is purely English, absolutely without taint or alloy of any kind, the love of the English poet for Mr. W. H. was, though only for a short time, more Greek than English. I cannot explain this."

No, I may add, nor is any orthodox Shakespearian ever likely to explain it. William Shakespeare was most distinctly *not* the kind of man for a scandal of this nature, nor is there the slightest trace of such a stain in his whole life. He had his scandals too, but they were very different ones. Take his early Stratford days—we all know how he cropped his own sweet rose before the hour. It is down in black and white against him in the contemporary registers of the diocese of Worcester—that is one scandal. Take his London actor-manager days—we know pretty well how he showed a citizen's wife that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. ; that too has been current in black and white from an early period and seems founded on good oral tradition. That is another scandal, but not the kind we have to do with here—nay, it almost excludes it, for Shakespeare's breaches of the moral law were distinctly virile, and, moreover, he was the father of twins begotten in lawful wedlock before he was twenty-one—so there was not much sexual inversion about *him*. We cannot marry any facts, or even fictions of his life, to the scandals of

the Sonnets. But how about Bacon? What do the Baconians—the heretics—tell us about him with regard to this particular matter? Nothing, apparently. Either they know nothing, or else they are in a conspiracy of silence; for I have seen nothing in print on the subject as yet. But as I have only recently entered on the field of controversy, I may not have sufficiently examined their arguments or evidence.

But we may surely begin by saying that at least *a priori* we have in Bacon a much more likely man for a moral scandal than in the country lad Shakespeare, who was brought up far away from the infectious atmosphere of “Italianated” gallants, and who mixed with middle-class people of a much more unsophisticated character than were the libertines of a royal court, whether a French or English one.

Bacon had early experience of court life abroad, and was thrown into the company of aristocrats who had widely travelled and knew the vices of the Continent at any rate, even if they did not practise them. And if we put aside the grosser forms of vice as improbable, and reduce the scandal to an intense Platonic friendship for a beautiful youth, still Bacon is much the more likely man for this too than Shakespeare. For since the Greek teachers and scholars came to Italy after the fall of Constantinople, there had been a great revival, almost a re-birth, of Greek literature in that sunny land, and a kind of Platonism established itself in literature and in the higher culture of men, whereby the Greek view of an intense innocent male friendship was fostered and became indeed fashionable and praiseworthy among the cultivated upper classes, and Englishmen who travelled in Italy, or consorted with men who had spent some time abroad, would be likely enough to catch this fashion or folly of the time, and would either seek or imagine some “master-mistress” for their passion.

Bacon, I maintain, was a much more likely individual to catch this infection than was Shakespeare. But however that may be, I feel it is only right that I should

produce in open court all such scandal-evidence regarding Bacon as I have found in the course of my comparatively short search.

I will begin by calling my principal witness, who is no other than good old Aubrey, whose appearance in the witness-box should be greeted with delight and respect by all lovers of biographical research. If ever a man devoted time and trouble to gathering useful and accurate details of the lives of famous Englishmen of his own age and of the near preceding ones, it was John Aubrey. He has recovered and preserved for us many valuable literary assets which are now in our possession for ever, and we have to thank him for many precious records of Milton, Waller, and scores of other famous and interesting Englishmen, which would have been utterly lost but for his conscientious and painstaking notes, which he put down in those MS. volumes now preserved in the Bodleian. He is a most valuable witness in this case, as indeed he is in all cases of contemporary biography, for we know his antecedents, and we know how he used to obtain his evidence. He was a man of good position in society, with numerous friends and correspondents, and was a most persistent questioner and seeker-out of those who had personally known any of the worthies whose lives and peculiar characteristics he wished to record in his great MS. collections. He dined out, and had frequent social intercourse with cultivated men of the higher classes, and any scraps of their conversation, any anecdotes they might personally relate, would be carefully and honestly transferred to his note-books on his return home. This was a hobby of his and he rode it for many years. He may be called the Boswell of the seventeenth century, and he took, not merely one literary colossus, but many interesting celebrities into his anecdotal biography.

What then does this valuable witness tell us about Bacon? A new, astonishing, and for the present controversy, a most important fact. Aubrey says: "He was *παιδεραστής*. His Ganimeds and favourites took

bribes, but his lordship always gave judgment *secundum æquum et bonum.*"* The latter part of this statement is fully corroborated by evidence in other writers, but the first few words contain a most startling fact which I have not met with in any Life of Bacon.

How is it that this serious allegation against the great Lord Chancellor is apparently unknown? Perhaps it has been looked at by those who have happened to come across it as a *scandalum magnatum* which it would be unseemly to stir up or even to notice, on account of the high recognised position of Bacon in English literature and history. But I think the real reason is that until quite recent years (1898), it has really been unknown. It was in Aubrey's MSS. at the Bodleian, and had been there for many years; but what literary student in ten thousand would go through those intricate jottings, those erasures and alterations, or that complicated patchwork of many memoranda spread here and there in the folio pages? Besides, they had been already edited and presented to the public, and most students had read them in this printed form. I had done so, years ago, when I was only a general reader, in my college or salad days, and the astounding fact we are now dealing with was *not* there. It had been suppressed, along with much else that was thought too broad and unrefined for the age.

But in 1898 a distinguished University scholar, recognising the importance of old Aubrey's gatherings, published a much larger (but still not quite unexpurgated) edition, and on re-reading my delightful old friend, I came upon Bacon in a character hitherto totally unsuspected by me.

But is this *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον* of Aubrey to be accepted as a probably correct statement, or as simply a piece of vulgar gossip without real foundation? Is there any corroboration in Bacon's life or works for such an astounding assertion? I am sorry to say there is; and, all things considered, the amount of corrobora-

* Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, edited by A. Clark, i. 71. Oxford, 1898.

tion is larger than might be expected, for such matters are always most carefully covered under the veil of secrecy by all persons in any way connected with them.

If it be objected, that such a charge is ridiculous, that it has not a leg to stand upon, and that there is not a single *legal* or *official* document or record of anything of the kind connected with Bacon, I would ask these objectors to hear what Bacon himself has to say about the treatment of high official records by those who had power over them. He says in his *History of King Henry VII.* (Works, Spedding, vi. 38) that "soon after this king ascended the throne, all the documents which tended to taint him were defaced, cancelled, and taken off the file." May we not well imagine that Lord Chancellor Bacon, who enjoyed the friendship and confidence of James I. (who also had his Ganymedes), would be able with little difficulty to take off the official files any documents connected with any charge or base attack upon himself, especially if it had been an abortive one, as the words "hunting on an old scent" would seem to imply?

In spite of the many high qualities of Bacon, both in intellect, and as I believe in character as well, he was obliged at times by the exigencies of his social and political position to adopt a Machiavellian policy which hardly received indorsement either from his intellect or from his conscience. He was most skilful in suppressing that which he wished to conceal, and he had considerable practice at this work all his life. He had a great deal to do with the Masques at Gray's Inn, and the Devices for the Earl of Essex; we may say, in fact, that he was the prime mover, producer, and author of several pieces of this description, and yet his name is kept out of the business in a most marvellous manner. His contemporaries (*e.g.* Rowland White and others) write full descriptions of these Devices and Masques in letters to their intimate friends, and do not so much as mention Bacon's name except on one occasion, where he is given the credit of getting up "the dumb shows" of a certain

Masque. The Earl of Essex gets all the credit of his Device, and the inference universally was that he was the author of the libretto. But it was nothing of the kind ; it was Bacon who wrote the speeches, and perhaps we should *never* have known this for certain unless some rough drafts in Bacon's own writing had accidentally been preserved in the Gibson Papers, and the famous Northumberland MS. had revealed to us other pieces of Bacon's work. Bacon was one of the greatest literary fabricators (especially of letters for other men) and one of the greatest concealers and cancellers of his own literary work that perhaps ever existed, apart from professional impostors. He would fabricate "Apologies" with the greatest readiness, for this man or for that, or write letters in their name, either to them or from them, and imitate the style required admirably. He would suppress passages in important parts of his works, and add or cancel names as circumstances might require. I think many people quite forget this when they put aside Bacon as an impossible producer of the Shakespeare works. But enough has been brought forward here of the known peculiarities of Bacon's literary life, and his astuteness therein, to show that, combining these with his official position as Lord Chancellor, it would be no difficult matter for him to cancel and conceal from posterity every atom of official evidence concerning this scandal which had ever existed, for such documents would be very few in number, and would be in "archives," not in printed books. But enough about this possible objection.

There is indirect evidence in plenty, and before dealing with that, it will be as well to get a clearer view of the true nature of the charge contained in Aubrey's Greek word *παιδεραστής*. In the first place, the charge is not so bad as it sounds to the classical ear. The Elizabethans were not ancient Greeks, not even the most Italianated of them ; there were no gymnasia and no gymnosophists in Elizabethan England ; the cultus of the nude was not in evidence in those days, as it was when Pheidias

gave supreme expression to the human form divine, and when Grecian generals took their favourite minions with them in their campaigns. Our northern climate was different; our institutions and habits were different; the whole *entourage* was different, and excluded the *special* signification of Aubrey's word or at least considerably modified it.

I take the charge against Bacon to mean something much less repulsive than the Greek vice and something infinitely more pardonable, and we shall find, I think, that this more lenient interpretation of the scandal is to some extent borne out by certain well-authenticated but rather mysterious circumstances of Bacon's public life. We shall find that it is very especially corroborated in numerous allusions in the Sonnets and also in the other works usually attributed to Shakespeare; but in the plays not so pointedly or frequently as in those private "sugred" poems, which were certainly never meant for public or general perusal but for his special "friends" alone.

What the secret scandal really was will be best seen as evolved in the course of the evidence.

I. *The hidden scandal in Bacon's life.*

It is admitted *in limine* that there is absolutely no judicial or official record of any prosecution of Bacon on such or similar charge at any period of his life. And it must also be admitted that if such a charge had found its way to official record in any inferior, or, for the matter of that, superior court, no one would have been in a better position to erase or annul the record than Lord Chancellor Bacon. And now for the evidence we possess.

Just before the 29th April 1601, there was a most unseemly squabble between the Attorney-General Coke and Bacon, "publicly in the Exchequer the first day of term," in which Coke abused Bacon most violently and persistently. The abuse had its origin in Bacon raising some legal point as to the re-seizure of the lands of George Moore, a relapsed recusant, and showing "better matter for the Queen against the discharge by plea." This

roused Coke, who was, as a rule, overbearing and insolent to the juniors, and he bade Bacon not to meddle with the Queen's business, but to mind his own. Bacon gave a kind of *tu quoque* reply, and then Coke burst out again worse than before, and according to Bacon's letter of complaint to his cousin Mr. Secretary Cecil, Coke went on to say: "It were good to clap a *capias utlegatum* upon my back! To which I only said he could not; and that he was at fault, for he hunted upon an old scent. He gave me a number of disgraceful words besides, which I answered with silence, and showing that I was not moved with them." Dr. Abbott (*Life of Bacon*, p. 91) says that the threat of *capias utlegatum* no doubt refers to Bacon's arrest for debt in September 1598. But I rather question this. It seems to be some scandalous charge that is referred to, some felony or charge to which Bacon did not appear personally when called to answer it, and so incurred the penalties of an outlaw. It is clear that Coke's abuse was most virulent, for the letter says that his words and tone were "with that insulting which cannot be expressed."

Bacon also reminds Cecil in this same letter (April 1601) that he was using boldness in addressing him on such a subject, because he had before experienced his cousin's willingness to stand up for him jealously when wronged. "I am bold now," Bacon writes, "to possess your Honour, as one that ever I found careful of my advancement and *yet more jealous of my wrongs*, with the truth of that which passed, deferring my farther request until I may attend your Honour."

And earlier in 1598, when Bacon was in trouble on account of being arrested for debt, he had also written to his cousin Cecil, asking him to help in repelling the indignity offered to him by arrest while on her Majesty's service, and says further: "How sensitive you are of wrongs offered to your blood in my particular, I have had *not long since* experience."

I suggest that with these letters before us, it seems highly probable that Cecil had protected his cousin

Francis Bacon some time previously, when some unpleasant and probably disgraceful charge had been either brought against him or threatened—a charge that would tarnish the fame or throw disgrace in a smaller degree on his blood relations and home circle. Still further, we can date this odium or charge as “not long” before 1598, the date of his reference to it in his letter to Cecil. This would bring us to the years 1596–7 as a possible limit for the time of the scandal, and this date agrees remarkably well with the allusions in the Sonnets.

As far as I can make out the old legal term *capias utlegatum*,* it appears to have to do with either treason or felony, and the suggestion that the Attorney-General Coke, who was Bacon’s lifelong enemy, referred mainly to the arrest for debt in 1598, seems to me wholly untenable. What was there so very disgraceful in this arrest? How could this charge of itself be so terribly insulting? Besides, it appears that Bacon had purged himself from that charge, nor was this an “old scent.” Neither could it be treason that Coke referred to; for if the Essex case looked bad for Bacon, and the play of *Richard II.*, which Bacon seemed to fear that some busybodies would father on him as “one of his own tales,” looked still more treasonable, yet these things had only just occurred, and reference to them could hardly be called “hunting on an old scent”; so I cannot but come to the conclusion that this scandal, which Coke raised so brutally and violently (as was his wont at times of passion) against his rival, and which Bacon received for the most part in silence, had reference to some charge or information laid against Bacon’s moral character,

* As far as the old law-books and dictionaries help us, we find that the Latin words used by Coke referred to what in plain English would be a “Writ of Outlawry,” which was thus defined: “When an indictment has been found in any Court of *oyer* and *terminer*, or general or quarter sessions, against a person, and that when a justice of the peace, being applied to, shall issue a warrant for his apprehension, then if he shall keep away or cannot be found, he is liable to be outlawed, and if the charge be treason or felony the writ would be *capias utlegatum*; but if the charge were only for misdemeanours of less gravity, the writ would be *venire facias*.”

and was most likely to have had its origin in his great familiarity and friendship with youthful persons of his own sex. Nothing raises suspicion among the foul-minded vulgar more easily than such a companionship as this, which they, with their low ideas, can only interpret in one way. I believe that Bacon was innocent of such a charge, supposing it to have been made, and that Coke in his temper made himself the mouthpiece of mere vulgar report, or at most a mistaken suspicion arising therefrom. Young Francis Bacon when at Gray's Inn and engaged in arranging plays and masques and interludes, was a very different person from the thoughtful philosopher of Gorhambury, who sat in his arm-chair and mused of Man's Power over the Elements of Nature. He associated with notorious libertines, and, as will be seen, was a bit of a libertine himself. He was the bosom friend of Southampton, and afterwards of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, both young men notorious for debauchery, and almost given up to the attractions of the theatres. Southampton, with whom most of the Sonnets, and all the early ones, are closely connected, was far the worse of the two. The Earl was the Adonis of his passionate admirer, and for him had been written *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and in their dedications Bacon had enshrined his loved one's name while time should last. This I hope to show very clearly farther on. Bacon's character in earlier life and his then associates form the subject now. Well, another close friend and correspondent was Essex, a man who, whether married or a bachelor, was constantly angering Queen Elizabeth by his intrigues with her maids of honour, not simply with one love-lorn virgin of that vestal band, but with four or five. Bacon's cousins, the two Russell girls, were among the number, and their aunt, Lady Anne Bacon, Francis Bacon's mother, had to lay a formal complaint against Essex, of which he admitted part and promised amendment.

Antonio Perez was another great friend of Bacon. He came over to England in the summer of 1593, or

perhaps earlier, and attached himself to Essex, mainly for political purposes. Essex supported him in London, and procured for him £130 from the Queen, as a pension. Perez became very intimate with Francis and Anthony Bacon, and had now established himself for a time in Bacon's mansion near Twickenham Park. Bacon found food for his curiosity and ambition in the conversation of such an experienced diplomat as was Perez, and besides this, Perez was a very quick-witted, amusing, and, it must be added, a very licentious and dissipated man.

Francis Bacon's mother, the Lady Anne, was naturally alarmed at such an intimacy, and wrote one day to her son Anthony: "I pity your brother; yet so long as he pities not himself, but keepeth that bloody Perez, yea a coach companion, and bed companion, a proud, profane, costly fellow, whose being about him, I verily fear, the Lord God doth mislike, and doth less bless your brother in credit and otherwise in his health."*

Lady Anne had some justification in speaking of "that bloody Perez," for he was suspected of the murder of Escovedo, and his illicit relations with ladies of title were notorious. He and the Princess of Eboli were once found by Escovedo, who was a kind of male duenna to the lady, *en el estrado en cosas deshonestas*, and when Escovedo threatened to tell the king about it, the princess replied: "Escovedo, do so if you like, *que mas quiero el trasero de Antonio Perez que al rey.*" Hardly the language one would expect from a "perfect lady," but it helps us to understand why Lady Anne, who was very strict and proper, and herself a grim duenna to the maids of honour her nieces the Russells, and others, did not think Antonio Perez quite the right person for her son Francis to be intimate with.

Somewhat later on in May 1594, Lady Anne Bacon writes to her son Anthony, strongly condemning the dangers of London life. Anthony had located himself in Bishopsgate Street, and his mother disliked the neighbourhood very much. It was too near, she said,

* Birch, *Memoirs*, i. 143.

to the Bull Inn, where plays and interludes were acted. The servants would be corrupted, religion would be neglected, and so on. Francis comes in for his share of his mother's annoyance as well. In fact, the general impression to be derived from Lady Anne's correspondence is that both Francis and his almost inseparable brother Anthony were both somewhat given to a wild licentious life, frequenters and lovers of plays and masques, and boon companions of wealthy young bloods, whose room, in Lady Anne's opinion, would be far better than their company. We have hints too of trouble with the servants; their conduct seems to have been by no means satisfactory to her ladyship at home, and she evidently thought that London and the neighbourhood of the theatres would neither improve their behaviour nor their morals.

We have other evidence about Perez besides what comes from the puritan-minded Lady Anne. She might be suspected of prejudice against Perez as a Roman Catholic, and of jealousy on account of his influence over her two sons, but we are able to judge Perez out of his own mouth. There is a letter written by a Mr. Standen to Francis Bacon in March or April 1595, from which we learn the kind of post that was assigned to Perez—and a person more unfitted for such a delicate post would be hard to find. Mr. Standen writes: "It is resolved that Mr. Perez shall not depart, for that my Lord hath provided him here with the same office that eunuchs have in Turkey, which is to have the custody of the fairest dames; so that he wills me to write, that for the bond he hath with my Lord, he cannot refuse that office."* About this time he seems to have become very intimate with Lady Rich, who writes to Anthony Bacon (May 3, 1596) saying "she would fain hear what has become of his wandering neighbour, Signor Perez." About a year before (March 1595), Perez had written to Lady Rich the following rather impudent and braggart letter, at least we must so consider it when we remember his post: "Signor

* Birch, vol. i. p. 229.

Wilson hath given me news of the health of your Ladyships, the three sisters and goddesses, as in particular that all three have amongst yourselves drunk and caroused unto Nature, in thankfulness of what you owe unto her, in that she gave you not those delicate shapes to keep them idle, but rather that you push forth unto us here many buds of those divine beauties. To these gardeners I wish all happiness for so good tillage of their grounds. Sweet ladies mine, many of these carouses! O what a bower I have full of sweets of the like tillage and trimmage of gardens."

This unabashed reprobate goes on to say that he has written a book full of such secrets as some persons would not like to have known, and he seems to hint that on his return to England these people must pay if they wish their names kept out of his book. So it seems he was a "black-mailer" in addition to his other odious qualities, and that the womanly instinct of Lady Anne had pierced through the veneer of the polished and travelled Perez, and had detected the baseness that was concealed under his clever and insinuating manners.

Most certainly Perez was no fitting coach or bed companion for Francis Bacon, and I should say that the style of their free conversation was a little different from the style of the *Instauratio Magna* or the *Novum Organum*. I doubt whether Mr. Spedding, thorough expert on Bacon's style as he undoubtedly is, would have been able to identify it on these *tête-à-tête* occasions. May not this give us a hint why this same great authority so resolutely says that "whoever wrote the Plays of Shakespeare it was certainly not Bacon"?

This dictum of so great a Baconian expert is almost the greatest stumbling-block that lies in the way of the Baconian theory. For if Mr. Spedding cannot judge of Bacon's style, who is there that can? But may not too much attention have been paid to the high philosophical and philanthropical style which Bacon chose in order to clothe his message to the world with due dignity, and too little heed to the faculty which Bacon

undoubtedly possessed and gloried in—the faculty of presenting feigned letters and compositions under other names than his own, and so working out his object under a mask or veil? Look at the many letters he certainly wrote for Essex, and also some most probably for Pembroke and others; even for Lord Walsingham as early as 1590. In fact Bacon plumed himself on his skill in “invention,” and as for our Plays, Sonnets, and Poems, why may not they be, after all, the hidden works of Bacon’s “Invention” and “Recreation”? We know of cases of “double personality” in the domain of psychical research—why may there not be double personality in the domain of literary style? I only suggest a question, I do not press it, nor do I highly value the theory.

The only reason I have dwelt on Perez’ and Bacon’s earlier associations at such a length, is because they are to a great extent passed over in the ordinary biographies of Bacon. Of his life for the ten or twelve years after his father’s death (1580–1592) we really hear very little, even in the exhaustive collections of his best biographer Spedding, and the years between one’s majority and the age of thirty-two or thirty-three are most important for character and prospects. Francis Bacon was in early and early-middle life more inclined to gay and fashionable society, and much more mixed up with the players and theatrical life than has ever been imagined, and was more in touch with the maids of honour and their Christmas amusements, their masques, their virginals, and their loves, than any of his biographers have given him credit for. At least so I hope to make it appear in the course of my argument.

Thus far I only claim to have shown that in the recorded life of Bacon there was a hidden scandal which was more akin to the veiled scandal of the Sonnets than anything we know or could infer from what has been handed down to us about Shakespeare, their reputed author. Also that this same mysterious something with which Coke used to vilify Bacon, seems to corroborate what Aubrey has plainly stated; and moreover, that Bacon’s

early associates and surroundings, so distasteful to his puritanical mother, Lady Anne, point more to the authorship of the Plays and Sonnets than has previously been supposed.

Next let us consider what the hidden scandal of the Sonnets appears to be, and whether it points to the authorship of Shakespeare or of Bacon. But before doing this, there is another piece of evidence to which I attach some importance, and it ought not to be omitted in the present connection. It concerns the unusual helplessness in which Bacon found himself with regard to authority over his male servants, and Spedding accepts it as probably a true history. "In the year 1655, a book-seller's boy heard some gentlemen talking in his master's shop; one of them, a grey-headed man, was describing a scene which he had himself witnessed at Gorhambury. He had gone to see the Lord Chancellor on business, who received him in his study, and having occasion to go out, left him there for awhile alone. 'Whilst his Lordship was gone, there comes,' he said, 'into the study one of his Lordship's gentlemen, and opens my Lord's chest of drawers wherein his money was and takes it out in handfuls and fills both his pockets, and goes away without saying any word to me. He was no sooner gone when in comes a second gentleman, opens the same drawers, fills both his pockets with money, and goes away as the former did without speaking a word to me.' Bacon being told when he came back what had passed in his absence, merely 'shook his head, and all that he said was, 'Sir, I cannot help myself.' " *

The relater of the tale commented on it in a curious and suggestive manner, for he thought that Bacon's manner was so strange when told of the thefts, that it struck him that Bacon's servants must have had some mysterious power over him, and that Lord Bacon had some fault; whatever it was he could not tell.

This Gorhambury anecdote would refer to a later period of Bacon's life than when the Sonnets were written, and would correspond more with the time of his life to which

* Preface to "*On The Cries of the Oppressed*," by M. Pitt in 1691.

old Aubrey refers, *i.e.*, when Bacon was in a high judicial position, and "his Ganimeds and favourites took bribes."

But there are some letters written earlier than this, in April 1593, which appear very compromising for Francis Bacon, and have a worse appearance in regard to the scandal than his familiar acquaintance with Perez, which I have recently related from Birch's well-known Memoirs. They are original letters from Lady Anne Bacon to her son Anthony, and they complain very strongly of the behaviour of the male servants that Francis Bacon kept about him. "There was," she says, "that Jones, and Edney,* a filthy wasteful knave, and his Welshmen one after another." Until they came, the poor mother writes, "he (Francis) was a towardly young gentleman, and a son of much good hope in godliness." And she adds, "he hath nourished most sinful proud villains wilfully;" and ends thus: "For I will not have his cormorant seducers and instruments of Satan to him committing foul sin by his countenance, to the displeasing of God and his godly true fear."

Now this letter was written just about the time that *Venus and Adonis* was being given to the world, and supplies us with a good reason why Bacon should not care to have *his* name mixed up with it, even if it came from his fertile brain. He had to reckon with his mother, who was a lady of considerable force of character, and held both her sons somewhat in her power in money matters. The pecuniary difficulties of Francis were the original cause of these letters and the strong remarks contained in them. Francis wanted to pay his debts by selling an estate called Markes, that had been left to him, but he could not sell without the consent of his mother, who as dowager would have her widow's third. Anthony, who was always trying to help his brother, wrote an appeal to his mother to let Francis have power to sell the estate altogether, for the sake of

* This name has always been deciphered as *Enney*; so Spedding and the rest have it. I have replaced Edney from the MS. Lady Bacon seems to mean Idney, of whom I speak presently.

his brother's health and peace of mind, which were both in a bad state just then. Lady Anne Bacon eventually consented, but there were more letters, which are given (in part) in Spedding.* They are worth reading entirely, and throw a strong light on the unwholesome and unscrupulous kind of young servants by whom Bacon was surrounded—at least so his mother thought. It seems they were mainly Welshmen, and of a low class, for his mother writes, "He is robbed and spoiled wittingly by his base exalted men, which with Welsh wiles prey upon him." "That Jones never loved your brother . . . but your brother will be blind to his own hurt. . . . The Lord in his mercy remove them from him, and evil from you both." And again, she writes: "Oh that he had not procured his own early discredit, but had joined with God that hath bestowed on him good gifts of natural wit and understanding."

These "base exalted" Welshmen remind me of the many Welsh characters in Shakespeare's plays, and the great credit critics have given him for the lifelike way in which the Stratford man reproduces the broken Welsh-English lingo, and the Welsh character. According to Lady Anne just now (1593) and earlier, Bacon had been living almost in an atmosphere of Welsh cunning and Welsh lingo, and was therefore quite qualified to give the speaking portraits of Captain Fluellen and Sir Hugh Evans we find in the Shakespeare plays.

But there is stronger evidence still—evidence that almost proves Lady Anne right, when she said that Francis was "blind to his own hurt." It appears that Bacon used to sleep with one of his men-servants and take him out with him in his coach. This was defying public opinion indeed. This was almost asking the tongue of vulgar scandal to wag. The name of this servant was Percy, and it is to the laborious Spedding that we owe his name. Percy turns Perez out of Bacon's bed, and occupies the place himself. This is far worse than I have been supposing. I first read about Perez

* *Life and Letters of Bacon*, i. 243-246.

in Birch's Memoirs, and was surprised at Bacon's unusual intimacy with such a profligate character, and found an historical reason why Lady Anne should call him "bloody Perez." I noted these things down, and not long after I found that the conscientious Spedding had been to Lambeth and had read through all Lady Anne's letters in her own handwriting, and that he had found that Birch had wrongly deciphered Lady Bacon's rather difficult writing, and that the "bloody Perez" who was bed and coach companion to Francis, should really have been the "bloody Percy." As Spedding thinks, a Henry Percy, one of Francis Bacon's servants, was here meant. But why "bloody"? That word suits Perez much better.

However, in any case, whether Perez or Percy shared the bed, it caused Lady Anne to use very strong language, and evidently worried her very much. Of the two, Percy would cause the greater scandal, for Percy from his position in the household should certainly have had a room of his own; whereas Perez as an occasional visitor and perhaps entertained unawares (though no angel) might well receive the hospitality of Bacon's own chamber.

Dr. Abbott, dealing with this matter of Lady Anne in his *Bacon and Essex* (p. 46), quotes "bloody Percy" as a "*couch* companion and bed companion." These variations induced me to go to Lambeth, and inspect for myself the original there carefully preserved. I found Lady Anne's writing extremely hard to decipher; the paper she used was more like blotting paper, and her pens must have been very bad. But I found that she wrote "coch companion"; there is no doubt of that, and as that was an early way of spelling the name of the vehicle, after the French fashion, I think *couch* may be dismissed. The name Percy or Perez is much more dubious. I could only read it as *Peerer*, which rather favours the Spanish gentleman. "Bloody" also was a puritanical epithet for Papists, "Bloody Queen Mary" to wit.

I have somewhat to remark on one paragraph of Lady Anne Bacon's letter as given by Spedding; it is as follows (i. 244): "It is most certain till first Enney (?),

a filthy wasteful knave, and his Welshmen one after another . . . did so lead him as in a train, he was a towardly young gentleman, and a son of much good hope in godliness." Mr. Spedding puts a note of interrogation after Enney's name, either because he was uncertain whether it had been correctly deciphered, or because he knew no one connected with Bacon of that name. I read the doubtful word as Edney. I suggest that Edney may be a Mr. Idney, whom we hear of through Aubrey, who says, "Three of his Lordship's servants kept their coaches, and some kept race-horses;" and in a side-note Aubrey adds that the three servants were "Sir Thomas Meautys, Mr. Thomas Bushell, and Mr. Idney." The first two are well known to Bacon's biographers, but what became of the last I know not.*

So far then, I think it must be generally admitted that we have a considerable amount of good and undeniable *external* evidence that Bacon was given to unusual intimacy with loose and unprincipled people, some of whom were beneath him in position, and that he was also on terms of friendship with wild and licentious gallants of his own class. There is evidence that he gained discredit by such a manner of life with his mother, and no doubt with other strict-living people, and that he was once publicly discredited by his old enemy Coke on some old and disgraceful charge, possibly of this same character, or worse.

The *external* evidence for a scandal in Bacon's life is stronger and clearer than is usual for a man so highly placed, and can hardly be dismissed. Next let us take the internal evidence for a similar scandal in the author of the Sonnets, which is also strong.

* There was a William Edney connected with the Chapel Royal (1569-1581), and there was a Peter Edney, an excellent singer, who might, as far as chronology helps us, easily be his son. This Peter Edney receives much praise for his "grace and musical talent" from John Davies of Hereford. Bacon might well have taken him as a page, or in some other personal service, when he left his father and the Chapel Royal surroundings, which latter were not the best seminary for a graceful boy. Of course this is mere conjecture from the name alone; but Edney is by no means a common name, and there may be something in the coincidence.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCANDAL : INTERNAL EVIDENCE

To any reader who has the slightest acquaintance with those gems of English verse known as "Shakespeare's Sonnets," it is perfectly evident that the author, whoever he may be, does pathetically confess and bewail some "blot," some "offence" or "guilt" of his, some "lameness," which metaphorically crippled his better nature (for mere physical lameness hardly seems to suit the different passages), some result in some way of his "sportive blood," which others with their "false adulterate eyes" had esteemed vile. Men's thoughts about the author's "frailties" are described as "rank thoughts," and altogether we may say that something unusual and unpleasant of a sexual character is clearly meant. The author gives us many other hints similar in character and phraseology to those quoted above in the inverted commas, and several Sonnets have more or less reference to this peculiar subject of scandal, but cxx. and cxxi. are perhaps the strongest. We must not, however, forget that even in these he defends his innocence, or partly leads us to infer it. Thus, the first four lines of Sonnet cxxi. certainly go far to make us think that the author's offence *never went beyond intention*, and the same remark applies elsewhere, as in Sonnet cix., where he excuses and accuses himself in this remarkable phraseology :

"Never beleeve though in my nature rain'd
All frailties that besiege all kindes of blood,
That it could so preposterouslie be stain'd
To leave for nothing all thy summe of good ;
For nothing this wide Universe I call,
Save thou, my Rose, in it thou art my all."

Now *preposterouslie* is a significant adverb here, and

there seems to be more in this word than meets the eye. We shall find it used in what is evidently a similar connection in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act V. sc. i.), and if we remember that this play is the very one which was supposed to be the "purge" that Shakespeare gave to Ben Jonson in return for his bitter attacks on the play-writers in the *Poetaster*, we shall understand the force of the word still better. For Ben Jonson had hinted pretty plainly that one, if not all of them, belonged to that disgraceful class of men whom the Romans called *cinædi*, as will be seen further on when I deal with Ben Jonson and Bacon, and the way in which Bacon is implicated in the charge as a young Alcibiades. The Shakespeare passage where the word now in question occurs is a dialogue between "rank Thersites," the universal vilifier, and Patroclus, the unsullied bosom friend of Achilles :

Thersites. Pr'ythee be silent, boy, I profit not by thy talk ; thou art thought to be Achilles' male varlet.

Patroclus. Male varlet, you rogue ! what's that ?

Thersites. Why, his masculine whore. Now the rotten diseases of the south . . . take and take again such *preposterous* discoveries.

There can be no doubt about the application of the word here, and thus some light is, I think, thrown upon the meaning of the word in the Sonnet.

Moreover, in *Othello* (I. iii. 330) we have this word *preposterous* again used in a similar connection ; Iago says :

"If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions."

And these words of the Sonnet were addressed to a young MAN, which makes them stranger still. "My Rose!" it seems so very inappropriate. Indeed, Gerald Massey, who devoted so many years to these mysteries, will not believe that the Sonnet was to a man at all. He says, "The Rose is a female emblem," and that he should no more think of calling a man "my Rose," than of calling him "my tulip."

The Sonnets which deal with the peculiar "bewailed

guilt" of the author seem to be xxxvi., cx., cxii., and cxviii.—cxxxii., and any one carefully considering the repeated self-accusations they contain can have little doubt that these Sonnets are distinctly autobiographical. I know some good authorities have held the opinion that these Sonnets contain no key to the author's real life but are simply works of his poetic fancy, trials of imaginative skill, as was the usual habit with many, and indeed most of the Elizabethan sonneteers. This fashion in sonnets may be admitted as pretty general, but no writer has ever dwelt on his own abasement and infamy as it is exhibited here.

There is just a possibility that the scandal was connected with Mary Fitton, for in Sonnet cxix., which is included in the criminating sequence, we have the suggestive lines :

"How have mine eyes out of their spheres been *fitted*
In the distraction of this madding fever ;"

and the punning word "fitted," in connection with her name, is not without other examples—Fitton, fit one, &c., and especially Sonnet cli. :

"flesh stays no farther reason,
But rising at thy name, doth point out thee
As his triumphant prize."

And moreover, there certainly seems to have been some peculiar scandal about the Pembroke-Fitton case, apart from Pembroke, when we consider the abrupt departure of Mary and her father from town, and the fact of Pembroke renouncing marriage for some reason not clearly stated. Bacon certainly knew Mary well, for did not she and his cousins the Russells act and dance together in masques at court, and private interludes before the Queen? Moreover, we are told of this rather audacious young maid of honour that she would tuck up her clothes and put on a large cloak like a man, and go forth to meet her lover, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. This kind of male-impersonation would commend itself strongly to a man of Bacon's temperament, as Aubrey would have

it to be. She would be like the charming Rosalinds and other maidens in doublet and hose which meet us in the pages of the immortal plays. I admit much of this is mainly fanciful, but I also submit that it is most curious and suggestive if taken in connection with Aubrey's most positive statement. Anyhow, I will assert with some degree of confidence that Francis Bacon was a much more likely man to sit by Mary Fitton when she was playing the virginals, and to "envy those jacks that nimble leap to kiss the tender inward of her hand," and then afterwards write Sonnet CXXVIII. as a record of the sweet experience—a much more likely man, I say, than was William Shakespeare.

There is an atmosphere of aristocratic life and refinement about the Sonnets, in which I think the Warwickshire rustic would breathe with difficulty. This view of the case is also helped by that expression of Sonnet CXXV., "Hence thou suborned *Informer*," where *Informer* is meant to be a significant word, being one of the few words put in italics in the original edition of the Sonnets, and implying a hidden reference for those who knew. I take the *Informer* to be Sir William Knollys, who appeared in the Essex trial in that thankless character, and may possibly have informed against Bacon and Mary Fitton as well. He was a lover of the wanton maid himself, and would keep a jealous look-out on her doings, and an effective one too, as he was, so to speak, on the spot, and could get to her by the "postern door," as is well known he did one night, with his a——e * in his hand. But that is another story. All I want to show here is, that the secret scandal of the Sonnets points much more to Bacon as the real author of these strange confessions than to Shakespeare.

And if we consider the Poems, and especially the *Venus and Adonis*, and that bashful smooth-faced boy therein depicted with all a lover's fervour, what are we to think? Must we not feel how Adonis recalls the

* What this was will appear further on. I leave it for the present for the reader's skill in guessing. I do not think any one will succeed.

Southampton of the Sonnets, and is his very "counterfeit," our author's "lovely boy"? Do we not see how Adonis, with his half-girlish coyness and tempting inexperience, as yet unassailed, represents, in a way, the "master-mistress" of the author's passion, who was to live in eternal lines in these very poems? For the Sonnets were a private message, for private friends, not for the world of fame. They were, at least some of them, of the nature of a secret embassy accompanying or preceding the powerful rhymes that were openly to give life and fame to the "lovely boy" whose name was on the dedication page:

"So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

Have we not here, in the Poems as well as in the Sonnets, Bacon *παιδεραστής* — Bacon a born lover of youthful semi-feminine beauty, rather than Shakespeare, a virile married man and the father of twins?

Of course, as the poem of *Venus and Adonis* was to be open to the eyes of the public, not a word of scandal or male-love do we hear; but the tendency is but half-concealed when we read in impassioned lines how fair the young Adonis was.

In the Plays the tendency would be more concealed still, for they would be acted in public as well as read in the pirated quartos, and allusions were always keenly looked for by the observant Elizabethan audience. The Plays, too, were historical more than autobiographical.

But there are indications now and then, if only slight ones. Take this from *Hamlet*:

"So oft it chances in particular men
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth—wherein they are not guilty—
Since nature cannot choose his origin . . .
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star—
Their virtues . . .
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault."

—*Hamlet*, Act I. sc. iv. l. 30.

And Biron (who represents in so many ways the author) says :

“For every man with his affects is born,
Not by might mastered, but by special grace.”
—*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I. sc. i.

And what is still more remarkable, we find that the admirable lines just quoted from *Hamlet* were all struck out from the last *revision* of the Plays in the folio of 1623. Did the editor of the folio (Ben Jonson?) do this to prevent any inference being drawn against the true author? or did Bacon and Ben Jonson jointly withdraw the passage, fine as it was, on the well-known principle of “the least said, the soonest mended”? We must not forget that there was another possible reason for the omission of this passage, and that is, that the Sonnets had been given to the public since the quarto *Hamlet* was printed, and they might raise suspicions in people's minds, for in the Sonnets there were allusions to “Fortune's spite” and “Nature's defect,” and people might put two and two together.

And there are several suggestive passages in that little-read poem *A Lover's Complaint*, by William Shakespeare, printed at the end of the original edition of the Sonnets in 1609. It is a poem allied to *Lucrece* in metre and some other points, and allied to Bacon in its law terms and similes. Here are two stanzas :

“Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood,
That wee must curbe it upon others proffe,
To be forbod the sweets that seemes so good,
For feare of harmes that preach in our behoofe ;
O appetite from judgement stand aloofe.
The one a pallate hath that needs will taste,
Though reason weepe and cry it is thy last.”

“All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood, none of the mind :
Love made them not, with acture they may be,
Where neither Party is nor trew nor kind ;
They sought their shame that so their shame did find,
And so much lesse of shame in me remaines,
By how much of me their reproch containes.”

I am half-ashamed to say that I have only just read this poem for the first time. It seems to be written in a lofty Shakespearian vein, abounding in imagination and exquisite phrasing. Stanzas XII.—XXI. would suit young William Herbert very well, but the maiden seems more chaste and reserved than the volatile Mary Fitton had the reputation of being at the time.

Mr. W. C. Hazlitt has lately (1902) written a volume entitled *Shakespear*, with a view to improve upon the famous Life of Shakespeare by Sidney Lee. Mr. Hazlitt's knowledge of curious and out-of-the-way Elizabethan literature is unrivalled, and I bought the book at once, expecting a flood of light on an undoubtedly obscure subject, and possibly a clearing up of the Sonnet-scandal question. I must say I was much disappointed. I will give an instance or two. Mr. Hazlitt takes Yorick to be Richard Tarlton, the popular jester and low-comedian. Very likely that is so; I had already deduced an argument from the same supposition in the present book. But, being an orthodox believer, he has to bring "Shakespear," as he calls him, on the scene somewhere with Tarlton, for the jester had borne Hamlet "on his back a thousand times." What does Mr. Hazlitt do? He invents a journey to London of the boy Shakespeare when of the age of ten! These are his words: "I conceive myself perfectly justified in inferring that the original introduction of the poet to London took place about 1574, when he was a boy of ten" (p. 21). Be it remembered there is not a scrap of evidence to corroborate this assertion. This was disappointing, to say the least of it. But worse follows. He takes it for granted absolutely, that "Shakespear receives a magnificent eulogy from Jonson in the *Poetaster*, 1602" (p. 235). To give a bare *ipse dixi* on a much-discussed question is hardly the way to throw light upon it.

But my purpose here is not to criticise that which disappoints me in this recent book, but rather to quote some remarks connected with the "scandal" which I thoroughly endorse. He is discussing (p. 33) whether

we are justified in "constructing an autobiography from detached passages of the works." Looking at such characters as Hamlet and the melancholy Jaques, not to speak of others, he thinks we are justified in a degree. He quotes the very words of Hamlet that I have just quoted, and adds: "The question is, is it not a personal touch? There are other very similar allusions scattered about, and the insistence is too frequent, too explicit, and even too inconsequent, where it immediately offers itself, to permit more than a single conclusion. . . . Scores of them (such passages) might be lifted out of their places in the text, and printed in sequence; and they would tell one story—that of a magnificent career smitten by a blight." This is a novel and remarkable admission to come from an eminently orthodox Shakespearian, especially one who denies the autobiographical nature of the Sonnets. It sounds inconsistent from him, but I take it *per se* as a very judicious piece of criticism, but applied, alas, to the wrong man. It was Bacon who had the "magnificent career" and the "blight," not Shakespeare.

I will also quote what Mr. Hazlitt says just before this: "The author of *Venus and Adonis*, who we should not forget lived so long and so constantly, as we should now colloquially say, *en garçon*, was what the Goddess of Love would, according to him, have desired the object of her passion to be. Who shall say he never proved a Tarquin to some unchronicled Lucrece? It was the opulent and voluptuous property of his blood—a perpetual spring of warm and deep emotions—which accomplished for us all the nobler and purer things that we so cherish, yet that was chargeable, too, with certain infirmities of our strange composite nature."

I am not quite sure what infirmities of our nature Mr. Hazlitt refers to, and of course when he and I speak of the author of *Venus and Adonis* we are referring to very different people; but I certainly do not see much evidence that *my* author of *Venus and Adonis*, although he also lived so long *en garçon* in the midst of a pleasure-loving set, ever showed in his earlier years much

“infirmity of nature” in his relations with the fair sex. He and his friends were undoubtedly fond of going to the playhouses, but they would not be drawn to the *fair sex* by any personages they might see on the stage. The modern provocatives were not there. When Bacon went to the Bankside or to Blackfriars he saw no ballet-dancers, nor yet any “leading ladies” or fascinating *soubrettes*. If he took a fancy to wait at the stage-door or exit after the performance, he would never have the pleasure of praising an actress for her attractions and graces; for the very good reason there were no actresses to meet. The only semblance of a petticoat likely to flutter the hearts of the *jeunesse dorée* of those days, at the stage-door or on the boards, was bound to belong to a lively boy or to a beardless effeminate-looking youth. At some theatres there were only boy-actors—these and nothing more—nests of little half-fledged “eyases,” as they are called in *Hamlet*.

We must take all this into consideration when venturing to pronounce an opinion on the scandal of the Sonnets, and we must not forget that the poet passed the greater part of his middle life in London, in the very centre of the temptations of the age.

There is a puritanical pamphlet of date 1569, entitled *The Children of the Chapel Stript and Whipt*. We have here perhaps the earliest mention of the boy-actors or young singing men of the Chapel Royal: “Plaies will never be suppress, while her majesties unfledged minions flaunt it in silkes and sattens.” Again: “Even in her majesties chapel do these pretty upstart youthes profane the Lordes day by the lascivious writhing of their tender limbes, and the gorgeous decking of their apparell, in feigning bawdie fables gathered from the idolatrous heathen poets.”

I must say that “unfledged minions” carries a bad savour with it, although I know that the earlier meaning of the word *minion* was perfectly harmless. When the court circles had become Italianated the case was rather different.

The Elizabethan stage was the forum of the people, and their daily newspaper as well. That has always to be kept in mind. Chettle's *Kind-Hartes Dreame* (1592), and Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, both refer to the topical jests and personal allusions which were permitted on the stage, and enjoyed by the audience to such a degree that hardly any reputation was safe, whether aristocrat or plebeian. The *mendacia famæ* that Bacon refers to in his published letters, were possibly stage lies and scandals enjoyed and appreciated by the many-headed vulgar in the penny and twopenny divisions of the theatre. The victims had to wince and bear it, unless they had influence enough with the Star Chamber authorities, or with the official censors of the theatres, to suppress the libellous parts of the plays. And even then it could only be effectively done when the play was to be printed, when permission could be withheld. It was next to impossible to stop the ill-natured "gag" that could be introduced on "first nights," and other nights as well. We have a reference to this in *Hamlet*, where the boy-actors are referred to. We hear that many a man with a rapier, that is to say, a gentleman, was afraid of goose-quills, or the play-wrights, and was afraid to show himself among the audience. (*Hamlet*, II. ii. 359.)

With reference to the Sonnet-scandal, F. T. Palgrave says: * "We cannot understand how our great and gentle Shakespeare could have submitted himself to such passions; we have hardly courage to think that he really endured them." Mr. Palgrave's own view seems to be that "excessive affection is one of the characteristics of great genius," and looks for Shakespeare's excuse in this direction. He also quotes the "sublime language" of Plato's *Phædrus*, where this same wondrous affection is described as "that possession and ecstasy with which the Muses seize on a plastic and pure soul, awakening it and hurrying it forth like a Bacchanal in the ways of song."

* *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare*, edited by Francis Turner Palgrave. London, 1865.

That young Francis Bacon can be satisfactorily cleared and whitewashed in this high Platonic way is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Finally, if ever there was a false judgment on any man, Pope made it by the last adjective in his famous distich on Bacon :

“ If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin'd ;
The wisest, brightest, *meanest* of mankind.”

No word could be less appropriate. One of the most distinguishing marks of this illustrious man was his philanthropy, in the Greek sense of the word, as he used and expressed it himself. As for meanness, he was too liberal, too fond of show, too careless of expense, for his own purse to bear it.

But I must not dwell too long on such points, tempting as they are, for this book is not written either to whitewash Bacon's character, or to blacken it. However, I must here say that I hold him, in a certain sense, to be independent both of eulogy or blame. No man had a greater fall or bore it better, and it might be said of him, as Malcolm said of Cawdor :

“ Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving of it.”

As to his character, I accept Dr. Abbott's solution of this difficult problem. He undertook political life and conformed to the practices of courtiers, but he was not by nature or intellectual tastes fitted for it; he knew it was an error, “ that great error that led the rest,” but he had to go through with it, and “ hardened himself in order to subsist.” He never forgot his real calling, the furtherance of the Kingdom of Man over Nature, and consequently could never be or feel a commonplace self-seeker. Dr. Abbott goes on to say : “ With all his faults he is one who, the more he is studied, bewitches us into a reluctance to part from him as from an enemy. He has ‘ related to paper ’ many of his worst defects ; but neither his formal works nor his most private letters

convey more than a fraction of the singular charm with which his suavity of manner and gracious dignity fascinated his contemporaries, and riveted the affections of some whom it must have been hardest to deceive." Of course when Dr. Abbott refers thus to Bacon as committing to paper "many of his worst defects," he does not refer to the Sonnets, as he does not include them among Bacon's writings; and therefore we cannot have his weighty opinion on the scandals which are therein half-revealed and self-confessed. But he speaks of the "long cleansing week of five years' expiation," which he thinks "may have chastened his moral character and generated in him an increased affection for those few friends who remained faithful to him." In fact, during those last five years, Bacon was more his real self than at any other period of his life, and then we were enabled (at least so it seems to me) to see the true value and genuine ring of a lofty, noble, and intellectual nature. The virtue that was in him became more evident then, for, as he himself most wisely said, "Virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when incensed or crushed"; and though he is no "professor" of religion either in his acknowledged works or in his active life, or in the Shakespeare Plays, still there is such a reverence for religion generally, and such an absence of bitterness and of the vulgar *odium theologicum*, that we feel, in spite of Lady Anne's complaints of his careless religious habits in his youth, that we have to deal with a nature thoughtful, serious, and self-searching—nay, sometimes, as in "the dark period," sceptical and pessimistic to a degree, but still a mind that was *naturaliter pia*; and if Shakespeare is to be dethroned, the English-speaking world has no reason to be ashamed of the qualifications of the illustrious man who will occupy that lofty seat. However he may have followed the promptings of his nature in the heyday of youth and of his sportive blood, he finished his course with admirable patience and composure, in apparent peace with God and man. If the unpleasant scandal really belongs to Bacon, it can only be, I should

think, in a very modified sense; or if the infection of his nature really was stronger than we have reason to believe, we can still hopefully look to the judgment on it that the great psychological experts of the present day (the only thorough judges) are prepared to give; and we know that they say such a man is to be pitied rather than condemned.

CHAPTER V

WAS THE AUTHOR OF THE SHAKESPEARE POEMS AND SONNETS A SCHOLAR ?

BUT let us turn to a more pleasant subject. I have already expressed my opinion that the author of the Sonnets was an aristocrat by birth and feeling, and it can be shown, and has been often shown by numerous extracts from the Plays, that their author had in special a dislike to low, common people, and to vulgar tastes and habits. I do not think there is need to press this point. But there is another point much disputed, which requires to be settled definitely if possible, and that is :

Was the author of the Plays and Poems a scholar ?

Much depends on this, and I, for one, am much surprised that it has been so long in dispute ; it seems such a clear and certain matter. But we must hear both sides. First take the Shakespearians : they are not all agreed among themselves on this matter, but the majority of them assert that the author of the Plays was *not* a scholar, and was not well read in languages ancient or modern, but that he was a born genius and picked up sufficient general and special knowledge to be able to write the Plays, even such masterpieces as *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*, by the force of his natural genius. His mind was a remarkably receptive one, they say ; he would easily get his law from his Stratford experience and his father's conversation, for the old gentleman was obstinately litigious. He would get his Spanish and Italian and French from the natives of those countries whom he chanced to meet at the inns and taverns and other public places of the metropolis. He would get his knowledge of Venice or of Denmark from sailors or travellers who had been there, and so on. He was no

erudite scholar or linguist, but he had been to an excellent country grammar-school, and that fact, along with his receptivity of mind, and above all, his heaven-sent genius, would be quite sufficient to account for Shakespeare being the author of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and the rest of the Plays and Poems, without being at all a great scholar or linguist.

Gerald Massey puts this view of the majority of Shakespearians as strongly as any one, and as his *Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (100 copies for subscribers only, 1888) is a very uncommon book, I will reproduce his words here. "To suppose," he says, "that a college education and a profound acquaintance with the classics are necessary to the bringing forth of a Shakespeare is to *miss the lesson of his life* (the italics are his), the supreme lesson of all literature; because in him it was triumphantly demonstrated once for all, that these are not necessities of the most real self-developing education; that nature grows her geniuses like her game-birds and finer-flavoured wildfowl, by letting them forage for their own living, to find what they most need. It was learning in the school of life that was the best education for him, and in that school, as he says of Cardinal Wolsey—

'From his cradle
He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one.'

Probably he had not many books to read; but he was not made out of books. When Nature wants a new man it is not her way to make him out of old books. Books are too often used as the means of getting our thinking done for us. Shakespeare did his own. He could transmute, but his genius preferred to work on Nature, and drew his drama directly from the life."

So the opinion of the majority is that the author of Shakespeare's Plays and Poems was not a bookish scholar at all, but a born genius. However, the Shakespeare party is not unanimous on this question. Many orthodox Shakespearians cannot get over the difficulty of the learning and linguistic acquirements, which seem to them

so evident throughout all that Shakespeare wrote; so they hold the opposite view that Shakespeare *was* a bookish student, and say in addition "there is nothing to prove that Shakespeare did not read languages with as much ease as Bacon." * But the great drawback for these people is, that they can tell us nothing about Shakespeare's books, and nothing about his skill in languages; they cannot refer us to one book of the bookish Shakespeare's library, nor can they show us a single line of his writing in any foreign language, and nothing but his own name in his own language!

Now, when we come to the Baconians, we find that on this question they are all in unity, and unity is strength as a rule. They say, with one accord, that the author of the Plays and Poems was a good scholar, an excellent linguist, especially in French (he having lived in France for some years), and a man of the highest intellectual ability and most deep philosophy, with an unparalleled vocabulary. The Baconians say this, and have said it for many years, and have backed up their assertions with an immense amount of illustration and lucid proof. I need hardly say that on this point I thoroughly agree with them, and am of the opinion that the intellectual acquirements of the author of the Plays, on almost any subject that comes before him, can hardly be estimated too highly. He touches nothing that he does not adorn with the elegant knowledge of an expert, a scholar, and a gentleman. The arguments and facts showing his well-nigh universal knowledge, as though he had taken all learning for his province, are numerous and powerful; but I shall not adduce them here, for I wish to go over as little old ground as possible, on this much-debated question. But I will give two instances of the author's bookish scholarship which have not been hitherto much noticed, if at all, and these point strongly to the real authorship.

The first turns on the subject of the "Gardens of

* Cf. *Is there any resemblance between Bacon and Shakspeare?* p. 209. (An anonymous work.)

Adonis." We find in 1 *Henry VI.*, i. 6, the following lines :

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

This allusion was so deep and scholarly that it puzzled even the learned Alexander Schmidt in his excellent Shakespeare Lexicon, where, *s. v.* Adonis, his comment is—"Perhaps confounded with the garden of King Alcinous in the *Odyssey*." And another Shakespearian scholar, Richard Grant White, says there is "no mention of any such garden in the classic writings of Greece and Rome known to scholars." But both these gentlemen stumbled over a comparatively easy obstacle. Liddell and Scott would have removed it from their path, if they had been consulted. Adonis' Gardens (οἱ Ἀδώνιδος κήποι) were quick-growing plants, seeds, or herbs, put in pots for use at the annual festival of Adonis, and hence used proverbially for anything pretty, but fleeting and unreal. Plato makes Socrates refer to them in the *Phædrus* (p. 276, Jowett). Milton, too, speaks of them :

"Those gardens feigned,
Or of revived Adonis or renowned
Alcinous." —*Paradise Lost*, ix. 439.

Here a passage in Pliny's *Natural History* seems to be the original source: "*Antiquitas nihil prius mirata est quam Hesperidum hortos, ac regum Adonidos et Alcinoi,*" *i.e.* the ancients admired no gardens more than those of the Hesperides and of the kings Adonis and Alcinous.

From other references it is gathered that in the flower-pots of Adonis were placed seeds, cuttings of wheat, fennel, lettuce, &c., all quickly drawn up by heat and as quickly faded. They so became an emblem of the swift fading away of the life of mortals—"It cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." Erasmus, in his well-known *Adagia*, has a long account of these gardens, with all the original Greek passages and a Latin translation following them.*

* *Erasmi Adagia*, 1599, fol., p. 1047.

All the above goes clearly to show that the author of the play of *Henry VI.*, when he fitly compared promises to the gardens of Adonis, was writing as a scholar would write who knew his Plato and Pliny, or at least knew his Erasmus. But from what we know of Shakespeare's education and opportunities, should we be inclined to give him the credit of such a neat and learned allusion? I think not. How about Bacon, we next ask; would he be likely to mention Adonis' gardens? Why, certainly, a most likely man; and he *has* mentioned them twice—once in his *Promus*,* 806, where he took the thing from Erasmus, and once in his *Lord Essex's Device before the Queen* (1595),† where he speaks of “the gardens of love, wherein he now playeth himself, are fresh to-day and fading to-morrow.”

My other instance is taken from the last two Sonnets. They are outside the scope of the rest of the Sonnets, and have nothing to do with the “Lovely Boy,” or the “Dark Lady.” They are, as Mr. Wyndham rightly calls them, “exercises on a Renaissance convention.” They seem to be early essays of the author's “pupil pen,” for they both contain the same poetical fancy, but differently versified. They seem to me to be a very good proof that the author was a scholar, and I have taken them as my second instance of “scholarship,” partly to correct a mistake that every later commentator on the Sonnets has made, even such thorough ones as Dowden and Tyler. They all say that Herr Hertzberg, in 1878, was the first to trace the original source of these Sonnets to a Greek Epigram of the Palatine Anthology. But I can say with confidence that I knew their origin in 1865 when I was

* Strange to say, Mrs. Pott, who has so carefully and laboriously illustrated Bacon's *Promus* by parallel passages from Shakespeare's Plays, has omitted to quote *Henry VI.* as above, although it is by far the most striking instance, and, as it seems to me, one of the best Baconian proofs that the *Promus* offers us.

† Spedding, viii. 379; where the speeches written by Bacon for the several characters are given in full. We only know by internal evidence, and the fact of a chance copy with rough notes in Bacon's handwriting being found in the Gibson Papers, that Bacon was the author. All the contemporary references quite ignore Bacon, and give the credit to Essex.

at College, and that other Englishmen knew it as early as 1849, so that it is rather a shame that the modern German Hertzberg should get all the credit. The truth of the matter is, that in 1849 Dr. Wellesley, the learned Principal of New Inn Hall, Oxford, published his *Anthologia Polyglotta*, which was a choice selection of versions in different languages of some of the best Epigrams in the Greek Anthology. I bought a copy of this in 1865, which I have now, and I well remember my surprise to find on page 63 that William Shakespeare was down for a version of a very fine Epigram, in company with Grotius, Thomas Gray, Pagnini, and Herder, this being William Shakespeare's sole appearance in the 464 pages of learned versions which the book contained. What astonished me was to find Shakespeare among such an array of Greek scholars, for I knew even then what Ben Jonson had said of his Greek qualifications. A little farther on, at p. 133, I found "Lord Bacon" down for a version in company with Ausonius, Maittairi, Ronsard, and some old English authors of 1530-1550. This did not surprise me half so much, although it was my first inkling that Bacon was a poet. I knew he was a Trinity man and a thorough student, and therefore not absolutely unequal to tackling a Greek Epigram—but Shakespeare!! Well, it staggered me quite; but I had other problems, more mathematical than literary, to study in those days, so I just found out in what part of Shakespeare's works this version from the Greek appeared, which, I remember, took me some time to discover (for Dr. Wellesley gave no reference, and I began to look in the Plays), and after that, for many years thought no more about it. But now it strikes me as a strong proof that the author of the Sonnets was "a scholar" in a higher sense than any one has ever claimed that title for Shakespeare. In fact, it strongly suggests to me that Shakespeare was not a likely person to edge himself in just once among such a learned crew, and that Bacon was a much more probable author, especially as he had tried another Greek Epigram, and had expanded it in a similar way to the one in question.

If necessary, a large number of proofs of scholarship and book-learning could be adduced from the Plays and Poems attributed to Shakespeare; but I think it would only be useless repetition of what has been before inquirers for many years. It is not, I think, too much to say that the author we seek was a profound student both of books and men, and one who set before him as his aim and object an almost universal scholarship. He was indeed a searcher after *omne scibile*. But we have no biographical hints that Shakespeare was a man of this stamp at all.

Moreover, even if we leave out of all consideration the numerous identities and literary parallels which Mrs. Pott and Ignatius Donnelly have so laboriously piled up, having dug them out one by one from the rich mine of the Plays;—if we reckon all these as mere *scoriæ*, as so much dross that has no marketable value with literary experts, even then there remains in the mine a rich asset in the shape of a most extensive and scholarly vocabulary, such as hardly any other mine ever possessed.

Max Müller, an authority surely of considerable weight, declares that “Shakespeare displayed a greater variety of expression than probably any writer in any language.” He estimates Milton’s vocabulary at 8000 words, Shakespeare’s at 15,000 words; nearly double!

Again, there is no proof that Shakespeare ever crossed the Channel, and he certainly had neither time nor opportunity to become a polyglot student, or a scholar in living languages. He came up to London early in life as a “utility man” in connection with Burbage’s stable-yard first, and his theatre afterwards, and if the elder Burbage had found his young fellow-townsmen conning foreign dictionaries and grammars instead of doing his proper work—he would have had somewhat to say.

That the author of the Shakespeare Plays was an Italian scholar has been shown by George Brandes. He finds imitations of Berni’s *Orlando Innamorato* and other Italian poems which must have been used in the original, but his most telling example is from Ariosto, who is used

evidently when Othello, talking of the handkerchief, says :

“ A sibyl that had numbered in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work.”

In *Orlando Furioso* (canto 46, stanza 80) we read :

“ Una donzella della terra d'Ilia
Ch' avea *il furor profetico* congiunto
Con studio di gran tempo, e con vigilia
Lo fece di sua mano di tutto punto.”

The agreement here cannot possibly be accidental. And what makes it still more certain that Shakespeare had the Italian text before him, is that the words *prophetic fury*, which are the same in *Othello* as in the Italian, are not to be found in Harington's English translation, the only one then in existence. The author must thus, whilst writing *Othello*, have been interested in *Orlando*, and had Berni's and Ariosto's poems lying on his table.*

There are several proofs that the author was a French scholar, but the two best are (1) The gravedigger's case in *Hamlet* about “crowner's quest” law, taken from the French of Plowden's *Commentaries*; and (2) The play of *Henry V.*, where one entire scene and parts of others are in French. But the French of Stratford-on-Avon was not likely to be much better than the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe.

William Rawley, Bacon's first and last chaplain, and his literary executor, said of him : “ I have often observed, and so have other men of great account, that if he (Bacon) had occasion to repeat another man's words after him, he had a use and faculty to dress them in better vestments and apparel than they had before : so that the author should find his own speech much amended, and yet the substance of it still retained.”

What is meant is that Francis Bacon was a most elegant and ornamental paraphraser of other men's phraseology, and certainly the marvellous alchemy by

* G. Brandes, *W. Shakspeare*, ii. 122.

which the baser metal of other men's thoughts and words was changed in the Shakespeare Plays to ever-shining and imperishable gold is without a parallel in literature. Was it Bacon or Shakespeare who did this ?

If we, in this way, come somewhat to the same point of view as Emerson, and find ourselves unable to marry Shakespeare to his works, to whom are the works to be irrevocably joined ? Here we have not much power of selection, for there is absolutely but one competitor in the field. If Shakespeare should appear to us unequal to that intellectual task of the very highest order, which meets the eye and ear so vividly throughout his supposed works, then there is but one alternative—Bacon was the man ! He is the only one who at all suits the situation ; the only key that has the slightest pretence to fit the lock, and open the secret chamber. That this key does fit has been shown unanswerably again and again, on such points as “identities of expression,” “parallel passages,” and “similar mistakes” both in Bacon and in Shakespeare ; but the effect on the public has been most inadequate, for the reason that many of the Baconians who have brought so much incontrovertible evidence before the public have either mixed it up with some unintelligible or incredible cipher theory, or, as in the case of Mrs. Pott's edition of Bacon's *Promus*, have spoilt the whole effect by overdoing the illustrations, and piling together a heap of material for the most part irrelevant and worthless.

I myself could add a few extra pieces of undesigned coincidence between Bacon and Shakespeare which I have come across quite casually, but they are not worth the trouble of writing down. Such evidence, if well chosen, is really forcible, but no one seems convinced by it, and every one evades it ; and if both writers are shown to make the same extraordinary mistakes, or the same recondite remarks, why then the common reply is : “Oh, that's nothing, no proof at all ! one clearly copied from the other.” Or else the argument is, if the *Promus* discovery be mentioned : “Oh, can't you see how it

happened? Bacon went to hear *Romeo and Juliet*, and jotted down his notes and reminders in his *Promus* when he got home." And so on. I do not say that my few pearls of coincidence are either fine or costly, but I would prefer them kept out of the mud, and not trampled on.

But to return to direct Baconian evidence. Quite apart from literary and other identities, and similar phraseology—a kind of proof which, as I allow, can be much abused—we have abundant evidence left, whereby we can show, that if Shakespeare was not scholar enough, in spite of his transcendent genius, to write the Plays and Poems, there was undoubtedly a man fully equipped for the great work. That man was young Francis Bacon.

I do not suppose that any one living in Bacon's time was able to give a truer account of the kind of man Bacon was than his lifelong friend, Sir Toby Matthews. Fortunately we have his account in *A Collection of Letters made by S^r Tobie Mathews, K^t*, which was edited by John Donne, son of Dr. Donne, in 1660. He is praising his native country for possessing such four excellent and rare minds as Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Francis Bacon, and he thinks England can "pose any other Nation of Europe" in this respect. He reviews their great abilities, and coming to Bacon he says: "The fourth was a Creature of incomparable Abilities of Mind, of a sharp and catching Apprehension, large and faithfull Memory, plentifull and sprouting Invention, deep and solid Judgment, for as much as might concern the understanding part. A man so rare in knowledge of so many severall kinds, endued with the facility and felicity of expressing it all, in so elegant, significant, so abundant, and yet so choise and ravishing a way of words, of metaphors, and allusions, as, perhaps, the World hath not seen, since it was a World. I know, this may seem a great Hyperbole, and strange kind of riotous excesse of speech; but the best means of putting me to shame, will be for you (the reader) to place any other man of yours, by this of mine."

To feel the full force of such remarks as these, we

must remember that if any man at that time really knew the literary secret, it was assuredly Sir Toby. Bacon used to write to him and submit his compositions to his friend's criticism, which he valued highly. "I have sent you," Bacon tells Sir Toby in one letter, "some copies of my Book of the *Advancement*, which you desired, and a little Work of my Recreation, which you desired not." In another letter Bacon writes: "And I must confesse my desire to be that my Writings should not court the present time;" and in another he confesses that a certain past "business" is not quite clear to his memory, and gives this reason—"my head being then wholly employed about Invention."

Do not all these facts seem to point out the very man who *could* write the wonderful Plays; the very kind of head to do the work and not to speak of it, but to leave its fame and good effects to a later time? And as all who are interested in this literary problem well know, it was Sir Toby who, having received some favour or present from Francis Bacon about the time that the first folio was being brought out, wrote back that enigmatical reply, that the greatest wit he knew across the Channel was "of the same name as his Lordship, though he went by another." This used to be thought a Baconian proof, a gem of the first water, until some Shakespearian suggested that the greatest wit in question was Southwell the Jesuit, whose proper name was Bacon, and that the gem of the first water was in fact a worthless paste imitation. But what made Sir Toby mention such a circumstance at all—what led up to it? I think the gem is really as valuable as ever, although I believe Southwell *was* the man referred to. For surely there must have been talk of some double authorship, or some author concealed by an *alias*, or we should not have had such a postscript at all.

Having thus heard one good witness speak to the *fitness* of Bacon, let us hear, by way of contrast, one good witness bear evidence as to the *unfitness* of Shakespeare to fulfil such remarkable qualifications as are everywhere

noticeable in the immortal works, especially in the early plays and poems, mostly written when Shakespeare had not long left the wilds of Warwickshire.

A strong argument against Shakespeare's authorship can be drawn from "the first heir of" his "invention," the *Venus and Adonis*. He could not have left home very long when he began to write this successful and popular poem; possibly he was ostler and odd-man at James Burbage's livery-stables at Smithfield when he thought out the first few lines. Surely, then, we may expect some Warwickshire expressions in it. Country dialect is not easily shaken off all at once. Now, a well-known American, Appleton Morgan, has devoted much labour to tabulating the Plays and Poems with a view to find the percentage of provincialisms (especially Warwick ones) in each. The dialect column for *Venus and Adonis* was absolutely blank! not a single Warwickshire word to be found in the poem, unless *urchin* for hedgehog could be counted, but *urchin* was common to many counties besides Warwick. And then, in spite of the risky subject of the love of Venus for the bashful youth, the whole poem is written with such an air of aristocratic grace, culture, and refinement, that could hardly be attributed to the young man William Shakespeare. He could hardly have seen much fashionable society or elegant court ladies yet. He was but an honest, facetious actor and stage factotum who had not written any popular poetry so far, nor had his name been at all in the mouths of men.

He had been promoted, no doubt, very soon, as I hope to show, from the stable-yard of John Burbage to the inside of Burbage's theatre, and was working his way up, but he was not in a position to address Southampton or any other young nobleman as "my lovely boy," either in public or in private.

Neither was he qualified (we believe) to read that voluminous and rather crabbed French writer, Saluste du Bartas, in his original language. But the celebrated picture of the horse in *Venus and Adonis* is borrowed

word for word from Du Bartas, that well-known French poet, afterwards in Milton's days so popular in Sylvester's translation. But there was no translation for more than five years after *Venus and Adonis* appeared!

Therefore the author must have read the work in its French original. Bacon could do this easily, as a perfect French scholar; but whether the Stratford man could is very doubtful.*

Some Shakespearians no doubt will argue that when we attempt to give the authorship of the sensuous *Venus and Adonis* to the philosophic and studious Bacon we are open to the very same objection that was so forcible against the Shakespearian authorship of *Hamlet* and *Lear* and *Love's Labour's Lost*—the objection, I mean, that "the man cannot be married to his muse," that his life and surroundings effectually forbid the banns. I admit the objection in Shakespeare's case but not in Bacon's. Bacon was a friend and close associate of Essex, Southampton, Perez, and many others of the Elizabethan highest social grade—and that grade abounded with the wayward children of the Renaissance, who thoroughly accepted one of the principal new doctrines floating in that new atmosphere, the Rehabilitation of the Flesh. Neither Essex, nor Southampton nor Raleigh would hesitate one moment about seducing a maid of honour, or carrying on an intrigue with two or three ladies at the same time, if the chance occurred. The state of feeling in the high and cultured circles of renascent Italy in the preceding generation or two had its counterpart in the high and cultured circles of Elizabethan England, especially among those who had travelled beyond the boundaries of their island home and had seen many men, cities, and manners.

A reversion to the unrestrained and joyous life of the natural man—as he was so finely depicted in pagan art and classic story—must have been evident to all travellers. The very pictures and statues, the glories of the new Italian art, told the tale to the eyes

* Cf. *Quarterly Review*, April 1894.

in a livelier and more vivid manner than could ever reach the ears.

Both the Bacon brothers were intimately connected with men of this class. Lady Anne Bacon often wrote to her sons warning them against the character and conduct of their aristocratic associates. She mentions in one letter "thy Earl's unchaste manner of life." This Earl was Essex, who had been a married man for years. Indeed the names of at least four ladies of the court were coupled with his in a rather compromising manner: (1) Elizabeth Southwell, who bore to him a son, described in a law paper at the S. P. O. as "Walter Devereux, the base reputed son of Robert, Earl of Essex, begotten on the body of Elizabeth Southwell"; (2) Lady Mary Howard; (3) Mistress Russell, who was Bacon's cousin; and (4) the "fairest Brydges." This last was a peculiarly disgraceful amour, for Lady Essex, his wife, was with child at the time, and we hear in a letter, dated 11th Feb. 1598, that "it is spied out by some that my Lord of Essex is again fallen in love with his fairest B. It cannot chuse but come to her Majesty's ears, and then he is undone." Apparently the intrigues did come to the Queen's ears, for her wrathful Majesty "treated her and Mistress Russell with words and blows of anger: they were put out of the Coffer Chamber and took refuge in Lady Stafford's house for three nights." However, they promised to be more careful and were restored to their former position. The excuse given for the royal displeasure was that these young damsels had neglected their duties, had taken physic, and had one day gone through the privy galleries to see the gentlemen play ballon. Lady Mary Howard's punishment was rather a spiteful piece of temper on the Queen's part, for Lady Mary had a velvet dress with a rich border, powdered with gold and pearl, which was probably intended, among other purposes, to help to captivate the fascinating Earl. Anyhow it roused the envy of the Queen and others. The Queen one day sent for this dress privately, put it on, and came out among the ladies, and being much taller than Lady

Mary, it was too short for the Queen, and was therefore quite unbecoming. The Queen went round asking the ladies whether it was not short and unbecoming, to which they agreed, and when the question came to be made by the Queen to the real owner of the dress, she too was forced to agree with what the others had said. "Why then," said the Queen, "if it become not me as being too short, I am minded it shall never become thee as being too fine, so it fitteth neither well." So the dress was put away and never worn till after the Queen's death. So the Queen effectually prevented *that* dress captivating the Earl.

CHAPTER VI

BEN JONSON AND BACON

THE next piece of evidence I shall bring forward is, to a great extent, new and unnoticed, but, if I may venture to say so, by no means unimportant. It has mainly to do with Ben Jonson and his early attitude towards Shakespeare and Bacon, especially during the "War of the Theatres," or the *Poetomachia* as it is sometimes called, which lasted two or three years from 1600 onwards.

I am afraid the evidence cannot be fully appreciated without a careful reading of two or three of Ben Jonson's plays, right through from prologue to epilogue. This is rather too much to ask in these days, when writing is so often done *currente calamo*, without stopping to think, and reading is so often got through *currente oculo*, by just glancing at the pages as we turn them over.

However, after a few preliminary remarks I will endeavour to extract some of the more important allusions from their context, and thus save the hasty reader the trouble of reaching down another book from his shelves.

A great deal depends on getting a proper appreciation of Ben Jonson's treatment of Shakespeare and Bacon—for he knew them both well, and also knew Pembroke more intimately than we have any reason to believe that Shakespeare did. In Ben's plays there are such evident satirical comments on actors having arms from Heralds' College and becoming "gentlemen born," that we cannot avoid the conclusion that Ben Jonson is aiming at and satirising Shakespeare. And there are equally strong adverse allusions pointing against Bacon. I know that Gifford, and many critics more recent than he, would not allow either a word or a proof connected with Jonson's

rancour or malignity against Shakespeare. They were both sworn friends and boon companions all their lives, so that school of criticism declared. My own views may be gathered from the present chapter.

It is difficult to give a short, yet clear, account of this War of the Theatres, which lasted quite four years (1598-1603), and involved in it Ben Jonson, Marston, Dekker, and in a certain less degree, Shakespeare and Bacon. But it is important to have a general idea of its course. It began, I believe, with Marston in 1598 or 1599, who was merciless in his *Satires*, and railed so universally that many libels might be accepted without being really intended. Jonson, however, thought Marston had attacked him for youthful indulgence in the sports of Venus, and henceforth Jonson brought his enemies and slanderers, as he thought them, continually into his plays, which were full now of concealed personalities and bitter remarks, Jonson himself figuring in them too in the various characters of Asper, Crites, Horace. Marston was one of the first to receive Ben's onslaught. In *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) Jonson attacked both Marston and Dekker as Anaides and Hedon; and again, next year, Jonson laid about him vigorously all round as Horace in the *Poetaster*, which we consider more closely elsewhere. About now a useful piece of evidence on this War of the Theatres comes to us from *The Returne from Parnassus*, a play acted at St. John's College, Cambridge, when the War was almost at its height. In Act IV., sc. 5, Burbage and Kemp, Shakespeare's fellow-actors, are brought on the scene and discuss theatrical and other matters, especially the talents of the "University pens." Kemp does not think much of these persons. "Why," says he, "here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all downe, I (*i.e.* 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 beray his credit." So Jonson had a nasty reply from Shakespeare according to this undeniably good Cambridge authority. We know from other

sources that Ben had the *Satiromastix* written against his *Poetaster*, but this was clearly not by Shakespeare but by Dekker; so we must look for Shakespeare's Purge somewhere else. Where shall we find it? I think, for several reasons, we shall find that strange play *Troilus and Cressida* to be the Purge meant. It was "our fellow Shakespeare's," for it was acted at his theatre by his company, and he no doubt took a part and did a good business with gag. It was also against Jonson, who was satirised in a not very cleanly manner under the character of Ajax (= a jakes), who went running about the field of battle asking for himself. This was a Purge indeed. It seems to have been put together by Shakespeare, the play-broker, in a more miscellaneous manner than was usual with him, for it may have been founded on an earlier play of the same title by Dekker and Chettle, which Henslowe's Diary refers to May 1599; and as it appears in the folio of 1623 there may be pieces of Bacon in it and touches of Shakespeare as well, although the folio editors seemed to look askance at one at least of the earlier quartos. But whatever else it was, *Troilus and Cressida* was undoubtedly a manifesto of the New Romantic school against the Jonsonian Classical school of Ben and his "tribe," and was written as a reply to the *Poetaster*, for the Prologue to *Troilus* begins with an *armed* Prologue entering upon the scene, just as there was an *armed* Prologue in the *Poetaster*, a circumstance unusual, and the subject of some remarks at the time. So we may opine that Bacon, Shakespeare, Dekker, and Chettle all stood together to give the Classical school of Jonson, Chapman, and the rest a good blow in this very strange composite play. Marston would be with Jonson's tribe in this matter, for Marston was steeped in the classic satirists and rather despised the new romantic and pathetic tragedies that were rising in the popular favour. Sometimes Marston and Jonson were sworn foes, and then next year or sooner they would be fulsomely lauding each other's plays; and at different times in Jonson's career the same thing happened to him both

with Bacon and Shakespeare. At least that is my belief. It was a very peculiar characteristic of "rugged Ben," for Dekker, who ought to know, wrote thus of him: "'Tis thy fashion to flirt ink in every man's face; and then crawl into his bosome." This remark was in the *Satiromastix* of 1601. It was some long time after this that Jonson crawled into Bacon's bosom, but he did eventually, and apparently into Shakespeare's too, if he and Drayton really had that last carouse with Shakespeare at Stratford in 1616.

I have dwelt longer than I should on this War of the Poets, but the better knowledge we have of these matters, the more likely we are to take a correct view of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, which cannot, and should not, be dismissed with such words as, "Ridiculous!" "Impossible!" "Irrational!"

Ben Jonson published the *Silent Woman* in 1609, and in Sir John Daw we seem to see Bacon drawn to the life as near as "rare old Ben" dared to do it.

Whether the fact of the Shakespeare Sonnets being published about this time had anything to do with these daring public allusions, I know not, but I cannot help seeing several artfully concealed allusions to the events of the Sonnets and to the male love therein dwelt upon. Anyhow, the first seventeen Sonnets are most likely meant when Sir John Daw's "Ballad of procreation" is jeered at. It is also said of Sir John Daw that he was not a professed poet, for he had more caution than to be that; "he 'ill not hinder his own rising in the state so much," says one of the characters. Surely this looks like a hit for Bacon. It will be further considered when we come to the Sonnets. Indeed, that Sir John Daw=Bacon will be proved conclusively.

Ben Jonson's allusions in the *Poetaster* are a puzzle to critics. However, with much diffidence, I will put, as succinctly as possible, what appears to be a likely explanation of the relative positions of some of the combatants in the *Poetomachia*, or War of the Player-poets. It is a most important and neglected part of the Bacon-Shake-

speare question, and Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, Dekker's *Satiromastix*, Marston's *Satires*, and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, all help to throw light on the true author of Shakespeare's Plays; for although Bacon's name does not appear once in the conflict, nor have the Baconians (with one exception) tried to bring him into the fight at all, still I believe he is there in an Ovidian domino, and that Ben Jonson knew the Great Secret as early as 1600-1, or even before that date.

What I mean is that in the *Poetaster* we have Francis Bacon depicted in a vein of Aristophanic banter by Ben Jonson, and attacked with jealous and bitter humour in the character of Ovid junior. Nay more—and this is evidence hitherto altogether unnoticed—Ben Jonson seems to hint at the scandal connected with Bacon's character, as well as to recognise the rising lawyer and political aspirant as the gay young Ovid of the Shakespeare Poems, and the provider of plays "at request" though "not known unto the open stage." He also aims at a play-writer that was mixed up with the suspicious and treasonable play *Richard II.*, and was banished from court for the share he was supposed to have in it; and who could that be but Bacon?

Moreover, it appears that the *Poetaster* was threatened with a prosecution by some persons of rank and position, and part was suppressed. Upon this I will only remark now, that if this was only a paltry squabble between literary hacks and play-actors, who would care to go to the Star Chamber or King's Bench about it? If, however, Bacon or his noble friends were involved in the scandalous satire it would be a different matter altogether.

The *Poetaster* has exercised the wits of many searching critics, but no one, as far as I know, except the anonymous author of *Shakespeare-Bacon, an Essay*, 1899, has attempted to connect the play with the rising lawyer.

As I have made several additions to his argument, I will proceed to give the main points of the *Poetaster*, so far as it seems to aim at Francis Bacon.

The curtain rises with Ovid junior discovered in his study putting the finishing touch to some verses he has been composing. This young Ovid is a lawyer by profession, but has no "stomach" for law, and he is heard reciting with evident pleasure the last two lines of his poem :

" Then when this body falls in funeral fire
My name shall live and my best part aspire " ;

to which he adds self-complacently, " It shall go so." To him then enters Luscus, and says hurriedly, when he sees what young Ovid is occupied with, " Young master, Master Ovid, do you hear ? Away with your songs and sonnets * . . . get a law book in your hand." He tells him that his father, Ovid senior, will be coming presently, and ends with a tragic warning that " this villainous poetry will undo you yet, by the welkin." † Ovid's reply is, " What, hast thou buskins on, Luscus, that thou swearest so tragically and high ? " Ovid senior is possibly Lord Burghley, to whom Bacon looked for preferment when he had lost his own father ; and we know that Lord Burghley was much against time being wasted over sonnets and plays and such frivolities, and thought that Bacon should look to the law steadily for his rise in life. Luscus entreats young Ovid again and again to give up his verses, and not to be " Castalian mad." ‡ But finding it in vain, he finally says : " God be with you, sir, I'll leave you to

* Sonnets ! This was not Ovid's line of poetry.

† This fanciful and unusual oath, " by the welkin," and the succeeding question, " What, hast thou buskins on, Luscus ? " both, I suggest, emphasise an allusion to Shakespeare the Player, whom Luscus seems to represent both here and elsewhere. It is in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* (I. iii. 101), and only there, that we find a similar oath. Pistol says, " Wilt thou revenge ? " Nym replies, " By the welkin and her star." So I certainly think Ben is here getting a joke against Shakespeare the Player and his way of bombasting out blank verse with the metaphorical buskins on, and is here giving us one of the " locks of wool " or " shreds " which the Player contributed to the Baconian fleece.

TO POET-APE.

Fool ! as if half eyes will not know a fleece
From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

‡ Referring probably to *Venus and Adonis*, which had the Castalian spring in its motto from Ovid : " *Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ.*"

your poetical fancies and furies. I'll not be guilty, I. (*Exit LUSCUS.*)” Young Ovid thus left to himself recites his poem, which turns out to be that very part of the *Elegies* of Ovid from which the motto prefixed to *Venus and Adonis* had been taken by the supposed Shakespeare. Just as Ovid finishes there come upon the scene Ovid senior, Luscus, Tucca (a braggadocio of the army), and Lupus. Ovid's father, seizing the situation at once, attacks :

Is this the scope and aim of thy studies? Verses! Poetry! Ovid whom I thought to see the pleader, become Ovid the play-maker?

Ovid Jun. No, sir.

Ovid Sen. Yes, sir ; I hear of a tragedy of yours coming forth for the common players there, called *Medea*.

Luscus here interposes a remark that he did “augur all this to him (young Ovid) beforehand,” whereon Tucca turns on him with angry contempt, and with other abuse tells Luscus (Shakespeare the actor?) to “talk to tapsters and ostlers, you slave, they are in your element, go : here be the emperor's captains, you ragamuffin rascal, and not your comrades. (*Exit LUSCUS.*)”

On this I would only say that if Shakespeare came up from Stratford and first obtained work in connection with the stables of old Burbage's inn, and afterwards rose to be an actor, then Ben Jonson would be the very one to know it and make a point of it.

Even when Luscus has departed, Tucca continues his venomous remarks : “They forget they are in the statute, the rascals ; they are blazoned there ; there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees ; they need no other heralds, I wiss.” This is surely another of the many thrusts at the Shakespeares aspiring for a grant of arms from the Heralds' College. Presently young Ovid tries to excuse himself thus :

Ovid Jun. They wrong me, sir, and do abuse you more
That blow your ears with these untrue reports.
I am not known unto the open stage,
Nor do I traffic in their theatres :

Indeed, I do acknowledge, at request
Of some near friends, and honourable Romans,
I have begun a poem of that nature.

Ovid Sen. You have, sir, a poem! and where is it? That's the law you study.

Ovid Jun. Cornelius Gallus borrowed it to read.

Ovid Sen. Cornelius Gallus! there's another gallant too hath drunk of the same poison, and Tibullus and Propertius. But these are gentlemen of means and revenues now. Thou art a younger brother, and hast nothing but thy bare exhibition; which I protest shall be bare indeed, if thou forsake not these unprofitable by-courses. Name me a profest poet that his poetry did ever so much as afford him a competency.

I suggest that Ben Jonson aims at Francis Bacon in all the above allusions. Bacon was a *younger brother*, disliked his profession of the law, and (if my supposition is correct) took to poetry instead, and, what was considered much worse, wrote for the public theatres. His intimates were wealthy gallants, Southampton, Pembroke, Essex, and others, and some of them were given to poetry as well. Ben Jonson names them not, but as Cornelius Gallus, Tibullus, &c., and thus was able to defend himself in his "Apologetical Dialogue" to the *Poetaster*, which was prohibited through some powerful influence (perhaps Bacon) and not printed till some time after. The author there says:

"I used no name. My books have still been taught
To spare the persons and to speak the vices."

And I am afraid the vices of young Ovid are here spoken out, for Lupus and Tucca both advise young Ovid to stick to the law. "He that will now hit the mark must shoot through the law," says Lupus; and Tucca adds that it is easy enough as a profession, a little talk and noise and impudence will serve, "and the less art the better: besides when it shall be in the power of thy chevril conscience to do right or wrong at thy pleasure, my pretty Alcibiades." I think Ben Jonson knew how those words, *chevril* and *Alcibiades*, were like to gall Bacon far better than we do, but we may be sure of this, they are not meant to allude to his *virtues*.

In the suppressed "Apologetical Dialogue" we have some further vicious allusions. Ben says of the authors who had attacked him :

" I could stamp
Their foreheads with those deep and public brands,
That the whole company of barber-surgeons
Should not take off, with all their art and plasters,
And these my prints should last, still to be read
In their pale fronts."

And some lines before we read :

" Not one of them but lives himself, if known,
Improbior satiram scribente cinædo."

This looks like attacking "scandals" in pretty plain language, so plain indeed that some "cheveril" lawyer (perhaps Bacon) either went, or threatened to go, to the Star Chamber about the libel, as Ben Jonson tells us himself in two of his Epigrams, to be quoted presently.

Then later on there is a great deal about some treason, conjuration, or conspiracy that was to be brought forward by some of the poet-players, and Ovid among them, at a theatre, and we are told how *Histrion*, an actor, informs the authorities of the state, and how eventually it comes to the emperor's ears, and Ovid is banished from court. The information that *Histrion* supplies is to the effect that a letter was directed to him and his fellow-sharers in the theatre, asking to hire some of the stage properties, a sceptre, crown, caduceus, petasus, &c. As soon as *Lupus*, who seems to represent some state official, hears of it he says : " Player, I thank thee : the Emperor shall take knowledge of thy good service ; this is a conjuration, a conspiracy, this." *

* There are some passages and characters in the *Poetaster* by Ben Jonson which throw, I believe, some interesting fresh light on Shakespeare and Bacon, and especially upon the well-known acting of *Richard II.* on the eve of that day when Essex sought to recover his position by stirring up a rebellion in the city. We know that the play was ordered to be performed that evening specially by command of the heads of the Essex faction, and that a sum of 40s. was paid to the company to induce them to revive this play, now some time out of vogue. It was thought to be treasonable, and all the more so on account of the circumstances attending the performance, and the particular time chosen. The matter was brought up as evidence against Essex at his trial, and told

Now all this fits in with what we know of the play of *Richard II.* being acted by arrangement before Essex and his party the night before they made their mad attempt on the city. Bacon was placed in an awkward predicament at the trial of Essex, as is well known, by having to help in the prosecution of his old friend and patron, and also to bring in constructive treason in connection with *Richard II.* being played the evening before to encourage the conspirators. Bacon did not like his position at all, for, as he suggested, it might be bruited abroad that he was bringing in evidence one of his own tales.

There was certainly suspicion raised against Bacon about this time (1601), and he was under a cloud, virtually banished from court, although the Queen took his legal advice when necessary. The *Poetaster* was written shortly after these events, when they were still occupying men's

against him very much, and embittered the Queen, who, feeling that she was aimed at in the plot of the piece, treated it as a personal matter. However, strange to say, the players of this supposed treasonable plot got off scot-free, and Shakespeare was not so much as once named in connection with the play, though he took a prominent part both in the composition and acting of the play, and the matter was apparently well sifted at the trial. But if we take the play to be an old one written by Bacon some time previously, we shall find that Ben's allusions to the matter in the *Poetaster* all fit in excellently, and we shall understand, in a way never understood before, what most probably happened in regard to this one memorable revival of *Richard II.* on the eve of the foolish rising of Essex. There are two characters in the *Poetaster* called by the stage names of *Histrion* and *Æsop*, and the first seems by a particularly clear allusion to be Alleyn, who made so much money as builder and manager (in part) of the *Fortune Theatre*.

In Act III. sc. 1 Captain Tucca, a swaggering *militaire*, sees *Histrion* pass by him without due deferential salute; so he has him called back and rates him for it: "No respect to men of worship, you slave! Ha! you grow rich, do you, and purchase, you two-penny tear-mouth, you have FORTUNE and the good year on your side." *Histrion* would thus appear to point to Alleyn of the prosperous *Fortune Theatre*, where he acted and was joint owner with his father-in-law, whereas Henslowe, who did not act, does not answer to the description. And in Act IV. sc. 2 and elsewhere we have *Histrion*, or Alleyn, telling a certain high official either of the court or city that there is a conspiracy being hatched in connection with a certain play by young Master Ovid (Francis Bacon), and that he (Alleyn) discovered it by reason of a letter directed to him and his fellow-sharers of his theatre (the *Rose* and the *Fortune* were both his at this date), begging to be allowed to hire *Rose* some of his stage properties—a sceptre, crown, and a petasus, &c. This sets the official in a mind to look

minds, and therefore likely to be introduced into a new satirical comedy. For the theatres took, to a great extent, the place of newspapers and society journals in the Elizabethan days. Moreover, there is a long love scene between Ovid and Julia (his "dear Julia, the abstract of the court") which the annotators of the play can make nothing of; it is called by one of them "a kind of metaphysical hurly-burly, of which it is not easy to discover the purport or end." But this high-flown lover's dialogue between Ovid below and Julia at her chamber window is very likely a striking and clever parody on *Romeo and Juliet*, and so fits in with the rest of Ben Jonson's allusions throughout his *Poetaster*, and gives us good grounds for thinking that he, at least, as early as 1602, had got to know that Bacon was the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Richard II.*

into the matter, and he seems to have obtained further information from a player named Æsop, who can be identified for several reasons with Shakespeare. The official tells Cæsar (Elizabeth the Queen), and Æsop is brought upon the stage to answer before Cæsar, and Captain Tucca describes him thus (Act V. sc. 1):

"'Tis a gentleman of quality this, though he be somewhat out of clothes, I tell ye.—Come, Æsop, hast a bay leaf in thy mouth? * Well said; be not out, stinkard. Thou shalt have a monopoly of playing confirmed to thee and thy covey under the emperor's broad seal for this service."

The result is that Cæsar orders him to be taken away, and adds this injunction to the satellites who hurry him off:

"Gag him that we may have his silence."

If we read between the lines correctly it looks as if Shakespeare's company at the Globe, when asked on short notice to perform *Richard II.*, an old play, at once sent off to Alleyn at the Rose Theatre, not far off, to beg the hire of such old stage properties of the piece as they might still have about the theatre. Thereupon Alleyn, who was no friend to his rising rival the Globe, suspecting what was about to be done, eventually informed the authorities. Then Æsop, or Shakespeare, was questioned, and he cleared himself by showing he was not the real author. Silence was imposed upon him—he was gagged, and the matter allowed to drop into oblivion. If *Richard II.* passed as one of Shakespeare's Plays in 1601, it has always puzzled commentators to explain why, when there was a judicial investigation into this important matter, it so happened that Shakespeare's name was not referred to throughout the inquiry. I think Ben Jonson in the *Poetaster* lets us somewhat into the secret of the matter: Ovid, *i.e.* Bacon, was at the bottom of it.

* A bay leaf was thought to be conducive to eloquence if placed under the tongue—the bay, too, was sacred to Apollo.

But the whole play should be carefully read ; it is full of contemporary allusions, and the quick-witted theatre-goers of the day would seize upon them with avidity.

Anyhow, Shakespearians all allow that the author of the Poems was a great admirer of Ovid, and Professor Baynes has shown at great length * that Shakespeare was familiar with Ovid to a degree formerly little suspected ; that Shakespeare was independent of English translations of the Elegies, for they had not yet been made ; and that quite early in life, before he left Stratford, Shakespeare knew his Ovid pretty intimately, and with the perception of a scholar. I must say I would rather take Jonson's word that Shakespeare "knew little Latin," and accept Jonson's allusions as meaning that the true Ovid of the Poems, of *Romeo and Juliet*, and of *Richard II.* was Francis Bacon, the needy "younger brother" of Gray's Inn, who had no "stomach to digest this law," but who had friends who were "gentlemen of means and revenues," and was himself well-nigh "Castalian mad," and in addition nearly got himself into trouble over the play of *Richard II.* We know well enough from Ben Jonson's *Epigrams* who it was that stirred up the authorities against the *Poetaster* and its *Epilogue*. It was Cheveril, the Lawyer.

EPIGRAM LIV

Cheveril cries out my verses libels are ;
And threatens the Star-Chamber and the Bar.
What are thy petulant pleadings, Cheveril, then,
That quit'st the cause so oft, and rail'st at men ?

EPIGRAM XXXVII

On Cheveril the Lawyer

No cause, nor client fat, will Cheveril leese,
But as they come, on both sides he takes fees,
And pleaseth both ; for while he melts his grease
For this ; that wins, for whom he holds his peace.

The sobriquet "Cheveril" was probably given from a common saying, used by Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses* :

* *Shakespeare Studies*, 1894, pp. 195-249.

"The lawyers have such cheveril consciences," *i.e.* they stretch as easily as a kid glove. Or else the omnivorous Ben had noticed the word "cheveril" two or three times in the Shakespeare Plays, and thought it would be a capital word to turn against Bacon, and to hoist him with his own petard, for in the matter of the Essex treason it was generally felt that Bacon's conscience had been of a most yielding, soft, and ultra-expansive kind—and so on *Cheveril the Lawyer* would score a hit.

As is well known, Ben Jonson eventually (*c.* 1617) became on friendly terms with Bacon, and at the latter end of the Lord Chancellor's life, and after his disgrace, the friendly terms rose to personal intimacy, and Ben was very useful to Bacon in literary matters and Latin translations, and undoubtedly had a large share in bringing out the First Folio of 1623, and arranging and writing the prefatory matter.

I have already given my view that Luscus stands for Shakespeare the actor in Marston's *Scourge of Villainie*, and that Luscus also stands for the same famous Stratford player in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, just considered. If we accept this we shall get some interesting addition to our very scanty budget of facts about Shakespeare's personal characteristics. According to Marston, the actor-manager, Shakespeare was thoroughly taken up by his profession, and he

"Ne'er of ought did speak
But when of plays and players he did treat."

This sounds very likely, and would account for the little we hear of Shakespeare publicly or in society. He stuck close to his routine of theatrical work, and was frugal and careful about money, as we can judge by results. Marston hints also that he was a critic of plays, and transferred the passages he admired into his commonplace book, that he was much applauded "by curtain (*i.e.* the Curtain Theatre) plaudities," that he was a fine delineator of character, and that he managed to do all this

"From out his huge long-scrapèd stock
Of well-penn'd plays."

This seems probable enough, and would account very well for the contemporary views which we meet with concerning him. Shakespeare was a busy, important, actor-manager, with his heart in his work, with a gift of flowing, felicitous language, and possibly a power of gag in addition ; all this impressed the audience and the public, and it did not occur to any of his contemporaries that the plays, attributed to him openly in print, were beyond his powers—except those few, such as Jonson, Marston, and Hall, who had discovered the secret, as I contend. Looked at in this light, the proof of the Shakespearian authorship inferred from the contemporary assent to it is by no means a weighty proof, and yet this is the grand, incontrovertible, and decisive proof that the orthodox critics rely upon.

I hope that the evidence adduced so far throws a little new light on the way in which Ben Jonson viewed Shakespeare and Bacon. But we still get Ben's view of Shakespeare best from the Epigram on the Poet-ape, and when we remember that this was first published in the collected edition of Jonson's works in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, we shall have to consider it, I am afraid, as Ben's final judgment on his contemporary, and we shall have to conclude that both Ben Jonson and Greene thought very little of the Player's talents or literary methods. As late as the eve of Shakespeare's death, Ben Jonson seems to have had as little respect for Shakespeare's genius as he had in 1602, and this certainly leads me to think that he knew very well that *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, and many other remarkable dramas that were then being brought forth, were not from the brain of Shakespeare the player and parcel-poet. Not even in a moment of envy could Ben have called such productions "the frippery of wit." He was a better critic than that, although I believe his theory of art did not quite agree with the art as displayed in the plays—it was not classic enough in form for the learned Ben ; and that is what he meant when he told Drummond of Hawthornden, in 1618, that Shakespeare wanted art.

But let us read again his Epigram :

“ Poor Poet-ape that would be thought our chief,
 Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
 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.”

Does not this look as if Ben Jonson knew that Bacon supplied the fleece, and that the successful player “ grown to a little wealth ” was only responsible for certain shreds or locks of wool in it ? I name Bacon for the fleece, because there are no hints in any of Ben's Aristophanic allusions of any other possible provider for such a remarkable article, and because all the hints that are given seem, as we have just seen in the *Poetaster* and other plays, to point directly to Bacon. We gather also from this important Epigram that Shakespeare the Player had become a “ credit in the scene ”—that he was now not merely a Johannes Fac-totum full of conceit, who supposed that he could “ bombast out a blank verse ” (*i.e.* write or fill one out) as well as any one, as Greene said in 1592, but a good and capable actor as well. This quite does away with the foolish tradition that his best effort was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*, and also should prevent Baconians from making the too-wide assertion that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, which we can plainly see from this present Epigram is not strictly correct. Shakespeare the Player had a hand in the Plays ; his shreds are there, though no one can pick them out now *for certain*. He was a “ broker ” of old or unfinished plays, and a “ gleaner ” in other men's fields, and he did not care if people taxed him with it. “ He slights it.” He was making money

in a legitimate way, and some such "factotum" there must be in every company that wants to keep alive in the public estimation. Such literary bantlings as other men did not care to bring up, or were partly ashamed of, he would "take up"; and when they came to maturity under his hand, by what name should they be presented to the public unless it were his name? True, when he wrote his own name he did not spell it Shake-speare, and these bantlings appeared under that form of spelling, but as he had been called Shake-scene in 1592, he was not likely to care much for being called Shake-speare in 1598. Perhaps one of the "grand possessors" of the plays who had a talent for mystifying the public preferred that form. The Stratford man could afford to "slight" this mere detail, and if Poems were sent forth to the world in 1593 and 1594 with William Shakespeare at the foot of the dedications, well, he "slighted" that too, even if the surly "Ben" should call him "Poet-ape" on this very account.

But the Stratford man was responsible for some of the work in the Plays—not the best of it—and perhaps was responsible also for more of the facetious vulgarity than we shall ever know about. There are certainly a good many shreds in the fleece that do not look as if they ever belonged to Bacon. Just take some of the names of the inferior characters, in connection with the following fact. During the year Nov. 1591–Nov. 1592 the country was searched for recusants. In some counties more than one commission was held. This was the case in Warwickshire, where we find there was a second commission in this year 1591–2. At the head of this we find the names of Sir Thomas Lucy and Sir Fulke Greville, who were active persecutors of the Papists. There is a long list of recusants and others who did not come to the parish church for divers reasons, and John Shakespeare, the father of William Shakespeare, is one of them. Strange to say, there are seven of the characters of the Plays among these Warwickshire recusants, viz. Page, Fluellen, Gower, Bates, Court, Bardolph, and Bolt. According to

Aubrey, the names of the poet's dramatic personages were often taken from the circle of his acquaintance, for he and Ben Jonson gathered humours wherever they went; thus the original of Dogberry was a constable Shakespeare met one midsummer night at Crendon in Bucks.

The authority for the above is Father Bowden,* who endeavours to show that Shakespeare was of the Old Religion and a good Roman Catholic. I assume that his list of recusants is correct, and therefore admit that for seven Stratford or Warwickshire recusants to have their names put in the Plays is a curious fact that wants explanation. It certainly looks as if Shakespeare put them there, or supplied the names to Bacon. But our theory does not exclude the supposition that Shakespeare touched up for the gallery whatever MSS. he obtained.

But now the question arises, and a very important one it is, if Ben Jonson so depreciates Shakespeare as the Poet-ape, how can it possibly have happened that in 1623, only seven years afterwards, this same broker of old plays, and patcher of shreds, this parcel-poet with his frippery of wit, became at once in Ben's eyes the

“ Soul of the Age !

The applause ! delight ! the wonder of our Stage !
My Shakespeare !”

How can it be that we have in 1623 the full-page portrait of the maligned Player William Shakespeare prefixed to the collected Plays, and opposite to the portrait some more lines by his quondam maligner Ben, who now calls him “ Gentle Shakespeare,” whereas of old he called him anything but “ gentle,” and was continually deriding his claims on the Heralds' College? “ 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.” † Is it possible that the surly, cantankerous, envious, and independent Ben assumes the office of a Herald in the folio and calls

* *Religion of Shakespeare*, p. 83.

† *Poetaster*, Act I. sc. i.

Shakespeare "gentle" to his face? It must be admitted that it seems so, and has seemed so from the time it was written until the present day.

This portrait of the Player, and the laudatory verses accompanying it in the first collected edition of the Shakespeare Plays, have, taken together, effectually precluded all argument or doubt about authorship for quite two hundred and forty years, and they still are the great stronghold of the orthodox party. They reason thus: Whatever kind of man Ben Jonson might be, rugged, cantankerous, Aristophanic, or even libellous, yet he was of such a bold and independent nature that he could not possibly become such a mean, sycophantic liar as to declare Shakespeare the Player to be the author of the immortal Plays, when he knew all the time that Bacon was the right man. Now, the strength of this argument is very great; in fact this portrait and the title-pages accompanying it have been called Shakespeare's title-deeds to his property, and they certainly are the best that his admirers can produce before the court of public opinion. They have been brought up and verified again and again, and those who produce them have always maintained, and still maintain, that the disputers of Shakespeare's title have absolutely "no case." The leading critics and the leading newspapers with one voice shout out "No case"; or if they do not shout, they enter into a conspiracy of silence.

The argument certainly seems decisive, and at first sight one would suppose there was no more to be said. But the more this particular matter is examined, the more suspicious does it become. There seems some juggling with words and phrases here. There seems some "mystery," and what Ben Jonson wrote concerning Bacon, who was celebrating his sixty-first birthday at York House—"Thou stand'st as though some mystery thou didst"—may well be retorted upon Ben's lines that face the famous Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare. The lines do not seem to say what they mean. I certainly had no suspicion of anything misleading in

the lines until the suggestion was made to me some years ago, and then a somewhat similar case of hoodwinking by phraseology came into my mind which had happened within my own knowledge long before. A friend of mine was applying for a mathematical tutorship, and sent round to his old College friends and tutors for testimonials as to fitness and ability. He received one from a very distinguished mathematician in these words :

“GENTLEMEN,—Mr. X. has applied to me, on the ground of our former acquaintance and friendship, for a testimonial as to his mathematical abilities. I am not in favour of verbose or elaborate testimonials, and therefore I hope it will be sufficient for me to say that I always have valued and do still value his mathematical attainments quite as highly as I do his friendship. I knew him during several years, so my opinion has the merit of being founded at least on some experience.”

Mr. X. was very pleased with this, and showed it to me with some degree of pride as coming from so eminent a man. I remember at the time that it seemed to me rather curt and indefinite ; but eminent mathematicians have their little peculiarities as I knew well enough, and so I thought no more about it, especially when I heard that X. had been chosen for the post he sought, mainly, as he thought, on the weight of this particular reference. Some time afterwards I heard that the eminent mathematician had “given himself away” by remarking in an unguarded moment that he really didn’t care a button either for Mr. X.’s mathematics or his friendship, one was no better than the other. In fact, neither Mr. X. nor I, nor yet, as it appears, the gentlemen of the committee, had any suspicion of the *bona fides* of the distinguished reference. They took their first impression, and retained it.

Now I think this is exactly what people have been doing for a long term of years with Ben Jonson’s testimonial to Shakespeare. They have taken for granted that it was intended in a good sense, and do not suspect for a moment that it *may* be a kick rather than a compliment. It was just so with Mr. X. The more I read

these "commendatory verses" of Ben Jonson, the less sure I am that they *are* commendatory, the less sure I am that Shakespeare the Player is meant, and the more likely it seems that Shakespeare here = Bacon. The very first lines are puzzling :

"To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame."

Envy has to do with the living more than with the dead—the lines might be *à propos* in Bacon's case, but hardly so in Shakespeare's. Envy here seems to mean ill reputation, or the wagging tongues of enemies. These could tarnish Bacon's name, and his revealed connection with writing plays for the theatres would be harm to him rather than good. But it would be different in Shakespeare's case, and he too was out of the reach of wagging tongues of envy. And further on the lines about "crafty malice" pretending to praise, and yet intentionally ruining the object of that praise, would bear some rational meaning if applied to Bacon, who would be ruined for a seat in the House of Lords if it leaked out that he was a play-writer ; but the application to Shakespeare is much less clear. Then Ben goes on to say that Shakespeare is "a Monument without a tomb," and that he is alive still—which is rather startling until we read on, "while thy Book doth live." Which sounds rather like word-jugglery.

And when we come to the famous words facing the portrait,* matters seem to get even still more suspicious and mystifying. That word "brass" does not sound very complimentary ; we think of a brazen-faced impostor, or we think, perhaps, of those well-known lines in the play of *King Henry VIII.* :

"Men's *evil manners* live in brass ; their virtues
We write in water."

And we feel the wooden-headed effigy has had a downright kick. Moreover, we are told not to look at it :

"Reader, look
Not on his picture, but his book."

* Given in Appendix, with curious matter connected therewith.

This seems, too, a strange injunction, and if we break it, and carefully inspect the picture, what do we find? We shall find, so Mr. Lee tells us, that only twenty of these figures (out of two hundred copies extant) are *printed on* the title-page; the rest are either inlaid or in some way imperfect. This again looks as if there was something wrong originally, or that another portrait had been intended for the space. And what is still more singular, the dress of the figure that faces Ben Jonson's lines looks more like the dress of an aristocrat or court-gallant than the plain dress of a *bourgeois* Player. Altogether we cannot help feeling that there is more here than meets the eye. And the way in which Ben Jonson, who after Shakespeare's death seems to have been permanently reconciled to Bacon, clearly took the leading part in ushering the book to the public, and quite put Heminge and Condell in the background, adds much to the singular mystery surrounding the whole production of the contents of that renowned book—perhaps the most wonderful single volume in the whole of literature—the first folio of 1623.

One more remark before we dismiss this famous Droeshout woodcut. As Ben Jonson was necessarily much at Gorhambury when he was helping Bacon to get his works translated into Latin (a year or two before the 1623 folio), we may take it for granted that he had seen or knew of Hilliard's picture of young Francis in 1578, round which the painter had inscribed—“*Si tabula daretur digna, animam malle,*” *i.e.* Would that I could paint his mind! Would that I had a material or canvas worthy of such a subject!

The very fact of this same rather unusual idea being brought into Ben's lines, seems to point towards Bacon, or at least to Jonson having Bacon's picture in his thoughts when he wrote his mystifying lines. But how courteous and lucid is Hilliard; there is no suspicious “brass” in *his* eulogy. How different when we come to Ben's verses, and the hydrocephalic-looking figure which faces them. Surely such a head never brought forth Pallas Athênê

fully armed and *shaking her speare* against Ignorance and Folly.

Besides, this figure-head is not *like* the head on the Stratford tomb; you would hardly believe they could both be the same man. The orthodox party will persist in seeing "a kind of likeness," but many, who have compared the two, think (and I with them) that the only marked resemblance is the baldness on the top of the head!

Perhaps now is the best time to say a few words about the Shakespeare monument in the chancel of Stratford-on-Avon's parish church. This too is considered one of the "indubitable proofs" that William Shakespeare, who was buried there, wrote the immortal Plays.

If we knew who put the monument where it is, and who composed the inscriptions that are upon it, then some very strong evidence might be gathered from it. But we are in utter ignorance on both points, and are therefore left somewhat in suspense as to our judgment in this matter. We do not hear a word about it till 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, and then the first mention of it appears in that famous first folio which has so many remarkable and suspicious circumstances connected with its publication.

These peculiar circumstances detract considerably from the weight of evidence which such a monument would generally afford. The crowds of Americans and other people who are constantly passing before this shrine and god of their pilgrimage as a rule hold but one opinion on this subject, and that is, "The tomb settles the question." But does it really? Is the Baconian stream of evidence, which has of late years so increased in volume, and is rushing on daily with increasing force, to be dammed at once and for ever by a tomb. Can a piece of sculptured masonry, prepared and put up by "no one knows who," be strong enough to resist or turn back such a swelling torrent? My own answer would be, "Certainly not," and I would remark in addition that the first line of the famous Latin inscription on the tomb looks very much as if it was composed and placed there by some one who

knew the Great Secret and Mystery of the problem that faces us.

What does this line tell us? It says that the man there buried was :

“Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,”

that is to say, he was :

“ A Nestor in experienced judgment,
A Socrates in philosophical genius,
And an Ovid in the Poetry of Love.”

Could the mind of mortal man earn higher meed of praise than that? Where else could these three great, yet diverse, merits be found to exist together in supreme excellence in one man? I made my first pilgrimage to the tomb in my undergraduate days, and I well remember how that Latin line, and its trebly condensed praise, arrested my attention :

“ And still I gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head should carry all he knew.”

I was strictly orthodox, for in those days no one ever caught even a whiff of heresy, and while I stood in reverential awe before that shrine I thought of no one but the Stratford genius, and that other genius of ancient Greece—that “blind old man of Scio’s rocky isle,” who was the only parallel instance of such God-given powers of mind that then occurred to me. Ah! *quantum mutatus*—now that famous Latin line on the tomb seems far more appropriate to Bacon than to Shakespeare; and as for the Stratford Player being either a Nestor or a Socrates, I must confess I have found hardly a tittle of corroboration for this in any account of him either by friend or foe.

Judicio Pylius—a Nestor in judgment! The quality for which Nestor was chiefly famed in antiquity was his wisdom, or judicious advice, in the council-chamber of heroes. I do not quite see where this quality shows itself in any special manner in Shakespeare’s life. On the other hand, there are few persons in all history to whom

the words are more applicable than to the great Francis Bacon. He, if any man, was a Nestor in wisdom and in judgment; wise, as he sat and thought in his study; wise, as he sat on the seat of judgment and of law, and passed decrees concerning which Rushworth said, "Never any decree made by him was reversed as unjust." Not even after his fall and disgrace were his decisions overruled. Nowhere could a more judicious counsellor or giver of advice be found in Elizabethan England; and he was always ready with his advice, be it to his Queen, to his fellow-aristocrats, or to his private friends. He had the courage of his opinions when quite a young man, and when in later life he sat in his arm-chair at Gorhambury meditating, he was indeed *Judicio Pylius*—a Nestor in judgment—lacking nothing but Nestor's years.

Take the second historic parallel of the tomb. *Genio Socratem*—a Socrates by his genius. I cannot see that there was 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. His marrying before he could support a family was not Socratic; nor yet his rather sordid money-getting ways as actor-manager. Socrates was an accurate logician, and had an exalted opinion of a good and valid argument; but when Shakespeare was discovered upon the premises of a London citizen where he had legally no *locus standi*, he came to the conclusion that the best way to deal with Burbage, his fellow-tragedian, who was knocking for admittance (and also seeking a *locus standi*), was to give him a piece of Shakespearian logic, which was to the effect that William the Conqueror was before Richard III.; *ergo*, or rather, *argal* William had a present *locus standi*, and Richard therefore must wait for a future one. I cannot call this Socratic either in logic or morals, and I think the great friend of Plato would have objected to the premises he occupied, the conclusion he came to, the *locus standi* he illegally took, and above all, the bastard logic by which he tried to defend it. Now the great Lord Chancellor had somewhat of the true logical and

philosophical spirit of Socrates in him, and he has left us good proof of it in the *Instauratio Magna*, the *Novum Organum*, the *Essays*, the *Apophthegms*, and other acknowledged works of his ; but to put in the first line of William Shakespeare's epitaph that he was *genio Socratem* was a most strange choice of words, and by no means what one would expect. Besides all this, the words contain a howling false quantity, and will not scan. The antepenultimate of *Sōcrates* is as long as one's arm, and therefore cannot get into a hexameter at all. If a Greek Omega is not long, I don't know what letter can be. It has been thought that Ben Jonson or some London friend, or possibly Dr. Hall, the son-in-law, composed this precious line. It could hardly be the classic Ben, unless, perchance, he made the slip on purpose that posterity should *not* credit him with such vile prosody and such inappropriate praise. Nor do our difficulties end here, for there is another mystery ; no one knows when the monument was erected, who paid for it, and who arranged the inscriptions. There may have been no monument at all until about a few months before the folio of 1623 was ready for publication, for anything we know to the contrary. Leonard Digges is the first writer who tells us a single word about it, and that is not till Shakespeare had been in his grave seven years. In some commendatory verses prefixed to the first folio of 1623, Digges tells us that Shakespeare's works would be alive when

"Time dissolves thy Stratford monument,"

and that is all the information we get.

I have, some may think, dwelt longer than necessary on this monument and its epitaph. My reason has been this ; so many people think it definitely settles the question we are considering, whereas I think it does little more than leave us in suspense when we have considered all the evidence, and the singular circumstances connected with it. We really do not know enough how and when it came into existence, or who placed it where we now see it. It is by no means impossible, or even utterly improbable,

that the persons who arranged and edited the first folio also arranged and edited this monument, and are responsible for the "writing on the wall." This requires an interpreter quite as much as did that other writing at Belshazzar's Feast, and we are not likely to be sure of our interpretation until we know for certain who wrote the inscription, and with what object it was thus strangely conceived and worded.

And so once again and finally, neither the Figure in the Folio nor the Effigy in the Stratford Chancel *definitely* settles the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays. And the curious laudation of Shakespeare by Ben Jonson seems so full of double meanings and mystifying expressions, that it is bereft of most of its evidential value. "But," some one may say, "Ben calls Shakespeare the 'Swan of Avon'; that's plain enough in all conscience." No, not even that is without suspicion, for the Avon flows by Cheltenham, where Bacon had an estate, as well as by Stratford, at least so the Baconians say. I cannot vouch for the Cheltenham Avon myself; all I know is that when I was at Cheltenham many years ago, I did not hear of any river Avon there, but of course there may be—Avons are common enough.

CHAPTER VII

PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE

THE preceding chapter on Ben Jonson and Shakespeare was written before Judge Webb's excellent book, *The Mystery of William Shakespeare* (1902), was published. I have since read that book carefully, and especially the chapter on Ben Jonson and Shakespeare. I was glad to find nothing to make me modify or alter what I had already written.

There is nothing of the "crank" about Judge Webb, nor is it very likely there would be in a Regius Professor of Law. His arguments and pleas are carefully considered, and there is but one really bad mistake, as far as I can see, and that is, he thinks the "noted weed" allusion in Sonnet LXXIV. intimates that Shakespeare, was not the author's real name. This interpretation cannot stand. But certainly such a well-timed, well-prepared, and well-directed blow has never before been given against the Shakespearian authorship of the Plays. But will this knock-down blow make the other side throw up the sponge and accept defeat cheerfully? I augur nothing of the kind. I do not suppose the critics and the newspapers are likely to give up their pet traditions merely because some judge has cleverly arranged his words so as to tell against them. They have had experience of this kind of thing in the law-courts, and they know well enough how an experienced advocate can make the worse appear the better reason. Moreover, nearly all these arguments and facts have been before the world for the last twenty years or more, and have convinced no one but a few cranks. "Have not these same bricks been lying about the Baconian brick-fields for years and years for any to examine that cared to do it; and now because

a clever judge collects them together and presents us with a rather imposing edifice which he has made up from them, are we to be taken in by it?"

People who have strong views of their own and argue as above are not likely to be convinced. In Judge Webb's case it turned out as I thought; all the critics and irresponsible reviewers attacked him at once. They all fastened their fangs on his one evident mistake, and having discharged the full venom of their rhetoric on that, they finished up by sneering and laughing at his carefully built edifice, treating it as a mere house of cards, with no solid foundation and no lasting cohesion. Having dislodged one of Judge Webb's cards or bricks, they assumed the airs of a conqueror who had brought the whole edifice to the ground in ruins. They scored the first point in the literary fight, and thought the fight was as good as finished.

But many a literary pugilist gets the worst of the first round and yet proves after all the better man. I remember well, years ago, seeing and hearing Bradlaugh get a knock-down blow from Father Ignatius on the Hall of Science debating platform, Bradlaugh's own castle where he was king, somewhere in the City of London. The Anglican monk cleverly got S. Irenæus into the argument, and Bradlaugh, who would persist in calling the sainted bishop by the name of High-Reenyus, and evidently got quite at sea with regard to him, was clearly floored. But, though Bradlaugh lost this round in spite of (perhaps partly by reason of) his vigorous *aspirations*, he certainly scored a logical victory in the sum total of debate, as most of the audience admitted irrespective of their own convictions. It seems to me that when the whole controversy is properly thrashed out, Judge Webb, like Bradlaugh, will be shown to be the logical victor.

One singular and useful result of this Regius Professor of Law appearing on the side of the Baconian heretics, has been the imposing spectacle of a triangular duel between three Professors—all of the same college and University, and all most distinguished in their several

capacities. As it helps to show that the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy is getting beyond the range of vulgar abuse, and as neither the irresponsible pressmen nor the cocksure experts are likely for their own reputation's sake to brand Regius Professors as fools or asses, I will give names and titles :—

1. TYRRELL, ROBERT YELVERTON, Regius Professor of Greek, Dublin, since 1880; Litt.D., LL.D., D.C.L., Fellow of Trin. Coll. Dubl., Professor of Latin, 1871; Gold Medallist in Philosophy and Classics.
2. DOWDEN, EDWARD, Professor of English Literature, Dublin, since 1867; Litt.D., LL.D., D.C.L., Clark Lecturer in English Literature, Trin. Coll. Camb., 1893-96; Editor of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, &c. &c.
3. WEBB, THOMAS E., Regius Professor of Law, Dublin, 1867; Public Orator, 1879; Q.C. (1874), LL.D., Judge of the County Court of Donegal, and Chairman of Donegal Quarter Sessions since 1887.

In the triangular duel, No. 3 fired the first shot in his *Mystery of William Shakespeare*, whereupon No. 1, an inveterate theatre-goer and lover of the drama, and No. 2, an experienced Shakespearian critic, at once got their pistols ready and firing began in earnest.

Professor Tyrrell (No. 1) fired off three columns in *The Pilot* of July 19, 1902, finishing thus: "I would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud and Alcoran than that the author of the *Novum Organum* was the author of the plays and poems of Shakespeare." He uses the old arguments, and uses them very forcibly. He says that Bacon does not "show a scintilla of that humour with which Shakespeare bubbles and boils over. Conceive for a moment Bacon as the creator of Falstaff, Shallow, Dogberry, the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, and Launcelot Gobbo. It would be as easy to imagine Mr. Herbert Spencer as the author of *Pickwick*."

But in the course of his arguments he makes an admission which cuts the ground from under his feet. He thinks that "no candid reader can refuse to admit" that "the author of the Plays was very familiar with

the works of Bacon, especially the *Sylva Sylvarum* and the *Natural History*, which were not published till after Shakespeare's death." He admits it himself, and accounts for such an extraordinary miracle of literature by the theory which he puts forth. "There is no reason why Shakespeare should not have known Bacon just as he knew the Earls of Southampton and Pembroke." So Judge Webb's coincidences are admitted, but they only show "that Shakespeare had access to the works of Bacon years before they were published."

Judge Webb (No. 3) now fires his shot at No. 1, and wellnigh disables him; for, as the Judge rightly says, if the coincidences between Bacon and Shakespeare are admitted, then the strongest existing evidence that the Baconians have is also admitted, and that is quite enough for them.

Meanwhile Professor Dowden (No. 2) has fired *his* shot, and has shown that there were really no coincidences between Bacon and Shakespeare in the sense that the Baconians required for their argument. Unfortunately, this shot hit his own Shakespearian ally (No. 1), and in *The Pilot* for Aug. 30 Professor Tyrrell (No. 1) had to leave the field as best he could. This is how he does it. "When I read that article (Prof. Dowden's shot) I would gladly have recalled my paper (his shot), but it was then too late. I am not versed in the literature of the Shakespearian era (a Litt.D.!), and I assumed that the Baconisers who adduced the parallelisms had satisfied themselves that the coincidences were peculiar to the writings of the Philosopher and the Poet. Professor Dowden showed that this was not so. . . . Thus my theories were completely superseded, and the one specious argument of the Baconisers demolished. . . . I, for one, have now said my last word on the Shakespeare-Bacon question." *Exit* Professor Tyrrell badly wounded by *each* of the other combatants, while Professors Dowden and Webb remain on the field still fighting.

I am not a duellist on the field of the Plays, and therefore shall not attempt to occupy the corner of the

triangle left vacant by Professor Tyrrell. But if my proofs of the authorship of the Poems and Sonnets be allowed, Professor Dowden will be in a hot position.

There is hardly a more obstinate or difficult critic to convince or to reason with than the thoroughly ingrained scholar-critic who has been absorbing the traditional and orthodox views of any subject during the whole course of his life. The fact seems to be that the Shakespearian authorship has become a kind of "vested interest" in the eyes of the English-speaking race, and we all know how people hang on *per fas et nefas* to a vested interest. Critics have declared the "Divine William" to be the Eternal Glory of the British race, and their readers, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, have fully accepted this great treasure as their own by right and prescription; and this has been going on for some hundreds of years. Here is a vested interest which dates back earlier than the licence of the oldest public-house in the kingdom. Can we be surprised that people fight for it?

As all the orthodox Shakespearians make so much of Ben Jonson's testimony, and are constantly repeating that "it settles the question," I made some more researches into Ben's life, and found a letter of his addressed to Lord Salisbury which was new to me. Gifford does not mention it in his Life, but it is published in the *Calendar of State Papers*, Domestic Series, 1603 to 1610, London, 1857. It is too long to quote, but it shows that Ben Jonson, who, when he wrote this letter, was a Roman Catholic, was quite willing to play the spy and informer among his fellow-Catholics, and covered this mean and detestable offer by the plea of patriotism justifying it. And what made him turn Roman Catholic? Well, he was in prison, and, as he told Drummond afterwards, he was not convinced, but he "took the priest's word for it." But why should he, unless he was to get something by doing so? If so, what opinion must we hold of him? Would he be a stickler for truth persistently, no matter when or where? Is it not more probable that he would be just the kind of man who would be

easily induced by Bacon to assent to a *suppressio veri* if required of him. As for Bacon, no one who has any acquaintance with his "Life and Letters" would venture to deny that one of this great man's favourite literary devices was the *suppressio veri* combined with the *suggestio falsi*. Instances are very numerous, but one of the best that I can call to mind now is in a letter of Jan. 28, 1616, when the King had asked Bacon's advice regarding the attack by Coke on the Lord Chancellor's (Ellesmere) jurisdiction over cases decided at the King's Bench. Bacon replied: "I do think it most necessary, seeing there is some bruit abroad that the Court of King's Bench do doubt of the case, that it should not be treason, that it be given out constantly, and yet as it were in secret, and so a fame to slide, that the doubt was only upon the publication in that it was never published."

Now, I hold that a man who could so ingeniously advise how to throw dust in the eyes of the public, and how to circulate false reports, would not have much difficulty in doing the same in the case of the first folio, and would do it with greater gusto and care, as it was here a personal matter. What I wish to emphasise is that since Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon were both wonderfully shrewd men, and held the *peculiar views as to truth* described above, we should not reject as a "monstrous impossibility" the view that *between them* they succeeded in deceiving the world of letters as to the authorship of the first folio for several hundred years.

Nor must we forget that the Dedication and Address over the signatures of Heminge and Condell, fellow-actors with Shakespeare, are both open to grave suspicion and serious objections. Here too we cannot marry the style to the men. The phraseology differs much from what we should expect from ordinary actors. It has been plausibly suggested by such high authorities as the Cambridge editors, that both the Dedication and the Address may have been written by some literary man in the employment of the publishers, and merely signed by the two players. This seems probable enough, and in that

case I should suggest Edward Blount as a very likely man. But there are strong internal indications of a well-read Latinist and good classical scholar, which seem to point beyond these ordinary players and Blount also, and lead us to think rather of Ben Jonson. For there is a curious passage concerning "country hands that reach forth milk and cream and fruits," that is evidently taken from the dedicatory epistle to Vespasian, prefixed to Pliny's *Natural History*, and is an independent scholarly translation such as we might expect from Jonson rather than any one else. What would Heminge and Condell be likely to know of such a passage? Blount, who had a fancy for dedications and prefaces, might have come across it and kept it for his own future use, but not men like Heminge and Condell. Judge Webb mentions this part of their prefatory matter as being unlike the phraseology we should expect from them, but did not notice the peculiar classical source I have given above, although he refers to another passage of the Address which he regards as conclusive for the Jonsonian authorship. However that may be, I claim we are fully entitled to say that there is strong evidence of some literary chicanery in this part of the vestibule of the first folio, where Heminge and Condell give their signatures and evidence. This being so, we have a corroboration of the literary chicanery we have suspected in the other parts of this famous vestibule, and it becomes much easier to hold the opinion that this vestibule was originally arranged "to oblige Bacon" and to conceal him. That is, I confess, my own conviction on this debated point, and I rather fancy that Blount and Jaggard were mixed up with it as well as Jonson.

Look again at the secret of the "Waverley Novels." It should teach us a lesson surely. There were several shrewd guesses at the right author, but they were repressed somewhat in the way that the shrewd Baconian suggestions are repressed. People were hoodwinked by what was considered "good authority," and this lasted several years. The Ettrick Shepherd says, in his Auto-

biography, that when he saw certain words about long and short sheep used near the beginning of *The Black Dwarf*, he said to himself: "How could I be mistaken of the author? It is true Johnnie Ballantyne persuaded me into a nominal belief of the contrary for several years following, but I could never get the better of that and several similar coincidences." For Johnnie Ballantyne read Ben Jonson, and we have the very kind of influence that produces nominal belief in Shakespeare's authorship. J. B. and B. J. were both in a tale for throwing dust in the eyes of the inquisitive and curious public, and both succeeded, B. J. holding his tale up even to the present day.

But why, after all, are Baconians treated so discourteously? I suppose it is because they are heretics, and because the firm believers in the cult of the "Divine William" do actually feel that their higher religious instincts are being impudently trifled with. Bacon enthroned as our literary Paragon and Deity? Never! 'Tis flat blasphemy as ever was committed. Away with such cranks! nothing is too bad for them! I am reminded of a famous utterance of Dr. Wace (D.D.) before the Church Congress of 1888: "It is," he said, "and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly that he does not believe in Jesus Christ." Many people nowadays seem to hold the same views as to disbelief in Shakespeare, and the attempts to disenthroned him from his lofty position. Such is the view of the more ordinary man who plods to his work along the public thoroughfares of our cities and towns. He knows hardly anything of the subject, and cares less. As to the orthodox Shakespearians of cultivated tastes, the heresy is to them "literature of a peculiarly uninviting kind," as they often say. Naturally so, for it upsets all their past ideas on the subject; throws ridicule on all their beautiful devotion to "Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child," and the "native wood-notes wild," which they fondly imagined he had learned to "warble" in Warwickshire; and, perhaps worst of all, leaves one

of their special shrines positively empty. No substituted image can fill that shrine, for it is against human nature to blot out the lifelong devotion that has been bestowed on one great literary ideal, and then to transfer it restored to another idol or ideal of a very different description.

Appeals to Zoilus are quite out of date nowadays, but I will frankly say this: that, if any slashing critics or snarling cynics try to make matters "unpleasant" for me, I in turn will suffer them gladly. If they "grin like a dog" I too will grin—and bear it.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME ORTHODOX SHAKESPEARIANS PUT IN THE WITNESS-BOX

At this point it seems only fair to listen to the Shakespearians, who, no doubt, have for some time been muttering *audi alteram partem*. I will therefore now put Sir Theodore Martin, who is one of their best and most courteous and amiable witnesses, into the box and report his evidence. It is also to be read in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1888). He says :—

“Have they (the Baconians) ever tried to picture to themselves what was the position of an actor and dramatic writer in a theatre of those days? By necessity he was in daily communion with some of the sharpest and finest intellects of the time—men like Marlowe, Dekker, Chapman, Middleton, Heywood, Drayton, and Ben Jonson. We might as soon believe that a man who pretended that he had written *Vanity Fair* or *Esmond* could have escaped detection in the society of Charles Butler, Tennyson, Venables, or James Spedding, as that Shakespeare could have passed himself off as the author even of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* or *Love's Labour's Lost*—we purposely name two of his earliest and weakest plays—or that any of that brilliant circle of Elizabethan poets would have given credit for ten minutes to such a man as the Baconians picture Shakespeare to have been for the capacity to construct one scene, or even to compose ten consecutive lines of the blank verse—the exquisite blank verse which is to be found in those plays.”

This is excellently put, and has convinced in its time thousands of sensible people. But it is a fallacious argument after all. We have no reason to believe that Shakespeare ever did manage to deceive those people who were in the best position to judge. I do not think that he deceived Ben Jonson, or Greene, or Marston, or

Dekker, or Henslowe, or the actors of his own company, for one moment. They knew him as an adapter of old plays, and no doubt he could from his stage experience make them very presentable to the audience; he knew the popular taste, and had a "facetious grace of writing." This I think we must allow him. It was the saying of an impartial contemporary, and there is no reason it should not be accepted. But he was a "broker" of plays, and either bought or appropriated other people's feathers to add to his own natural plumage. If those who knew charged him with it, it did not seem to trouble him; he "slighted" it,* and took it all in the day's work, so long as it brought him money and success, for he was a careful man, with a good eye to the main chance. I think he was generally credited with the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and very likely he claimed and maintained his authorship there, for he had put his name to the dedication; and there may have been other reasons why he should do this, reasons best known to Bacon, Southampton, and himself. But I maintain, as against Sir Theodore Martin's apparently weighty argument, that his contemporaries, who, from their position and relation to him, ought to know, were not deceived, nor did Shakespeare try to deceive them. Shakespeare as the promoter and producer to the public of a number of popular and successful plays. They were pirated and printed without his collaboration and without his authority. Some had his name put to them, and some had not. He did not trouble much, so long as the money came in to the theatre, and possibly there was a private arrangement with the real "inventor," who did not care to be publicly associated with them. A new play was acted by his company; he was known to be the active *factotum*, and so, when successful and put in print by the speculative booksellers, it was attributed to him—often, too, when it was not his at all. He was no dunce, and had sufficient natural quickness and flow of language

* I assume that Ben Jonson's "Poet-Ape" was Shakespeare. The evidence seems very strong to me.

and facetious grace to impress outsiders, and people who were not great critics (as Ben Jonson really was), that he was quite equal to producing the marvellous beauties of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and the rest, because for one reason they were not at that time perceived to be such marvellous creations as the verdict of after ages has decreed.

But enough has been said to show that Sir Theodore's argument is not by any means so convincing as it at first appears to be. However, let us now hear another champion on the Shakespearian side. Allow me to introduce Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, a man of the keenest and most original intellect, an LL.D. and F.R.S., a competitor with Darwin for the honour of discovering Natural Selection, and one of the sanest defenders of modern Spiritualism in the matter of its evidential proof that we have had in this country. The occasion of his testimony was this. The *Arena*, a high-class American periodical, some years ago invited the opinions and verdict of distinguished men on the Shakespeare-Bacon problem. I need hardly say that the general result was an almost unanimous verdict for Shakespeare. As the *Arena* is not much known in England, and as Professor Wallace gave stronger reasons, perhaps, than any one else, they may suitably find a place here.

“When we are asked to believe that the whole of the plays and poems attributed to Shakespeare were not written by him, but by Lord Bacon, we naturally require evidence of the most convincing kind. It must be shown either that Bacon did actually write them, or that Shakespeare could not possibly have written them, in which latter case somebody else must have done so; and we then demand proof that Bacon could possibly, and did probably write them.

“First, then, is there any good evidence that Bacon did write them? Positively none whatever: only a number of vague hints and suggestions which might perhaps add some weight to an insufficient amount of direct testimony, but in its absence are entirely valueless; and then we have the enormous, the overwhelming improbability, that any man would write, and allow to be published or acted, so wonderful a series of poems and plays,

while another man received all the honour and all the profits ; and though surviving that man for ten years, that the real author never made the slightest claim to them, never confided the secret to a single friend, and died without a word or a sign to show that he had any part or share in them. To most persons this consideration alone will be conclusive against Bacon's authorship.

"The reasons for Shakespeare not being able to write them are weak in the extreme. They amount to this :

1. He had no University education.
2. His early associates were mostly illiterate.
3. No single letter or MS. exists in his writing.

"But 'transcendent genius' is sufficient to remove all such difficulties. Moreover, he lived near to the lordly castles of Warwick and Kenilworth, and 'at times of festivity such castles were open house, and at all times would be accessible through the friendship of servants or retainers ; and thus it may be that Shakespeare acquired some portion of that knowledge of the manners and speech of nobles and kings which appears in the historical plays.'

"The endearing terms applied to him by his London friends after he had left Stratford show he was an attractive personality, and we may therefore infer he was acceptable in many grades of society. The law-courts were open ; he would there have ample opportunities of getting that knowledge displayed in the plays ; and as for French and Spanish, he could easily pick up from his travelled friends or from foreign visitors enough for his purpose.

"Lastly, putting Shakespeare out of the way, could Bacon have written the plays, &c. ? No ; the man who wrote the Essays on 'Love' and 'Marriage,' and did not allow one spark of love or sentiment to appear in them, could not possibly have conceived and delineated such characters as Portia, Juliet, Imogen, and a score of others, not to speak of the 'pouring forth of the soul' in the Sonnets.

"Never, surely, was there so utterly baseless a claim as that made by the advocates of Bacon against Shakespeare.

"A. R. WALLACE.

"Verdict for the defendant—Shakespeare."

This verdict is given as strongly and as tersely as the most devoted Shakespearian could wish. As the reader has already seen, and will, I hope, continue to see further

on, I do not leave such arguments unconsidered. Therefore I will now simply refer to the argument of the Professor that Bacon was not the man to "conceive or delineate such characters as Portia, Juliet, Imogen," nor yet the man to pour forth his soul in the Sonnets. At first sight the argument seems insuperable, and the incongruity of such a philosophical and serious brain as that of Bacon evolving the marvellous lovers' ecstasies of *Romeo and Juliet*, together with the pure, graceful, bright and lovable maidens that meet us in the various plays, must seem to most people so enormous and so insuperable that it is to some extent an excuse for the unrestrained language they use to those who think differently.

No, Bacon was most distinctly not the kind of man we should credit with the creation of a Juliet, a Portia, a Beatrice, or a Rosalind. I admit the statement and agree with Professor Wallace's remarks on this point, but I would add a saving clause. I would say, "Bacon is impossible, *as we know him.*" In his mature life Bacon is known to the world of culture as a deep-thinking and far-reaching philosopher, a most wise and suggestive essayist, a sane, serious, sober-minded man, and apparently somewhat of a misogynist and a time-server. But what of his youthful days, when he was in the heyday of spring and of "sportive blood"; what of the time before he was on the shady side of thirty-five or forty; how much do the best of us, or even the wellnigh omniscient Spedding, *know intimately* of his inner life and emotional feelings then? He did not publish anything with his name of much importance till his *Essays* in 1598, when he was nearly forty years old, and his greater works were reserved till he was nearly sixty. Are we to judge his natural bias and his emotional instincts solely by such records as are left us in this way? Maturity is not often wont to lay bare the secrets and follies of its undisciplined and inexperienced youth; nay, rather it is apt to conceal or obscure them. Moreover, his *Essays on Love and Marriage* were not in the first edition of 1598, and did not appear till 1612, when Bacon was over fifty, and were

not finally put into shape till 1625, when he was sixty-four. We must not expect the exuberance and florid rhetoric of the tender passion at such ages of life; but among much excellent advice we get this: "Nuptial Love maketh mankind; Friendly Love perfecteth it; but Wanton Love corrupteth and imbaseth it."

In the friendly love that is the perfection of the great passion, may there not be a reminiscence of the ardours of the Sonnets? Anyhow, the *Siren* is there in the essay (*cf.* "What potions have I drunk of Siren tears?" Sonnet cxix.), and Marcus Antonius too, the hero of *Antony and Cleopatra*; and he is the only lover named in the essay except Appius Claudius, the Decemvir. And so I say to Professor Wallace and all who rely on this apparently invincible argument, "Be not too dogmatic concerning that portion of Bacon's life and history of which we know so little intimately; your invincible argument may after all be nothing but invincible ignorance."

And after all, what are Juliet, Beatrice, or Miranda, but creations of the fine human intellect which a genius can throw off from himself into space, and then embody them, so to speak, in the domain of the intellectual and literary world; but it does not necessarily follow that they represent any actual analogies to the personal character of the genius who created them. Just as a man "may smile, and smile, and be a villain," so, I suppose, an author may produce the sublimest and purest conceptions of the human mind without being so very sublime and pure in his own personal and intimate life. A man's lofty conceptions, and pure aspirations, do not necessarily find a counterpart in himself. "Colonel Newcome" is a beautiful conception, a fine character, but I don't suppose that Thackeray much resembled him.

Besides this, the emotional, the sensual, and the spiritual natures of men and women, be they great or small, vary considerably at different stages of their life. Look at Milton, for instance, and compare him in youth and middle age, in regard to his expressed views on the master passion love and the fair sex generally. If ever there was a

chaste, serious, and self-respecting man, a severe student delighting in books, Milton was that man, and yet in the heyday of youthful emotion, and in the spring of life, what does he tell us of his first love, that girl he met, above and surpassing all her accompanying troop, on that long-remembered May Day in 1628, when he was but nineteen? Then it was that Dan Cupid drew his bow at a venture and smote the unsuspecting youth and pierced his unguarded breast :

“Nec mora ; nunc ciliis hæsit, nunc virginis ori,
Insilit hinc labiis, insidet inde genis ;
Et quascunque agilis partes jaculator oberrat,
Hei mihi ! mille locis pectus inerme ferit ;”

which Cowper translates unapproachably,

“[With . . . quiver at his side,]
Now to her lips he clung, her eyelids now,
Then settled on her cheeks, or on her brow,
And with a thousand wounds from every part
Pierced and transpierced my undefended heart.
A fever, new to me, of fierce desire
Now seized my soul, and I was all on fire.”

But later on in life, in 1645, when Milton was approaching forty, he would not put in print his youthful effusion without a demurrer or antidote, and so he appends his altered views when he was more matured, in the following fashion :

“Such were the trophies that in earlier days,
By vanity seduced, I toiled to raise,
Studious, yet indolent, and urged by youth,
That worst of teachers ! from the ways of truth :
Till learning taught me in his shady bow'r,
To quit love's servile yoke, and spurn his pow'r.”

And why may not this have been young Francis Bacon's case as well? When that fair Adonis, that eminent “child of state,” the attractive young Earl of Southampton, came up about the year 1590 to be the young cherub of Gray's Inn, what more likely than that a “fever of fierce desire” should seize the soul of that more experienced and naturally sensitive member

of the same Society, Francis Bacon? with whom, as we know, an early and long-continued intimacy sprung up. Some of the Shake-speare Sonnets show us, as only impassioned poetry can, a soul that was "all on fire," and the Cupid that supplied the torch is generally admitted to be this same young Earl. Does it not seem more probable that the author of these Sonnets was one who was fitted by birth, position at Gray's Inn, and opportunities of many kinds to enter into an ardent and romantic attachment to his young friend—all which qualifications are fulfilled to the letter in Francis Bacon—rather than the *bourgeois* lad from the country, William Shakespeare, who had about this time just risen from the stable-yard of old Burbage to do hack-work with old plays, and was perhaps honoured sometimes with the rôle of the original Ghost in the *Ur-Hamlet* of Thomas Kyd, which used to cry out, to the terror of the penny and twopenny sections of the audience, "Hamlet, revenge."

Bacon, like Milton, became devoted to more serious matters as life rolled on, and put aside the ecstasies and fancies, the "watching and pursuing the light that lies in woman's eyes," and that friendship for youth which he thought at one time to be the perfecting of love. Those spring days had passed. For "one hour" at least he had enjoyed spring's most glorious sun; but now the autumn had come, and he sat and thought (*sic sedebat*), and possessed with a philanthropy for his race and for posterity, he devised his new schemes of Philosophy and Natural Science, and left them and the other works of his invention that he had devised in a "despised weed" for the good of all men, and for future ages. From what Sir Thomas Bodley said about Bacon in later life, we may almost infer that Bacon had wasted (according to the Bodley view of the matter) much of his youth in frivolous literary work, such as plays and interludes, which Sir Thomas rigorously excluded from his famous Library.

Once more, then, and finally, the argument that Bacon could not possibly have depicted the love scenes and

Das Ewig-Weibliche of the Plays does not seem an invincible one.

I will next introduce one of the most experienced Shakespearians we have amongst us, as far as practical exposition is concerned—I mean, of course, Sir Henry Irving.

He has just been delivering the “Trask” lecture at Princeton University (March 1902), and he took the Bacon-Shakespeare question for his subject. He approached the matter from the point of view of the actor mainly, taking up two principal points. First, is it conceivable that Shakespeare’s contemporaries would have allowed him to masquerade in borrowed plumes? Even as it was, Robert Greene was jealous of him, and called him “the upstart crow beautified with our feathers.” Greene would have been only too glad to expose Shakespeare, had there been anything to expose. Secondly, it is equally as inconceivable that Bacon wrote the Plays, as that Shakespeare did not write them. They are the work of a practical playwright, conversant with all the business of the actor; and Bacon is not known to have had any knowledge of the stage. “If,” said Sir Henry, “you have not studied the art of writing for the stage, you will never write a good play.”

I must say I am astounded at the inaccurate statements which the newspapers have here given to Sir Henry, and would hope that he has been incorrectly reported. Surely all who have only read a little way into the subject know that (1) Shakespeare was charged over and over again at the time with patching up old plays, with dressing himself up for the public in borrowed plumes, and for “brokerage” or buying literary property from outsiders; and that (2) Bacon was known to be well acquainted with the practical work of getting up masques and plays at Gray’s Inn, and was, to his mother’s sorrow, a frequenter and lover of the theatre.

The *Globe* newspaper, commenting favourably on Sir Henry, goes a step further than the lecture, by stating that when Shakespeare “employed legal terms, he is

often wrong," and that "it is, in short, abundantly clear that the author was not a lawyer."

To which we can only say :

"O ye chorus of indolent reviewers,
Irresponsible, indolent reviewers."

Next take this good leading trump card from the other side : "Keats, though minus education in Greek, yet through the genius within him caused his poetry to be saturated with the spirit of Greek mythology ; and shall we deny to Shakespeare a similar transmuting power of genius, even on the assumption of a limited Latin scholarship ? "

I do not know who first said this, but it has been often repeated, and with most Shakespearians *decies repetita placebit*. I admit its *primâ facie* force and congruity, but fortunately we know much more about young Keats than about young Shakespeare of Stratford. Therefore let us, for the sake of comparison, hear what is known of Keats. He was sent in his eighth year to a school of excellent repute kept by John Clarke at Enfield. He gained the friendship of Charles Cowden Clarke, the master's son, and an usher of the school, and during his last two years the love of study so seized him that he could be hardly torn from his books, not only winning all the literary prizes of the school, but devouring during play-hours everything he could lay his hands on, especially classical mythology. He carried away from school a fair knowledge of Latin, and apparently a little knowledge of French, which he afterwards improved. He made plenty of spare time for himself in his teens and afterwards, and relinquished the profession of surgery and medicine for more congenial pursuits. He had many talented friends to stimulate him. Books were within his reach, to be consulted at pleasure.

Now compare Keats' works, their author being thus favourably handicapped, with Shakespeare's works. I can see neither wide learning nor philosophical knowledge in Keats, but I can see both in Shakespeare. I can see in Keats' works how he was enabled by his innate genius

to "build the lofty rhyme" and to produce most exquisite flowers of the finest poetry, from the groundwork, so to speak, of Lemprière and the current treatises on mythology, thoroughly mastered by a willing and interested reader. But when I see this splendid result, I do not view it as a miracle, or the man himself as *stupor mundi*. His natural genius and the special tendency of his mind would be sufficient, without a miracle.

But how very different in the case of Shakespeare. We do not know much about his educational advantages; but, taking the most favourable view, they could hardly be superior to those that were afforded to Keats. And yet where can there be found a man of wider, and, as a rule, more accurate knowledge, or of a greater vocabulary, or of a more beautiful or philosophical way of using it?

Genius can do much, but it is far from being able to make a man *omnibus numeris absolutus*, or "complete" in the sense that Shakespeare was. Genius alone can undoubtedly lift a man to a purer and a larger æther than ordinary mortals can breathe in. Instances are numerous enough in the annals of many a cottage home and lowly birthplace, but these self-same favoured mortals, even if, as with Milton, they could hope to soar

"Above the flight of Pegasean wing,"

still would soon find that their wings of genius are sadly clipped, confined, and weakened unless they are taught to rise and fly by the knowledge that is in books and by the varied wisdom that has descended from the ages of the past. Without these helps they may indeed rise somewhat from the brute earth of ordinary humanity, but they will never be able to make those glorious circling swoops in the lofty "circumambient air" which are ever the wonder of the earth-bound crowd below, the marvel of an admiring world.

Such an ever-living *stupor mundi* is Shakespeare—but not Keats, nor yet Burns, nor James Ferguson, as *Notes and Queries* would suggest when their critic remarks, "It is only in degree that Shakespeare is more of a

miracle than Burns or than James Ferguson." I cannot accept such a statement as this. The miracle of the Shakespeare Works is a different *kind* of miracle from that of Burns, or Ferguson, or Keats. Theirs is really after all no miracle, for *they* only went where their genius led them. But Shakespeare went where no natural genius ever did or ever could lead a man, and that is the miracle we are asked to believe. Put Bacon in Shakespeare's place, the miracle disappears and a much easier problem awaits us. And as it is a good standing rule, both in theology and common sense, that we should never multiply miracles if we can by any possibility find other explanations of a fairly satisfactory kind, I adopt the rule and accept Bacon until the other side give me a downright miracle to swallow in *his* case, and then he must go too, for miracles do not happen now either in the literary or physical worlds. But I must have a real miracle, better than any they have on their books at present.

I once had the privilege of a short casual conversation with one of the most distinguished Shakespearian scholars that England possesses. The Bacon theory being mentioned tentatively, I well remember his curt and decisive reply: "Absurd! Why, Bacon never wrote a humorous line in his life." At the time, coming as it did *vivâ voce* from such an authority, it appeared to me very convincing, and for a moment or two I seemed to feel certain that whatever Bacon wrote, he did *not* write the humours of Sir John Falstaff. Even still I often feel inclined to credit the Stratford man with some of the incidents and characters in the Falstaff plays. But the great critic's casual remark was not so strong as it sounds; for, allowing the assertion to be accurate, there still remains plenty of evidence that Bacon was a natural humorist, and very fond of indulging his vein. Ben Jonson, best of contemporary witnesses, declared: "His (Francis Bacon's) language, *when he could spare, or pass by, a jest*, was hotly censorious;" and Dr. Abbott, one of the best of Bacon's modern biographers, said: "If Francis owed his energy

to his mother, he was probably indebted to his father for his placid self-control and *his rich humour.*" Such remarks discount considerably the value of the statement that, for the moment, rather nonplussed me.

I could go on and fill many pages with amusing and ridiculous extracts from the books and pamphlets of the privates, camp-followers, and facetious buffoons of the orthodox army. But it would take up too much space, and would not strengthen my own case, which is the main object to strive for. They spare not invective, they seem to think us all lunatics, and call us all the ridiculous names they can invent. I wish some one would invent one for them. When modern critics call the Bacon-Shakespeare theory a craze of semi-educated people, and a theory that is absolutely irrational, one hardly knows by what nickname to hit off such people. They certainly deserve one, and one that would stick to them. Perhaps some sympathetic reader will supply one.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROOFS OF BACONIAN AUTHORSHIP AS DEDUCED FROM THE HISTORY OF THE THREE PROMINENT ELIZABETHAN EARLS—SOUTHAMPTON, PEMBROKE, AND ESSEX

HAVING thus, for a change, heard some of the best Shakespearian champions in their own words, let us proceed with our own case.

Our next piece of evidence will depend upon three celebrated English noblemen—Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and the unfortunate favourite of Queen Elizabeth, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. These three men, of the highest aristocracy of the land, were all on terms of special intimacy with Francis Bacon. That is an historical fact which is not disputed, and does not admit of dispute.

It is also said that the first two noblemen were most closely bound by friendship and patronage to William Shakespeare, the poet-actor and part shareholder and manager of the Globe Theatre, and that the third nobleman was also, though more slightly, connected both with the Globe Theatre and its plays. But these latter intimacies with the actor-manager, which are of prime necessity for the Shakespearian orthodox theory, have been much disputed in the near past, and are being more strongly challenged every day in the present, and their force as an historical fact is being slowly but surely weakened.

The Bacon-Shakespeare controversy will revolve more and more round these three historic personages, so it seems to me. The future battlefield for the literary combatants will be the ground of the Sonnets and the Poems, and especially the respective territories (or counties) of Pembroke, Southampton, and Essex.

Strange to say, neither Southampton nor Pembroke

occurs in the index of what is perhaps the most convincing and important work of the whole controversy—a work of which the seventh edition revised (1897) is now lying before me, I mean “*Bacon versus Shakespeare*,” by Edwin Reed, member of the Shakespeare Society of New York (pp. xxiv–296). But I hope to show now that these names, and their connection with the history and lives of Bacon and Shakespeare, are of the utmost importance as throwing light on the real author of the Sonnets and Poems and thence by inference of the Plays as well.

First, let us collect in as compact a bundle as possible the evidences and inferences that Shakespearians have given us (*fas est et ab hoste doceri*) of these young noblemen and their connection with the Sonnets. I assume, in agreement with the most eminent Shakespearian critics, that the Sonnets contain a partial autobiography of their writer, and I think I am justified in so doing. To take a merely symbolical, allegorical, or idealistic view of the Sonnets leads us anywhere or rather nowhere, and is contradicted very plainly by the author accusing himself of scandals and misdemeanours, a thing unheard of and without a parallel in this ethereal kind of literature. To make somewhat plainer this strange alternative theory of the Sonnets, I will quote a letter which one of these expositors has quite recently (March 22, 1902) written to *The Speaker* :—

“In the Sonnets the ideal of Beauty, Truth, and Love, as an operative ‘grace’ (so the poet calls it) manifesting itself in his art, life, and love, is by him identified with his spirit or higher and truer self, and at the same time with the All of Nature. Thus Shakespeare in the Sonnets figures as one with the Ideal or Spirit, and the All of Nature.”

If we wish to discover the real author, we shall have to tread on firmer ground than this. I think we can.

To begin with, we may state, as a matter of common knowledge now, that the great majority of the mysterious Shakespeare Sonnets are addressed to a high-born and beautiful young man, apparently a mere lad when some

of them were written. The smaller number of Sonnets are addressed, or have reference to a woman, generally known by critics as the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. "A woman coloured ill," a "female evil," not of the best reputation for strict chastity. To show that the word "mysterious" used above is justly applied to these poems, we have only to remember that for many years after they were first published, they were all supposed to be addressed to a woman, young and beautiful; and even as late as 1797 Chalmers endeavoured to show that this was none other than Queen Elizabeth, although her Majesty must have been close upon sixty years of age when the Sonnets were commenced. Coleridge thought the person addressed was a woman, and that Sonnet xx. and others, which speak so evidently of a man, were put in as a blind. Many other solutions more or less absurd have appeared in print for the last hundred years or more, and many still appear in the course of every few years.

The first critic who deserves the credit of directing the public to what is now generally believed to be the true solution, and of naming the right young man, was Dr. Drake, who in his excellent work, *Shakespeare and his Times* (1817), conjectured that Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, was the friend of Shakespeare who was addressed so affectionately in the Sonnets, as well as inscribed so lovingly in the dedication to his poems. Of course he was met in the later Sonnets by the difficulty that the adored friend's name was clearly Will, that is William, while Southampton's name was Henry; but he easily managed to get over this slight discrepancy, by announcing his entire conviction that the later Sonnets were not written to a *real* object at all! And a Mr. Heraud, a rather famous critic in his day, says: "After a careful re-perusal I have come to the conclusion that there is not a single Sonnet which is addressed to any individual at all."*

But enough of such barren surmises, which could easily be recounted in detail so as to fill more than an

* *Shakespeare, his Inner Life*, by J. A. Heraud, London, 1865.

hundred pages ; I only refer to them here to show what a mysterious, difficult, and thorny subject critics have always found the Sonnets to be.

A Mr. Tyler attempted a new explanation in 1890, and was so very ingenious and successful that for a time he deceived the very elect ; and Mr. Sidney Lee believed, with many other most distinguished Shakespearians, that the right man was a William, the Mr. W. H. of the dedication, and none other than William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and that the Dark Lady was Mistress Mary Fitton, maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, a prominent performer in the Court masques and interludes, the secret, illicit mistress of William Shakespeare, William Herbert, and two or three other Wills, and the mother of a base-born child of which William Herbert was the putative father.

Mr. Tyler's very convincing book held the field for some years, and I believe some able Shakespearians still swear by his interpretation. It is certainly a learned and able attempt to throw light upon a very dark subject, one especially dark for all those who hold the Shakespearian hypothesis. Some points connected with the Dark Lady and her numerous "Wills" do seem much elucidated, and some novel evidence is given which, I believe, still holds good. But when the question of dates comes to be looked into, this William Herbert theory utterly comes to grief for the majority of the earlier Sonnets. It can be made very plain in this way : William Herbert was born April 8, 1580. Now the first seventeen Sonnets, or, as they are sometimes called, "The Procreation Sonnets" (c. 1592-3), are a strong appeal to a lovely youth to marry and beget a child that may reproduce and recall the fair lineaments of his father should death rob the world of such beauty :

" Make thee another self, for love of me,
That beauty still may live in thine and thee."

—*Sonnet X.*

Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 173, 174 :

" And so in spite of death thou dost survive,
In that thy likeness still is left alive."

But how can this possibly be young William Herbert? For these seventeen belong indubitably to a period when he was only about eleven, or at very most twelve or thirteen years old.

I cannot give the whole evidence here, nor would any reader thank me if I tried, for it is internal evidence of a complicated but most positive kind. By a careful comparison of the language, tone and parallelisms, and characters of the Sonnets and early Plays and Poems, especially *Venus and Adonis*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and others of those so-called Shakespeare Plays, which were often acted and written long before they were introduced by pirates to the public, it comes out clearly and convincingly that the earliest Sonnets were written in the years 1591 to 1593, when, as I have said, Herbert would be a boy of only eleven or twelve.

Moreover, Mr. Tyler and all the "Herbertites" agree in saying that the first intimacy between Shakespeare and young Herbert must have taken place in 1598, when we know, on the best of evidence, young Herbert came up to live in London, having got his father's permission to do so "with much adoe." It is Rowland White, in the Sidney Papers, in his letters about the affairs at Court, who tells us this, and if the Sonnets, urging a lovely lad to marry, were written about 1593 at the very latest, what possible connection could they have with Shakespeare and William Herbert in 1598, five years later? I should mention here, that I have made a discovery in the Sidney Papers, which neither Mr. Tyler nor any one else, as far as I know, has noticed, viz. that young William Herbert was up in town for some months in the latter part of the year 1595, when he would be between fifteen and sixteen, and that his parents were contemplating his marriage and engaged in negotiations about it at that very time. This would have been a great help to Mr. Tyler's ingenious theory if he had known of it, and indeed when I discovered it first, and took it in connection with Sonnet CIV. and the *three years' interval* between the first acquaintance with the lad there mentioned, I thought for

a few moments very complacently that the chronological key of the Sonnets had been found at last, that Mr. W. H. was William Herbert, and that Southampton was thereby excluded from the Procreation Sonnets and all the others as well. But this state of mind did not last long. I looked again into Gerald Massey's scarce book, *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, privately printed in 1888, and there found again the evidence for Southampton in such overwhelming force that it could not be resisted. I am of the same opinion still, and although this evidence of Massey is based on the Shakespearian hypothesis, and his early date of 1590 does not seem so probable to me as 1591-93, there can surely be no shadow of doubt that Southampton was the youth to whom the early Sonnets were addressed, and that the Pembroke and Fitton (?) Sonnets come on later in the book, and later than 1594 in any case. But my great point is that Bacon suits both the Southampton theory and the Pembroke theory of the later Sonnets so very much better than Shakespeare does, that the Sonnets, both early and late, can be almost said to establish, through these two historic personages, the great fact we are seeking to prove, viz., that Bacon was their author, and not Shakespeare.

First let us take Southampton and the proofs about him, mainly from Massey, and from a concise summary in the *Athenæum* for April 28, 1866, which I give entire, as follows :—

“If Southampton is not the male friend addressed by Shakespeare in the earlier portion of these poems (the Sonnets), evidence counts for nothing. Why, he is indicated in general and in particular—as regards his class and his person—by the most certain marks. The friend addressed by the poet is young (S. 1), of gracious presence (S. 10), noble of birth (S. 37), rich in money and land (S. 48), a town gallant (S. 95), a man vain and exacting (S. 103).

“These general characteristics, though vague and impersonal, exclude a good many pretenders to the office of Shakespeare's friend. They exclude the whole class of actors, playwrights, and managers; the whole tribe of Shakespeare's kinsmen and towns-

men; and all the imaginary Hugheses, Hathaways, and Hartes. They confine our field of choice to men of the rank and character of Essex, Rutland, Pembroke, and Southampton, and such like. Passing in review men of this class we find one, and only one, to whom all the criteria above will apply. Essex was not single; Rutland had no previous connection with the poet, and had never publicly honoured him; Pembroke was a mere boy, to whom Shakespeare had not dedicated a book. In 1595 Pembroke, then William Herbert (Lord Herbert?), was only fifteen years old, and *his* mother was not a widow (and I may add, he was not an only son on whom the succession of the direct line depended). Every point in these criteria meets in Southampton."

This critic takes, it will be seen, 1595 for the date of the Sonnets; rather too late, I think.

Mr. Massey devotes many pages to this theory (pp. 52-66), and begins thus:

"The youth whom the poet first saw in all his semi-feminine freshness of the proverbial 'sweet seventeen,' and afterwards celebrated as a 'sweet boy,' a 'lovely boy,' a 'beauteous and lovely youth,' a pattern for rather than a copy of his Adonis, corresponds perfectly with Southampton in his seventeenth year. If we take the year 1590 for the first group of Sonnets, we shall find the young Earl of Southampton's age precisely reckoned up in Sonnet 16:

'Now stand you on the top of happy hours,'

which shows us that the youth has sprung lightly up the ladder of his life, and now stands on the last golden round of boyhood. (The years 1591-93 suit equally well.) The very first Sonnet addresses one who is the 'world's fresh ornament'—that is, the budding favourite at Court, the fresh grace of its circle, the latest representative there of youthful spring—"The Expectancy and Rose of the fair State!" Southampton was, in truth, the 'child of the state,' under the special protection of the Queen. He was recommended to her Majesty's notice and care by the loss of his father at so early an age, . . . as well as favoured with the best word of his guardian, Burleigh, who at one time hoped to bring about a marriage betwixt Southampton and his own grand-daughter. We shall see further that such was his place in her Majesty's regards, that an endeavour was made

by Sir Fulke Greville and others to get the Earl of Southampton installed as royal favourite instead of Essex."

Gerald Massey proceeds with his arguments and proofs at too great length to extract them here, but I will give the summary, asking the reader first to notice *how well Bacon would fit in* if we consider the proposed marriage with Burghley's grand-daughter above, and the endeavour to get Southampton into the place of favour that Essex held.

How badly Shakespeare fits in, too. What can Shakespeare, who has only been in London three or four years, and has hardly yet shaken off his dialect or the manners of the stable-yard—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 grand-daughter of the highest dignitary in the 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?

But if we take Bacon and put him in Shakespeare's place all fits in most admirably. There is no social bar between Francis Bacon, the clever son of the late Lord Keeper, and the young Earl of Southampton. They are, too, members of the same Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, and are likely enough to be brought into intimate contact, for Bacon, the older member of the Society, would be sure to call upon or at least cultivate the acquaintance of such a distinguished fresh-comer as was

* Cf. Ben Jonson's attacks in *Poetaster*, &c.

Southampton. Moreover, the beauty of the lad would draw Bacon to intimacy, if nothing else did. Who so likely as Bacon to try and foster a marriage that would unite the powerful families of Wriothesley and Cecil—unite his new friend Southampton to his old family patron Burghley and the Cecils generally, to whom, since the death of his father, Bacon had steadily and almost solely looked for help and patronage. And to get Southampton into Court favour instead of Essex would be indeed a double success, for Bacon and the Cecils would be rid of Essex, who was *then* a hostile influence to both, and Southampton, allied by marriage to Burghley (if it came off), would become a most powerful ally.

There was some use and purpose in Bacon circulating *among his private friends* such sugared sonnets to the "coming man," but where does Shakespeare come in? A few of the primary facts as substantiated by Mr. Massey, an orthodox Shakespearian be it remembered, are these:

(1) That Henry Wriothesley was the fatherless young friend to whom Shakespeare addressed his first Sonnets.

(2) That it was to him the promise of a public dedication of his Poems was privately made in Sonnet xxvi.

(3) That he was the living original from whom the poet drew his portrait of Adonis as the Master-Mistress of his passion.

(4) That he was the man who encouraged Shakespeare to publish his Poems, and the friend to whom the Sonnets were offered privately as the "barren tender of a Poet's debt."

(5) That a mass of the Sonnets belong to the time of the early Plays, and were therefore written too soon for William Herbert to have been the friend addressed in them.

And finally, he adds, "If evidence is to count for anything, we may now consider Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to be sufficiently identified as the young friend and patron, who was both the object and subject

of the early Sonnets." I heartily endorse these last words, and so do most students of the subject now.

Mr. Massey has several other arguments besides the above, especially a curious solution of that well-known *crux* in Sonnet xx., which as originally printed was :

"A man in hew all *Hews* in his controwling,"

where the word in italics with a capital H is supposed to contain some hidden allusion which might possibly discover the secret. This I have left to be considered, with other solutions, when we are dealing with separate Sonnets.

Our critic is rather severe and sarcastic when he has to deal with those who reject Southampton. "Professor Dowden," he remarks, "has the temerity to assert that Henry Wriothesley 'was NOT beautiful,' for which gratuitous assertion he had no warrant whatever. He merely repeats without testing what Boaden had already said without proof. The Professor further declares that Southampton bore '*no resemblance to his mother.*' But if this were a fact, he had no knowledge of it—where is the fact recorded? 'Youngster,' said the impecunious manager Elliston to the author of *Black-eyed Susan*, 'have you the confidence to lend me a guinea?' 'I have all the confidence in the world,' said Jerrold, 'but I haven't got the guinea.' So is it with the Herbertites. They have any amount of assertion, but not the needful facts."

Those I have called the Herbertites Massey calls Brownites, and devotes a whole chapter to the *Lues Browniana*, with which disease he thinks all the champions of William Herbert are infected. Charles Armytage Brown wrote to prove the Herbert theory as early as 1838, and Brown and Massey were looked upon as the protagonists of their respective sides. But none of these combatants had all the facts, and for the matter of Southampton's "beauty" I am able to contribute some new ones.

Those Shakespearian critics (*e.g.* Prof. Dowden and others) who are opposed to the Southampton theory of

the Sonnets, and have declared that Henry Wriothesley was anything but a good-looking man, and therefore most unlikely to receive the almost extravagant praise of the Sonnets, seem to have judged by the engraved portraits of Southampton in later life. These certainly do not give him the appearance of an Adonis, and do not lead us to fancy that he ever was one. But such learned critics have gone wrong, as so often happens, through their lack of the necessary knowledge that would permanently settle the question. They can now, without any hesitation or any particle of doubt, be put right.

The young Earl of Southampton when he was between eighteen and nineteen *was* an Adonis, and there is the best possible proof of it. He accompanied, with many others of the English aristocracy, our great Queen Elizabeth when she visited Oxford in state in 1592. The Vice-Chancellor of the University gave the royal company a dinner, and John Sanford, who was chaplain of Magdalen, and evidently an excellent Latin scholar, gave an account of this dinner and the guests in a very rare tract of Latin verse of which only two copies are known.* The most distinguished visitors each have two or three lines of notice in the poem, and this is what the learned John Sanford says of the young Southampton :

"Quo non formosior alter
Affuit, aut doctâ juvenis præstantior arte ;
Ora licet tenera vix dum lanugine vernali,"

that is, he was the handsomest personage of the whole company, though but a smooth-faced boy whose cheeks had scarce yet the downy promise of Spring. Here is Adonis drawn to the life.

Strange to relate, the other candidate for the "only better" of the Sonnets was also among the guests on this historic occasion, and young William Herbert, then but twelve years old, was privileged to sit down with his father and enjoy the good things provided by hospitable

* *Apollinis et Musarum* Ἐγκτικὰ Εἰδύλλια in serenissimæ Regine Elizabethæ auspiciatissimum Oxoniam adventum.—Oxonix (1592), 4to.

Dr. Bond. The young boy is not without his line or two of praise :

“ Puer huc patrem comitatus euntem
Sedit convivas inter, prænobilis hæres
Indolis egregiæ, sed cui *stat messis in herbâ.*”

This was a neat little piece of praise, for the words in italics were the family motto or emblem-device.

Here then in this account we have a well-authenticated date, 1592, and we know pretty well how all the parties we are particularly concerned in are spending their time except that will-o'-the-wisp Shakespeare, whom we can hardly ever follow up or locate.

As to dating the Sonnets as accurately as possible, it is important on the Bacon theory of authorship, for we do know, pretty well, from Spedding's exhaustive life of Bacon, what was happening to him each year from 1590 or thereabouts. But, on the Shakespeare theory, dating the Sonnets is not of much use, and indeed prominent Shakespearians, such as Mr. Howard Furness of the *Variorum Shakespeare*, and others, agree to this, for they tell us :

“ If we arrange dates to Shakespeare's Plays, what else is it but re-arranging that chronological table which by courtesy we now call a Life of Shakespeare, and which he who knows more about it than all the rest of us styles, as modestly as truthfully, merely outlines. Of the real Life we know absolutely nothing, and I for one am genuinely thankful that it is so, and gladly note, as the years roll on, that the obscurity which envelops it is as utter and impenetrable as ever.” *

This seems an odd utterance, that a devoted Shakesperian should be thankful for knowing so little about Shakespeare's true life ; but I think he means this, that he is glad Shakespeare is not in the Poems and Plays personally or autobiographically, for he does not want the incidents of Shakespeare's possibly trivial life half-masked in the verse or action of the Plays ; he would much rather have the marvellous conceptions of Shakespeare's mind presented in their singular beauty as they are now, inde-

* *Merchant of Venice*, Var. Ed., p. 277.

pendent of any such autobiographical allusions, free expressions of the highest fancy, and absolutely unmasked and undisguised.

But no such difficulties or disappointments crop up on the Baconian theory—the clearer idea we get of the dates, the better proofs have we whereby we can judge whether Bacon wrote them or not; and personally I must say that making clear to myself the early date of the first seventeen Sonnets had much to do with making clear to me who their author was. If the earlier Sonnets were written about 1591–92, it is very hard to see how Shakespeare can possibly come in. But we shall hear more about dates when we take some of the Sonnets separately.

Enough has been said, I hope, to show that Southampton is the “lovely youth” addressed in the earlier Sonnets, and that certainly Francis Bacon was a *far more likely person* to write familiar and affectionate sonnets to a rising young aristocrat than was the nondescript supernumerary William Shakespeare. I shall try to prove this more conclusively still when I come to consider the correspondence (epistolary) that passed between Bacon and the Earls of Southampton, Pembroke, and Essex.

But I have a very good proof that Bacon *did* write sonnets, and, what is more, showed them to his friend Southampton for his opinion and judgment; and perhaps this is the best place to introduce it. I am also inclined to think that this very poem is extant, having been ascribed to Shakespeare on the authority of a commonplace book which is preserved in the Hamburg City Library. I shall give the poem and a fuller account when I deal with the correspondence of Bacon and Essex. Meanwhile, here is the evidence referred to above:

Bacon in his *Apology concerning the late Earl of Essex*, published in 1604, says:

“A little before that time, (the Trial) being about the middle of Michaelmas term, her Majesty had a purpose to dine at my

lodge at Twicknam Park, at which time I had (though I profess not to be a poet) prepared a sonnet directly tending and alluding to draw on her Majesty's reconciliation to my Lord, which I remember also I showed *to a great person, and one of my Lord's nearest friends*, who commended it: this, though it be (as I said) but a try, yet it shewed plainly in what spirit I proceeded," &c.

I suggest that this great person and great friend of Essex was none other than Southampton, and that Bacon showed him this sonnet as he had shown to him many another sonnet before, *privately* as among friends. The author of Shakespeare's Poems and Plays was apparently on terms of friendship and admiration with both Essex and Southampton before the disastrous Irish expedition and the subsequent rebellious uprising of Essex and his followers (Feb. 1601); but as Mr. Tyler says (*Sonnets*, p. 30), "there is reason to believe that as early as 1601 he became alienated from Southampton."

The Baconian hypothesis fits in best with these facts, for the guilt or innocence of Essex and Southampton was of vital importance to Bacon, whose whole political advancement and future prospects in life depended on it, while the actor-manager Shakespeare and his relation to Southampton would be looked at as merely that of literary client and patron, without any treasonable or political significance. After Elizabeth's death, and when James I. had shown his good inclination towards Southampton, and had set him free from his imprisonment, then it was that Bacon wrote to Southampton a remarkable letter (*cf.* Montagu's *Life of Bacon*, p. 98), in which he uses this expression, "I may safely be that to you now, which I was truly before." Bacon makes a strong appeal for renewed friendship, but it does not appear that the appeal was met in any particular way. It is supposed that the breach caused by Bacon's conduct at the trial of Essex was never quite healed. But under James I. they belonged to the same political party and had the same interests, and were both in favour of colonisation, and sat together on the Council of Virginia.

The lifelong intimacy and the early and very close relationship between Bacon and Southampton present no difficulties to the historical inquirer.

It is a different and wellnigh impossible task that faces us when we try to join together in early friendship, or even in mere casual acquaintance, two men so widely apart in the qualifications that make for intimacy, as were Southampton and Shakespeare. The suggestions that critics are often obliged to make to account, for instance, for the first introduction of one to the other are in general ludicrously imaginative. Indeed, the only point that the Shakespearians can score in this matter is, that the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* are dedicated to Southampton, and signed by Shakespeare in his own name. But how easily might that have been a blind. Bacon might not wish to "show his head" until his beloved Southampton gave his consent, and Southampton may not have cared that Bacon should appear in the matter at all, lest the malevolent world should begin to wag its tongue about the "sugred sonnets" or something worse.

Of this one thing we may be pretty sure: the author of *Venus and Adonis* and the Sonnets was a man of elegant and courtly manners, who was at the time of writing much under the influence of Sidney's *Arcadia* and Sidney's other literary works. It should be noticed that *Venus and Adonis*, although not quite commendable from the moral-pedagogical point of view, and not quite a book for the young lady's boudoir, or even the drawing-room table, is most certainly not written in a low or vulgar strain of obscenity, and is far removed from the ribald licence that was too often permitted both in public and private in those more outspoken days. I believe Queen Elizabeth, old as she was, would have read of this Adonis, his boyish attractions and shame-faced manners, with the highest interest—nay, would almost have gloated over some of the more striking passages, for she had the blood of Henry "Bluebeard" Tudor in her veins, and was as fond of blushing beardless boys when she herself was approaching sixty, as an old maid of her last litter of

kittens—and let us hope with no more evil intent. I am not one to bring up fresh “scandal” against the Virgin Queen, and when I suppose the Queen to be an interested reader of *Venus and Adonis*, I take into account the manners of the time, and do not charge her Majesty with being any worse in her literary tastes than her lively maids of honour. I believe she was more foolishly vain than the majority of her sex, and looked for real love and adoration at sixty—but that was perhaps all, and her unique position may have produced and sustained that feeling. It has more than once crossed my mind that if Bacon really wrote *Venus and Adonis* with Southampton’s beauty and Court prospects before him, the aspiring Francis must have plainly seen that such enticing descriptions of a handsome youth, with Southampton’s name on the dedication-page, must evidently help to bring the latter to the Queen’s notice and to further Court favour and comment; and this was exactly what Bacon wanted.

The Virgin Queen was certainly not too much of a prude to read *Venus and Adonis*. Even when quite a young girl she was perfectly ready, so it seems, for a game of romps with her good-looking and semi-paternal guardian if he came into her bedroom before she was up or dressed. She was no prude then, nor yet, we may take it, years and years afterwards, when her old lover Essex came in hot haste from Ireland, and came all travel-stained to seek his “sovereign,” pressing into the royal presence before her Majesty was ready outwardly to receive him. Queen Elizabeth was, in spite of her imperious disposition and masterful activity in state matters, rather frivolous in her pleasures and recreations, and spent more time in seeing plays and frequenting what we should nowadays call “low-class entertainments,” than cursory readers of history manuals would ever suspect. And that great Queen, who had heard in plain English on the stage what was the “privie fault” of “Cisly Bumtrinket,” and perhaps laughed over it,* was not likely to throw aside

* Dekker’s *Shoemaker’s Holiday*, 1600, 4.

Venus and Adonis from any feelings of prudery. Perhaps Bacon knew that, and saw the advantage to be gained.

The more I consider this "first heir" of the author's "invention," the more do I think it likely that Bacon wrote it when closely drawn to Southampton's company, friendship, and future prospects, rather than that Shakespeare should bring it up to town with him from his provincial home (as many believe, for it was an undoubtedly early work) and dedicate it to Southampton on the chance of his valuable patronage. It is said, I know, that the poem is quite alien to Bacon's serious and philosophic turn, but, as I have tried to show, Bacon in his early Gray's Inn days was not such a serious and staid personage as we mentally picture him to be later in life. Besides, I do not see that it is so very reprehensible even in the region of morals to write and dedicate such a poem as *Venus and Adonis* to Southampton. True, it was not a work to be written or dedicated *Virginibus puerisque*, but Southampton was neither one nor the other. He was quite of an age to be married; marriage was talked about, and the early Sonnets recommended it. If Alphonse Daudet dedicated *Sappho* to his sons "quand ils auront vingt ans," *a fortiori*, I say, might Bacon, who was neither the lad's father nor tutor, dedicate *Venus and Adonis* to Southampton, who was this very age.

Moreover, so many things seem to point to Bacon; the last stanzas of *Venus and Adonis* show the author to be somewhat of a misogynist in spite of his impassioned descriptions—which, by the way, are both here and in the *Lover's Lament* mainly occupied with the *male*—otherwise he would not depreciate and calumniate love as he does towards the end of the poem. The method here used strongly calls to mind the similar impeachments of love in the last Sonnets to the "Dark Lady." In both cases they seem somewhat uncalled for, especially in *Venus and Adonis*; and this very fact seems to show the true psychological character of the writer. It suits Bacon, as Aubrey describes him, very accurately, but not Shakespeare, who was a virile Benedict very early in life,

and had twins before he was in a position to maintain them.

But the Sonnets have a great deal to say about a "Will" or "Wills," and from the way these words are printed in italics and referred to in the Sonnets, it seems evident that a person (or persons) named William plays a leading part in the mystery of the Sonnets, especially of the later ones. It is enough to say here that nearly all the best Shakespearians of the orthodox party agree that William Herbert is the hero of the later Sonnets, and seeing that his unfortunate *liaison* with Mistress Fitton is a historical fact fitting in very well with the hazy circumstances of the later Sonnets, the number of critics is steadily increasing who believe that Mary Fitton is the "Dark Lady," the unlovely yet, in some way, fascinating charmer to whom both Shakespeare and Pembroke fell a victim. More recently, too, some family documents have been discovered in the muniment room of the Newdegate family, which was allied by marriage to the Fittons, and from these fresh corroborating evidence has been drawn. It had been supposed by that shrewd dramatic critic Mr. Archer that the "Dark Lady" in Sonnet cxxxv. was intriguing with *three* Wills at the same time, seeing that she was thus addressed :

"Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in overplus."

Now William Herbert and William Shakespeare would account for two Wills, but who was the third Will? This was a mystery until the letters from the Newdigate chest revealed the fact that Sir William Knollys, who was Comptroller of the Queen's Household, and therefore brought into close relation to the maids of honour, was a great admirer of Mary Fitton, and had talked of marrying her when his elderly wife was out of the way. Here then was the third Will, and a most curious old gentleman he was to be let loose in a chamber full of frisky young maids of honour. But that is another tale, to be told in its proper place, under Sonnet cxxxv.

The Herbertites were naturally much encouraged in their opinions by such an unexpected corroboration as this. But they soon had their new confidence dashed to the ground by one of their own orthodox side. Mr. Sidney Lee had changed his camp, which used to lie under the Pembroke standard, and had joined the camp of Southampton; so at once he began to lay about him vigorously, and his orthodox fellow-Shakespearians who lived in his former camp went down like ninepins before a cunning thrower. Pembroke, said he, will not do at any price, or with any corroboration; why, Shakespeare hardly knew him, and the only positive proof we have of any connection between the two was the casual remark in the dedication of the first folio Shakespeare (1623), that Pembroke and his brother had "prosequuted" the plays and "their author living" with much favour, which most likely only meant the brother earls shared in the enthusiastic esteem which James I. and all the noblemen of the court extended to Shakespeare and his plays during the dramatist's lifetime.

I think that Mr. Lee had the best of this argument, and that it was, to say the least, most unlikely that Shakespeare, being the manner of man he was, with a wife and family at Stratford into the bargain, should have had such a peculiar and close intimacy with a prominent young nobleman and a maid of honour standing high in the Queen's favour.

To such difficulties are Shakespearians reduced, and in such suicidal contests do they indulge. For if the close intimacy of Shakespeare and Pembroke, as supposed to be revealed in the later Sonnets, is without any positive proof and against all probability, why then Shakespeare did not write these Sonnets, and thence assuredly follows the inference, neither did he write the Plays. For of this fact I am as confident as I can be, in a world where *il ne faut jurer de rien*, that whoever wrote the Shakespeare Sonnets was mainly responsible for the Shakespeare Plays.

But how everything becomes more reasonable and probable when the Baconian hypothesis is applied!

All the arguments derived from birth and social position which I used in the case of Southampton and Bacon apply equally well here with regard to all the three persons implicated—to Pembroke, to Bacon, and to Mistress Fitton. Bacon was evidently in a position about court, wherein he would have frequent opportunities of meeting and being intimately acquainted with both young Herbert and Mary Fitton. Shakespeare, on the other hand, would not, from his position, be likely to be closely intimate with any ladies of the court, or with any court noblemen either.

Now young "Lord Herbert," as he was called, was, as I have discovered, on a two or three months' visit to London between October and December 1595. He was fifteen, and was in town partly for the sake of a marriage being arranged for him, according to the following evidence which I have extracted from Rowland White's letters to Sir Robert Sydney at Flushing, giving him the court and general news.

A LETTER FROM ROLAND WHITE TO SIR ROBERT
SYDNEY (AT FLUSHING)

"8th Oct. 1595.—My Lord of Pembroke . . . with my Lord Harbart (have) come up to see the Queen, and (as I heare) to deal in the Matter of a Marriage with Sir George Carey's daughter."

"16th Nov. 1595.—Lord Harbart in town still."

"15th Dec. 1595.—Sir George Carey takes it very unkindly, that my Lord of Pembroke broke off the match intended between my Lord Harbart and his Daughter, and told the Queene it was because he wold not assure him £1000 a Yeare, which comes to his Daughter, as next of Kinne to Queen Ann Bullen. He hath now concluded a marriage between his Daughter and my Lord Barkley's Sonne and Heire."

It is not at all unlikely that Bacon, being often at court, would make the acquaintance of the young lad *now*; especially if his mother, "Sidney's sister," was up with her son.

Thus after three years, young Herbert, in the spring of 1598 or perhaps a little before, comes up to live permanently in town. We know nothing of the way in which he spent the year 1598, although there is an allusion in a letter of Tobie Matthew dated Sept. 15, 1598, to the effect that a marriage was contemplated between William Herbert and Lady Hatton, who must have been considerably older than he was. During 1599 Herbert was frequently at court, and on Nov. 24 White records, "My Lord Harbert is exceedingly beloved at court of all men." I should think Francis Bacon was much more likely to be one of the company of "adorers" than was William Shakespeare. And in August 1600 White mentions him again thus: "My Lord Harbert is very well thought of, and keepes company with the best and gravest in court." This looks rather as if he were one of Francis Bacon's intimates. Anyhow, two months before, on June 16, 1600, there was a grand marriage festival, where Herbert and Bacon were both most likely prominent actors. Bacon was the cousin of the bride, Mistress Ann Russell, and Herbert was one of the two noblemen who conducted the bride to church. The Queen herself was there, and having come to Blackfriars by water, she was carried from the waterside in a *lectica* borne by six knights. Bacon is not named as one, nor was he a knight at this date, but it seems very possible from Sonnet cxxv. (the Canopy Sonnet), beginning, "Were't aught to me I bore the canopy," that Bacon was privileged, as a cousin of the bride and one so well known to the Queen, to assist in bearing the canopy over the *lectica*, although he was not of such knightly rank as the other bearers.

There was every likelihood, too, of Bacon knowing Mistress Mary Fitton very intimately, although there is, I believe, no record of such acquaintance in print or in MS. Bacon had two rather lively cousins, the Russells, among the maids of honour, and through them and through his interest in court masques and plays Bacon would almost certainly be frequently thrown into the company of the good dancer, Mistress Mary Fitton, the

foremost among the Queen's maids in the mazes of the masques and dances. If she was a noted flirt, and a woman "coloured ill," yet it was not Will Shakespeare who was, in my opinion, the third "Will." I think Will Kemp the famous clown and jig-dancer was a much more likely man to complete the trio, though he was in a lower station than the other two aristocrats. He was not unknown at court, and had absolutely been bold enough to dedicate his book, the *Nine daies wonder*, to "Mistress Anne Fitton, Mayde of Honour to the most sacred Mayde, Royal Queene Elizabeth." Here Mistress Fitton's Christian name is given erroneously as Anne, for Mary was the only sister of the Fittons who was a maid of honour in 1600, and she is undoubtedly the one meant by Kemp. Kemp probably knew her well enough to dedicate his book to her, through having been her occasional tutor or prompter in dancing and posturing. So it looks as if the Sonnet was right about the third Will—if Will Kemp be meant—and that he really was somewhat intimate with this unconventional young lady, who tucked up her clothes and put on a man's long cloak and marched out to meet her lover—or her lovers, for she was certainly not confined to one. Anyhow, there seems excellent direct evidence as to Kemp in the following verse of contemporary court satire, probably written by T. Churchyard, which is found in an unprinted ballad of the year 1601 preserved among the State Papers (Eliz., vol. 278, No. 23), in which the maids' chamber, or the Queen's household in general, represented as a herd of deer, is the subject of the second stanza, the Lord Chamberlain being the subject of the first, Sir Robert Cecil of the third, and Raleigh of the seventh and last :

"Partie beard was afeard
 When they rann at the herd ;
 The Raine dear was imbost,
 The white doe she was lost ;
 Pembroke strooke her downe
 And took her from the clowne
 Lord, for thy pittie !"

A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1901, explains thus: "'Partie beard' seems to be a nickname of the Comptroller of the Household, Sir William Knollys; the 'Raine dear' is the Queen (*la reine*), 'imboſt' or embossed is a hunting term with the secondary meaning of enraged (cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, iv., xiii. 3); the 'white doe' is Mistress Fitton, and 'the clowne' is Shakespeare."

The writer of the above deserves credit for a useful literary find, and his explanation of the stanza given seems likely enough with one important exception. The "clowne" I suggest was Will Kemp, who always took the part of "clown" in Shakespeare's company, and elsewhere too. Shakespeare never was "clown" professionally, nor ever stigmatised as "clownish" as far as I know. He was the "gentle Shakespeare," "sweet Mr. Shakespeare," &c.

I do not think that the question of the supposed close intimacy between Herbert and Shakespeare and Mary Fitton need detain us much longer. There is really no good evidence to support it; and the necessary inference that the Queen's maid of honour was Shakespeare's mistress before she knew Herbert, or indeed at any time, is so extremely unlikely, that it would require the strongest evidence to make it at all credible.

Such a remarkable theory seems to have had its origin in the mysterious Mr. W. H., to whom the Sonnets were supposed to be addressed, or who was the sole cause of begetting or producing them in the brain of the author Shakespeare. But Mr. W. H. is only just possibly William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and may just as well be the Mr. W. Hall whom Mr. Sidney Lee brings forward—indeed, I think that the curiously coincident collocation of letters:

"To the onlie begetter of
these ensuing sonnets
Mr. *W. H.* all happinesse
and that eternitie," &c.,

rather points in the direction Mr. Lee has aimed at.

The following old jingle also seems to add probability to this :

" My love's *Will*
I am content to fulfil.
 Within this rime his name is framed,
 Tell me then how he is named ? "

The answer, of course, is Will I am = William.

But though we cannot connect Lord Herbert and Shakespeare together by any contemporary history or satire, we can, as I believe and propose to show, connect Herbert and Bacon in a way so far quite unnoticed by any critic of the Sonnets.

I think we meet Bacon and Herbert in Sir John Daw (Bacon) and Sir Amorous La-Foole (Herbert), both characters of Ben Jonson's play *The Silent Woman* (1609). To see the full force of the allusions the play ought to be read through carefully, and I will also say here that the Silent Woman, who is called " Epicœne " in the *dramatis personæ*, and with whom both the gallant knights confess to have had a consummated *liaison*, turns out in the end to be a boy in woman's clothes. Sir John Daw shows Bacon's head on his shoulders as plain as a pikestaff. He had been giving his views (Act ii. sc. 2) of the poets, and had poured forth a succession of names after the manner of the list in *Palladis Tamia*, when Clerimont and Dauphine, characters in the play, discuss him thus :

Cler. What a sackfull of their names he has got.

Dauph. And how he pours them out ! Politian with Valerius Flaccus ! *

Cler. I wonder that he is not called to the helm and made a counsellor.

Dauph. He is one extraordinary.

Cler. Nay, but in ordinary : to say truth, the state wants such.

Dauph. Why, that will follow.

Cler. I muse a mistress can be so silent to the dotes of such a servant.

* Meres in his famous *Comparative Discourse* on the Poets (1598), which tells us so much about Shakespeare's plays, brings in Politian and other moderns along with the ancients as Sir John Daw does. I have often thought this part of the second Bodenham book might be Bacon's. Jonson seems to hint it here.

Daw. 'Tis her virtue, sir. I have written somewhat of her silence too.

Dauph. In verse, Sir John?

Cler. What else.

Dauph. Why, how can you justify your own being of a poet, that so slight all the old poets?

Daw. Why, every man that writes in verse is not a poet: you have of the wits that write verses, and yet are no poets: they are poets that live by it, the poor fellows that live by it.

Dauph. Why should not you live by your verses, Sir John?

Cler. No, 'twere pity he should. A knight live by his verses! he did not make them to that end, I hope.

Dauph. And yet the noble Sidney lives by his, and the noble family not ashamed.

Cler. Ay, he profest himself: but Sir John Daw has more caution: he'll not hinder his own rising in the state so much. Do you think he will? Your verses, good Sir John, and no poems.

Daw. "Silence in woman, is like speech in man;
Deny 't who can."

Dauph. Not I, believe it, your reason, sir.

Daw. "Nor is't a tale

That female vice should be a virtue male,

Or masculine vice a female virtue be:

You shall it see.

Proved with increase:

I know to speak, and she to hold her peace."

Do you conceive me, gentlemen?

Dauph. No, faith; how mean you with increase, Sir John?

Daw. Why, with increase is, when I court her for the common cause of mankind, and she says nothing, but *consentire videtur*; and in time is *gravida*.

Dauph. Then this is a ballad of procreation?

Cler. A madrigal of procreation; you mistake.

Epicæne, the Silent Woman. Pray give me my verses again, servant.

Daw. If you ask them aloud, you shall.

[*Walks aside with the papers.*]

I shall not comment on this or many other passages of this play and other plays; it would take me beyond the subject in hand, and surely any one who knows a little of Bacon's early life and the scandals connected with it will not want a commentary, and the madrigal is in the metre of Bacon's single specimen, *The world's a bubble*, &c. I will give one more extract. They are discussing

the character of Epicœne (the Silent Woman with the boy's doublet and hose beneath her dress, Mrs. Fitton ?) :

Cler. And what humour is she of? Is she coming and open, free?

Daw. O, exceeding open, sir. I was her servant, and Sir Amorous was to be.

Cler. Come, you have both had favours from her: I know, and have heard so much.

Daw. O no, sir.

La-Foole. You shall excuse us, sir, we must not wound reputation.

Cler. Tut, she is married now; and you cannot hurt her with any report; and therefore speak plainly: how many times, i' faith? which of you led first? ha!

La-Foole. Sir John had her maidenhead,* indeed.

Daw. O, it pleases him to say so, sir; but Sir Amorous knows what's what as well.

Cler. Dost thou, i' faith, Amorous?

La-Foole. In a manner, sir.

Cler. Why, I commend you, lads, little knows Don Bridegroom of this; nor shall he for me.

Whether this Don Bridegroom was Captain Lougher or Captain Polwhele I shall not venture to examine, for genealogists cannot agree which had the precedence in marrying Mary Fitton.

However, whether these remarkable allusions stand or fall does not so much matter, for in either case we have a total exclusion of Shakespeare of Stratford from any connection with this evidently popular tale of the "scandal of the Epicœne woman." The date of this Jonsonian play should be noticed; it coincides with the publishing of the incriminating Sonnets.

But I must find a place for one more very short extract from Act iv. sc. 2. One of the characters thus addresses Sir John Daw:

If you love me, Jack, you shall make use of your philosophy now, for this once, and deliver me your sword.

Daw (replies). As I hope to finish Tacitus, I intend no murder.

What possible reason, one asks, was there for Ben to bring Tacitus in? he had absolutely nothing whatever to do with the plot or the incidents of the plays. True,

* This excludes the drab Lais.

but it was a fine hit at Bacon, and is a neat, manifold allusion of Ben's to (1) the tale of Queen Elizabeth, Bacon, the play of *Richard II.*, and Dr. Hayward. Here Bacon got out of a grave difficulty, when questioned by Elizabeth, by saying he did not find treason in the incriminated play, but felony—felony from Tacitus. Ben knew what he was writing about well enough, and so would the audience. It was also clearly an allusion to (2) some work on Tacitus by Bacon now unfortunately lost. There was a work entitled *Notes from the First Book of Tacitus, touching the Making or Breaking of Factions*. This was among Bacon's papers when Dr. Tenison made a list of what he had in a box in 1682. These Tacitus notes and many other papers on Tenison's list have now disappeared. Or it might be an allusion to (3) an English translation of Tacitus, presumably written by a Richard Grenewey, of whom nothing is known (in 1597). Some have thought this translation to be by Bacon on account of the many parallel passages in it and in *Richard II.* Perhaps Jonson knew. But anyhow, no one but Bacon suits this Tacitus allusion. In fact, Bacon is clearly aimed at in many ways, and such a series of apt satirical allusions as we meet with in the character of Sir John Daw could not, I venture to assert, be adapted to any contemporary personage except Francis Bacon, knight, lawyer, concealed poet, rising statesman, and "extraordinary counsellor." He and Sir John Daw alike filled all these positions. That Sir Amorous is young Lord Herbert is not quite so clear, and perhaps some may think that the circumstances of the play would agree with Southampton's love-escapades almost as well. But I think not so, for Southampton is not connected with a maiden in the Sonnets at all, but with a Lady of considerable experience in the bonds of love and possibly of wedlock too; while with Herbert and Mistress Fitton it was presumably a case of virgin love, and this apparently was Epicœne's case in the play. Moreover, I shall show that Ben Jonson in another play, later on, alludes to Southampton and his bosom friend Bacon, and

their common drab whom they shared between them—the lady here being of a very different stamp from a maid of honour. Moreover, Sir Amorous La-Foole does not present to us the character of a practised *roué*, or an associate with depraved women of the theatres; but rather appears to be a simple, sensual young gallant of not overmuch experience. And this hits off young Lord Herbert very well. Till he fell a victim to Mary Fitton's blandishments he seems, by what Rowland White and others tell us, to have been a young aristocrat who made a good impression at court, and was fond of the society of grave and notable men, but eventually showed that he had a nature of a warm and sensuous kind. No doubt the terpsichorean abilities of Mistress Mary Fitton had something to do with conquering his youthful modesty, for on June 16, 1600, he was present at the marriage of Mistress Anne Russell (one of the frisky, gambolling lambs that disturbed old Sir William Knollys), and helped to conduct the bride to church. This was indeed an eventful day for him, for Mistress Fitton was chief dancer in the Masque. An eventful day indeed! Some of its blushing secrets were doubtless kept ever hidden in his breast, for on March 25, 1601, Mary Fitton, the Queen's most notable and lively maid of honour, brought forth a male child, born dead. This tell-tale boy carries us back to that "leafy month of June" of the year before, when the marriage guests were all so merry, and when, no doubt, young Lord Herbert fell vanquished by Cupid's dart. However, before this he had not been a forward lover, and clearly we cannot connect him with any common "drab" or "loose-legged Lais." Let him tell his own tale as to that.

SONNET

By WILLIAM HERBERT, EARL OF PEMBROKE

[*Opportunities neglected*]

YET was her Beauty as the blushing Rose,
 And greedy passionate was my desire,
 And Time, and Place, my reconcilèd Foes,
 Did with my wish and her consent conspire :

Why then o'er-reachless of my Love's fruition,
 So eagerly pursued with rough intent,
 So dearly purchast with performed condition,
 Kept I my rude Virginity unspent ?
 Did shee not sweetly kiss ? and sweetly sing ?
 And sweetly play ? and all to move my pleasure ?
 And every dalliance use, and everything,
 And show my sullen Eyes her naked Treasure ?
 All this she did, I wilfully forbore :
 And why ? Because methought she was an whore.

The sonnet seems to represent a real and striking incident, and the heroine seems educated, or at least highly accomplished—possibly it might be one of Mistress Mary's unsuccessful attempts. But no, her beauty was "as the blushing Rose." This will not suit, for Mr. Tyler, who has taken great interest in her, and has specially examined her monumental effigy in Gawsworth Church, found her to be a swarthy, black-haired damsel, with thick, sensuous lips. But on the other hand, during the circumstances described in Herbert's sonnet, I should say that a warm blush would naturally suffuse her cheeks, so she might have been like a deep-coloured rose after all. In any case I accept this sonnet—as I do the Shakespeare Sonnets—as Biography and not Idealism. I think it shows young Herbert to be a very different stamp of man from that *roué* the Earl of Southampton, who thought nothing of unseating his closest friend Bacon in the jousts of Venus :

"Ay me ! but yet thou might'st my seat forbear."

—*Sonnet XLI. 9.*

As I have hinted several times, Ben Jonson knew as well as any one all the theatrical and general scandal of the town, and he seems to have taken delight in alluding to it in his various plays. He knew the character of Mary Fitton, and was well acquainted with the gossip about her at his Tavern haunts. He had a shrewd conjecture that young William Herbert was *not*

"The first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea."

And in any case he knew, for it was the public property of all the town gossips, that young Lord Herbert had found his lively maid of honour a "sea of trouble" to him—a sea that had given up its dead in sorrow and disgrace. It seems pretty clear that he used this knowledge, and tried to amuse the public with hidden allusions to it, in his *Silent Woman* of 1609, just about the time the Shake-speare Sonnets were brought to light. He introduces Sir John Daw and Sir Amorous La-Foole in this play, and he did not make it a very hard riddle for the spectators to guess. We are not nowadays in a position to get as sure and certain a grasp of all that was meant as those who listened to the words and saw the actions of the players; but I do think we can grasp Jack Daw, take his theatrical feathers from him, and find —BACON.

For the sake of my American readers I will add yet one more piece of evidence connecting Sir John Daw with Bacon. At the beginning of Act V. of *The Silent Woman* one of the female characters of the play says, "Gentlemen, have any of you a pen and ink?" To this *Clericus*, another character on the stage, answers, "Not I in troth, lady; I am no scrivener. Then Sir John Daw intervenes with, "I can furnish you I think, lady." And the lady leaves with Sir John to get what she has asked for. Now it is a notorious fact that Bacon had a scriptorium and many busy penmen in it, and if scrivener's work should be required, it could be certainly furnished by Bacon. But it is when Sir John Daw and the lady have gone for the pen and ink, that the interesting American allusion is brought forward.

The other characters go on talking about Sir John Daw directly he has left the stage, and Sir Amorous La-Foole speaks of his "box of instruments," and also of "his brass pens and black lead, to draw maps of every place and person where he comes." Then says *Clericus* :

Cler. How maps of persons?

La-Foole. Yes, Sir of Nomentack when he was here, and of the Prince of Moldavia and of his mistress, Mistress Epicœne.

Now how many Englishmen, I wonder, know the history of Nomentack? Very few indeed. But Americans who are interested in early Virginian records will remember him well enough.

Nomentack, or more properly Namontack, was a trusty servant of the well-known Indian chief Powhattan, who was the father of the still better-known Princess Pocahontas. Nomentack is said to have been a man of "a shrewd and subtle capacitie," and when Captain Smith thought of returning home, this "trustie" native was allowed by Powhattan to go to England, while one of the Smith's men agreed to stay with the Indians, as a kind of exchange of hostages. Hardly anything seems recorded of Nomentack's stay in England. All we know of him is that he was murdered by an Indian at the Bermudas in 1610 when returning to his country with the English expedition.

Now as *The Silent Woman* was first acted in 1609, the dates agree exactly, for Nomentack had only just come and gone again, and who was more likely to take an interest in this American Indian from Virginia than Sir Francis Bacon, who was a member of the *Virginian Trading and Discovery Adventurers* at the very time? Indeed Bacon had taken interest in Indians before this in 1595. For when Raleigh had brought an Indian from Guiana in Queen Elizabeth's time, who but Bacon straightway utilised the fact in his *Masque of the Indian Prince*, who had come from the mouth of the Amazon to be cured of his blindness in the sunshine of the Queen's favour and in the healing light of her kindly eyes. The *Masque* was played on Nov. 17, 1595, when Raleigh and the Indian had only very recently arrived. So Bacon struck the iron while it was hot. He seems, according to Ben Jonson, to have done the same in 1609 with regard to the Virginian Nomentack, for why in the world should Nomentack's name be dragged thus into the play, except as a hint that Bacon was being aimed at as a celebrity known for his interest in matters Virginian at the time. This knowledge of Bacon's habits seems to have died out in the

present day. Spedding in his immense and exhaustive work never alludes to it. But I have noticed one or two things which throw a good light on it. Bacon's receipts and disbursements for the months of July–September 1618 have been fortunately preserved among the State Papers. We read there in the column for disbursements prepared by his secretary :

<i>Sept.</i> 1, 1618. To one that went to Virginia by your	
Lordship's order	£2 4 0
<i>Sept.</i> 11, 1618. To George the Verginian, by your Lord-	
ship's order	0 10 0

And in 1620, in a speech in Parliament, Bacon, while referring to the importance of the plantation of Virginia, said : “ Sometimes a grain of mustard seed proves a great tree. Who can tell ? ”

Though it is hardly known or mentioned, the fact remains that Bacon held very strong views as to the importance of maintaining and increasing our plantations in America, and that he worked hard, both by his influence and by his money subscriptions, to lay the foundations of a strong colony beyond the seas. The grain of mustard seed has indeed become a great tree, and I think the millions of English-speaking people who now dwell beneath the branches of it, will rejoice to hear that the very greatest master of their native tongue wished to make them a strong nation, and foresaw their future greatness. And he not only wished, but gave effect to the wish, for there is evidence beyond all suspicion, as given above, that in the course of one fortnight he helped to send off a new colonist (and men were wanted then), and to relieve by his charity a needy Virginian.*

Among the other estimable and surpassing qualities of Francis Bacon was this one—he was a true and foreseeing patriot. He, Southampton, Herbert, and other sub-

* Since writing the above I have read the first volume of the Cambridge Modern History—*The Renaissance* (1902). I was both surprised and pleased to find in the chapter on the New World (pp. 62–66) the highest praise awarded to Francis Bacon, for the great, wise, and almost prophetic interest he took in the New World and its future. We are told that “ American man in his physical and ethnological aspect strongly attracted Bacon's attention.”

scribers to the expeditions to the New World, together with Raleigh especially, must be reckoned among the true founders of the United States. Was this vast American continent to become mainly English or mainly Spanish? that was their feeling, and they worked both in purse and person for English predominance. But my American cousins have taken me a long way from Ben Jonson, and I must return.

And just as Ben Jonson tried to amuse the gossips among his audience in 1609 with allusions to Bacon, Herbert, and Mistress Fitton, who had lately been married, so I think that in one of his later plays, *Bartholomew Fair*, in 1614, he treated his audience to a pretty plain exposition of that remarkable triangular love-picture of Bacon, Southampton, and the First Lady of doubtful character, which meets us in the Sonnets.

Jonson has two characters in this play, *Bartholomew Fair*, whom he names Damon and Pythias, and describes them as "two faithful friends of the Bankside," who "have but one drab." Considering the mention made of Burbage and the Bankside, and that it was Jonson who put in this remark, and that he, by our hypothesis, knew pretty well what was going on, it seems likely enough that the strange tale of the Sonnets *is* here alluded to. But the strangest part of the history is, that if the facts of the Sonnets were known well enough in 1614 to form part of a stage allusion like the above, how are we to account for the 1640 edition of the Sonnets being so manifestly ignorant of the true state of the case as to suppose all the Sonnets to be addressed to a woman?

This Damon and Pythias allusion of 1614 is noticed by few critics; but Elze, Dowden, and Tyler seem to think that Shakespeare and Herbert may *possibly* be meant. No one has ever thought of suggesting Bacon for Damon and Southampton for Pythias, but when I tried it, I found the phraseology of the passage so curiously suggestive that I give the summary here.

After some quarrelsome words to each other, in which Damon (Bacon?) says: "*Thou hast lain with her thyself,*

I'll prove it in this place," they subsequently go off to breakfast together. (*Exeunt.*) Presently Leatherhead, who is the showman of the Fair, says :

"Now here come the friends again Pythias and Damon,
And under their cloaks they have of bacon a gammon."

The two friends Damon and Pythias now observe the presence of Hero (their "drab"), and Damon (*i.e.* Bacon) says : "*'Tis Hero.*" To which Leatherhead replies :

*Yes, but she will not be taken
After sack and fresh herring with your
Dunmow bacon.*

Pythias. *You lie, it's Westfabian.*

Leatherhead. *Westphalian, you should say.*

These "bacon" allusions are, to say the least, unexpected, and seem forced in for a purpose, but I do not press them as either direct or convincing—they are perhaps only an odd coincidence. *Westfabian* seems puzzling—I have met with the word elsewhere in Jonson's plays but cannot find the reference. Doubtless it referred to some current joke of the period.

Hero, the drab of Damon and Pythias, seems to have been, like most gay women, rather particular in her eating. No bacon flitches even of Dunmow will take her fancy. Bacon at best was peasants' food, yokels' food. She has been used to sack and fresh herring, and such other appetising "snacks" as gallants are wont to regale their lady-loves with at the best places of "ordinary" resort. This sounds more like an allusion to some Lais or some fast citizen's wife, who enjoyed life when her husband was away, than to the Queen's young maid of honour. Moreover, Sonnet cxxxviii., by its variations as published in 1599 in the *Passionate Pilgrim* by the pirate Jaggard, shows the lady *not* to be young, though she was fond of saying so.

I claim, having now brought these various distant and delicate, or rather indelicate, allusions into as clear a light as my limited knowledge of Elizabethan literature will allow, that a fair case is made out for Sir John Daw and Damon being Bacon, and Sir Amorous La-Foole

Herbert. In that case Hero would be the common drab, the loose-legged Lais whom Marston tells us about in connection with the fair-haired Cyprian, gallant Briscus. She might even be the brunette (Brownetta), the "chough with a white bill," the Dark Lady with a white face (powdered?), who seems to have made her husband a cornuto without much fuss about it. Anyhow, we have Marston's authority that this Lais was the one "for whom good Tubrio took the mortal stab"; and if Tubrio in this phrase be not poor Marlowe, I know not who he can be. So Hero would be a good name for Jonson to have chosen, if he knew that Marlowe had been her Leander and lost his life for her sake.

But the Epicœne or Silent Woman seems a different lady, who married after the scandal, and Sir Amorous seems a different personage from the Pythias or Briscus, who both stand better for Southampton. Here Herbert and Mary Fitton take their places very suitably, while neither of them would suit the characters of Briseus and the "drab" Lais depicted by Marston in 1598, for the date is too early for young Herbert, who had not yet come to town permanently, and Mary Fitton at that date was a young maid of honour standing well with her Queen. But I say again these matters are neither so clear nor so important as is the evidence for Francis Bacon's identity in these shady concerns; and *that* I claim is fairly established.

And there is some novel evidence adduced concerning Mistress Fitton and the Dark Lady and their distinguishing characteristics in our remarks on Sonnet cxxxvii. But I would add here that since I wrote my extract above from the *Silent Woman* I have carefully examined Mr. Tyler's researches into the history of Mistress Mary Fitton in Chap. VIII. of his *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and find they corroborate Ben Jonson's broad allusions of 1609, both chronologically and generally, to such an extent as almost to settle the question whether *Epicœne*, or the *Silent Woman*, refers to Mary Fitton or not.

I am surprised that neither Mr. Tyler nor any other

investigator has brought this play to bear on the vexed question of the Sonnets. Mr. Tyler's researches into Mistress Fitton's biography are much too long to quote here, but his whole Chap. VIII. (pp. 73-92) is worth reading in this connection. He shows she was married to Captain Polwhele in 1607, when between twenty-nine and thirty years of age, and that she had probably been married when very young and the marriage made null or disallowed. Ben's play came out in 1609, and he refers to the *Epicæne* woman as being married: "Tut, she is married now, and you cannot hurt her with any report"; and the Sonnets had come out this same year, all tending to corroborate the Bacon-Herbert-Fitton allusions, which Jonson, though not alone in the knowledge, was alone in daring to express. Moreover, there is testimony extant of the very best kind which, although only negative, yet goes far to show that the theory of the *Shakespeare* and Herbert intimacy has little or no foundation.

John Aubrey, the Wiltshire antiquary, has a great deal to say about the various members of the Pembroke family—one of the chief in Wiltshire—and also many anecdotes about Shakespeare. In fact, lively gossip about both appears prominently in Aubrey's *Lives of Eminent Persons*, but nothing is said about their being acquainted or associated with one another. If there had been a tradition of any such connection, Aubrey would almost certainly have heard of it and recorded it, as he was an inveterate gossip-monger. I think, therefore, Shakespeare may be dismissed, but not Herbert (*pace* Mr. Lee), for besides the proof from Pembroke's letters, which we shall hear presently, it does not seem to me altogether impossible that Bacon, who could never pass by a jest, should have scribbled on the cover of his private MS. copy of the Sonnets (or on some page of his copy)—in joking allusion to the *only* lover of Mary Fitton who succeeded in becoming a father—those mystifying words, "To Mr. W. H., the Sole Begetter." What if this copy fell into Thorpe's possession and accounted for his odd

dedication? I have referred to this more fully in my note to Sonnet CXXXVIII.

Neither can we dismiss Herbert on Mr. Lee's assertion that he did not possess the requisite goods look or youthful beauty. We know differently, and prefer the statement of a contemporary, Francis Davidson, who says in his dedication to Pembroke of his *Poetical Rhapsody* :

"Whose outward shape, though it most lovely bee,
Doth in faire Robes, a fairer Soule attire."

But surely we need not dwell longer on this point just now. That Shakespeare the play-actor should have a mistress among the maids of honour, and that Pembroke, the supreme aristocrat and rising favourite at court, should have first joined himself in the closest bonds of far more than ordinary friendship with an older man in a much inferior social position—an intimacy more like love than friendship—and then, treacherously unfaithful to the closest of bonds, robbed the actor of his mistress, and admitted the paternity of the bastard that ensued—well, to state it is enough almost to refute it. And, as we said, there is no evidence whatever for such a peculiar friendship, or indeed for any particular intimacy between Shakespeare and Pembroke at all. But the author of the Sonnets seems to allude to such things personally, and the author of the Plays, who is the same man, not only returns to the theme in *Much Ado about Nothing* (ii. 1), but has given a variation of the same subject in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The orthodox Shakespearians have been put to such straits that many of them have declared that the Sonnets dealing with this triangular tragedy are merely poetical conceits with which Shakespeare amused himself and his private friends, but had no facts behind them. My point is, that if we take Bacon as the writer of the Sonnets and Plays, the whole matter is moved from the region of the wellnigh impossible, to the region of reasonable probability, and more so still when we come to Pembroke's written letters.

So that there may be no mistake about my views

regarding Southampton, Pembroke, and the author of the Sonnets, I will here say categorically that I am quite opposed to the opinion of those critics who hold that there is but one male friend in the Sonnets—a Mr. W. H., corresponding to William Herbert. And I am also quite opposed to the view that the Earl of Southampton was the one male friend in the Sonnets, and that William Herbert was *not* in the Sonnets, and in no close intimacy with the author at all. I hold it to be a fundamental fallacy, and an irretrievable error, to try and read one friendship backwards or forwards through all the Sonnets, when there are two entirely distinct series. Both of these noblemen were patrons of literature; both were personal friends of the author, Southampton being the first by many years—at least five, and more likely eight years.

The earlier Sonnets, which were consecrated to Southampton by the personal love of the author, are profaned by being mixed up with the latter Sonnets as commonly interpreted. Those who begin with Herbert and the date of 1598 are bound to read the Sonnets backwards, and only, as Gerald Massey well says, “obfuscate the Sonnets and confuse the minds of their readers.” I still think Massey’s Southampton proof in his scarce book of 1888 the best extant for the early Procreation Sonnets, and putting Bacon for Shakespeare, as I do, it seems strengthened rather than otherwise.

As for Essex, the third nobleman who was so closely intimate with Francis Bacon, there are but few possible allusions in the Sonnets, and these indirect and doubtful. But the Plays, as is well known, have several direct and undoubted references to Essex, especially that one in *Henry V.* which augured a glorious return of Essex from Ireland, with the rebellion crushed, and all London enthusiastically greeting the conquering hero—a most useful passage for dating the play. And then there is the play of *Richard II.* and the long tale of how the Queen suspected treason in it, and how much it was supposed to help the rebellious faction and rising of Essex and his followers. But in the whole story there is not a single

word about Shakespeare's authorship of the play, nor is his name even mentioned. This seems unaccountable if Shakespeare were even only the suspected author or adapter; whereas we know what an awkward matter it was for Bacon when he was called upon to deal with it officially. He even suggested that people might say it was one of his own tales.

But beyond such suggestive evidence as we get from the Plays, there was in 1601, just after the tragic execution of Essex, which had been carried out without a word of reprieve from the imperious and sensitive Queen, a poetical essay on *The Phoenix and Turtle*, published in an appendix to Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr, or Rosalind's Complaint* (1601). This "deep-brained poem" was signed in full William Shake-speare, and although it is a most enigmatic composition, and was evidently to be so intended, yet there is no better solution before the public than that of Dr. Grosart, who was the first to suggest that the Phoenix was Queen Elizabeth and the male Turtle, Essex. These two were known to be lovers, and just then (1601) there was no other tragical event which was so likely to form the subject of this strange allegory, if indeed it had personal allusions at all. But in any case, I venture to say that this most peculiar and able poem seems much more akin to Bacon than to Shakespeare. Mr. Lee cannot make more out of it than any one else can, and adds, "Happily Shakespeare wrote nothing else of like character."

I think it was far more likely to come from the fertile brain of him who was cogitating at an early age upon such subjects as the Greatest Birth of Time, the Male Birth of Time (*Partus Masculus Temporis*), and other recondite and allied matters, than from the active and shrewd money-getting *factotum*, "Shaxper, late of Stratford-on-Avon." Moreover, it is signed Shake-speare, with a decided hyphen. We are not surely to be classed with cranks if we suggest that there may be some mystification here. This is by no means the only place where this suspicious and uncalled-for hyphen appears. It is

as large as life on the title-page of SHAKES-SPEARE'S Sonnets in the original edition of 1609, and Ben Jonson is, I think, clearly aiming at this hyphen when he speaks of Cri-spinus or Cri-spinas in his *Poetaster*.

Finally, as far as Essex and Shakespeare are concerned, it is admitted that there is not a scintilla of evidence that they were ever known to each other, or even brought casually together on any occasion. On the other hand, Francis Bacon and his brother Anthony were for many years most devoted friends of Essex, and the correspondence between them by letter and in other ways is extant and well known.

We have next to deal with letters that passed between Bacon, Southampton, Pembroke, and Essex, and therefore will say nothing more of the letters of Essex at present.

CHAPTER X

THE PROOF FROM CONTEMPORARY LETTERS AND BOOKS

It is always a great advantage in a difficult controversy like the present one to get upon firm and undisputed ground. The disturbing thought has sometimes crossed my mind that perhaps, after all, this Bacon *v.* Shakespeare war was really only a *Skiamachia*, a contest in which, for the most part, only hazy and indefinite personalities were concerned. Especially in the Sonnets it has often seemed as if the chief personages could hardly ever be detected walking in the clear light of day upon the common earth, but seem always, more or less, creatures of hypothesis or of the historic imagination. For instance, what do we really know of Mr. W. H. except *per hypothesin*? May not the Sonnets be, as some have suggested, poetic conceits, Platonic idealisms after the Italian school then in fashion, or the mere vapourings of a "Pupil Pen" of some youthful genius in those Renaissance days when such poets were very plentiful? When, too, I saw biographies of Shakespeare which filled six or seven hundred pages of close type, and afterwards found out by careful search the very few personal memoranda these bulky "Lives of Shakespeare" were built up on, I began to think seriously that there must be more fiction and imagination in such productions than honest, sober fact.

These various considerations very nearly induced me to lay aside all thought of entering upon such a shadowy realm. But in the course of my reading I met with several letters which had passed between Bacon and Essex and Southampton, and also letters of Pembroke and Essex to Cecil. The originals had been preserved either at Hatfield House in Lord Salisbury's custody, or with the public records of our country in the State Paper

Office, or in the British Museum. Here I felt I was dealing not with the shadows, but with the very substance of history. Here at least I was on *terra firma*. Such records and such custodians were beyond suspicion. They provided me with useful and suggestive evidence for Bacon which I had not noticed elsewhere. So I regained fresh confidence; and in spite of the manner in which heretical opinions are generally received by critics, I will go on my way, unpromising as it is, for I think we are here dealing with one of the most interesting and amazing problems of literature.

The first letter that I bring forward shall be one from Pembroke, dated June 19, 1601, a few months after the Mary Fitton scandal. His short time of imprisonment in the Fleet for his serious offence—for such it was where a maid of honour was the victim—had been endured, and Pembroke was anxious to obtain permission to go abroad and put his troubles and disgrace behind him for a time, until the scandal had blown away. The Queen seems to have given him the required permission to go, and then revoked it. So he writes a letter to that important political personage Cecil, Lord Burghley's son, containing the following passage, curiously connected with our subject:

“I cannot forbear telling of you that yet I endure a grievous Imprisonment, and so (though not in the world's misjudging opinion) yet in myself, I feel still the same or a wors punishment, for doe you account him a freeman that is restrained from coming where he most desires to be, and debar'd from enjoying that comfort in respect of which all other earthly joys seeme miseries, though we have a whole world els to walk in? In this vile case am I, whose miserable fortune it is, to be banished from the sight of her, in whose favor the ballance consisted of my misery or happines, and whose Incomparable beauty was the onely sonne of my little world, and alone had power to give it life and heate. Now judge you whether this be a bondage or no: for my owne part I protest I think my fortune as slavish as any man's that lives fettered in a galley. You have sayd you loved me, and I have often found it; but a greater testimony you can never show of it then to use your best means to ridd me out of

this hell, and then shall I account you the restorer of that which was farre dearer unto me than my life."

Now a comparison of the wording of this letter with several of the Shakespeare Sonnets brings to notice many unexpected analogies. If this resemblance stood alone, not much perhaps could be made of the likeness between Sonnet xxxiii., line 9,

"Even so my sun one early morn did shine,"

and "the onely sonne of my little world" in the letter. But the most remarkable analogy and correspondence is with Sonnets LVII. and LVIII. Mr. Tyler has worked this out carefully and at some length in his book (pp. 60, 61), and being a most orthodox believer in the traditional authorship of the Sonnets, ends thus: "These various resemblances are remarkable and striking, and as the letter was written from London, the possibility may suggest itself that, if it was written by the hand of Pembroke, *it was really composed by Shakespeare.*"

The words I have italicised seem very suggestive to me of something that clearly did not enter into Mr. Tyler's thoughts. I should say it was *not* Shakespeare that composed a feigned letter for his friend, for from all we hear and know he was about the last person to write a long letter, feigned or not, to any one; but I should say it was far more likely to be *composed by Bacon*. Why, he was the very man who delighted in this rather peculiar vein of literature. We have several examples of his handiwork admitted to be genuine by the best and most unimpeachable authority—Bacon's own statements and confession. And there are many more of this same semi-fictitious character, which, although never acknowledged by Bacon, have been accepted by Mr. Spedding as bearing so palpably the marks of Bacon's style, that these are given to him in that carefully edited work, Spedding's *Life and Letters of Francis Bacon*. Who so likely as Bacon to write a letter for his friend Pembroke, when he was so worried and so anxious, to put things in the best light

for Cecil and the Queen to read? Indeed, Bacon had done the same thing several times before on behalf of his friend Essex, and perhaps for Southampton too, and must have been quite an old hand at it. The choice of Cecil, Bacon's cousin, as the recipient of the letter seems also to point to Bacon. But enough has been gained if we have succeeded in placing ourselves on the firm ground of an undoubted letter of Pembroke still extant, and in finding an evident connection both of phraseology and thought with the Shakespeare Sonnets. And as we are told on very high authority that there was only the slightest intimacy between Pembroke and Shakespeare—just an official recognition, perhaps, and no evidence of anything further—we are led to look for a more likely man upon whom to father the inspired epistle to Cecil; and I think all who are unprejudiced will look (*oculis irretortis*) in one direction only, and find their quest.

Next let us come to the letters of Essex. Here again we are upon firm historic ground, and we shall find Bacon pointed out as the far more probable author of the Sonnets.

We will begin with the evidence of a strict Shakespearean, who was known to be intensely anti-Baconian. It can therefore be accepted with the greatest confidence as not being prejudiced evidence in Bacon's favour. Our authority is dealing with the "sugred sonnets" and the "private friends" who knew of them, and he considers that Essex was one of these private friends. Seeing that Bacon knew Essex so very intimately, of course I quite agree. He goes on thus:

"In the letters and verses of Essex will be found thoughts and expressions which almost prove his acquaintance with the Sonnets in MS. In a letter to the Queen, written from Croydon in the year 1595 or 1596, there occurs a likeness remarkable enough to suggest that Essex was a reader of the Sonnets as they were written. The Earl speaks, in absence from the Queen, when he is about to remount his horse for a gallop. He writes: 'The delights of this place cannot make me unmindful of one in whose sweet company I have joyed so much as the happiest man doth in his highest contentment, and *if my horse could run as fast*

as my thoughts do fly, I would as often make mine eyes rich in beholding the treasure of my love.' It is superfluous to point out the resemblance to the thought in two of the Sonnets."

I suppose Sonnets L. and LI. are meant. He then takes another letter :

"In Essex's letter of advice to the young Earl of Rutland, 1595, there are one or two touches that look like reminiscences of the early Sonnets. Shakespeare says to his young friend, Sonnet LIV., after speaking of his outward graces :

' Oh how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament that truth doth give,' &c.

Essex tells his young friend—'Some of these things may serve for ornaments, and all of them for delights, but *the greatest ornament is the inward beauty of the mind.*

"Again, in a letter to the Queen dated May 1600, Essex writes: 'Four whole days have I meditated, most dear and adored sovereign, on *these words* that there are two kinds of angels—the one good, the other evil; and that your Majesty wishes your servant to be accompanied by the good; which sounds very like an echo of the 144th Sonnet. Of course the Earl might have seen this Sonnet in *The Passionate Pilgrim* the year before, but I hold that his acquaintanceship was much closer than that; here is yet stronger proof.

"In Shakespeare's Sonnet xxxv., the speaker *excuses* the person addressed *because* 'all men make faults,' and in a Sonnet written by the Earl of Essex 'in his trouble,' the speaker says 'All men's faults do teach her to suspect.' . . . The thought and expression of Shakespeare must have been in the mind of Essex to have been so curiously turned."*

My comment on the above is this: whether the likenesses be strong or faint, they point to Bacon much more than to Shakespeare. Especially is this so in the case of the letter to the young Earl of Rutland in 1595. This letter is really one of a set of three addressed by Essex as advice to the young Earl of Rutland when going on his travels. Now, these are all shown clearly by Mr. Spedding to be full of Bacon's phrases and turns of thought, and to have been *written by Bacon for Essex*; and therefore Mr.

* Massey, *Sonnets*, 1st ed., p. 464.

Spedding actually includes them, in brackets, in his edition of Francis Bacon's *Letters and Life* (ii. pp. 6–20). So Bacon was making use of his own unpublished MS. of the Sonnets, which he had a perfect right to do, or else he had been favoured by Shakespeare with *his* copy and was plagiarising from it, a thing neither likely nor proper.

Spedding also mentions in the very next pages a letter of advice from Essex to Sir Fulke Greville. This too, he says, is "such a letter as Bacon would undoubtedly at this time have wished Essex to write and the Queen to know he had written." Moreover, it is "so very Baconian in matter and manner that I see no reason why every word of it (the opening and closing paragraphs excepted) might not have been written by Bacon himself in his own person." These and other feigned letters of Bacon, purporting to be between Essex, himself, and his brother Anthony, of which he admitted the authorship soon afterwards, show the great literary versatility of the man, his secret and deceiving ways, and, may I not add, *give further plausibility to his having written the dedications of the Poems signed William Shakespeare, as well as the Poems themselves and the Sonnets.* But our Shakespearian Massey having thus unwittingly brought evidence against his own theory, proceeds to further instances :

"There is a copy of verses in *England's Helicon* (1600), reprinted from John Dowland's '*First Book of Songs ; or, Ayres of four parts, with a Tableture for the Lute.*' It is an address to 'Cynthia' :

' My thoughts are winged with hopes, my hopes with love :
Mount love unto the Moon in clearest night !
And say as she doth in the heavens move,
In earth so wanes and waxeth my delight.
And whisper this—but softly—in her ears,
How oft Doubt hangs the head, and Trust sheds tears.

And you, my thoughts that seem mistrust to carry,
If for mistrust my Mistress you do blame ;
Say, tho' you alter, yet, you do not vary,
As she doth change and yet remain the same.
Distrust doth enter hearts but not infect,
And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect.

If she for this with clouds do mask her eyes,
 And make the heavens dark with her disdain ;
 With *windy sighs* disperse them in the skies,
 Or with *thy tears* derobe them into rain.

Thoughts, hopes, and love, return to me no more,
 Till Cynthia shine as she hath shone before.'

"These verses have been ascribed to Shakespeare on the authority of a commonplace book, which is preserved in the Hamburg City Library. In this the lines are subscribed W. S., and the copy is dated 1606. The little poem is quite worthy of Shakespeare's sonneteering pen and period. And the internal evidence is sufficient to stamp it as Shakespeare's, for the manner and the music, with their respective felicities, are altogether Shakespearian of the earlier time. . . . The line

'And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect,'

surely comes from the same mint as

'The ornament of beauty is suspect.'

—*Sonnet LXX.*

Also the line,

'And make the heavens dark with her disdain,'

is essentially Shakespearian ; one of those which occur at times, —such as this from *Sonnet xviii.* :

'But thy eternal summer shall not fade.'

Then the 'windy sighs' and the *tears for rain* are just as recognisable as a bit of the Greek mythology. Here is one of the poet's pet trinkets of fancy ; with him sighs and tears, 'poor fancy's followers,' are sorrow's *wind* and *rain*—

'Storming her world with *sorrow's wind and rain.*'

—*A Lover's Lament.*

'The *winds thy sighs.*'

—*Romeo and Juliet*, iii. sc. 5.

'We cannot call her *winds and waters, sighs and tears.*'

—*Antony and Cleopatra.*

'Where are my *tears*? *Rain, rain*, to lay this *wind.*'

—*Troilus and Cressida.*

'Give not a windy night a rainy morrow.'

—*Sonnet XC.*

(*i.e.* give not a night of sighs a morning of tears.)

'The sun not yet thy sighs from heaven clears.'

—*Romeo and Juliet*, ii. sc. 3.

In these last the mental likeness is very striking. I have not the least doubt of the poem being Shakespeare's own, and my suggestion is that it was written for the Earl of Essex, at a time when the Queen, 'Cynthia,' was not shining on him with her favouring smile, and that Essex had it set to music by Dowland to be sung at Court."

Most likely Cynthia does refer to the Queen; it was a very frequent and popular name for her. I do not know whether anything further has been discovered about the authorship, since the above was written so long ago as 1866. The mere initials W. S. do not make a very strong peg to hang a Shakespearian theory upon, and perhaps W. S. is now identified thoroughly—if so, Shakespeare and Bacon are both alike impossible—I know nothing beyond the above statement of a Shakespearian expert. My comment again is, how much better Bacon fits in with all the circumstances. For we know that Bacon did compose a poem just when Essex was in danger of losing the Queen's favour, and that the object was "directly tending and alluding to draw on her Majesty's reconciliation to my Lord (of Essex)," which Bacon himself tells us he "showed to a great person and one of my Lord's nearest friends," doubtless Southampton, "who commended it." It was meant to reach the Queen, and no doubt in some roundabout way this was arranged, for I do not find it stated absolutely that Bacon showed it to the Queen. It would come best from Essex. Anyhow, there is a chance that we have here something by Bacon which experts pronounce to be genuine Shakespeare.

But the best proof that Francis Bacon was a poet, and a busy one too, when he was enjoying the friendship of Essex and Southampton in the days of his early manhood, is contained in a letter to Essex from Bacon at the end of 1594. Bacon admits the fact himself in an undoubtedly genuine letter preserved to us by his literary executor Rawley.* I hardly see what better, or more

* *Resuscitatio*; Supplement, p. 85.

direct, evidence we can have. I therefore reproduce it here *literatim* :

TO MY LORD OF ESSEX.

MY SINGULAR GOOD LORD,

I may perceive by my Lord Keeper, that your Lordship, as the time served, signified unto him an intention to confer with his Lordship at better opportunity; which in regard of your several and weighty occasions I have thought good to put your Lordship in remembrance of; that now, at his coming to the Court, it may be executed: desiring your good Lordship nevertheless not to conceive out of this my diligence in soliciting this matter that I am either much in appetite or much in hope. For as for appetite, *the waters of Parnassus are not like the waters of the Spaw, that give a stomach; but rather they quench appetite and desires,*" &c. &c.

There is not much of the "concealed Poet" in this expression. He admits that he has been quenching his thirst from the waters of that Castalian fount which springs from the foot of Mount Parnassus—or in plainer English, he admits that he has been writing poetry, and assumes pretty clearly that Essex knows the fact. And seeing, moreover, that only a short time before Essex's great friend Southampton had received a dedication copy of *Venus and Adonis* with this motto prefixed:

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

where full draughts of the same Castalian waters of Parnassus are the author's beverage—I think we can shrewdly guess, and so no doubt could Essex, that both letter and Virgilian motto were in the fine Roman hand of Francis Bacon. Both Essex and Southampton must have known the Mystery of the Sonnets and Plays, and probably several other contemporaries, including Ben Jonson, also knew; but it was a subject on which reticence was the best policy for every one concerned. Nothing but peril and vexation could arise from stirring in such a matter, and no good object

could be gained by it. Even Ben Jonson's semi-concealed Aristophanic banter was threatened with the Star Chamber, so every one seemed to take the wise policy of a still tongue.

There are other letters also between Bacon and Essex found among Bacon's papers and published by Rawley, and it looks very much as if Bacon wrote both the letters and the answers; but we need not dwell on this subject. Bacon's "slimness" in such things is admitted.

Let us now pass to the third noble friend, Southampton, who was so closely allied in friendship with Bacon from his early days at Gray's Inn until the Essex treason case. Then the two friends stood on opposite sides—Bacon a prosecutor, Southampton a defendant pleading almost for his life. This was a terrible time for Bacon, and he became most depressed and pessimistic; there are signs of this evident enough both in the Sonnets and the Plays. Bacon became very unpopular for the part he took in the matter; ill reports were spread against him—*mendacia famæ* he calls them—and his life was threatened, as he tells the Queen. All this appears to be hinted at pretty plainly in those Sonnets where he speaks so gloomily of "*being the prey of worms, my body being dead,*" and "*the coward conquest of a wretch's knife*" (LXXIV.), and in that deeply pessimistic Sonnet a little earlier (LXVI.). Many of the Plays, too, are attributed to a "Dark Period," but of course the Shakespearians are obliged to give this "Dark Period" to Shakespeare, who to all appearances never had one.

The result of the treason case was that Essex was beheaded, and Southampton imprisoned without apparent hope of release. But when the Queen died her successor, James VI. of Scotland, who had friendly feelings towards the party to which Southampton belonged, released him, and reinstated him in his old position and privileges. Bacon, with a view to conciliate his former friend, wrote him a letter (April 10, 1603) just before his release from prison, and referring to their altered position to each other of late, said: "This great change hath wrought

in me no other change towards your Lordship than this, that I may safely be now that which I was truly before." However, it does not appear that the former very close friendship was ever reached again. The Bacon-Southampton correspondence that has been preserved is much smaller than would have been expected. Perhaps Sonnets took the place of letters. The Shakespeare-Southampton correspondence is of course *nil*.

"Of Bacon's personal relations with the Earl of Southampton we know little or nothing. The intimate connection of both with the Earl of Essex must, no doubt, have brought them together; but no letters had passed between them that I know of, nor has any record been preserved of any other communication." * But it seems that Bacon used his private influence after the trial with the Queen, and was helped by Cecil, and the Earl was "saved" as far as his life went. In drawing up the "Declaration of Treasons" Bacon had mentioned Southampton's name as slightly as it was possible to do, evidently acting on the proverb "*The least said the soonest mended.*" I think Bacon often acted on this principle, and that herein we find a reasonable and sufficient explanation of several incidents in his life hard to understand otherwise. For instance, what can be the reason that he never utters a single syllable about Shakespeare or Ben Jonson—no letters seemed to have passed, their very names are unrecorded? I suggest the explanation just referred to—there were literary mysteries and dead secrets connected with Bacon and known to these two, and so a strict reticence was adhered to. If Bacon had in any way referred to either or both of these famous men, his remarks would have been most surely weighed and considered, and that was just what Bacon did not want. The same explanation suits the absence of all correspondence (save the one letter preserved by Bacon and quite innocuous) between Bacon and his intimate friend Southampton, to whom, as our theory goes, he addressed those intense Sonnets. They

* Spedding, *Letters and Life*, iii. 75.

were probably torn up and burnt so that no suspicions might arise—no scandal be revealed.

The play of *Richard II.* and its connection with the foolish attempt of Essex and his party would be one reason why Bacon should not mention Shakespeare or bring him into any relation with himself. In fact, the way Shakespeare is ignored throughout all the official proceedings connected with this supposed treasonable play points out, in my opinion, that he was known *not* to be the author, and in no way really responsible for the play which so greatly offended the Queen. What if the Queen got to know that Bacon was the real author, and that he had to turn "Queen's evidence," so to speak, against the rebellious noblemen Essex and Southampton, who were his dearest friends! Bacon's whole future depended on the course he might take. He was either an utterly ruined man, or else, by his compliance with the Queen's orders, there was a chance of still maintaining his position.

The Sonnets, and the scandal half revealed in them, were also causes which would tend to make open correspondence between Bacon and Southampton avoided by both as much as possible. It has often been a subject of great surprise that Bacon did not reveal the secret of authorship at least shortly before he died. No obvious objection has been adduced. The scandal seems a possible reason, Southampton and Pembroke and others connected with them being alive.

Ben Jonson knew the "secret" at an early date, and the evidence for that is given in the present volume. But it seems pretty clear that it was not long before Bacon and the "grand possessors" of the Shakespeare Plays induced that needy though vigorous and independent personality to come over to their side and help them to keep the secret.

Let us next, still keeping on the *terra firma* of undoubted and extant letters and books, hear what Francis Bacon says in them about his own literary powers and qualifications. In a short autobiographical passage in

the preface to the *Interpretation of Nature*, written about the year 1603, Bacon says :

“Whereas I believed myself born for the service of mankind, and reckoned the care of the common weal to be among those duties that are of public right, open to all alike, even as the waters and the air, I therefore asked myself what most could advantage mankind, and for the performance of what tasks I seemed to be shaped by nature.

“But when I searched, I found no work so meritorious as the discovery and development of the arts and inventions that tend to civilise the life of man . . . moreover, I found in my own nature a special adaptation for the contemplation of truth. For I had a mind at once versatile enough for that most important object—I mean the recognition of similitudes—and at the same time sufficiently steady and concentrated for the observation of subtle shades of difference . . . I had no hankering after novelty, no blind admiration for antiquity,” &c. &c.

These extracts seem to point to just such a man as we should expect the author of the Shakespeare works to be—a man naturally supplied with the best tools for successfully carrying out the highest efforts of poetic and dramatic “invention.” If Sir Henry Irving should retort that such mental tools are no use for the Drama unless one has practical knowledge and frequent practice in stage work and stage machinery, we have a good answer which, strange to say, was quite ignored, and I understand *denied*, by Sir Henry, viz., the fact that Francis Bacon was a man who especially had these practical requirements from the share and interest he took in masques and interludes, both at Gray’s Inn and among his aristocratic friends and at court. So that Bacon’s own account of his special capabilities goes some way to prove the Bacon theory not altogether unreasonable or impossible.

And in a letter to Lord Burghley in Jan. 1592 he explains what a wide and comprehensive range of mental action he was contemplating. “I have taken all knowledge to be my province.” Surely then Poetry and the Drama—the glories of the human intellect in the best days of Greece and Rome—would not be excluded ; nor

Sonnets, the present glory of Italy and the rising fashion of the Elizabethan poets. This very letter, as it proceeds, reminds us of a Sonnet (No. 11.) which would be composed about the same year (1591-2), and was addressed presumably to a young man of about twenty. He warns him how rapidly a man ages, and tells the youth that when he is just double his present age of twenty, all his youth and beauty will be practically gone, or of no value. The Sonnet begins :

“When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,
Will be a tatter'd weed of small worth held.”

But this is an unusual view to take, even for such irresponsible beings as poets are ; at forty many, or indeed most, men think themselves hardly past their prime.

But what says Bacon in this letter to his uncle of the same year 1591-2 ? “I wax now somewhat ancient ; one-and-thirty years is a great Deal of sand in the hour-glass.” Is thirty-one in any degree ancient ? Surely not. But Bacon thought so. Do forty winters furrow the manly brow in such deep trenches that youth's proud livery is all departed ? Surely not so. But the writer of Sonnet 11. thought so. The inference is not absolutely certain of course, but it looks pretty obvious that the writer of the letter was also the writer of the Sonnet.

Then there is the “Sonnet to Florio,” which Florio himself describes as written by “a gentleman, a friend of mine that loved better to be a Poet than to be counted so.” This Sonnet has been attributed to Shakespeare, on internal evidence, by two good critics, Professors Minto and Baynes ; but Bacon is much more likely than Shakespeare, for we know of no bashful reticence or concealment about Shakespeare and *his* poetry. The Johannes Factotum, the Shake-scene, the Poet-ape, was not likely to efface himself, or even to wish to do so, whereas Bacon says *he* was a “concealed poet.” We will give this in full, for the book in which it occurs is so rare that no one except Minto seems to have quoted the

Sonnet, or to have said more than that it was very fine, and possibly Shakespeare's. It occurs just after the preface of Florio's *Second Frutes*, London, 1591-4, being the sole laudatory poem in the book, and by the date presumably earlier than *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. Professor Baynes says that "Mr. Minto's critical analysis and comparison of its thought and diction with Shakespeare's early work tends strongly to support the reality and value of the discovery." It is entitled :

PHAETHON TO HIS FRIEND FLORIO.

Sweete friend whose name agrees with thy increase,
 How fit a rivall art thou of the Spring?
 For when each branche hath left his flourishing
 And green-lockt Sommers shadie pleasures cease :
 She makes the Winter's stormes repose in peace,
 And spends her franchise on each living thing :
 The dazies sprout, the little birds doo sing,
 Hearbes, gummes, and plants doo vaunt of their release,
 So when that all our English Witts lay dead,
 (Except the Laurell that is evergreene)
 Thou with thy Frutes our barrenness o'respread,
 And set thy flowrie pleasance to be seene.
 Sutch frutes, sutch flowrets of moralitie,
 Were nere before brought out of Italie.

—PHAETHON.

John Florio says in his dedication of *A Worlde of Wordes*, 1st edition, 1598, that he had lived some years in the "paie and patronage" of the Earl of Southampton. Referring to the Sonnet in the last book, *Second Frutes*, and some criticism that had been passed upon it, he says "to the reader" :

"There is another sort of leering curs, that rather snarle than bite, whereof I could instance in one, who lighting upon a good sonnet of a gentleman, a friend of mine, that loved better to be a Poet than to be counted so, called the auctor a rymer, notwithstanding he had more skill in good Poetrie, than my slie gentleman seemed to have in good manners or humanitie. His name is H. S. Doe not take it for the Roman HS, for he is not of so much worth, unlesse it be as HS is twice as much and a halfe as halfe an As."

The British Museum has a copy of Florio (edition 1598) which once belonged to Dr. Farmer, who has written on the fly-leaf: "Perhaps *Henry Salesbury* is meant by *H. S.* in the preface. He published *Graſm. Britaſn.*, 1593, dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke, Daniel's patron." And Florio calls *H. S.* a grammarian-pedante (in the preface).

The author of the Sonnet of 1591 might be Bacon or Samuel Daniel—both seem averse at that time to publishing their effusions—and both from their connection with the Pembroke and Southampton families would have every reason to know Florio well. Daniel seems the more likely, as he sent sonnets for Florio's later works. But there is this to be adduced in favour of Florio's allusion being to Bacon, that he uses words in this dedication of 1598 almost recalling the dedication of *Lucrece*. The words in *Lucrece* are: "What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have devoted yours." And Florio says: "In truth I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge but of all, yea of more than I know or can to your bounteous Lordship . . . to whom I owe and vow the years I have to live."*

A strong objection which occurred to me was that the Sonnet followed the Italian model as Sidney always did, and that Shakespeare never did follow this model. But as in 1591 no poet had yet deviated from the Italian model, the objection did not seem insuperable. So it comes to this, that we have recently found a very fine Sonnet written by Shakespeare at or before the certain date 1591, and addressed to John Florio in praise of a book containing dialogues and aphorisms in parallel columns of English and Italian to help those speaking the one language to acquire a knowledge of the other. But at this early date, 1591, Shakespeare was hardly free of Burbage's stable-yard, or at most had not got much

* Since I wrote the above I have read carefully Professor Minto's Appendix B. in his *Characteristics*, 1885, pp. 371-382, and I withdraw my suggestion that Daniel *may* have written the Sonnet. After going through Appendix B. there seems no room for Daniel or any one else except the author of the Shakespeare Plays and Poems. A more convincing piece of literary proof I have not read for a long time.

beyond "Hamlet revenge" in the Ghost part of the Ur-Hamlet. What had William Shakespeare, late of Stratford-on-Avon, to do with Italian dialogues and aphorisms? These elegant matters were of interest to a courtier and aristocrat, and were most useful to lard their conversation and epistles, to give the fashionable unctio that bespoke the travelled gentlemen—they would interest Bacon, and no doubt he would transfer some to his note-books. Aphorisms especially were in his line, and Bacon would enjoy the friendship and the conversation of the learned and resolute teacher, John Florio, as being an old *protégé* and dependant of the Southampton family; but I doubt very much whether Shakespeare would have cared particularly for either the man or the book. And we must not forget that Florio told us plainly in 1598, that this friend of his who wrote the Sonnet was a *gentleman* "that loved better to be a Poet than to be counted one." This suits Bacon exactly, but does not suit Shakespeare at all. In 1591, I should say, there was not much of the "gentleman" about Shakespeare.

But this is not the only apparent connection in verse between Bacon and Florio. There are some lines attached to another and later work of Florio—I mean his translation of Montaigne's Essays in its second edition of 1613. This has been attributed to Shakespeare by good critics, but if my contention holds good, it will have to go to Bacon along with the other in Florio's *Second Frutes*. It is in the same Italian form of the Sonnet as is the earlier one of 1591, probably adopted in compliment to Florio. It is little known, and may therefore well be quoted here to accompany the other. It was unsigned, and indeed so cramped in at the foot of the page, that there was hardly room for any subscription by the author.

It was entitled :

CONCERNING THE HONOR OF BOOKES.

Since Honor from the Honorer proceeds,
 How well do they deserve that memorie
 And leave in bookes for all posterities
 The names of worthy, and their vertuous deedes

When all their glorie els, like water weedes
 Without their element, presently dyes,
 And all their greatnes quite forgotten lyes :
 And when and how they florisht no man heedes
 How poore remembrances are statutes toomes
 And other monuments that men erect
 To Princes, which remaine in closed roomes
 Where but a few behold them ; in respect
 Of Bookes, that to the Universall eye
 Shew how they liv'd, the other where they lye.

The punctuation is peculiar, and the poem has apparently not been revised for the press. If it be Bacon's, the great interest he evidently took in Montaigne's Essays may be the cause of his contributing this solitary belated poem in 1613, his last attempt before the Psalms in 1624. Florio excuses, in a notice to the reader, the errata, which he confesses he had not properly attended to on account of his engagement at court which absorbed all his time. Again I enforce the argument that these hangers-on at court, and these foreigners attached to the households of noblemen, were much more likely to be acquainted with Bacon than with Shakespeare.

To take another instance. The Earl of Essex had in his service an Italian fencing-master named Vincentio Saviolo, who wrote a book, printed in London by John Wolfe in 1595, entitled, *Vincentio Saviolo his Practise. In two Bookes. The first intreating of the use of the Rapier and Dagger. The Second of Honor and honourable Quarrels.* It was dedicated to Robert, Earle of Essex, and Ewe, &c.

Now in the Shakespearian play of *As You Like It*, written some time before 1600, the scene of Orlando's encounter with Charles, the Duke's wrestler, and the description by Touchstone of the different kinds of Lies, Retorts, and Replies were clearly drawn from Saviolo's courtly book. But who was the most likely man to possess and read this Italian's expensive and well-illustrated book? Would it be Bacon or Shakespeare? Bacon was the intimate friend of Essex, quite at home with foreigners, be they Italians like Florio, or Spaniards like Perez, or Frenchmen like La Jessée. He was a

frequenter of courts from his boyhood, and took a natural interest in the etiquette and codes of honour and "nice conduct" of an "honourable Quarrel" which were necessary parts of a courtier's education. But what were such things to William Shakespeare? It was much more important for him to know how best to recover a debt, or invest his savings.

But there are also poems never attributed to Shakespeare which we can justly give to Francis Bacon in preference to any one else. There is *The Device of the Indian Prince*, referred to and examined at length at the end of vol. viii. of Spedding's *Bacon*; herein we find a canzonet describing the Queen of a land "between the Old World and the New." This poem recalls the Shakespearian Sonnets, and also the description of "the fair Vestal thronèd by the West," which most lovers of poetry know well enough where to look for. But as *The Device of the Indian Prince* is not on many book-shelves, the poem shall be judged as a whole. Here it is :

"Seated between the Old World and the New,
A land there is no other land may touch,
Where reigns a Queen in peace and honour true ;
Stories or fables do describe no such.
Never did Atlas such a burden bear,
As she, in holding up the world opprest ;
Supplying with her virtue everywhere
Weakness of friends, errors of servants best.
No nation breeds a warmer blood for war,
And yet she calms them by her Majesty :
No age hath ever wits refined so far
And yet she calms them by her policy :
To her thy son must make his sacrifice
If he will have the morning of his eyes."

The son referred to in the last two lines was the Indian Prince, who was born blind, and the verses (in sonnet form) are the words of the oracle declaring how his cure was to be effected. This same blind Indian Prince is supposed by some Baconians to appear in the centre of those remarkable typographical head-pieces which appeared at the top of the first page of many

of the Shakespeare books in their original form, as the Sonnets, the first folio, and others, and also in some anonymous works, now known to be by Bacon, such as *An Apologie of the Earle of Essex* (London, 1603-4).

This is a curious subject for inquiry, and stands on a different basis from Mrs. Gallup and her fellow-cipherers, but in this present volume I do not propose to discuss it. The speech of "Seeing Love," a prince of greater territories than all the Indies, attired with feathers and armed with bow and arrows, is well worth referring to in Spedding's *Bacon*, viii. p. 389. It seems to me to be a covert Baconian attempt to gain the Queen—but it is accredited to Essex by all the extant evidence. If really by Essex, I agree with Spedding that it is impossible to distinguish Essex from Bacon in style.

There is one more poem absolutely attributed to Bacon even by contemporary authority, I mean the "Farnaby" poem, *The world's a bubble*, which is a paraphrase of a Greek original, and has been already referred to when discussing the scholarship of the Shakespeare Works. No one but Bacon has been claimed as the author of this, and no one has ever said it might be Shakespeare's. In the first verse we have this excellent distich :

"Who then to frail mortality shall trust
But limmes the water, or but writes in dust."

Keats's well-known epitaph was :

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water,"

and I suppose most of us would refer the fine thought to Shakespeare alone :

"Noble Madam,
Men's evil manners live in brass ; their virtues
We write in water."

But we see that the idea appears in Bacon's supposed contribution as above, and also in Bacon's acknowledged writings in the following form :

"High treason is not written in ice, that when the body relenteth,
the impression goeth away."—*Charge of Owen* (1615).

And again this "re-appears" (*pace* Mr. Massey) in Shakespeare as :

"This weak impress of love is as a figure
Trench'd in ice, which with an hour's heat
Dissolves to water, and doth lose his form."

—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, iii. 2.

Such varied and intricate identities of thought tend undoubtedly to show that Bacon and Shakespeare at least were of one mind as to this poetical fancy. So there are five Poems quite outside the ordinarily accepted Shakespeare Poems and Sonnets, viz., the "Essex," the "two Florio's," the "Indian Prince," and the "Farnaby," which have every appearance of being the "concealed work" of Bacon. So that it appears neither impossible nor "irrational" that the Shakespeare Sonnets may be his concealed work also.

Let us now approach these perplexing enigmas.

CHAPTER X

THE SONNETS

"A sonnet is a moment's monument,
Memorial from the soul's eternity. . . .
A sonnet is a coin : its face reveals
The soul—its converse to what power 'tis due."

—D. G. ROSSETTI.

AT the very beginning there naturally rises the general question, "Do you take the autobiographical view or the impersonal one?"

The first, decidedly, is my answer. Nearly fifty years ago a famous Professor of English Literature, who is still (1902) alive and of most active intellect, put the autobiographical view very plainly, and if anything it is clearer now than it was then. He says :

"Criticism seems now to have pretty conclusively determined that the Sonnets of Shakespeare are, and can possibly be, nothing else than a poetical record of his own feelings and experience—a connected series of entries, as it were, in his own diary—during a certain period of his London life. . . . Whoever does not to some extent hold this view, knows nothing about the subject. . . . These Sonnets are autobiographic—distinctly, intensely, painfully autobiographic—although in a style and after a fashion of autobiography so peculiar, that we can only cite Dante in his *Vita Nuova* and Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* as having furnished precisely similar examples of it."*

In the Shakespeare Plays we never can be quite sure whether the author is alluding to himself or his friends, or not ; but in the Sonnets we feel we are dealing with the author in person. Hence their especial value.

The other view is the Impersonal view, or, as it has

* D. Masson, *Shakespeare and Goethe (Essays)*, 1856-58, pp. 22-24.

been called, the German-subjective-transcendental-symbolic view. This view excludes autobiography or any personal allusion whatever. There are no half-measures here. One critic says: "*After a careful re-perusal I have come to the conclusion there is not a single Sonnet which is addressed to any individual at all.*" This same gentleman holds that the "Two Loves" of Sonnet CXLIV. are "the Celibate Church on the one hand, and the Reformed Church on the other," and much more in a similar strain. This dogmatic nonsense so enrages a rival critic of the Personal school, and so amuses him at the same time, that he says of such stuff: "It is good enough surely, if boundless folly can reach so far, to tickle Shakespeare in eternity, and make him feel a carnal gush of the old human jollity."

The latest important work on the Sonnets takes a wise middle course, and is not blind either to the transcendental beauties or to the autobiographical facts. This is Mr. Wyndham's edition of the *Poems of Shakespeare* (1898). In his general introduction he most lovingly and lucidly examines the beauties of the various Sonnet sequences, and has laid more open to general view their many transcendental and introspective musings. He evidently estimates some of the Sonnets as the richest ore that has ever been drawn forth from the difficult mines of metaphysical meditation, and it seems as if his estimation could hardly be put aside by any rival sonnets, ancient or modern. My greatest surprise is that he marries these wonderful conceptions to the man William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon without the slightest whisper of any forbidding of the banns.

The Sonnets seem to be conceived in a lofty tone and written in an aristocratic atmosphere, and the same holds with the Love Poems.

I hold firmly that all the earlier Sonnets have to do with the Earl of Southampton, and that Mr. Tyler's famous exposition of the Sonnets one by one, in which he advocated the Pembroke theory throughout, though most ingenious and, as I know, convincing to many able

Shakespearians, cannot possibly stand against the adverse evidence. He has depended too much on the Mr. W. H. of the Dedication—a very unsafe prop or foundation. It is highly improbable that Thorpe, when he wrote the Dedication, had any real knowledge of the true author. If he had known that the author had written them to or for William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, he certainly would not have put down in the very front of his venture, “Mr. W. H.”

Initials, too, are very unsafe foundations whereon to build—*e.g.* Daniel’s *Delia* was in its first edition dedicated to M. P. The following editions were dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke, Mary Pembroke. How natural to insist that therefore M. P. stood for Mary Pembroke, but it seems that it stood for a friend of Daniel’s named Pine.

Perhaps this is the proper place for giving more fully my own view of the famous Dedication of the Sonnets, and Mr. W. H., “the onlie begetter.” Some years ago I was reading the “Isham reprints,” as they are called, a modern reproduction of certain unique books discovered by Mr. Charles Edmonds in a lumber room at Lamport Hall in 1867. One of them, a work by Rob. Southwell, S. J., contained a dedication to a certain Mathew Saunders, Esq., couched in the following terms: “W. H. wisheth with long life a prosperous achievement of his good desires,” and speaking of the MS. from which the work was printed W. H. says: “Long have they lien hidden in obscuritie, and happily (haply?) had never seen the light, had not a meere accident conveyed them to my hands.” I thought of Mr. W. H. of the Sonnets at once, and going into the matter further I found that Southwell’s poem was procured by William Hall and printed for William Hall by G. Eld, who also printed Shakespeare’s Sonnets and other publications for Thorpe. It also then struck me that Hall’s name was written in full in front of Shakespeare’s Sonnets, although I had never noticed it before—

“To the onlie begetter of these insuing Sonnets,
MR. W. H. ALL HAPPINESSE,” &c.

The next thing was to look up Thomas Thorpe's other dedications and examine their style. I found he was facetious and colloquial when addressing friends or equals, but most obsequious when addressing superiors and noble-men, such as Lord Pembroke, the William Herbert (as is supposed) of the Sonnets.

Thorpe wrote a dedication for Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, 1600 (ed. Blount), a facetious piece of bombast, in which he makes a pun on Blount's name (blunt) and calls him "Ned." He also wrote dedications to Healey's *Epictetus* in the editions of 1610, 1616, and 1636 (*penes me*), one to John Florio (1610), and the others to Lord Pembroke. I seemed to detect in all a somewhat affected vein of writing, and my interpretation of the famous dedication of the Sonnets was that Thorpe wrote it with punning humour to Mr. W. H. ALL, who had "procured" the MS.; and since the first Sonnets were all about "begetting" a child to make the father's name endure, so he in his humorous vein calls Mr. Hall the "onlie begetter," and wishes him "happinesse," and that he too would become a father and thus enjoy "that eternitie promised" to fathers by our ever-living poet. And when Thorpe says "ever-living poet," it looks like a sly hit at the immense importance the poet gave to his own "eternal lines":

"So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

—*Sonnet XVIII.*

Here was an "ever-living poet" indeed.

Mr. Hazlitt in his last work on *Shakespeare* gives great credit to Thorpe for bestowing such an appropriate epithet as "ever-living" on Shakespeare, and in thus anticipating the verdict of later men; but it does not seem that Thorpe was delivering an early verdict on the immortality of Shakespeare either as a dramatist or as a poet. I admit that Thorpe as a keen man of business was quite aware of the literary value of the Shakespeare MSS. if they could be obtained, and I have thought for a long time that in that singular preface to the *Troilus and*

Cressida of 1609 we have possibly the bombastic and affected handiwork of T. T., and Mr. Hazlitt, I see, "affirms" it; by which he means, I hope, that he *will not swear* that T. T. is the author. Therein Thorpe (if it be he) undoubtedly predicts the future value of the Plays in the hands of the "grand possessors," but Thorpe was more likely to mean a commercial value than a literary one, and his remarks there do not seem to invalidate my suggestion as to the interpretation of the "onlie begetter." Indeed, Mr. W. H. appears to have been a "lion's provider" or literary jackal to Thorpe, who would be just as likely as not to call him in one of his facetious moods, "my Jack 'all." But enough about this enigmatical W. H.—he has been long enough a bone of contention between the Herbertites and Southamp-tonites. He has to descend somewhat in the social scale, as it seems; but I believe he knew Marlowe, Blount, Florio, and Chapman, and had good chances for MS. finds.

Whether William Hall was a bachelor, or a childless widower, or a man with a large family I have no means of knowing. I only tentatively suggest that Thorpe wishes him "happinesse" as the "onlie" man fortunate enough to be the "begetter" of such a precious literary bantling as the MS. of the Sonnets, a child promising an "eternitie" of fame, according to the rosy view of "our ever-living poet," as he confidently calls himself.

I do not gather that either the author of the Sonnets or Thorpe thought definitely that the Sonnets would be immortal; it was rather the Poems that were to be thus highly favoured. As for the Sonnets, they were anonymous adjuncts not intended for the public eye; they were ambassadors coming privately to announce or accompany a Mighty Power able to immortalise the beloved one—a Power of Verse and a Monument of Glory that, like the Pyramids, should stand on such firm and broad bases (Sonnet cxxv.) as to be indestructible by the fiercest assaults of Time or Fortune. The Poems were published in 1593 and 1594, and appear to have had the author's

revision; the ambassadors accompanying them were withheld from vulgar gaze, and although two of the suite were captured by unfair means and exhibited in 1599, the others kept the strictest incognito for another ten years, and then Thomas Thorpe and some others of his tribe (perhaps Edward Blount was one) brought them out from their hiding-place without so much as saying "by your leave," as far as we know. It is these ambassadors, and their mission and message, that must now take our attention.

In dealing with the Sonnets, I shall try to read Bacon into them wherever he seems to have a proper claim to be there, and shall give some general views as to dates and sequences. But I shall not attempt to take them one by one and explain them in accordance with my preconceived theory: they are far too obscure and difficult for such a treatment to be anything but a failure. Mr. Tyler tried this plan with a skill and perseverance that few could equal, but the result gained was not worth the labour. There are certain enigmas in the Sonnets, especially the Rival Poet or Poets, and the "Dark Lady," or the "woman coloured ill," which I think no one can pronounce to be solved, or ever solvable with our present imperfect knowledge and data.

Here I simply give my preference, but by no means my conviction. I sometimes think the "Dark Lady" may have existed for Francis Bacon when Mary Fitton was a mere unformed girl at school. Gregor Sarrazin, a very capable German critic, places the "Dark Lady" episode chronologically as beginning about 1592, and he sees clear signs of the episode in the plays of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and in *Romeo and Juliet*, all very early plays. Thus he holds that Mary Fitton, the maid of honour, born 24th June 1578, and therefore in 1592 a girl of only fourteen, could not be the lady of the Sonnets or early Plays, could not have been the original of Rosaline or of the other graceful and quick-witted damsels who so often appeared in doublet and hose. Certainly there may have been an earlier

flame who was the original of the many early allusions and reminscences in the plays mentioned above, which are supposed now to date much about the years 1591-1593. This would make the author a younger man than was previously supposed, and would carry us back almost to the time when Shakespeare had not been very long in London, and had not yet become acquainted with Southampton. Thus the Shakespearian authorship would be rendered more unlikely than ever, for how could Shakespeare at that time have had any intrigue or even acquaintance with a lady of the type of the early Plays and Sonnets? For these types of delicate and aristocratic womanhood cannot possibly have had plebeian models. He might have known a Doll Tearsheet or a merry wife of a London citizen, but a Rosaline, a Beatrice, or a Juliet—never!

But Bacon had the *entrée* into the best society—into Court society—among his cousins who were maids of honour, from his boyhood upwards. Was not he the Queen's "my young Lord Keeper"?

However, there is this to be considered as against Sarrazin's shrewd objection to Mistress Fitton. These early plays were being continually altered (*more Baconico*), and the "Dark Lady" types may have been later additions to the plays, suggested by Mistress Fitton's remarkable personality. The originals, unrevised, and produced before Mistress Fitton came to Court in 1595, may have been quite devoid of such allusions. But when, as was the case with *Love's Labour's Lost*, the play was revised for performance in 1597 before the Court, then the episode would be appropriately newly introduced, and Bacon and his friends, who were acquainted with what had been going on, would enjoy the allusions immensely, and all the more for the lady herself being present in the court circle. This play was the first of the Shakespeare Plays that was not anonymous. It was given to William Shakespeare. It was beginning to be necessary to name some author, so as to prevent curious inquiry.

As to the Dark Lady, Mrs. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes says :

“It is much more likely she was the educated wife of some wealthy city burgess, an acquaintance of Shakespeare’s, to whose home, business, or friendship took him, and in whose parlour Shakespeare envied the virginal jacks for kissing ‘the tender inwards of her hands.’ Such a one, for instance, as Jacquinetta Vautrollier, the wife of Richard Field the printer, a Frenchwoman, therefore probably dark and fascinating, who dwelt in Blackfriars near the theatre. To such a home it would be quite natural that Shakespeare might take his friend, and that the friend should charm the hostess, and displace the poet in her attentions. Field was a Stratford man and a friend of the poet. He printed Shakespeare’s first poem, but transferred it soon, never printed another, and signed the 1596 petition against the existence of the Blackfriars Theatre.”*

Mrs. Stopes has also, as she thinks, discovered Mr. W. H. He was really the Sir William Harvey who married Southampton’s mother in May 1598. She died in 1607, and left the best part of her stuff to her son, but the greater part to her husband, Sir William Harvey. Mrs. Stopes thinks a copy of the Sonnets was included in her household stuff, and that Sir W. H. read them and thought them worthy of being printed, and took them to Thorpe, who, seeing a W. H. on them, thought they had been addressed to Sir William Harvey himself. As to the W. H. on them, it stood most likely for *William* and *Henry*, and was inscribed in a true lover’s knot. To lead Thorpe into error, and critics into confusion worse confounded, it was only necessary that some one of the initials W. H. should have become owner of the MS. And this happened in the case of Sir William Harvey.

I am afraid I cannot follow Mrs. Stopes in her high imaginative flights, and the William and Henry initials in a true lover’s knot savour more of the transpontine drama and melodramatic sentiment of the Victorian age than the Elizabethan.

* *Athenæum*, March 26, 1898.

I think, however, after all, that we may safely say that we are considerably nearer to the personality of the so-called "Dark Lady" than we were twenty years ago or more, when that excellent critic Professor Dowden said, "We shall never discover the name of that woman who for a season could sound, as no one else, the instrument in Shakespeare's heart, from the lowest note to the top of the compass. To the eyes of no diver among the wrecks of time will that curious talisman gleam."

Some believe confidently that we have recently found out the name of the lady who is the "Fit one" for *all* the circumstances. I cannot go quite so far as that. But I do think we are on the right track with regard to the lady who was so much in our poet's thoughts between 1597 and 1601, or perhaps even a little earlier. Mary Fitton came to Court as we know in 1595, being then "sweet seventeen," and there would be plenty of time for Francis Bacon—a former gallant of the Inns of Court, a relative of some of the maids of honour, and one possessing by birth and his circle of noble friends an *entrée* to the highest society—to form an acquaintance with a lively, musical, masque-loving, forward girl as we have every reason to believe Mary Fitton was. She would doubtless be present, and Bacon too, when *Love's Labour's Lost* was performed before the Queen at the usual Christmas court festivities in 1597. If these two were among the audience, they were also, on that occasion, on the stage as well, thinly disguised, to those who knew, as Biron and Rosaline.

The play had been revised and enlarged especially for this great court function, and some of Biron-Bacon's finest love-speeches and descriptions had been added for the occasion. These additions in the author's later and improved manner have been acknowledged by critics, who have also said that in Biron were to be caught the true accents of the author himself—Shakespeare as they all thought. But no further explanation could they give, and one of the best of them could only say, referring to the splendid speech on Love by Biron in the fourth act,

“ We must take Biron-Shakespeare at his word, and believe that in these vivid and tender emotions he found, during his early years in London, the stimulus which taught him to open his lips in song.” *

This critic and most of the other authorities take the original *Love's Labour's Lost* to be one of the very earliest of the Plays, and date it 1589 from certain internal evidence of a very strong character. I think this may be taken as almost an ascertained fact, and is of itself as good a Baconian argument as any I know of. For that Shakespeare should begin with such a play and such a subject, dealing, I mean, as it does with aristocratic court life in France, and in that part of the kingdom where Bacon had been, seems out of all probability. The first *Love's Labour's Lost* of 1589 could have nothing to do with Mary Fitton, who would then be an unformed girl of about eleven. She, clearly, could come into the play only when, after some years, it was revised, augmented, and played before the Queen and the court ladies in 1597-8 at the Christmas festivities.

But there might have been a different and original “ Dark Lady ” in the 1589 play and in the other early plays written before 1595, when first we hear of Mary Fitton at Court. Some of the German critics have thought that there was such a lady, and that Shakespeare's *Aspasia* was not an Englishwoman but an Italian, who was not beautiful, but well-educated and very musical, and that she left a deep impression on the poet, which he revived in his *Cleopatra* and *Cressida*. One German, Gregor Sarrazin, holds it not impossible (*nicht für unmöglich*) that Shakespeare met her in Venice when on his travels, and that the whole story was enacted in Italy and not in London. At first sight this must seem utterly absurd to the ordinary Shakespeare reader; but it is not so absurd to such Shakespeare students as are acquainted with the marvellous general and *local* knowledge of Italy displayed in the Plays. The author must have been on the spot, we are inclined to say, again and again when

* G. Brandes, *William Shakespeare*, i. 56.

he criticises so excellently the artistic work of Giulio Romano, and seems almost to have read his epitaph—when he speaks of the “traject,” the common ferry which trades to Venice (Italian *tragitto*, Venetian *traghetto*), which appeared in all the Quartos and Folios as “tranect” and nonplussed the commentators for a long time. At length it was found out what the author meant and how correct he was, and what a local colour he could give. Surely the author must have visited these scenes in person, otherwise how could he have been so accurate? Thus many Shakespearians say that their great Idol *did* visit Italy, and they give him from the autumn of 1592 to the summer of 1593 for the tour. He was then free, they say, for all the theatres were closed on account of the plague.

It is not at all likely that Shakespeare would visit Italy alone, although poor students and others often made their way there on foot. If Shakespeare went at all he would go with his fellow-actors, so as to make a little money to pay expenses. That is possible, for to the Englishmen of that day Italy was the goal of their longing as travellers. It was a land where was the joy of life. Venice attracted the average man more even than Paris. Shakespeare may have gone to Venice and met a dark lady there; but we have not a scrap of direct evidence about it. If Shakespeare did not go during the plague year, he could hardly have gone at any other time.

Now with Bacon all is very different, and his opportunities much greater for visiting and knowing about Italy. Between 1579 and 1584 Bacon might have gone to Italy again and again for anything we know to the contrary. In that period we hardly know anything about his doings. He was presumably studying law at Gray’s Inn, but lawyers have holidays and go abroad as well as other people. George Brandes says Bacon is “known to have visited Italy.”* I cannot corroborate this, but I think it is likely to be correct. But even supposing Bacon never found time to visit Italy, there was his brother Anthony,

* Brandes, *William Shakespeare*, i. 135.

and many intimate friends, who knew Italy as well almost as they knew their own country. From these Bacon could get any knowledge of local matters that he might require. But the subject need not be pursued further; enough has been said, I hope, to show that Bacon was a much more likely personage for "Dark Ladies," whether maids of honour or "Italian black-eyed devils," than was that "young man from the country" who left his twins behind him. Bacon was much more likely to know about Italy and its beautiful language than was the Warwickshire lad who was mainly master of his own *patois* only.

The first thirteen Sonnets, or indeed the first seventeen, form the most certain and easy sequence of the whole collection. They were written, as everything seems to show, about the year 1591 and 1592, and the author had been evidently reading the *Arcadia* of Sidney, which was published in 1590, and had extracted much of the matter of the first thirteen Sonnets from that work. It looks as if the author had been asked to try his "pupil pen" in turning Sidney's prose into sonnets, so many and close are the parallels.* Sir Walter Scott thought that Sidney must have read the Sonnets, but from what we know of Bacon the reverse is much more likely. Bacon read the *Arcadia*, just as in after years he read Holinshed, and then turned it into magnificent poetry. Bacon's great natural gift, early and late, was that of adorning and glorifying as if by a magical alchemy the prose of other people. Whatever expressions other people might use, in whatever way they might present a tale or history, Bacon was able either to exalt or embellish.

Besides, who more likely to read, and be interested in, the *Arcadia* than Bacon? We should not expect the burgesses of Stratford, or their family either, to rave about the beauties of that elegant composition. The question of fines for not removing the dirt from their doorways was a much more burning question with some of them. But Bacon was a courtier and an elegant gentleman, to whom

* Cf. Massey's *Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, priv. edit. 1888, pp. 73, &c.

such a work would appeal. After he had written the first thirteen Sonnets, it is probable that Sidney's next work, the sonnets in *Astrophel and Stella*, fell into Bacon's hand in 1591 or thereabouts (published in 1591), for *after* Sonnet XIII., *but not before*, we find clear traces of likeness to and borrowing from this later work of Sidney.

As to the subject of these first seventeen Sonnets, called "Procreation Sonnets," we have the best of evidence. For there was a scheme in hand as early as 1590 to induce the young Earl of Southampton to marry. He was Burghley's ward, and it was the interest of that astute politician to capture the young nobleman and his political influence for his own family faction. He therefore desired a marriage between the rising youth and his own granddaughter. Bacon belonged to Burghley's faction, and it would further his worldly prospects very much if he could show that he had done *his* share in bringing the young Earl up to the marriage mark. So he opened fire on his young acquaintance, who had not long joined his own Society of Gray's Inn, and delivered thirteen similar shots in succession and eventually reached seventeen. But though skilfully aimed they failed to effect their purpose.

By a singular coincidence there was, nearly eight years afterwards (1598), another rising young nobleman whom his friends were persuading to marry at a similarly early age, and what is still more strange, to another granddaughter of the same Lord Burghley. This was William Herbert, at that time known as "young Lord Harbert," his father being alive. *This* was the youth, say the Herbertites, to whom the Procreation Sonnets were addressed in 1598. This was the Mr. W. H. of the dedication—and no other youth will suit. "Why," say they in derision, "in 1598 the Earl of Southampton was a man of twenty-five with a full beard: how could Shakespeare possibly call him his 'cherub' and his 'darling boy'?" But these Herbertites have gone wrong in their dates, and 1598 is an impossible date for many of the Sonnets. There are such clear parallels and allusions to *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and to the sending of this poem to

Southampton in 1593-4, and to the early plays, in many of these Sonnets, and in the Procreation Sonnets too, that such ones cannot have been written later than 1594 as an extreme limit. But they say Herbert first came into residence in town in 1598, and that there was the early marriage episode with Burghley's grand-daughter, and then was Shakespeare's first acquaintance with him. Chronology upsets this altogether. I helped the Herbertites by three years, without intending it, when I discovered the new fact that young Herbert was three months or more in London towards the end of the year 1595, and that his relations were even then trying to marry him (*really* a cherub and darling boy of about fifteen) into the Carew family. But these three years, and these strangely similar circumstances, are not much good to the Herbertites. They want eight years at least, and the dates must be carried back before *Lucrece*, and even 1595 is no use in such circumstances.

However, the Shakespearians must fight their own battles, and meet their own difficulties.

I suggest, to return to my present object, that there is not much "difficulty" in our believing that Francis Bacon, of Gray's Inn, wrote the Procreation Sonnets I.-XVII. to his young acquaintance the Earl of Southampton about the years 1591-2, after a close study of Sir Philip Sidney's recently published and fashionable works.

I also have a strong impression that it was Daniel's *Delia* which supplied Bacon with a model for the form of verse, which is English and not the ordinary Italian form. This was a new departure, dating about 1592, or earlier if Daniel's sonnets had been seen by Bacon in MS. But the date would not be *before* 1591, for the Sonnet to Florio is of that year, and is in the ordinary Italian style then in vogue.

Sonnets XVIII.-XXVI. form another pretty plain sequence. Some were sent to Southampton with *Lucrece* or perhaps a little earlier, so the date would be about 1594. Some might have been sent with *Venus and Adonis* (1593). The last four lines of Sonnet XVIII. were more likely, I

think, to accompany *Venus and Adonis*; for, besides Southampton's name being immortalised and rescued from Death in the dedication, he himself was figured in the young Adonis :

“Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest ;
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives *this*, and *this* gives life to thee.”

The words I have put in italics could hardly refer to the Sonnet itself, which was of a private nature and only meant for a small circle of friends. Bacon was doubtless as proud of the “first heire” of his invention in poetry, as he was of his first heir in philosophy, *The greatest Birth of Time*.

A likely date for many of the Sonnets is midsummer or autumn 1593, when the theatres and law-courts were closed for the plague, and Bacon was lying somewhat of an invalid at Twickenham, and able to do little else but compose verses. It has been remarked that there is a decidedly autumnal tint about many of these Sonnets, and for some reason in Sonnet CIV. the word *Autumne* is put in italics in the original edition, being the only one of the four seasons mentioned in the Sonnet which receives that distinction.

The succeeding autumn of 1594 would also be very suitable for some of the Sonnets, for we hear : “Mr. F. Bacon was now at Twickenham Lodge, where he had been some time alone.” He writes on 16th Oct. 1594 : “One day draweth on another, and I am well pleased in my being here ; for methinks solitariness collecteth the mind, as shutting the eyes does the sight.” And a little later, viz. on 25th Jan. 1594-5, Bacon at Twickenham writes to his brother Anthony : “I have here an idle pen or two. . . . I pray send me somewhat else for them to write out,” &c.* These were his scribes, who had, we fancy, a good deal of work to do, now and then, on the Shakespeare Plays and Poems.

Bacon, too, was about this time getting worried and

* Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, i. 189, 198, &c.

depressed because neither his chief hope Essex, nor his friend the Vice-Chamberlain—who, by the way, was Sir Thomas Heneage, who had just become Southampton's father-in-law—seemed to be able to induce the Queen to give him promotion. All this would affect Bacon and his literary work about this time. But there was no autumnal decay about Shakespeare's present prospects; he was flourishing like a green bay tree, and putting by money every year.

Sonnets xxvii. and xxviii., the next two, from their striking parallelism to *Lucrece* and *Romeo and Juliet*, fall about the same period—perhaps the same autumn. The author had paid a visit to his friend, and had come back tired and worn-out, not being, just then, very strong, if my contention be correct, and the journey might well be from Twickenham to London, or wherever Southampton happened to be. The Sonnets of this early period show a very melancholy feeling in the author; the thought that the Beauty of Nature and all the fair “shows” of the world are but passing shadows, and that Time, the great and cruel tyrant, wipes them all away. From the sequence xviii.—xxvi. I will extract, for the sake of a few annotations,

SONNET XXIII.

As an unperfect actor on the stage
 Who with his feare is put beside his part,
 Or some fierce thing repleat with too much rage,
 Whose strength's abundance weakens his owne heart;
 So I for feare of trust forget to say
 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
 And in mine owne love's strength seeme to decay,
 O'ercharged with burthen of mine owne love's might:
 O let my books be then the eloquence,
 And dumb presagers of my speaking brest,
 Who pleade for love and look for recompence,
 More then that tongue that more hath more exprest.
 O learne to read what silent love hath writ,
 To heare with eies belongs to love's fine wiht (*sic*).

The meaning seems to be that the author is too much overcome by nervous hesitancy to do himself justice in

declaring his love for his friend. He cannot trust himself to say all that is in his breast (line 5), and in his dedication, which is one of the ceremonial parts of love's rite (line 6) he fears to make it complete and "perfect" by his own true name at the foot. Personally his feelings are so strong that they overcome him to weaken the expression of the love he really has (lines 7, 8). He begs that his books, his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, may be eloquent for him in their way; they are *dumb*, and therefore when they interpret the feelings of his speaking breast, there will be no tremor of the voice or choked utterance (lines 9-12). My love, he says, thus expressed by my "dumb presagers," is of course a *silent* love, and your ears cannot catch its quality, but you have eyes to read, and eyes often play the finer part in Love's domain (lines 13, 14).

May it not also be that the poet describes his love as *silent*, because he speaks not of or from himself, and therefore is personally *silent*? Another man, the man William Shake-speare, speaks in person and signs the books.

Bacon seems to suit this Sonnet much better than any one else, and I think the same may be said even more strongly of Sonnet xxvi., which is the concluding Sonnet and *l'envoi* of the sequence. This is the Sonnet which has such a striking resemblance to the written dedication of *Lucrece*, and where in the very last line he speaks of *showing his head*, and indeed it comes to *showing his tail* too, as I have previously endeavoured to place before my readers. I will quote the last six lines because I have a commentary of my own:

"Till whatsoever star that guides my moving,
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect :
Till then I dare to boast how I do love thee,
Till then not show my head where thou may'st prove me."

I think the poet refers to his auspicious star the Earl of Essex, by whose guiding influence he hoped to "move

up" considerably in the political world. As for the "apparel" to be put on his tattered position it would be robes of high office—high legal office—which he hoped the persistent efforts of his patron and friend would enable him soon to assume. These would hide the tattered poverty of the portionless younger son and the struggling lawyer, and would make him worthy of his loved one's respect. And *then*, when that position was gained, the poet might "dare to boast" of his hitherto concealed friendship and love, and "show his head"—his monogram in *Lucrece*—to prove his identity, F_B^R or FRA. B.

I may be altogether on the wrong track. If so, there is a remarkable series of coincidences here, all pointing to Bacon: that fact can hardly be denied in any case.

SONNETS XXVII. AND XXVIII.

These two Sonnets refer to a journey taken to a place some distance from London, in which the writer became "weary with toil," and his "limbs with travel tired." Fortunately we can here fix with a great degree of probability what this particular journey was, and also that it was Bacon who was the weary traveller.

We arrive at it in this way. The preceding Sonnet, xxvi., was the Sonnet that accompanied *Lucrece*, as we have just seen; and since *Lucrece* was registered in the Stationers' Company's books under date May 5, 1594, we may place the date of the Sonnet in the earlier months of 1594. Since the order of the Sonnets is (with a few exceptions, arising possibly from misplaced leaves) generally chronological, we may expect the date of the next Sonnet, xxvii., to be somewhat later, in the summer perhaps of the same year, for summer vacation was the time for travel. And that is just what we find to be the case, for in July 1594 Francis Bacon took his "northern journey" for a political purpose in the Queen's interest, and of course in the interest of Essex as well. He, however, was unfortunate with regard to his health during the journey, and on the 20th July 1594 wrote from Huntingdon to the Queen telling her that he was delayed there; but his

illness did not confine him long, for we find him in London again by the end of the month, and well.*

This then is the journey that suits these two Sonnets excellently, and we must remember that we know of no journey of Shakespeare with such accuracy of date.

Further on in the Sonnets (XLVIII.—LI.) we have another allusion to a journey that the poet was taking, but whether that was this "northern journey," or some other journey for Essex specially, cannot be decided. Bacon tells us in his *Apology for Essex*, "It is well known how I did many years since dedicate my travels and studies to the use of my Lord of Essex." By "travels" he may mean here "labours," but no doubt he often travelled about for Essex in the modern sense of the word. But the chief proof connected with these Sonnets is that Bacon's northern journey exactly fits in, while there is nothing whatever of Shakespeare's journeys that we know with any certainty.

SONNETS XXIX.—XXXVII.

These Sonnets seem to refer to a period of disgrace, and consequent depression, in the writer's life—he has had disappointments—"I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought" (xxx.). He had depressing thoughts of death (xxxii.), and the great scandal of his "bewailed guilt" makes a gulf of separation between them, for now his friend cannot, having regard to his own position and credit, publicly make a show of kindly affection to him (xxxvi.; cf. also cix.). Still the poet takes comfort from his own heart-union with his friend (xxxvii.), though he cannot let the world know it (xxxvi.). Again Bacon suits better than Shakespeare. Bacon felt keenly the failure of his hopes of advance through Essex, and possibly there was a scandal just now too, for Bacon writes to Cecil as if he had shielded him more than once.

From Sonnet xxxii. we can get a probable date, which would be 1598-9; for John Marston began his literary career in 1598 by publishing *Pygmalion's Image*,

* Cf. Spedding's *Life and Letters*, viii. 305.

which was of the style of *Venus and Adonis*, and was received with much favour and laudation as soon as it was out. If our date be correct, four years had passed since *Lucrece* had been offered to Southampton in 1594. The poet at that time promised to give further and better proofs of his love and of his immortalising verse, but years had passed and he remained dumb. This is referred to in several Sonnets, and various excuses are given. In this particular Sonnet (xxxii.) the excuse is that he had been outstripped by others, and that his Muse had not grown as he had thought and boasted that it would. But he hints (line 12) that though their style may be better than this, yet they cannot surpass his love for his friend. He seems to augur his own approaching death, and begs this request of his friend :

“O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought :
 Had my friend's muse grown with the growing age,
 A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
 To march in ranks of better equipage.
 But since he died, and poets better prove,
 Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love.”

Since *Lucrece* had been dedicated to Southampton in 1594, the principal poets who had given anything really good to the world of letters had been Chapman, Daniel, and Marston. The first two of these “rival poets” are referred to, as I believe, in the Sonnet-sequence (Lxxv.—Lxxxvi.) further on. Here it is Marston and his *Pygmalion's Image* which is alluded to. Marston speaks of his

“Stanzas like odd bands
 Of voluntaries and mercenarians :
 Which like soldados of our warlike age,
 March rich bedight in warlike equipage.”

So here in all probability we have the source of the similar and parallel line in the Sonnet. I believe Mr. Tyler has the credit of first noticing this, and he justly says : “The analogy is too close to be easily explained away. But, it may be said, is it not possible that Marston borrowed from Shakespeare? To this question the answer must

be given, that the congruity which is absent in Shakespeare is clearly seen in Marston." * The "bringing a dearer birth" to march in better-equipped ranks can scarcely seem altogether suitable, while Marston's simile is entirely suitable. Therefore we may say pretty confidently that Marston's poem preceded this Sonnet, and so the autumn of 1598 or 1599 is a probable date of the writing of this Sonnet. This is the very period when, as we know, Bacon was greatly depressed and thought much about death—perhaps suicide—and wrote to the Queen and others about the untrue libels (*mendacia famæ*) that the vulgar people were spreading against him, and that his life had been threatened. But all this is referred to in another sequence (LXXV.–LXXXVI.), to which this Sonnet may also well belong. There we see the same prospect of death, and the same kind of reference to other poets (*alien* poets) who are better than he is, and before whom his Muse is "barren" and dumb. He calls his muse or verse a "birth." This brings to mind Bacon's *greatest Birth of Time*, his early *opus magnum*.

But it must not be forgotten that Nash in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* uses the phrase "march in equipage of honour" in 1589, so thus Sonnet xxxii. may have taken the phrase from him before Marston wrote his lines.

SONNET XXXVI.

It is mentioned elsewhere how strange a thing it is that we hear of no personal relationship between Bacon and Southampton. It surprised Spedding very much, and when I first looked into the index of Spedding's *Life and Letters of Lord Bacon* for the volume containing the years 1561–1595—being the first thirty-four years of Bacon's life—and could not find the name of Southampton in the index at all, I confess I was equally, if not more, surprised. I had reason to be more surprised than Spedding, for he, who knew Bacon's correspondence better than any man in the world, did not know, as I do

* Tyler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 1890, p. 37.

now, of Bacon's love for Southampton and of his dedication to him of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*.

It appears from Spedding's exhaustive researches that there is no record of any letters or any other communications having passed between them until the letter of 1603, when Bacon was over forty-two years old and Southampton over thirty. And yet, putting aside the whole history of the close Platonic friendship revealed in the Sonnets, there was, as Spedding admits, such an intimate connection existing between both of them and Essex, that they must have been brought together frequently and on intimate terms.

Why then this burning of all letters, or, if not burnt, why this absence of all correspondence between such important personages, when, as we know well, Bacon had preserved hundreds of letters from far less interesting people? And why, when Bacon was drawing up the "Declaration of Treason" in the Essex rebellion case, did he mention Southampton's name as little as he possibly could? This Sonnet xxxvi. supplies the answer, especially the last six lines :

"I may not evermore acknowledge thee
Lest my bewailèd guilt should do thee shame,
Nor thou with publike kindnesse honour me,
Unlesse thou take that honour from thy name ;
But doe not so, I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report."

And if we compare this with Sonnet LXXXIX., where he speaks of his "offence" and lameness, and says he will try to behave as a stranger to Southampton :

"I will acquaintance strangle and looke strange ;
Be absent from thy walkes ; and in my tongue
Thy sweet belovèd name no more shall dwell
Least I (too much prophane) should do it wronge ;
And haplie of our old acquaintance tell,"

by the comparison we shall see plainly why Southampton is so persistently ignored by Bacon, and also, why the mystery of the Plays and Sonnets was never revealed.

It might "haply of their old acquaintance tell," and also it would "take honour from his loved one's name."

This is a cryptic expression quite in Bacon's style, and helps considerably the increasing body of evidence that we have gathered. For it points to Southampton, since the anagram of his *name* was

Henry Southampton = Thy Stampe-*Honour*.

or

Henrie Southampton = The Stampe in Honour.

There were also two other published anagrams of his full *name*, and in both of these *Honour* occurs prominently—

Henry Wriothesley Earle of Southampton.

Anagrams.

1. Thy *Honour* is worth the praise of all men.
2. Vertue is thy *Honour*: O the praise of all men.*

All this looks very much as if the *name* from which *honour* could be taken was Henry Southampton. This was the same young nobleman whom Nash addressed towards the end of 1592 in *Pierce Penilesse* as "The Matchless image of Honour" and "Jove's eagle-borne Ganymede." I do not attach reproach to the term Ganymede applied to Southampton by Nash in 1592, though it is not a pleasant name for a lad in any rank of society, and it is just possible that Nash knew of Francis Bacon's intense admiration for the young Earl. But it is one thing to be called a Ganymede when you are one of "the glistering attendants of the true Diana" (Elizabeth), and it is another and a very different thing to be called a Ganymede when you are a prominent member of the King's own set in the scandalous Court of the succeeding monarch, James I.

When Algernon Swinburne in his Essay on George Chapman speaks of Carr as "one whom we are accustomed only to regard as the unloveliest of the Ganymedes whose

* These anagrams come from a book in the Grenville Library, entitled: "The Teares of the Isle of Wight shed on the Tombe of their most noble, valorous, and loving Captaine and Governour, Henrie, Earle of Southampton:" London, 1625, 4to.

Jupiter was James," we know very well what is meant by it, nor are we in any doubt when we read in the same essay that James I. was "a king who combined with the northern virulence and pedantry, which he may have derived from his tutor Buchanan, a savour of the worst qualities of the worst Italians of the worst period of Italian decadence." But when Nash speaks of young Southampton (his own Mæcenas) as "Jove's eagle-borne Ganymede," he is, I think, only using a flattering classical allusion (flattering, because Ganymede was a very beautiful youth) in a perfectly respectful manner.

It may well be the same with Bacon and Southampton in the intense language of the Sonnets. It may be quite harmless as between the intellectual and pushing Francis Bacon and his younger aristocratic friend the literary Earl, and I have a strong feeling that it was so throughout their close acquaintance; but some incidents may have shown the natural bent of Bacon's passion even to the young Earl, and I cannot help feeling that the Sonnets refer more than once to a real scandal in the background. Moreover, such an occurrence or such reports of one, whether true or not, would help to explain in some degree Bacon's very tardy success in mounting the ladder of ambition. When we consider the high rank to which he was born, and the persistent place-hunter he always was, it does seem to require some explanation why he should be allowed to pass the age of forty-six before anything like a real rise was given to him. But more light will be thrown on the Dark Lady and the Southampton-Bacon scandal when we come to Sonnets XL.-XLII.

SONNETS XXXVIII.-XXXIX.

These two seem to go together, and not to be connected with their immediate antecedent or consequent Sonnets. Possibly an odd leaf of the MS. containing these two Sonnets got moved from its proper place. They both belong to Southampton, and seem to belong to the period before any intrigue, depression, or scandal had

come about. He will praise his beloved friend in worthy verse, for his friend is as himself :

“And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?
 Even for this let us divided live,
 And my dear love lose name of single one
 That by this separation I may give
 That due to thee which thou deserv'st alone.”

Now Bacon uses this very same idea of the first line in a letter to his cousin Cecil. “I write to myself in regard of my love to you, you being so near to me in heart's blood, as in blood by descent.”* This idea of the personalities of two lovers being mutually inter-transfused was very common in the Italian sonnets of the period, and arose no doubt from the study of Plato, which made such great advances in Italy just before this generation. Shakespeare would not be likely to hear so much about it among his Stratford or theatrical friends, as would Francis Bacon among the court gallants.

Perhaps the enigmatical four lines that follow mean that the name Bacon is to be lost as between them, but that thus separated he can and will give deserved praise to his beloved friend—but by another name or in another way.

SONNETS XL.—XLII.

These Sonnets are very important with regard to the relations between the author of the Sonnets, and the friend who robbed the poet of his mistress, and “heaved” the owner out of his “seat.” I am afraid we have nothing to do here with any Dark Lady of the Court, any maid of honour, any lively, forward Mistress Mary Fitton, or indeed any “real lady” at all. All the incidents and allusions seem to point to a “common drab” of a very pronounced kind.

Anyhow, the chronological order of the Sonnets, which none of the best critics ever venture to deny, exclude Mary Fitton here, for she was too young, and had not long been at Court; and it is Southampton who is the

* Abbott's *Francis Bacon*, p. 173.

fascinating Adonis who carries the lady off from a former lover, with that "lascivious grace" which the poet and "unseated lover" was fain to forgive. But we know of no scandal between Mary Fitton and Southampton; it was Pembroke some years later that brought her to grief. Moreover, the atmosphere of these Sonnets is hardly a court atmosphere. It seems much more like the atmosphere that John Marston so skilfully puts into his canvas when he depicts in his *Satyres* the baser vices of society as then existing.

It is well known that in Southampton's youth he was a licentious *débauché* of an extremely attractive personality. I often think that John Marston alluded to him and his drab in those *Satyres* that were burnt by the Archbishop's order in the Stationers' Hall. Who else could the following lines so well hit off? *Sat. II. 107*:

"In faith yon is a well-faced gentleman;
 See how he paces like a Cyprian!
 Fair amber tresses of the fairest hair
 That ere were wavèd by our London air;
 Rich lacèd suit, all spruce, all neat, in truth.
 Ho, Lynceus! what's yonder brisk neat youth
 'Bout whom yon troop of gallants flocken so,
 And now together to Brown's common go?
 Thou know'st I'm sure; for thou canst cast thine eye
 Through nine mud walls, or else old poets lie:
 'Tis loose-legged Lais, that same common drab,
 For whom good Tubrio took the mortal stab."

What if this "loose-legged Lais" should turn out to be the earlier Lady of the Sonnets after all? She was a strumpet who wore men's breeches, as Marston signifies afterwards. Indeed, some solution of this kind clears up many little difficulties with regard to the peculiar phraseology here and there to be noticed both in the Sonnets and the Plays. It helps to throw light on the Proteus of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and the Protean Form in Sonnet LIII., with its "substance" and "shadow," and yet more light on the ladies with doublet and hose [and codpiece], who make a decidedly unfitting appearance in some of the scenes of the Shakespeare Plays. Women did dress up

as men in those days, and got a reputation for doing so, not always of a very savoury character. There was Long Meg of Westminster, known to lovers of black-letter catch-pennies ; there was Moll Cutpurse, known on and off the stage by most scandal-mongers, a little later, but only a few years, than the date of these Sonnets. Indeed, Dr. Brinsley Nicholson suggested that the "loose-legged Lais" of Marston's satire was none other than Moll Cutpurse the hermaphroditic courtesan, and he took "good Tubrio" in the lines quoted above to be poor Kit Marlowe, who lost his life of intellectual promise all through some "lewd love" and bawdy quarrel. But Marlowe was stabbed in 1593 and Moll Cutpurse was born about 1584, so if Moll was the cause of the fatal quarrel, she was indeed a precocious young member of the profession, for she could not be much more than nine or ten years old, although she was doubtless over seven. But surely Dr. Nicholson's suggestion, though worthy of respect seeing from whom it comes, will never do ; it would out-gallop Mrs. Gallup, for while she only says that Bacon was Queen Elizabeth's son, and a very voluminous writer, the Doctor's suggestion would lead us to infer that Bacon took young Moll Cutpurse into keeping when she was about thirteen, she having been under Marlowe's protection some three or four years previously, and then, when certainly under fourteen, left Bacon and gave herself up to Bacon's Master-Mistress the fair-haired Southampton (fair Briscus). Whether the young lady wore frocks or breeches at this early age is doubtful ; but one would say breeches, from what the lynx-like eyes of Lynceus saw.

But a truce to such suggestions ; "this way madness lies," and a kind of Italianated sexual perversion, of which in these days we can hardly credit the existence. But it was by no means rare in the days of Bacon and Southampton, and in the neighbourhood of the theatres and the gardens, which so easily brought vicious people together. One has only to read Marston, Hall, and the others who satirise and deplore the vices of the age, to come to a very sad conclusion as to the real amount of vice in Elizabethan

London.* We must remember these satirists are not unworthy of credit; they are educated University men for the most part, and some, such as Hall, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, and a good Bishop too, were eminent for their private virtues.

But not much that is clear can be gained by dwelling on each Sonnet as it comes in order. There is too little to fasten on with any degree of certainty. There seems an allusion to a journey the poet took to some place in Sonnets XLVIII.—LI., and we know that in July 1594 Bacon took a long journey to the North, and was stopped at Huntingdon by a painful illness, and came back and rested at Cambridge and took his M.A. This may be the journey referred to here, as it is in Sonnets XXVII. and XXVIII. Anyhow, we know of no journey of Shakespeare for certain, as we know Bacon's journey. Sonnets LII.—LV. may be apportioned to Southampton, and dated before 1598 rather than after. We have in LIII. the *Proteus* of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Adonis*, and the hues or "hews" and "shadows" of beauty which lent such charm to Southampton's youthful face in the writer's eyes. And, as I have said elsewhere, it is not improbable that Meres saw Sonnet LV. in MS. before 1598 and moulded his Latin praises on it, as that the reverse should have happened, as the ordinary theory maintains, and the Sonnet be thus made later than Meres' book. Sonnets LVII. and LVIII. have been already referred to in connection with Pembroke's letter to Cecil, which was meant for the Queen's eye, and possibly written by Bacon, and was in any case suspiciously like these Sonnets in its wording. After these Sonnets we have a long sequence (LIX.—LXXIV.) dealing in a depressed tone of pessimistic philosophy with the ravages of Time, and with a world made all awry (LXVI.), and culminating in a hint of possible suicide or assassination (LXXIV.). Now all this is, I maintain, decidedly Baconian, and *not* Shakespearian.

* In fact, Marston puts the case very tersely thus:

"Ganymede is up and Hebe down."

—*Scourge of Villainie*, line 49.

In Nov. 1599 Bacon writes to the Queen, "My life hath been threatened, and my name libelled." He also writes about the same time to Cecil, "As for any violence to be offered to me, wherewith my friends tell me to no small terror that I am threatened, I thank God I have the privy coat of a good conscience." He also writes thus to Lord Henry Howard, "For my part I have deserved better than to have my name objected to envy, or my life to a ruffian's violence."

I will only consider in detail four lines of this section :

SONNET LIX.

"If there be nothing new, but that which is,
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,
Which labouring for invention, bear amiss
The second burthen of a former child !"

Here, I contend, we have several ideas and phrases which point distinctly to the philosopher Francis Bacon, and are very remote from Shakespeare.

The first two lines remind us of Bruno's philosophy, which had become somewhat the fashion with the cultured aristocrats and the Sidney set since Bruno's visit to England in Elizabethan days. This is not by any means the only allusion to this somewhat mystical and prophetic philosophy in these Sonnets, for in three later ones, CVI., CVII., and CXXIII., we have similar ideas put into the verse.

Bacon would be no stranger to this intellectual atmosphere, and could breathe freely in it. I doubt very much whether Shakespeare could. Then there is that word "invention," which Bacon had almost made his own; he was always "labouring for invention," from his youth upwards. And then consider that fourth line; it was a "Birth"—the "Greatest Birth of Time"—with which he, so confident in his own powers even at an early age, proposed to enlighten the world and to show forth a conqueror over the Domain of Nature, and afterwards he returned to the subject in his *Masculus Partus Temporis*, the first germs of his *Magna Instauratio*. By his "Male Birth of Time" he means something "generative" or "fruitful," as opposed to the barren philosophy of Aristotle.

This evidence, though only indirect and inferential, seems to me strong.

The possible connection between Bacon and Bruno must not be despised. Bruno was in London from 1583 to 1585, living with the French ambassador, and Sir Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, Lord Burghley, and other members of the cultivated aristocracy connected with the court circle, knew Bruno well. Bruno was a very little time in London before he went to Oxford to maintain his Copernican theories against the conservative dons of that august University. The occasion was a function of honour to Albert Alasco, Count Palatine of Poland; and Lord Leicester, who was Chancellor of the University, went down from London with Alasco and a company of court notables (*nobilium cohors*) to do the honours. How likely that Bacon should be one—how next to impossible that Shakespeare should be there. Bruno's friends in England were also Bacon's friends. Hardly a man could be named more likely to be conversant with Bruno's works than Bacon, or less likely than Shakespeare, who did not leave Stratford till Bruno had left England. Yet Bruno's peculiar philosophical ideas are deeply imbedded in the Shakespeare Plays and Sonnets. Nor are we without a sort of corroborative evidence which, considering the little we really know of Bacon between 1580 and 1592, is worth recording here. Mr. Nicholas Faunt writes to Anthony Bacon, 6th May 1583, just about a month before the Bruno court function at Oxford, and tells him that his brother Francis now was "sometimes a courtier." This is in our favour, for Bacon, who took all knowledge to be his province, would clearly like to travel down with a fashionable court company to Oxford to hear Bruno if he could bring it about.

The next section is

SONNETS LXXV.—LXXXVII.

Here the poet makes excuses for his verse being so "barren of new pride (LXXVI.) and tongue-tied" (LXXXV.). He complains that his "sick Muse doth give another place,"

and there are several allusions to a rival poet (one or more). To this vexed question of the rival poets, I can add but little to help the solution, nor does it affect the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy to any great degree.

Marlowe has had an ingenious defender, but his erratic course was ended in 1593, and this date being before *Lucrece* was published seems to exclude him from any rivalry; but Chapman and Samuel Daniel have each had very expert defenders as well, and perhaps we may say of them that "honours are easy" in the earlier Sonnets, but Chapman gains points towards the finish, and wins the rubber on Sonnet LXXXVI. The date involved is the main and only point connected with the Baconian theory, and it comes out 1598 or 1599, a very suitable date as will appear.

Sonnet LXXVIII. begins thus :

"So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every *alien* pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poetry disperse."

"Alien" is one of the few words put in italics in the original, and some allusion seems intended. I suggest that *alien* points to *Alleyn*, the actor-manager and partner with Henslowe, who had the Rose Theatre from 1592. Thus some poets or poet-dramatists connected with Alleyn's theatre are most likely meant. Chapman would suit, and Samuel Daniel as well. But in Sonnet LXXXVI. we get a rather strong proof that Chapman is alluded to *there* at any rate, and we get the date 1598-9, which agrees very well with the date we inferred from the parallel Sonnet xxxii., which recalled Marston's *Pygmalion's Image*. It would take too long to give the whole proof and the parallel passages which Professor Minto and Mr. Tyler have ingeniously worked out, but they show that this Sonnet refers to Chapman's *Iliad* in fourteen-syllable verse (1598)—"the proud full sail of his great verse"—and also to Chapman's *Shadow of Night* (1594). The poet says of these two of Chapman's attempts, "I was not sick of any fear from thence"; that is, he was not put

to "silence" by either the *Iliad* or the *Shadow of Night*, and then gives the real reason :

"But when your countenance fil'd up his line,
Then lack'd I matter ; that enfeebled mine."

Neither Minto nor Tyler has tried to explain this reference to Southampton's "countenance," nor is it known that the Earl gave Chapman any special mark of favour about this time.

But I have a suggestion to make, which would be in keeping with the rest of the explanation of the Sonnet. I think these last two lines of the Sonnet refer to Chapman's other fine poem of 1595, entitled *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*. This most sensuous love-poem was undoubtedly of the same class as *Venus and Adonis*, and it was a dangerous rival in its passionate raptures and glowing description of voluptuous male and female beauty. It took away for itself the very "matter" of verse that the poet wanted to give a second immortal picture of Southampton, as he had more than half promised his patron. Adonis was the "counterfeit" of Southampton, and when a second counterfeit of Southampton's manly beauty appeared in finer and fuller form in Chapman's *Banquet of Sense*, then our poet felt he had indeed a rival who had taken the very ground from under him :

"But when your countenance fil'd * up his line,
Then lack'd I matter ; that enfeebled mine."

The fact is that Chapman in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* had practically expanded a portion of *Venus and Adonis* dealing with the five senses (lines 433-450), in the middle of which portion appears the line :

"But O, what banquet wert thou to the taste ;"

which would suit very well as one of the lines which the rival poet filled up, for *Ovid's Banquet* is mainly a discourse to Corinna (Julia) of the five senses, which are all mentioned in the passage of *Venus and Adonis*.

An ingenious writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* for June

* *Fil'd* (orig. ed.) = *filled*. *Lack'd* in next line shows this.

1901 has given several reasons for supposing Daniel to be the rival poet. There are clearly more rival poets than one according to the explicit statement of the Sonnets themselves. Daniel is most likely one of them, as I have already suggested. This section also contains a line which is a difficult one for Shakespearians, but suits the Bacon theory well.

“I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,”

is the first line of Sonnet LXXXII. But what force or meaning can this have coming from Shakespeare? Southampton and Shakespeare's Muse were married poetically as far as the name of the Earl in the dedication and the signature of the poet in full at the foot of it could celebrate the fact. The banns were fully published, and no one at that time seems to have thought of forbidding them for any fault or error of name. But the case was very different with Southampton and Bacon's Muse. There was no poetical marriage here, nor were any banns published here, or even the two names coupled together in any way in the Temple of the Muses. So Bacon could truly say *his* Muse was not married, whereas Shakespeare could not say this.

As to the last Sonnet of this section (LXXXVII.), beginning :

“Farewell ! thou art too dear for my possessing,”

it is so thoroughly permeated with abstruse legal allusions, that unless the reader is well acquainted with what is known to lawyers as the “doctrine of uses” and that smaller branch of the subject dealing with “failure of consideration” he will be sure to miss the best points of the Sonnet. But who except the shining lights of the Inns of Court troubled about such matters, or, indeed, ever referred to them? Surely not the Stratford player. What omnivorous general reader knows anything about such matters even now? The inference seems inevitable and insuperable, but the orthodox look at it and—pass on.

SONNETS LXXXVIII.—CV.

These nineteen Sonnets seem to refer to Southampton as beginning to lead a gay life at Court, and as also getting entangled in general scandal as a libertine. The date may be 1595-6, and in part of this period, as we know, Southampton was away from England with Essex. Sonnets xcvii. and xcvi. fit in very well with this absence and separation from Bacon.

As the "lameness," which the author of the Sonnets admits as an affliction of his, is mentioned in this section (Sonnet LXXXIX.) as well as elsewhere (xxxvii.), it will not be amiss to consider it more closely. Whatever it was, the defect was with him, as with Byron, a subject about which he had unpleasant feelings of shame.

Capell and other Shakespearians have conjectured that Shakespeare was literally lame, while others have thought of the lameness only in connection with Shakespeare's morals. Mr. Swinburne, in his *Report of the Proceedings, &c., of the Newest Shakespeare Society* (April 1, 1876), introduces Mr. D. reading a paper on "The Lameness of Shakespeare—was it moral or physical?" Mr. D. assumed at once that the infirmity was physical. "Then arose the question—In which leg?" and then the discussion proceeded in far more earnest, courteous, and serious fashion than is ever granted or allowed or practised when dealing with Baconian heretics.

As Mr. Algernon C. Swinburne, besides being a most distinguished poet and man of letters, is also a high Shakespearian authority, I will give his report in full of Mr. D.'s paper. It was first printed in the *Examiner* of April 1, 1876, and never having been reprinted as far as I know, I think it will interest my readers. It must be remembered that Mr. Swinburne only professed to act as the secretary or reporter of the Society, and therefore cannot be held responsible for Mr. D.'s views, but I do not think he would have published them, unless he thought some good Shakespearian object would be

obtained by their publication. I therefore reproduce them :

“Mr. D. then brought forward a subject of singular interest and importance—‘The lameness of Shakespeare: was it moral or physical?’ He would not insult their intelligence by dwelling on the absurd and exploded hypothesis that this expression was allegorical, but would at once assume that the infirmity in question was physical. Then arose the question, ‘In which leg?’ He was prepared, on the evidence of an early play, to prove to demonstration that the injured and interesting limb was the left. ‘This shoe is my father,’ says Launce in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; ‘no, this left shoe is my father;—no, no, this left shoe is my mother;—nay, that cannot be so neither:—yes, it is so, it is so; *it hath the worser sole.*’ This passage was not necessary either to the progress of the play, or to the development of the character; he believed he was justified in asserting that it was not borrowed from the original novel on which the play was founded; the inference was obvious, that without some personal allusion it must have been as unintelligible to the audience, as it had hitherto been to the commentators.

“His conjecture was confirmed, and the whole subject illustrated with a new light by that well-known line in the Sonnets, in which the poet describes himself as ‘made lame by Fortune’s dearest spite,’ a line of which the inner meaning and personal application had also by a remarkable chance been reserved for him (Mr. D.) to discover. There could be no doubt that we had here a clue to the origin of the physical infirmity referred to: an accident which must have befallen Shakespeare in early life while acting at the Fortune Theatre, and consequently before his connection with a rival company—a fact of grave importance till now unverified. The epithet ‘dearest,’ like so much else in the Sonnets, was evidently susceptible of a double interpretation. The first and most natural explanation of the term would at once suggest itself; the playhouse would of necessity be dearest to the actor dependent on it for subsistence, as the means of getting his bread; but he thought it not unreasonable to infer from this unmistakable allusion, that the entrance fee charged at the Fortune may probably have been higher than the price of seats in any other house. Whether or not this fact, taken in conjunction with the accident already mentioned, should be assumed as the immediate cause of Shakespeare’s subsequent

change of service, he was not prepared to pronounce with such positive confidence as they might reasonably expect from a member of the Society; but he would take upon himself to affirm that his main thesis was now and for ever established on the most irrefragable evidence, and that no assailant could by any possibility dislodge by so much as a hair's-breadth the least fragment of a single brick in the impregnable structure of proof raised by the argument to which they had just listened.

"There was much further discussion, and a paper by Mr. G. on the quarrel between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, which unfortunately had to be postponed."

CIV. is an important Sonnet, for it supplies a chronological allusion, and these are scanty enough in the Sonnets. Three years have passed since "first your eye I ey'd," it says. Now this peculiar phrase about the eyes recalls the early Procreation Sonnets, I. and XVII., in both of which the youth's eyes are specially marked for admiration, and such very early Sonnets could not refer to Pembroke, as we showed. This Sonnet CIV. also speaks of the friend's "sweet hue," and "hue" is a Southampton word exclusively, so we get the date about 1595.

Sonnet CVII. is also a crucial Sonnet as to date. The two important lines are :

"The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage."

From these words some critics date the Sonnet before the Queen's death (1601), and others after the Queen's death (1603). It is pretty certain that the mortal moon stands for Queen Elizabeth; no title was more popular for her with the poets. But what does "hath her eclipse endured" mean? Is it her death that is referred to, or has she endured and passed through an eclipse—a time of dark danger—with Essex, and is now shining brightly again? On first reading Death seems meant, but a consideration of contemporary parallel passages points clearly away from Death and fixes the Sonnet at about 1601, the date of Southampton's imprisonment, apparently hinted at in the "sad augurs" whose presage about his success and Essex was so miserably wrong. The author of

Henry V. would be a "sad augur" now in 1601. But for the Queen to endure an eclipse need not mean her death. Bacon himself shall prove this beyond controversy. In his *History of Henry VII.* he says: "The Queen hath endured a strange eclipse." He also writes in 1594 to Lord Keeper Pickering: "If this eclipse of her (Majesty's) favour were past." * About the year 1599 Bacon writes to the Queen: "I beseech our blessed Saviour . . . that I may never live to see any eclipse of your glory, interruption of safety, or indisposition of your person." †

The first two lines of this same Sonnet CVII. refer to Bruno's *Philosophy*, which the author-poet had read in the Italian. All these things point to Bacon. CVIII. is connected with the preceding CVII. and with Southampton's imprisonment, and seems to be of the same tenor as Bacon's letter to Southampton after his imprisonment already quoted.

The line

"When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent"

of CVII. suits 1601 better than 1603 for date. But an earlier eclipse, the attempted murder of Queen Elizabeth in 1594, may be the one.

SONNETS CIX.—CXXV.

There has been a period of absence between Southampton and the poet, and the latter admits sins of omission and of commission during this time; but still there is nothing in all the world so dear to the poet's heart as his "Rose":

"For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my Rose; in it thou art my all."

There is no very clear reference to date in this sequence, but it seems to have been written after Southampton had returned from his Irish expedition with Essex (1599). This may have been the absence referred to, and while

* Abbott's *Bacon*, p. 37.

† Spedding's *Bacon*, ix. 160.

the Earl was away, certain indiscretions, which are vaguely hinted at, seem to have occurred. The poet confesses them with sorrow. Whatever they were they caused much "vulgar scandal," and they brought odium on the poet, for his name received "a brand," seemingly a "public" brand. He admits he had made himself "a motley to the view," and "gored his own thoughts" and "look'd on truth askance." All which seems to mean that he had acted more like a fool than a wise or sane man, had wounded his self-respect, and paid very slight heed to truth or virtue when they turned their admonishing eyes upon him.

If we read carefully the first four Sonnets of this sequence, and then read CXIX. and CXXI., we cannot fail to see a threefold charge admittedly hanging over the poet's head—a public *odium*, a vulgar private *scandal*, and a "madding fever" for an unworthy syren. I contend, taking into consideration the evidence about Bacon, already adduced, that all these three charges fit in with *his* life and character much better than with Shakespeare's. For Bacon incurred much public odium for taking a part in the Government prosecution of his closest friend Essex. This "public manner" of proceeding against Essex was imposed upon Bacon by "public means," *i.e.* his public position as a "learned counsel," and he hints that his nature was "subdued" to it not willingly, but of public necessity. This is his excuse in Sonnet CXI., and he lays the blame on "the guilty goddess Fortune." But the public opinion was strongly against Bacon, for Essex was most popular, and to be committed to custody almost directly he returned from Ireland raised pity far and wide, and, to use Bacon's own words, "Pity in the common people, if it run in a strong stream, doth ever cast up scandal and envy." * The people and the friends of Essex suspected an enemy at court, and as Bacon had been several times admitted to the Queen's presence, envy and odium fell strongly on him.

Bacon excuses himself to Southampton for his "harm-

* *History of Henry VII.*, Works, vi. p. 203.

ful deeds" (they *were* "harmful" to Southampton, and we know Bacon begged hard to be excused acting against his former friends) by reminding him that Fortune had obliged him to take up "public duties" and "public manners" (and not over-scrupulous were these last), to earn his living as an unprovided-for younger son. I know well that this particular Sonnet has been thought to be the best proof there is that the author of the Sonnets was an actor, and therefore Shakespeare,* but the "harmful deeds" of the second line of the Sonnet seem to exclude this interpretation.

The "vulgar scandal" has been sufficiently examined elsewhere. Enough here to say that it is Baconian and not Shakespearian. CXXI. deserves careful attention. The love fever seems to point to Mary Fitton :

"How have mine eyes out of their spheres been *fitted*, †
In the distraction of this madding fever!"

—*Sonnet CXIX.*

and the "Syren tears" are Baconian, as we see by what is said in Bacon's Essay "Of Love" (1612): "[Love]

* Mr. Tyler says (p. 270): "The allusions in this Sonnet CXI. to Shakespeare's profession as an actor are not to be doubted." What Mr. Massey says on this same Sonnet is well worth perusal, both on account of the convincing force of his remarks, and because it shows us how the most ingenious and expert Shakespearians, arguing from an unsound hypothesis, are constantly wounding and shooting their own side. Mr. Massey proves at great length that this Sonnet CXI. has nothing to do with Shakespeare and the stage, and completely demolishes Mr. Tyler's assertions and allusions. Mr. Massey shows that no one has "ever heard of any 'harmful deeds' or doings of Shakespeare, occasioned in consequence of his connection with the stage. Nor do we see how his name could be branded or 'receive a brand' from his connection with the theatre. What name? He had no name apart from the theatre and the friendships it had brought him. His name was created there. His living depended *on* the theatre; he met and made his friends *at* the theatre; he was making his fortune *by* the theatre; how then should he exclaim *against* the theatre? And then the meaning and application of 'public manners' and 'public means' is considered through several pages, with the result that Shakespeare and the actor's life is not referred to here at all" (pp. 189-195, private edit. 1888). Mr. Massey was a well-known and staunch Shakespearian, and laughed Bacon to scorn, but he rightly excluded Shakespeare here.

† This word *fitted* is, I think, rather an important piece of evidence in a matter where direct evidence is very scanty—I mean the matter of the Dark

doeth much mischief ; sometimes like a *Siren*, sometimes like a *Fury*." Cf. also *De Sap. Vet.*, xxxi.

SONNET CXXIII.

This Sonnet and some others are supposed to show traces of Bruno's philosophy, and Brandes, the great Danish critic on Shakespeare, inclines to the view that the author of the Shakespeare Plays and Poems was well acquainted with Bruno's curious opinions. (Cf. Brandes, ii. 14, &c.)

"No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change :
Thy pyramids built up with newer might
To me are nothing novel, nothing strange ;
They are but dressings of a former sight."

In this Sonnet, besides Bruno, we have the curious Baconian doctrine of the pyramidal form of science touched upon. Bacon, in his philosophical works, frequently advances the theory that knowledge was best represented in the form of a pyramid gradually tapering up to the transcendental from the broad bases of Natural Experiment. (Cf. Prof. Nichol's *Bacon*, ii. 231.)

As for Bacon and Bruno, we may record that in June 1583 there were grand doings at Oxford in honour of a "comte palatin de Pologne." Bruno was there and played an important part, for he sustained an argument against the most famous doctors of the University, defending the system of Copernicus against the older views. Was Bacon there? Not unlikely, for he was fond of hearing and seeing these Italian freethinkers, and when later on another famous and unfortunate Italian, Vanini, came to London and played at turning Protestant, we hear that Francis Bacon was the most noticeable man Lady's personality. The use of the word fitted here is unique, and it has a place all to itself in the *New Eng. Dict.* :

"Fit v² obs. rare¹ trans. To force by fits or paroxysms *out of* (the usual place); c. 1600. Shaks. Sonn. CXIX."

No other instance is known. So the word was probably invented by the poet for the sake of the verbal allusion or pun on Mistress Fitton's name. All this is quite in Bacon's manner. His enormous vocabulary is due a great deal to his own invented words, and we know he could seldom avoid a jest or quip if the opportunity presented itself.

among the large audience that assisted at the usual function held at such conversions. This was 1st July 1612. And in 1625, just before his death, Bacon writes to P. Fulgentius and tells him that he remembers writing a daring book called *Temporis Partus Maximus* quite forty years before. This would carry us to the exact date of Bruno's works, published (1583-1585) in London, which very probably had stirred up Bacon's thoughts to such metaphysical matters.

Where was Shakespeare in 1583-5? Ah! what a different *entourage!* What time or inclination or knowledge of Italian would he have just then to deal with the high question of "the prophetic and soul of the world," other mystical matters of Giordano Bruno? He had a wife who had just presented him with twins, and he had his bread to earn. But some one clearly thought about such things (*cf.* Sonnets LIX., CVI., CVII., and *Richard III.*, Act II. sc. iii. lines 41-44).

We read that "on the night of Ash-Wednesday 1584, Bruno was invited by Fulke Greville to meet Sydney and others to hear his reason for his belief that the earth moves." Bacon knew Fulke Greville, and there are letters still extant between them, so Bacon might well be included in the *others* who were asked to meet Bruno.

SONNET CXXIV.

This Sonnet is much too courtier-like and statesman-like for Shakespeare; it is thoroughly Baconian. Bacon here states that his love for Southampton was a personal love and quite apart from political or "state" considerations, and therefore it stood independent of the reverses of fortune (lines 1-8), or the choice (*alpeus*) of court favourites (line 9). *Hereticke* is in italics in the original, and therefore we must take the Greek signification, "seeking or choosing for itself." There is also allusion to the discontent existing after the death of Essex among men of rank ("our fashion"), which shows the author to be a man of quality, thus excluding Shakespeare, and

suggesting Bacon and the date 1601, which fits in with the rest of the sequence.

SONNET CXXV.

This is the "Canopy Sonnet," which has taxed the ingenuity of many interpreters, and dates have been given to it varying from 1588—the Armada year, when Elizabeth went to St. Paul's in state—to 1603-4, when King James I. made his progress through London under a canopy.

I suggest that the date was June 16, 1600, when the Queen came to Blackfriars by water to grace by her presence the wedding of Mistress Anne Russell, one of her maids of honour and also a cousin of Francis Bacon. It was a great function; Mistress Mary Fitton was there, and took the prominent part in the masque. William Herbert and Lord Cobham conducted the bride to church, and the Queen was carried from the water-side in a *lectica* borne by six knights. I suggest, as highly probable, that Bacon was one, for although not yet a knight, he was cousin of the bride, and on most intimate terms with the young noblemen who were present, and therefore may have been privileged to help in bearing the canopy and escorting the Queen.*

* It is quite possible that the expression "bore the canopy" is a purely figurative one; just as the next expression, "laid great bases for eternity," clearly is so. In that case the references would be to the two poems dedicated to Southampton—*Lucrece*, and *Venus and Adonis*. And other parts of this Sonnet would agree very well with this view; he now asks Southampton for something closer and more hearty than formal outward praise in dedications:

"No;—let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,
But mutual render only me for thee."

On this view we could better explain the curious phrase "not mixed with seconds" in a very Baconian manner; it would be a jesting pun referring to his "second" name William Shakespeare being mixed up with the oblation which he had made in *Lucrece* and had signed "Your Lordship's in all duty" (= duty = duo). I am rather inclined to prefer this explanation to my suggestion of the historical wedding canopy; for the author of the Sonnets is most studious not to let drop any plain hint by which his identity could be proved, and if a real event in his life is referred to by the words, "I bore the canopy," the writer is almost uplifting the mask, which he has been carefully and persistently keeping on throughout both series of the Sonnets.

As to the *informer* of the last line but one, there is some hidden allusion, for the word is one of the few placed in italics in the original. I think the poet is here apostrophising Sir William Knollys, the Comptroller of the Household, who had done him some bad turn, perhaps connected with Mary Fitton. The italicised *informer* would be very applicable to him, for in the Essex trial he appeared in that rather odious position. Some remark of Cecil's had been mentioned in the course of the trial by both Southampton and Essex; and they were asked who had informed them of this saying of Cecil's. They did not wish to say at first, but at last it was reluctantly admitted by Southampton that Sir William Knollys was the authority for it, that he was the *Informer*. There is another word too in the Sonnet that points to this same court official quite in Bacon's manner—it is the word "control":

"Hence, thou suborn'd *informer*! a true soul
When most impeach'd stands least in thy *control*."

Now Sir William was the *Comptroller* of the Household, with special care of Mistress Fitton and the bevy of maids of honour.

If Francis Bacon had an intrigue of any kind with Mary Fitton, the Comptroller would be the most likely man to impeach one or both—for he was very partial to Mary himself, and would have married her if his old wife had not been in the way. He, too, was one of the three Wills of a future Sonnet, cxxxv., and as the "Dark Lady" had

"Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents."

—*Sonnet CXLII.*

very likely the all-receptive Mary had taken the rent or "benevolence due" to the elderly wife of her "Comptroller" *Will*. But that is another story.

As to that word *informer*, we must not forget that jealousy is called "this sour informer" in *Venus and Adonis*. Perhaps the author wished to remind the Earl of Southampton of that passage as well.

This Sonnet also contains in line 10 a request which we may certainly term Baconian :

"And take thou my oblation, poor but free."

"My oblation!" Why, this is the very expression Bacon used when he presented his *Advancement of Learning* to King James in 1605, and he reckons the oblation of his book to the King amongst the "*freewill* offerings."

SONNET CXXVI.

This Sonnet, addressed to "my lovely boy," is generally supposed to be an *Envoy* to the preceding Sonnets, or, as some think, to the whole first series.

I can make very little out of it. *Audit* and *quietus* (lines 11, 12) seem legal and Baconian, but they might just as well be Stratford law and Shakespearian, for Stratford municipal accounts tell us that on Jan. 10, 1564,

*"Sic quieti sunt
Johannes Taylor et Johannes Shakspeyr."*

Here we have a decided break in the course of the Sonnets. A new series and a new history now begin. We hear no more of "my Rose" or "my lovely boy." Henry Wriothesley seems to disappear, and a certain *Will*, "a man right fair," plays a principal and unworthy part, in company with a "woman colour'd ill." To the latter the majority of the remaining Sonnets are addressed.

But before we quite leave the first series, and the hero and youthful Adonis who figures there as "my Rose," let us consider some facts which may suggest a possible reason for such an unusual term of endearment for a male.

In February 1592, Henslowe's new theatre, the "Rose," was opened on the Bankside for Lord Strange's Players, with whom Shakespeare acted, and only a short time before this same company had an important rise in public esteem by acting several times (six) before the Court, while during the years previous (1587-1591) the Queen's and the Admiral's were the only companies who performed at Court at all. This new favour continued in after years,

and Shakespeare's company henceforth had the pre-eminence in courtly favour.

Fleay, the great authority on the actors and plays of that period, attributes this change to Lord Southampton's influence, who had recently entered at Gray's Inn. For although the Earl might seem too young at nineteen to have much personal influence in advancing or favouring any particular body of players, yet he could easily induce Sir Thomas Heneage to aid his projects; for Sir Thomas was fond of the young Earl's widowed mother, and afterwards married her. He was officially connected with the direction of the theatres, and in him afterwards, in 1594, Bacon found a firm ally when seeking office. In fact, Essex and Mr. Vice-Chamberlain (Heneage) did more for Bacon than any of his other friends.

Here then we have Bacon, Southampton, Shakespeare's Company, and the Rose Theatre all brought closely together, and if Bacon and Southampton went to the Bankside as special patrons of the new house, and sat together enjoying the hidden allusions of the plays—a veritable Damon and Pythias of the newly opened Rose—may not that be one reason among others why the “lovely boy” of the Sonnets is so often called “my Rose”?

Again the question crops up, why is not Shakespeare ever mentioned or hinted at, if such interest is shown to be taken in him and his fellow-actors by Bacon and Southampton? Why this conspiracy of silence? I think the somewhat parallel case of Sir Walter Scott throws light on this. The author of *Waverley* used to place poetical mottoes as headings to the chapters in his novels. He quoted from many different poets, but he never (with one exception) quoted from a poet named Walter Scott, who was often in men's mouths and much admired just then. This was remarked upon as suspicious at the time. But it was soon seen that Sir Walter did not wish to “repeat himself.” Is that why Bacon never mentions Shakespeare? Perhaps it is one reason—but there are more serious reasons in this case of implicated scandal and odium.

But not only does Bacon never mention Shakespeare, but a great many other contemporaries never once mention him, even men who had written many voluminous works, such as Selden and Clarendon. Look, too, at the extraordinary case of Henslowe and Alleyn. If any men in the dramatic world were thoroughly acquainted with Shakespeare, and also knew his connection with Southampton, and perhaps Bacon, it was these two managers of theatres, of the "Rose" for many years, and the "Fortune" as well. Yet Henslowe's *Diary*, which contains frequent mention of many actors and playwrights for a long course of years, never so much as mentions Shakespeare directly or indirectly. Ben Jonson, Dekker, Chettle, Munday, Drayton, Marston, and others appear frequently in the comic spelling of this successful manager, but his *Diary* does not make a single attempt to spell the very variable name of the Stratford player. Neither do the Alleyn papers, although they mention many contemporary dramatists. Commendatory verses were common enough in those days, but in Shakespeare's lifetime he neither received any in connection with his own books nor composed any for other people's books.

The orthodox Shakespearians are always dwelling on the crushing weight of contemporary evidence, and suppose that alone to be an insuperable argument. It is really nothing of the kind. They put a false estimate upon it. There is reference certainly now and again to "sweet Mr. Shakespeare," "gentle Shakespeare," and the like; and *Venus and Adonis*, and *Tarquin* and *Lucrece*, were favourite poems, and were connected with a name or pen-name of Shakespeare; but seldom can we find anything clearly pointing out the Stratford actor, and again and again his famous contemporaries utterly ignore this surprising genius when there seems every reason to expect a notice of him.

We now come to the second series :

SONNETS CXXVII.—CLII.

A "Dark Lady" fills nearly all the canvas in the remarkable picture here put before us. She is such a

lady as no amorous sonneteer had ever ventured to depict before, and this is one reason for believing in her personal existence, and for inferring that here certainly we have no glorified or spiritualised creation of a poet's brain. Her eyes are raven black, her hair is like unto black wires, there are no roses in her cheeks, and her complexion seems to be anything but a good one, and her breasts are by no means the rising hills of snow that inflame rather than cool the lover's passion—they are dun. The poet feels that he cannot say of her :

“Vera incesso patuit Dea,”

and so he says, rather prosaically :

“My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.”

And yet in spite of all her defects there is this passionate finish :

“And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she bely'd with false compare.”

It seems by Sonnet cxxviii. that the lady was a fascinating player on the virginals, and therefore we may infer she was of good birth and expensively educated. The poet asks her (line 14) to give him her “lips to kiss.” Surely such aristocratic lips were not for Shakespeare! Then there is the well-known incident of the poet's dear male friend who so treacherously robbed the poet of this Dark Lady of his heart.

Then we have two singular Sonnets playing on the word *Will* in a most intricate and puzzling fashion (cxxxv. and cxxxvi.). I have already given my reasons for supposing the three *Wills* are William Herbert, Sir William Knollys, and Will Kemp the clown and acrobatic dancer, and have quoted the court ballad which coupled Mary Fitton with the clown. This is the only evidence we have as against Kemp, it is true, and no one would have thought of him, if it had not been for the ballad. When first I saw the ballad I thought the “clowne” was Shakespeare, so called as a Warwickshire yokel; but remembering that Kemp had dedicated his one famous

book to a Fitton who was a maid of honour, and most likely Mary Fitton the excellent dancer, I then, on this corroborative evidence, took Kemp to be more likely than Shakespeare.

Sir William Knollys is another new candidate for admission into the trio of *Wills*, but is not of my introducing. His claim has sprung up from the old documents and letters in the muniment room at Arbury, the country house of the Newdegate family, into which family Mary Fitton's elder sister married. From his letters to Mary's married sister (Anne Newdegate) he plainly shows his love for Mary, and that he would have liked her to have made him a father. But unfortunately Sir William was encumbered with a wife considerably his senior; however, it is believed that he promised to marry her when his wife died, and thus they were betrothed in a way. But as the Sonnets show plainly, the Dark Lady would break bed-vows or any vows, and would think nothing of being "twice-forsworn."

Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour seem to have been a rather noisy and frisky company of girls at bed-time, and Mary Fitton was presumably by no means the most sedate. She had also some curious experiences with the second Will. Sir Nicholas l'Estrange reports that when Sir William Knollys lodged at Court (which was his rightful position, being Comptroller of the Household) "some of the ladyes and Maydes of Honour used to frisk and hey about in the next room, to his extreme disquiete a nights, though he often warned them of it; at last he getts in one night at their revells, stripps off his shirt, and so with a pair of spectacles on his nose and Aretine in his hand, comes marching in at a posterne door of his own chamber, reading very gravely, full upon the faces of them." He enjoyed his joke, "for he often faced them and often traverst the room in this posture above an hour."

What must his wife have thought, if she heard of it! And what must the girls have thought when they heard, many years after, that Sir William had become a sure

and onlie (?) begetter at the age of eighty-four.* Surely they could not but recall the gymnosophist who studied his "Aretine" and tried to send them all to bed in the earlier days of their love's young dream.

There was evidently something out of the common in this scandal with the maid of honour, for Sir Robert Cecil, writing to Sir George Carew on Feb. 5, 1601, uses these rather suspicious words: "We have no news, but that there is a misfortune befallen Mistress Fitton, for she is proved with child, and the Earl of Pembroke being examined, *confesseth a fact*, but utterly renounceth all marriage." What was this fact, or perhaps fault, that may have induced him to renounce his serious responsibility? Was the "clowne," from whom Pembroke took her, brought into the matter, or did the Comptroller "impeach" Francis Bacon? We cannot tell; but the more we search into the unpleasant mystery of the three Wills, the less can we find any evidence implicating Will Shakespeare. Of course there remains, and always must remain, that enigmatic closing distich of Sonnet cxxxvi.:

"Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
And then thou lov'st me,—for my name is *Will*."

Until it be definitely proved that the writer means by these lines that his name is Will Shakespeare, I cannot

* For the remarkable Earl of Banbury paternity case see *Nat. Dict. Biog.*, s.v. "Banbury." When Edward was born, the father, William Knollys, first Earl of Banbury (the "Controller"), was eighty years old, and when the second son Nicholas was born, he was eighty-four!

The legal doctrine is "*Pater est quem nuptiæ demonstrant*," but the House of Lords has repeatedly refused to admit the legitimacy of the Countess of Banbury's sons, and so their descendants are without their titles to the present day.

One is rather reminded of the grey-haired old gentleman who one morning at his club pointed out with glee to a friend the announcement in the *Times*, that his wife had again given him a son; but was rather taken aback when his friend, in a voice of dismay, exclaimed "Good God, whom do you suspect?" Such a question might well have been addressed to the first Earl of Banbury.

I am afraid, too, that the book this virile old gentleman held in his hand was even worse than the modern reader may suspect. Marston tells us that Italianated Englishmen used to bring home "Aretine's pictures" with them from Venice (*Satire* II. 145); these would be the infamous "positions" of Giulio Romano, with verses by Aretin to accompany them.

accept the ordinary solution. There is so much word-play in the various uses of Will, that we must always be in some doubt as to what the writer of the Sonnets really means here.

In consequence of this enigmatical pleasantry and constant punning reiteration on the word "Will," Mr. Sidney Lee, in the *Fortnightly Review* (1888), wants to brush aside all inferences concerning Will Herbert, Will Shakespeare, and Will Knollys. He tries to do so by heaping up instances of playful contemporary reference to *Will* in the sense of lust or wilful lechery, and adds in a note (p. 219) that "the italics in the Sonnets may be disregarded, they only confuse the interpretation" (!). I fancy the truth is, he feels that they confuse *his* interpretation. But his argument makes it pretty clear that the writer *might* have meant by "my name is *Will*" something very different from Will Shakespeare. The idea intended to be conveyed may well be something of his kind: "Love the name *Will*, for that so well describes me and my passionate desire for you, that I may claim the name myself—I am indeed Will personified in my wilful passion for you." Or again, Will or Willy was a common poetic name for a pastoral love-poet, and the author of *Venus and Adonis* was that *par excellence*. He might have been "Shepherd Will," just as another fine poet was "Shepherd Tony." Or again, but this seems more unlikely, Bacon, as the writer, might mean that to the world at large his name as author of the Shake-speare "sugred" Sonnets and the Shake-speare Plays was not Francis, but *Will*.

At least, then, we may say that there are such sufficiently good alternative explanations, as to prevent the interpretation of Will Shakespeare as the name of the author being considered a *certainty*.

SONNET CXXXVII.

This sonnet is an important one, for it shows, by metaphors in no ways obscure, what the moral character of the "Dark Lady" really was. She was

"The bay where all men ride."

If Mary Fitton, the young maid of honour, is meant, this statement is certainly startling. The Masques and Revels of the Court of our great Virgin Queen must have concealed a state of morality far worse than our historians ever gave it credit for. We know Lady Anne Bacon made great complaints of Essex, and perhaps other young gallants as well, being too free with her nieces the Russells and other maids of honour; but Lady Anne was a rigid precisian, and may have therefore imagined more evil than really existed. But here we have the Dark Lady spoken of in terms only befitting the vilest and commonest "drab." In fact, a few lines farther on, this same lady is called "the wide world's common place." The distich is:

"Why should my heart think that a several plot
Which my heart knows the wide world's common place.

This reference to a common and its enclosure into *severals* may be compared with what Bacon says in a letter to Essex in 1595 after he had received from the Earl a valuable present of land, probably in Twickenham Park: "I reckon myself," he writes, "as a common, and as much as is lawful to be enclosed of a common, so much your lordship shall be sure to have."

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act II. sc. i., we have

"My lips are no common though several they be."

But this question of the Dark Lady and Mary Fitton is further discussed in the chapter on "Had Bacon a Mistress?"

I am sorry to say that the private records of the Newdegate family seem to show that the Elizabethan maid of honour belonged decidedly to that unfortunate class of women who are described as "women with a past." We find this portion of her MS. pedigree:

Capt. Lougher, <i>1st husband.</i>	= MARY FITTON =	Capt. Polwhele, <i>2nd husband.</i>
	Maid of Honour, had one bastard	
	by Wm., E. of Pembroke, and two bastards by Sir Richard Leveson, Kt.	

This is bad enough as it stands, but what makes it still worse is that genealogists cannot agree as to whether Captain Lougher was her first husband or her second—she was a lady evidently very “mixed” in her matrimonial relations. And then there was Will Kemp the “clowne,” who probably coached her for the intricate steps in the Court masque dances, and last (if she had a last) there was Sir William Knollys, the grave old gentleman who walked up and down before the maids of honour in a kind of “undress” uniform with his A—— in his hand. With such a record, I dare not say that Mary Fitton can *not* be the lady hinted at in the present Sonnet.

SONNET CXXXVIII.

This is one of the two Sonnets printed piratically by Jaggard in 1599. It is important for our purpose, because here we have the author calling himself *old* at some period before 1599. We are here on *terra firma*, and taking the supposition that these Sonnets were only just written, we have the writer (if Shakespeare) speaking of himself as old in his thirty-fifth year and (if Bacon) in his thirty-eighth year. Neither age quite warrants the appellation *old*, but the Sonnet becomes much more suited to the assumption of Baconian authorship, because Bacon has spoken of his being aged while yet in his prime, and Shakespeare has said nothing to that effect.

SONNET CXLIII.

This Sonnet, with its simile of a “careful housewife” running after a bird, probably a chicken, while her own child keeps running after her, reminds one very much of Bacon’s simile in his letter to Fulke Greville in 1595. He is complaining of the want of success that attends his pursuit of the Queen’s favour. “For to be, as I told you, like a child following a bird, which when he is nearest flieth away and lighteth a little before, and then the child after it again, and so *in infinitum*, I am weary of it.”*

* This same Baconian simile occurs almost word for word in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* (Act I. sc. iii.): “I saw him run after a gilded butterfly; and when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again; and over and over he comes and up again.”

Our poet uses this simile for the Dark Lady's benefit, and tells her :

“So run'st thou after that which flies from thee.”

This fugitive was William Herbert according to our theory of the *Will* Sonnets, and possibly at first this youthful courtier was rather shy of the Dark Lady as being too forward for his delicate and sensitive nature.

I have quoted in full, elsewhere in this volume (p. 156), a sonnet written by this same William Herbert to some unknown tempter of the softer sex, who had tried to overcome his bashfulness by a very liberal display of her charms. That sonnet shows plainly that young Herbert could be very shy and reserved if he suspected anything wrong. What if the unknown tempter was Mary Fitton ?

Though at first, then, it appears that the lady could not succeed either in catching her bird or in putting a little salt on his tail, yet afterwards, as we know, she was more successful, and got both herself and her loved one into great trouble through it. This appears in Sonnet XLI., one of the few Sonnets that have got displaced ; we read there :

“Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won ;
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailed ;
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son
 Will *sourly* leave her till she have prevailed ?”

The word “sourly” here fits in well with the “sullen eyes” of Herbert's sonnet, and the same lady seems to be meant in both cases. Cf. also Sonnet CXLIV., line 8 :

“Wooing his purity with her foul pride.”

This Sonnet CXLIII. seems both by its position and contents to belong plainly enough to the *Will* Herbert series. But a German commentator will have it that the “feathered creature” was a hen, *i.e.* a Hen which, he says, is short for Henry, and that Henry, Earl of Southampton, is the man meant here, and he proposes an emendation for the last two lines of the Sonnet, which

are at first sight rather against his theory. However, his emendation puts it all right, for instead of :

“So will I pray that thou may'st have thy *Will*
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still,”

he proposes :

“So will I pray that thou may'st have thy *Hen*
If thou turn back and my loud crying pen.”

His annotations are : “*Hen*, short for *Henry*, not so usual certainly as *Harry* or *Hal*, but not unknown. *Cf.* *B. Webster*, s.v. *Henry*, *Muret*, &c. For ‘*pen*’ *cf.* *Lucrece*, 681 :

“He *pens* her piteous clamours on her head.”

What are we coming to ? These Germans seem bent upon beating us on our own ground, and in our own language too. I have heard that some of the members of the German Shakespeare Society know more about the Plays than any English critic, or any Baconian either. I doubt whether the famous Bentley in his most far-fetched emendation of our great blind poet ever surpassed the above.

This next Sonnet, CXLIV., gives us more hints than the majority of the Sonnets. We get a limit of date, for the *Passionate Pilgrim*, which contains it and CXXXVIII., was published in 1599. Therefore this curious love history is probably shortly before that date, and that is rather too early for the Herbert-Fitton incident : again, line 12,

“I guess one angel in another's hell,”

seems to show that the author was well acquainted with the unspeakable tale in Boccaccio, which was not, I believe, at that time translated into English, and is generally a little oasis of French in our English versions still.

And the last line,

“Till my bad angel fire my good one out,”

points very plainly to a peculiar theory of the nature of fire which Bacon held. He supposed that fire extin-

guished fire. In his *History of Henry VII.* he describes how Perkin Warbeck at the siege of Exeter fired one of the gates. "But the citizens perceiving the danger blocked up the gate inside with faggots and other fuel, which they likewise set on fire, and so repulsed fire with fire." It is also referred to in his *Promus*. (Cf. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act II. sc. iv., *ad fin.*)

Throughout this second series addressed to the Dark Lady there are occasional hidden allusions to that "infection of nature" in the writer which we have had cause to notice elsewhere: thus our author speaks of his

"Tender feeling to base touches prone;"—(CXLI.)

and again:

"Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving;"—(CXLIH.)

again:

"O, though I love what others do abhor,
With others thou should'st not abhor my state;"—(CL.)

again:

"Love is too young to know what conscience is;"*—(CLI.)

again:

"My soul doth tell my body that he may
Triumph in love; flesh stays no further reason,
But rising at thy name, doth point out thee
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her "love" for whose dear love I rise and fall."—(CLI.)

This is the Sonnet which is more unworthy of Bacon, morally speaking, than any other in the whole collection. It must be construed I am afraid *sensu obscæno*, and is so bad that many Shakespearians have thought the divine William could never have written such a Sonnet about himself, not even if he had only just left the house where

* Cf. "chevril conscience" in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, Act I. sc. i.: "It shall be in the power of thy chevril conscience to do right or wrong at thy pleasure, my pretty Alcibiades." I have elsewhere supposed this aimed at Bacon, or Cheverell the lawyer.

William the Conqueror showed he was before Richard III. They say he wrote it for some one else, or they say that the indiscreet and lascivious Herbert wrote it, and that it got mixed up with Shakespeare's other Sonnets, and so was delivered to Thomas Thorpe, the printer, by Mr. W. H. the "only begetter." They will not have it that their supreme Swan of Avon should thus foul his own nest. "Is it not most damnable in us," says one of his own characters, "to be trumpeters of our unlawful intents?" Is it to be credited, they ask, that Shakespeare would not feel and act up to the level of that thought in such a matter of personal import as this? "The purest treasure mortal times afford is spotless reputation," says Mowbray. "Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls," says Iago. "I have offended reputation," exclaims Antony, "a most un-noble swerving." * They cannot think it possible that a man who cared so little about gathering up his best works would have been party to the careful treasuring up of his worst—especially a man "who was so full of self-respect, domestic prudence, practical sagacity, wise reserve, and *canny* discreetness as was our Shakespeare."

I confess such arguments do not much impress me; they seem rather out-of-date. Moreover, I do not believe that our author, whoever he was, *trumpeted* his own infamy at all. Some scrivener's apprentice stole the scrip—that seems far more feasible, and in that case such arguments fall to the ground. And Bacon's scrip seems far more likely to be lying about in reach of a publisher's pirate than Herbert's or Shakespeare's, for one had a *scriptorium* and ready "pens" or penmen, and would write to his brother Anthony for something fresh to copy so that the pens might not be idle. But the strongest imagination has failed to conceive Shakespeare's *scriptorium* or Shakespeare himself dashing off a long double letter to a learned foreign correspondent.

But let us just glance at this Sonnet that every one

* Cf. Massey, *Sonnets*, 1st edit., p. 434.

wishes to be quit of. It certainly seems to point to the author misconducting himself in some way with a lady of good rank or quality, and that her name *might* be Fitton, *i.e.* according to the punning customs of the time—"Fit one." The author's love-passion rose at her name, for he construed it as if she were "the Fit one" for him. He was not the only one who thus played on the name. On a monument of the Fitton family at Gawsworth in Cheshire, erected by Mary Fitton's sister-in-law, we are told of some members of the family who were

"Fittons to weare a heavenly Diadem."

In a former Sonnet, cxix., I have noticed a possible parallel allusion, where the author's eyes are said to have "been fitted out of their spheres" by his madding fever of love. And in *Cymbeline* we find this (Act IV. sc. i.)

"For 'tis said a woman's fitness comes by fits."

So there is a *prima facie* probability that Mistress Fitton is the "prize" of which the sonneteer was so proud. But if proud it was only for a moment, and in this Sonnet only where the flesh triumphs and conscience is put to sleep. In the next Sonnet and in many others, especially *EXXXVII.*, he admits his blindness and folly in being attracted to such a wanton and common harlot as the "worser spirit" which did "suggest" or tempt him really was. "She was," he says, "a woman colour'd ill," and I am not at all sure that this means she was of a swarthy or dark complexion, or of an unhealthy complexion. I rather think it was her moral qualities that were aimed at, and I am reminded of Bacon's Essays on the *Colours of Good and Evil*. There is also a very technical and legal sense of the word colour which we meet in *Lucrece* :

"Why hunt I then for colour or excuse?"

and in many other passages of the Shakespeare works. All these point to Bacon rather than Shakespeare.

And while just now on the subject of the "woman colour'd ill," I might refer to the other one of those—

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair"—

I mean "the better angel" or "the man right fair." Shakespearians are divided, of course, as to who he is. But as he seems also to have misconducted himself with the wanton lady of the later Sonnets, and to have

"Anchor'd in the bay where all men ride,"

so if Fitton is the right name here for the lady, then Pembroke will be the "man right fair." But Mr. Sidney Lee will have him to be Southampton throughout.

Seeing how Mr. Sidney Lee changes his views and opinions about the Mr. W. H. of the Sonnets, and how confident he always is—he certainly does not beget the confidence in him which his abilities and knowledge deserve. Mr. S. Butler has a sly hit at him at p. 66 of his *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Mr. Lee had been discussing the colour of Southampton's hair, and as he took Southampton to be the "man right fair" of this famous Sonnet, CXLIV. (The Two Loves), he had to make this hair as light as possible in the pictures and portraits of the Earl that remain. Dealing with one such picture he says, "The colour of the hair in Southampton's portrait is walnut, but is darker now than when the picture was painted." Mr. Butler remarks on this as follows: "Judging from the illustration given (in Mr. Lee's published book), when he says that the hair is walnut in colour, he must mean 'pickled walnut,' for a pickled walnut really is as black as the hair in the illustration; but how pickled walnut can be called 'bright auburn' is one of those puzzles the frequent recurrence of which detracts so seriously from the value of Mr. Lee's in many respects most interesting and useful work." *

But here I must bring my cursory view of the Sonnets to an end. The concluding eight (Sonnets CXLV.—CLII.) all deal with the author's questionings and meditations concerning the conflict in him between Reason and Conscience on the one side and Physical Love or Lust on the other. He seems to have fallen, as far as we can reasonably interpret the language used. When

* S. Butler, *Sonnets*, p. 66.

the sportive blood was hot in the veins, then he found that

“Love is too young to know what conscience is,”

and he seems to confess that he did “betray” his “nobler part” to his “gross body’s treason” (Sonnet CLI.). He was not alone in this—it is a frequent experience with the frail children of men—and many far greater saints than Francis Bacon, and men too whose intellects, like his, were of the lofty and philosophic order, men like St. Paul and Augustine, who delighted in the law of God after the inward man, but failed not to find another law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin in their members.*

The autobiographical Sonnets end rather abruptly with No. CLII., where the author accuses himself of perjured vows as well as the lady, and says :

“I am perjurd most ;

For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee.”

I don’t quite understand what he means by this. Tyler elucidates the passage thus : “ ‘To misuse thee,’ *i.e.* To treat you in a manner entirely different from that in which you ought to be treated.” Exactly so ; but one would like a little more light.

The last two Sonnets do not belong to the series at all, and are alternative renderings of a poem from the Greek Anthology. They have been referred to elsewhere as showing scholarship beyond the Stratford player’s reach. They are the contrasted attempts of a scholar’s idle moments. They are, I believe, not so much original renderings, as improvements on other men’s labours (*more Baconico*). For I find there are earlier attempts in English several years previously, and there is a good sonnet by Giles Fletcher, LL.D., in his *Licia* of 1593 (Sonnet XXVII.), founded on the same epigram. This would be almost contemporary work.

And here I will make a friendly appeal to Mr. Sidney

* See also William Huntington’s *Posthumous Letters*, iii. 196, &c. (Lond., 1815).

Lee. I take it that he knows as much about Shakespeare's times and the surroundings of the Plays as any man living. He has made a complete change of front once in his Shakespearian studies, and I now ask him to make another even more important than the last. I ask him to admit that Bacon, not Shakespeare, wrote the Poems and Sonnets, and for the moment I leave the Plays out of the question altogether. I do not think that any feeling of shame or vexation need oppress him for a moment, if he would remember, as I do, what Cardinal Newman often said in his fine sermons at Oxford, before he himself made his great change of front and position. His view was that in matters of mere opinion to have changed frequently was a true sign of vitality—and never to change in any circumstances a sure sign of stagnation. May Mr. Lee's vitality increase as he proceeds, and may his next criticism show the true sign of it.

Having thus cursorily surveyed the Sonnets on the Baconian assumption of authorship, I would state as a general remark that I should not be surprised if some of them were written by Bacon for Southampton or Herbert to send to their lady-loves. It was not at all an unheard-of thing for a lover to get a poet to write a sonnet for him in the Elizabethan days. Thurio, in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, goes into the city to seek a gentleman who shall set a sonnet to music for the purpose of paying court to Sylvia. Gascoigne, who died in 1577, tells us he had been engaged to write for others in the same fashion. The author of the *Forest of Fancy* (1579) informs us that many of the poems were written for "persons who had occasion to crave his help in that behalf," and there are other instances as well. Now we know that Bacon had a confirmed habit of writing letters for other people and supplying "devices" for Essex and such like literary tricks, and there is good contemporary evidence by Marston (1598) and others that certain aristocrats, apparently Essex and Southampton, had the repute of getting their literary work composed for them by another pen. We are told of court noblemen who were

but brokers "of another's wit" who did "but champ that which another chewed," and this specially with regard to "fine set speeches" and "sonnetting" (Marston, *Sat.* I. 42-44).

All these things add to the probability that some of the Sonnets were written by Bacon for some one else. If proved it would have little effect one way or the other on the question of authorship, but it would tend to relieve Bacon from the inference that he had a mistress of abandoned character. Of course the most inexcusable of all the Sonnets, morally speaking, is Sonnet CLI.,

"Love is too young to know what conscience is,"

and it is difficult to believe that Francis Bacon is the author of such a Sonnet. It is utterly opposed to Sonnet CXLI., the tendency and spirit quite diverse. There seems also a hidden jesting obscenity in the last lines. It is thought by some critics that it is "one of Herbert's or Southampton's productions which by chance got mixed with the others." I wish it could be proved to be so. Ben Jonson's first and early opinion about Bacon tends to establish the Sonnet as representing Bacon's conscience fairly accurately: "It shall be in the power of thy chevril conscience to do right or wrong at thy pleasure, my pretty Alcibiades" (*Poetaster*, I. 1). But Ben changed this view when he knew the man personally, and Bacon's later life bore out Jonson's later view.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE PARALLELISMS AND IDENTITIES BETWEEN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE AND THE ACKNOWLEDGED WORKS OF BACON

THESE are as plentiful as Falstaff's blackberries, and I feel somewhat as the humorous knight felt when asked for his reasons: "Give you a parallel on compulsion? No. I will give no one a parallel on compulsion, nor yet of my own free will; nor an identity either." They can be found easily enough. They grow on every bush of the Baconian nursery garden, and have been growing there for nearly forty years. They are a fruit free to all passers-by, and the nurserymen who look after the gardens say with one voice, "Taste and eat." But the men who have a reputation for being good judges of fruit, say they are not worth the ground they take up.

Let the reader, I say, please himself as to trying this singular garden; there are some odd bushes in it, and I hear that some of the out-of-the-way corners have been appropriated by strange possessors. Some say that at one end there is a "Paradise of Fools," and at another corner an odd gathering of men and women who, when they are reckoned up, are found to be mere ciphers. Let people find their parallelisms and identities themselves, and let them be sure of their own identity to begin with.

I know fairly well what reward the world gives to such explorers, and has given for forty years, and so I shall not attempt to play second Kettle to Mrs. Pott. Neither do I wish to offer "oblations" to be received by critics with language that would hardly be tolerated in a tap-room. So I therefore follow the example of the famous chapter "On Snakes in Ireland" (or was it Iceland?),

and say compendiously of this wonderful fruit from the Shakespeare Plays :

“No business done in this department during the present important alterations.”

And, indeed, what inducement can there be to bring such things before the eyes of people who would only see a wilderness full of Reeds shaken by the wind, or a desert of Potsherds scattered about the ground in sufficient numbers to make a second Monte Testaccio.

It is the immense number of those scattered identities and their want of arrangement that forms their element of weakness, just as a large undisciplined rabble with a horde of camp-followers is weaker in reality than a small determined band of tried soldiers. Perhaps, however, there may be a smooth stone or two in my small wallet which might sink into the forehead of some Goliath among the critical Philistines ; but I shall not sling them. Time works wonders, and I shall leave this desert of broken reeds and crockery to old Father Chronos, in full confidence that he will make it ere long “blossom as the rose,” and become a Garden of Pleasure to all lovers of English literature.

Besides this, these identities and parallelisms, whether good or bad, are so easily demolished ; and if a rampant Shakespearian critic has a thousand or two of these Baconian cattle to flesh his eager sword with, and can choose his victims—why then, of course, down they go like sheep before Ajax, and he stalks through the field of slaughter triumphant, and more “cocksure” than ever. No ; this chapter shall contain no parallels. I am not producing any just now.

CHAPTER XIII

HAD BACON A MISTRESS, OR WAS HE INCLINED TO
BE A MISOGYNIST ?

ON the Bacon theory of the Sonnets we are met with this serious objection—"History contains no record of Bacon keeping a mistress." Of course it is open to answer—"Neither does history contain any record that Shakespeare kept a mistress—and yet it has never prevented people, for more than two hundred years, believing that he wrote the Sonnets autobiographically. But it is a strong and serious objection nevertheless, and raises an *à priori* improbability, when we are asked to believe that Mary Fitton was Bacon's mistress. There is capital evidence for Bacon having the chance of knowing her intimately as the friend of his cousins the Russells, who were maids of honour with her and took their shares in the court festivities and masques ; and it is pretty certain that he would know her as an acquaintance before young Herbert would have a chance to do so. For Mary Fitton came to Court in 1597, and Herbert was not permanently in town till 1598. And it is quite certain that Mary Fitton was much more likely to be Bacon's mistress than to demean herself so far as to become mistress to a man of Shakespeare's position. Both suppositions seem improbable *à priori* for a maid of honour in high esteem with the Queen, but the second supposition, which is the accepted one by so many critics, seems absolutely out of court.

There is a way out of our difficulty, and it is this. I have sometimes thought that some of the Sonnets which seem to connect their author with the Dark Lady or Mary Fitton, may have been written *by Bacon for Pembroke*. This supposition has an air of *à priori* probability to

commend it, for Bacon was an adept at this feigned composition for others, and it has the extra advantage of quite doing away with the stumbling-block that Mistress Fitton was Bacon's mistress. It leaves her as Pembroke's mistress, but that is a historical fact well authenticated; and it leaves us free to reject a guilty *liaison* between Bacon and Mary, of which history has left no scrap of evidence or suggestion.

I wish I could accept this much easier theory, but the Sonnets do not seem to bear out this occasional feigned impersonation. The author (whether Bacon or Shakespeare) seems undoubtedly to have had "two loves"—the one "a man right faire," the other "a woman colour'd ill"; and even if Bacon got tired of the "Dark Lady" and of

"The expence of spirit in a waste of shame,"

and then became obsequious enough to pander to his friend's passion and write a Sonnet or two *for his friend to send to the lady*, we have still the initial difficulty of the loves of Bacon and Mary Fitton.

The love of the author of the Sonnets for the "Dark Lady" was certainly of a peculiar kind, and is expressed in a manner perfectly unique—quite contrary to the pretty way of the lovelorn sonneteers of that age—a good proof that the "Dark Lady" was not a mere abstraction of the poet's mind, but a very real and uncommon personality. "These Sonnets to the 'Dark Lady' are written on a burning theme, but they could not possibly woo the woman. Persons who serenade a lady do not usually approach her windows with a band of vulgar 'rough music.' They do not remind her that she has broken her marriage-vows, decry her charms, ask her not to play the wolf in leading lambs astray, tell her that her breath 'reeks,' and her breasts are black, her face is foul, and, to sum up, tell her she is as dark as night and as black as hell, with a view of gaining admission." So says Massey* very truly, and adds much more to the same

* Supplemental Chapter, edit. 1872, p. 7.

purpose ; but, ingenious as he so often is, he cannot explain why Shakespeare was such an extraordinary lover (for Massey is a staunch Shakespearian and laughs Bacon to scorn), or yet why Shakespeare should write feigned Sonnets for Pembroke and Southampton to Lady Rich, who was Massey's particular "Dark Lady," and who was old enough to be Pembroke's mother.

In fact, Massey completely fails to fit Shakespeare to the circumstances here, nor do I see how any of the orthodox believers can do any better.

But there is a famous man who fits the unusual circumstances admirably, and that is old Aubrey's *παιδευαστής*, Bacon. For that gifted genius was to a certain extent, in spite of his impassioned and lofty presentation of the tender passion in the play of *Romeo and Juliet* and elsewhere, at bottom a bit of a misogynist, which I have hinted at before as suggested by many depreciatory remarks about the love of women met with in the Sonnets and Plays, as well as in the acknowledged Essays of Francis Bacon. It may have come about in this way ; being an ardent lover of pure and beautiful youths, he may not have felt so much attracted by the other sex. We must always remember that the Ideal of the Sonnets, the Master-Mistress of the poet's passion, is a young man, with all the grace and tenderness, the changing hues and blushes of a bashful maiden. And we should always couple this fact with the strange love-ideals we meet with in so many of the earlier Plays—I mean the Rosalinds, the Julias, and the other "male impersonators"—graceful, slender girls in man's attire, with the doublet, hose, and other accessories of a courtly youth or pretty page.*

But although this be so, it cannot be denied that the earlier plays of Shakespeare do certainly dwell more than is usual on certain changes of sexual appearance in young lads and young girls. After Aubrey's revelation we are

* For the "other accessories" I can only refer the curious reader to Lucetta's words to Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Act II. vii. 53). Such matters were alluded to in contemporary Elizabethan literature without much scruple or offence, but it is not so nowadays.

naturally led by such incidents of the Plays to look in the direction of Bacon and Mary Fitton rather than towards Will Shakespeare and Ann Hathaway.

But after all, these suggestive incidents may be harmless enough, and indeed one of the Sonnets, the famous "Master-Mistress" one (xx.), inclines us strongly to take the more lenient view. I will quote it here, so that the reader may judge :

"A woman's face with Nature's owne hand painted,
 Haste thou, the Master Mistris of my passion,
 A woman's gentle hart but not acquainted
 With shifting change as is false women's fashion,
 An eye more bright then theirs, lesse false in rowling :
 Gilding the object where-upon it gazeth,
 A man in hew all *Hews* in his controwling,
 Which steales men's eyes and women's souls amaseth,
 And for a woman wert thou first created,
 Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a dotinge,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she prickt thee out for women's pleasure,
 Mine be thy love and thy loves use their treasure."

The two lines which I have put in italics are the more important ones with reference to what we are now considering. I think they are witnesses in the writer's favour, and exclude the grosser view. I think also that there is a play upon words in the use of the phrase *she prickt thee out for women's pleasure*, and that it is distinctly in Bacon's manner. He had the defect, which even his friends admitted, that he could not pass by a jest, if opportunity offered. Ben Jonson, while praising Bacon after his death, could not forbear a reference to this, and tells us "his (*i.e.* Bacon's) language (*when he could spare a jest*) was nobly censorious." *

Indeed the Sonnet, taken as a whole, seems to show pretty evidently that the love referred to in it was Platonical in the best sense of that word, and not after the unnatural or "wild" manner which we occasionally

* Ben Jonson's Works, edit. Gifford, p. 749.

hear of even in these refined and civilised days. It may have been "more Greek than English," but this may be attributed to the *refined* Platonism of Italian Renaissance culture, with which Bacon would be well acquainted.

We would accept any reasonable explanation rather than the gross charge which some might be inclined to draw from old Aubrey's word. The poet Gray and his Swiss friend Bonstetten have been adduced as forming a strictly parallel case.* And so has Michael Angelo, who had a strong passion for a youthful friend.†

Bonstetten was a Swiss youth of quality, who went to Cambridge with an introduction to Gray from his friend Norton Nicholls; and in Gray's letters both to Nicholls and to Bonstetten himself there are close parallels to the feelings so beautifully phrased in the Sonnets—especially as to the pangs of absence: "Alas! how do I every moment feel the truth of what I have somewhere read: 'Ce n'est pas le voir, que de s'en souvenir'; and yet that remembrance is the only satisfaction I have left. My life now is but a conversation with your shadow," &c. And another letter warns the youth against the vices to which his youth and good looks, and the example of his own class, leave him peculiarly exposed.

But the case of Michael Angelo is even stronger.

"Michael Angelo's relation to Messer Tommaso de' Cavalieri presents the most interesting parallel to the attitude which Shakespeare adopted towards William Herbert. We find the same expressions of passionate love from the older to the younger man; but here it is still more unquestionably certain that we have not to do with mere poetical figures of speech, since the letters are not a whit less ardent and enthusiastic than the Sonnets. The expressions in the Sonnets are sometimes so warm that Michael Angelo's nephew, in his edition of them,

* The Rev. Professor Beeching on the Sonnets: *Cornhill Magazine* for Feb. 1902.

† G. Brandes, *Shakespeare*, 1898, i. 343.

altered the word *Signiore* into *Signora*, and these poems, like Shakespeare's, were for some time supposed to have been addressed to a woman."

I have given barely a tithe of the arguments and letters by which the Rev. Prof. Beeching and George Brandes illustrate these close parallels. I think they have shown good cause for a belief in the innocent and Platonic character of the warm love depicted in the Sonnets. They are both orthodox Shakespearians, and are thinking of defending the character of the "Swan of Avon." I am thinking of a very different personage, intellectually, socially, and, I should certainly add, physically—but I hail their Platonic parallels with gratitude, and am glad to have Plato on my side. *Malo errare cum Platone quam cum [aliis] vera sentire.*

Bacon's real character has been more or less a mystery to most of his biographers—a mystery that we cannot expect to be ever made clear. But Mr. Abbott, who perhaps, after Mr. Spedding, has bestowed the greatest thought on this subject, makes a general remark which is worth notice in connection with the scandals we have been considering. He says: "All men lead double lives, a private and a public; but if we may believe Bacon's own account about himself—and it agrees with many casual and unpremeditated indications in his writings—he was a man in whom the two lives were to an extraordinary degree separable." This is a wise saying and worthy of all acceptance. It will account for his great intimacy with Perez while he was hard at work in the other life at the finest passages of *Romeo and Juliet*, or whatever other immortal drama was on hand at the time. It would also account for any possible scandal that there might have been connected with his earlier life and the Sonnets, even if it occurred when he was meditating the Greatest Birth of Time, or the best Policy for the Queen.

After the storm fell upon him and he was wrecked late in life, the double life becomes less apparent, and

gradually fades away. The cleansing fires had purged the dross, and he could say with truth then :

"I gaze at a field in the Past
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire.
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that
is higher.*

We get Francis Bacon's later "glimpses" in his Prayers, found after his death, in that translation of the few Psalms from a sick-bed, and also in his religious "Confession of the Faith" that was in him. For although this last was composed in earlier troubles (1602 perhaps), it was never annulled.

After all that has been said for and against this most illustrious Englishman who is, I hope and believe, eventually to be securely enthroned without serious opposition on the summit of Parnassus, I must give it as my final opinion that he was of a nobler nature and intellect than the world has given him credit for. He has been most unjustly maligned in Pope's well-known lines, and the words, or rather, the worst word, has been quoted against Bacon so often, that some of the mud contained therein has been bound to stick—when flung, as it must be, against a man unable now to reply or excuse himself. Dr. Rawley, his friend, chaplain, literary executor, and biographer, is a better authority for Bacon's character than Pope, that crooked little "note of interrogation," and the good qualities that he bears witness to in the moral and intellectual life of the great Lord Chancellor in his later years seem to bear the stamp of reasonable truth and impartial justice. If Lady Anne had good cause to complain of her younger son's carelessness for religion—or for the puritanical form of it that she professed—if that same younger son afterwards passed through a dark period of pessimistic scepticism very nearly allied to absolute Unbelief, still these were only "murmurings in the wilderness" of one who was to

* Tennyson, *Demeter and other Poems* (Lond. 1893), p. 159.

reach in later years a better spirit and to die on the Mount in the felt Presence of God Himself. It was a saying of his that "a little philosophy maketh men apt to forget God, as attributing too much to second causes; but deep philosophy bringeth a man back to God again"; and here no doubt he spoke of his own experience. His chaplain also tells us that "he was able to render a reason of the hope which was in him, which that writing of his of the Confession of Faith doth abundantly testify." We may accept this high testimony, I think, as well as the many other good qualities which Dr. Rawley assigns to his friend in the biography which was published about thirty years after Bacon's death, but had been compiled some years previously, and was published by Rawley in his own lifetime. Many people bitterly resent the "dethroning of Shakespeare" because they have, from tradition and fashion, come to view the man and his genius as something so sublime and wellnigh divine, that to speak anything derogatory against such a man is almost flat blasphemy. But this is pure idol-worship, founded on sentiment rather than on fact. As a matter of fact and evidence we may safely say that Francis Bacon, with all his faults, was a man of a higher, nobler, and diviner nature than William Shakespeare; and that therefore no harm is done to the moral convictions of any one, by dethroning the smaller man and placing the grander man in the vacant seat on the summit of Parnassus.

There seems little reason to doubt that, even if Francis Bacon had a "storm and stress" period and also a "dark" period in his earlier years, he found a philosophic and religious calm later on. His "Confession of Faith" is a noble one indeed; and has been accepted as a genuine and conscientious account of his ultimate convictions by his best biographers. It is far too little known. As Spedding says: "If any one wishes to read a *summa theologiæ* digested into seven pages of the finest English of the days when its tones were finest, he may read it here" (vii. 215). C. de Remusat says: "On ne voit

nulle raison de supposer que cette pièce, qu'il ne publia pas, ne fût point l'expression sincère de sa conviction." * A high ecclesiastical authority, viz. Abbas Jac. Andr. Emery, Congreg. St. Sulpicii generalis superior, says : " Cette confession met dans la plus parfaite évidence la religion de Bacon, elle donne encore la mesure de l'élévation de son génie, elle abonde en idées véritablement sublimes ; et ce qui est encore singulier dans cette pièce c'est que quoique l'auteur récût dans la communion de l'Église protestante, il serait difficile d'y trouver quelque article qui ne pût être avoué par un théologien de l'Église Romaine."

This last remark from the famous theological school of St. Sulpice agrees wonderfully with a similar fact that exists in connection with the immortal Shakespeare Plays. No one seems able to state clearly or positively whether the author of these Plays was a Puritan or an Anglican or a Catholic. Both in the Confession of Faith and in the Plays, the infused religious element is so lofty and so comprehensive that it seems to include both the opposing sections of the Church, as they then were. Bacon was as universal a genius in religion as in other provinces of the human intellect.

It may appear to some that these sincere religious convictions of Bacon's later days quite exclude the probability of his having a mistress or a scandal in his younger days. I cannot think so. I do not see why Bacon was not as likely to sow his wild oats as a Saint Augustine and many another man who afterwards came to die in the odour of sanctity, having "witnessed a good confession." I do not think that Bacon, as a young man, separated himself from his coetaneans as did "the Lady of Christ's," in certain special matters, some forty years later. It was an allowed saying in those times that "nowadays no courtier but has his mistress, no captain but has his cockatrice, no cuckold but has his horns, and no fool but has his feathers" ; and I think Bacon fell in with the conventions of the age for a courtier. Surely

* Bacon, *Sa Vie*, &c., Paris, 1858.

noscitur a sociis helps me here ; and the Sonnets connected with Southampton and Pembroke bear curious witness to the fact.

The chosen companions of Bacon's early middle period of life were men of loose principles, and both from his mother's letters about him, and from his own evident predilection for masques and mummeries, he was no "saintly confessor" up to the time of at least 1601 or 1602, when he said in *Hamlet* : "I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me." Perhaps the "bruits" and scandal connected with him had made him more careful since 1597 or 1598, when, if we may take the scant evidence of the Sonnets, he was beginning to be "vile esteemed," and to be fearful that Southampton would shun his close acquaintance. It is not at all unlikely that the ill odour in which he found himself both before and after the Essex trial, and the dark period in which he was thereby involved, had grave effects on his personal character, and that these and his thoughts of a well-dowered wife checked very considerably the grosser elements of his nature. I seem almost able, from Hamlet's remarks to Horatio about the gravedigger just before Yorick's skull had been thrown out, to gather the very year of the "bruits" among the vulgar, the *mendacia famæ* which Bacon refers to in his letters to Sir Robert Cecil and others in 1598. Hamlet says : "How absolute the knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe."

Now, taking *Hamlet* to be written in 1601 or a little earlier (for I do not think Bacon had anything to do with the *Ur-Hamlet* we hear of in 1589 ; this was Kyd's), we get by subtracting the three years of the text the very time when, as we have supposed from the Sonnets and other grounds, the public adverse rumours were strongest against Bacon. What if the slander was a country one

connected with Gorhambury, and hushed up with difficulty among a rural population? Village slander spreads like wildfire, but seldom gets into print. Hamlet speaking specially of the peasant leads one to think of village gossip, which notoriously puts the worst construction on doubtful matters. What if we have here a reminiscence of the "old scent" which Coke was following up when he talked about the *capias utlegatum* being clapped on Bacon's back, and used other insulting and disgraceful words?

I know the chief authorities on Bacon's life take the *capias utlegatum* incident to refer to Bacon's arrest for debt in 1598, but I think the reference is to something much more serious than this—either to the *treason* in being the author of *Richard II.* (but there would be no need of "disgraceful words" here), or, as I believe, to some scandalous charge evaded by Bacon; this was *felony*.

I am willing to allow all that can possibly or probably be said in Francis Bacon's favour regarding the "wild oats" of his youth, but I confess I do not like the frequency with which beautiful and graceful young girls don the male attire, and especially the unsavoury way in which they discuss their male dress in the Shakespeare Plays. This last is an unusual feature in Renaissance Romance or Drama, and is rather suggestive of Bacon, as it sends our thoughts to Aubrey's Greek appellation and the words that follow about Bacon's "minions." Moreover, the name Rosalind chose in *As You Like It*, when she was disguised as a young lad, was *Ganymede*, a distinctly unpleasant name through its classical allusions; for Ganymede was a minion *par excellence*. I know, of course, that this was the name in Lodge's original tale, from which the play of *As You Like It* was to a great extent derived, but the author of the play could easily have altered the name if he had chosen to do so—indeed he *did* alter most of the names—but he kept Ganymede and one or two others. But I lay very little stress on this name being chosen, for I think it is far more likely that the name was chosen casually and harmlessly rather

than that Bacon and Lodge should be written down *Arcades ambo*, or that we should say of them, as Dogberry said of his prisoners, " 'Fore God, they are both in a tale." And who is there acquainted with Renaissance literature who does not know that it was one of the commonest incidents of Italian and Spanish novels for young girls to dress themselves in the attire of a page so that they could follow their true love and be near him? Bandello's Tales and the *Diana* of Montemayor are full of such male impersonators, and I have often thought that it was through reading the *Diana* of the Spanish novelist, which had just been translated in 1598 for the English upper classes, that Mary Fitton went to meet her lover Pembroke with her clothes tucked up like a man. She had been reading the last fashionable novel, and she was madcap enough to do anything that was up-to-date and out of the common.

And while on the subject of Montemayor's *Diana*, mention should be made of its connection with the authorship of the Plays. It really affords a strong proof of the Baconian theory, for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is based on incidents in Montemayor's *Diana*, and this Shakespearian play was written before *Diana* had been translated from the Spanish, for it is mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598, and had most likely been written and acted long before this date. For in 1584-5, as we know by the Court Records, *The History of Felix and Philomena* was played before the Queen at Greenwich. Now Felix and Felismena are hero and heroine of Montemayor's novel, and so the Queen would be listening in 1585 to an imitation or reproduction in some form of the *Diana*, not at all unlikely to be an early attempt of young Francis Bacon which was afterwards revised *more suo*, and presented as the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which is itself an early play, as we judge by expressions in it reminding us of the early Sonnets. But the great proof in favour of Bacon that this play affords, is that the whole atmosphere of it, so to speak, is in the highest degree aristocratic, and far removed from that which

Will Shakespeare breathed. It was clearly a play for the court, and the allusions would be well understood by an aristocratic audience. For most of the ladies and gentlemen who aspired to frequent court society were fairly acquainted with the latest novels in their original foreign languages, and there were generally translations for those few who could only read or speak their own vernacular. Now, since the fashionable romance of *Diana* was not translated into English till 1598, it looks pretty evident that the author of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* would either have to translate from the original Spanish or some foreign version of it, or else borrow any manuscript English version he could procure. There might just possibly be two English MS. versions finished, viz., that of Barth. Yonge, eventually published in 1598, and that of Thomas Wilson, dedicated to the Earl of Southampton in 1596, and perhaps written at an earlier date. But whether the author grappled with the foreign languages, or borrowed the English translations before they were published, in both cases Francis Bacon is far the more likely man. As for Will Shakespeare attempting *Diana* either in Spanish or Italian, it seems to me a ridiculous supposition, nor would he fare much better in French.

Sir Henry Irving asked the pertinent question: "Why on earth could not Bacon let the world know in his lifetime that he had written Shakespeare?" Mrs. Gallup's reply was: "The principal reason was because the history of his life was largely given in those Plays, not alone in the bi-literal cypher but in the word-cypher, and the revelation of that in the lifetime of Queen Elizabeth would have cost him his own life. He hoped against hope to the very day of the Queen's death that she would relent and proclaim him heir to the throne. But he states that the witnesses were then dead, and the papers that would then authenticate his claims destroyed."

My reply is a very different one. It was not through any "more scandals about Elizabeth," but on account of a personal scandal of his own, which might involve

also people of high rank who were still alive. And if it be further asked why did not Bacon's own private secretary Rawley, who lived after him and edited his works, or Ben Jonson, who lived ten or eleven years after him, give to the world the wondrous news, my suggestion is that if they knew it, which I think extremely likely, they refrained from pity and sympathy with a great and unfortunate man latterly, who had made them firm friends of his, and who earnestly desired to throw a veil of concealment over the early errors of his sportive blood, which had been so long renounced and atoned for by his pure devotion to Dame Nature, his new method of enlisting her in the service of man, and his admirable *philanthropia* or lifelong endeavour for the public good.

But it will, I hope, have already been gathered from previous remarks of mine that I see another mistress connected with Bacon who is certainly very different from Mary Fitton the maid of honour;—different in age and experience and in social position—an earlier flame and a more unworthy and degrading one—a more notorious and infamous one as well, if Marston really meant that she was mixed up in Marlowe's early death. Apparently she was connected with the *habituées* of the playhouses, and known to Southampton and Bacon in that way first. Or if we put aside Marston's allusion to Marlowe as uncertain, there is other evidence pointing to a married "Dark Lady," a citizen's wife of doubtful virtue, whose shop was the resort of the fashionable gallants. And then there is Mrs. Stopes' suggestion that it was Jacquinetta Vautrollier, the dark French connection (by marriage) of Richard Field the publisher. Since Field published Bacon's *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, this seems to be a shrewd suggestion, by no means improbable. But Mrs. Stopes has no evidence to back it up, except that Field was a Stratford man and knew Shakespeare the Player.

CHAPTER XIV

BACON AS A POET

AFTER all, I believe the true estimate of Bacon will be found to be this, that he was not nearly so eminent a philosopher as he was a poet and orator, and withal a supreme master of human speech. I suppose no one knew him more intimately and with more freedom from "concealment" than his great friend Tobie Matthew. His testimony is therefore of prime importance, and is to the following effect: "A man so rare in knowledge of so many several kinds, endued with the facility and felicity of expressing it all, in so elegant, significant, so abundant and yet so choice and ravishing a way of words, of metaphors and allusions, as perhaps the world hath not seen since it was a world." *

The general belief of critics has nearly always been that Bacon was essentially prosaic, not to say prosy. His closest friend and contemporary, who was frequently corresponding with him, and was doubtless admitted to his secret, thought very differently. I maintain that his carefully expressed opinion as above would outweigh the consensus of scores of so-called "critics of style." Unfortunately, too, Mr. Spedding, who has studied Bacon's *known* works more carefully perhaps than any man living or dead, has helped to endorse this opinion of the absence of poetic fire in Bacon with his own weighty signature, and has practically declared that Bacon was incapable of writing either the Plays or the Poems, and that the styles of the two writers were perfectly distinct and unmistakable. These dogmatic assertions, uttered from

* Matthew, *Collection of Letters*, 1660, Preface.

behind the ægis of unquestioned authority, have with many people put an end to any further research into the question. This is unfortunate, for really Spedding, with all his deep acquaintance with Bacon's Life, Letters, and Works, knew hardly more than any one else about that very important period of Bacon's life between the ages of twenty and thirty. It is during this decennium, and a little earlier, that the flowers of poetic fancy are generally wont to bud and blossom, and it is just this period of Bacon's life that is so little known.

If Spedding had known what young Francis was doing in the years 1580 to 1590 as well as he knew his life later on, his dictum would have been much more weighty; but as it is, I hold that it has no warrant to carry conclusive conviction with it, especially when we remember that this opinion was probably founded on Bacon's own remarks on Poetry in the *Advancement of Learning*. But it is quite possible, and I think probable, that here Bacon "concealed" his real attitude to both Poetry and the Drama, *intentionally*. Thus Spedding would be misled. But even the careful and accurate Spedding was inconsistent, for although it is his well-known *ipse dixit* against the Baconian authorship which has strengthened the orthodox belief to such a degree that very few take the trouble to search into the dispute any further, yet this absolute anti-Baconian almost "gives himself away" with the following remark: "The truth is that Bacon was not without the fine frenzy of the poet. . . . Had his genius taken the ordinary direction, I have little doubt that it would have carried him to a place among the great poets." Yet this was the supreme authority who doubted whether there were five consecutive lines in either Bacon or Shakespeare that could possibly be interchanged and not recognised at once by any person "familiar with their several styles"!!

It is far too much taken for granted in this controversy that there is an absolute consensus of opinion against the

poetical gifts of Francis Bacon. This is not the case, as the following extracts show :

“The poetic faculty was powerful in Bacon’s mind.”—*Macaulay*.

“Another virtue of the book (Bacon’s *Essays*) is one which is not frequently found in union with the scientific or philosophical intellect ; viz., a poetical imagination. Bacon’s similes, for their aptness and their vividness, are of the kind of which Shakespeare, or Goethe, or Richter might have been proud.”—*John Stuart Blackie*.

“To this Bacon would bring something of that high poetical spirit which gleams out at every page of his philosophy.”—*Charles Knight*.

“Reason in him works like an instinct ; the chain of thought reaches to the highest heaven of invention.”—*William Hazlitt*.

“We have only to open *The Advancement of Learning* to see how the Attic bees clustered above the cradle of the new philosophy. Poetry pervaded the thoughts, it inspired the similes, it hymned in the majestic sentences of the wisest of mankind.”—*E. Bulwer Lytton*.

There are many more, and they are the common property of any reader who is unprejudiced enough to open the leaves of Mr. Edwin Reed’s anti-Shakespearian works. Unfortunately he seldom gives chapter or verse for these extracts, and I have not taken the trouble to verify them, but I believe there is every reason for accepting them as correct. I have noticed one myself from *De Maistre*, and have given it, with the reference, further on.

In later life Bacon’s views with regard to Poetry seem to have considerably altered. The difference between the views held in the *Advancement of Learning* of 1605, and the remarks on Poetry in the revised and enlarged edition of the same book in 1623, is very striking. In his later years Poetry holds a far less important place among the elements of human knowledge and progress. In *Advancement of Learning* (1605) he claims that “for the expression of affections, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholden to poets’ more than to philo-

sophers' works." In the corresponding place of the revised edition of 1623 he drops this claim altogether. In 1605 "Poesy" is declared to be one of the three "goodly fields"—"history" and "experience" being the other two—where "grow observations" concerning the "several characters and tempers of men's natures and dispositions." In 1623 this is omitted, or at least depreciated considerably, because poets are so apt to "exceed" the truth. In fact, as E. W. S. justly remarks,* the revised edition of 1623 so underrates the value of Poesy and Works of the Imagination, that we are led to think "that Bacon, if he had not been hampered by previous publications, would have deposed both Poetry and Imagination from the high place they still continued to occupy in his system."

I suggest that as Bacon grew older he looked with much less appreciation on his earlier contributions to Poetry and its criticism. He thought far less of the Shakespeare Poems and Plays than he did in younger days. His *New Method*, his *Novum Organum*, and *Instauratio* possessed him and cast out much of his earlier aspirations. Moreover, his philosophical methods could be exactly preserved in a language that would live (Latin), while his "works of recreation" could not be so preserved.

May not these things partly account for the strange neglect and concealment of the earlier and immortal productions of his genius, and for his disregard of the fame that might attach to their author? I say "partly account" advisedly, for I have given other reasons elsewhere for this concealment, viz., the wish in early days not to offend relations and friends; not to bring envy or ill-odour on himself; not to rouse personal controversy, and such like. I venture therefore to suggest, although against enormous odds, that Bacon was a born poet, and that it was the Muses who were the first to claim that incomparable intellect for themselves. But circum-

* *Shakespeare-Bacon*, an Essay, 1899, p. 41, where all the references are given.

stances were dead against his open profession of being their true liegeman. He knew well enough where his *genius* delighted to lead him, but his position in life and his surroundings forced him to follow his inner impulse not openly to be seen of all men, but hidden safely under a mask. Openly he became a great lawyer and politician, but his heart was not in the work—*multum incola fuit anima mea* was his oft-quoted complaint. He kept his countenance beneath his self-imposed literary mask with great caution and skill, and like a Franciscan brother in his cowl and rope-girdled cassock, he died and was buried, still wearing it.

Some of us, at last, are beginning to lift up the edges of it. Throughout his whole life, he voluntarily lifted off the mask to but very few—to his dear brother Anthony, his close friend Sir Tobie, his literary adviser Bishop Andrewes—perhaps these wellnigh complete the list. There were no doubt some others who discovered the secret against his wish—and among these I should put Ben Jonson, Marston, Hall, Ned Blount, and some of the piratical printers and their jackals; but both the scandal of the Sonnets and the face behind the mask were kept from public observation and comment in a truly marvelous way. The Star Chamber and its terrors had, I believe, somewhat to do with this, for the law of libel and the charge of *scandalum magnatum* could be very effectively used in those days by people high in authority.

I here maintain that Bacon's *genius* led him in his earlier days to poetry and to a style of oratorical prose, which for singularity of language, largeness of vocabulary, and richness of illustrations has hardly ever been equalled in our language. He showed his unique mastery of the English language both early and late in life, and the main difference between the two periods seems to be that he tried to be less ornate, less "spangled," and "more current in the style" in his later years. He had learned by the experience of years that this innate magniloquence to which his *genius* led him was sometimes against him rather than not, and so we find he asks his friend Sir Tobie

to mark any passages (in a MS. forwarded) where he (Bacon) may have yielded to his genius (*indulgere genio*). He intended to revise such. We have also Bacon's own clearest evidence that he was "a man born for literature" (*litteras*) rather than for anything else, and "forced against his own genius (*contra genium suum*) into affairs, by he knew not what fate." * Dr. Garnett, writing to the *Times* for July 5, 1902, suggests that the fact of Bacon being a great lawyer is very much against the Baconian authorship of the Plays, for no one illustrious in forensic circles has ever produced a masterpiece either in poetry or the drama. Dr. Garnett is not likely to be incorrect in his literary facts, but I demur to his Baconian inference, for Bacon was a lawyer *in spite of himself*, and was thus an exception to the general rule.

But how any literary student of Bacon can fail to see in his works the *vera insignia* of a poet, or pass over without notice the many *spolia opima* of our vernacular therein contained, is to me most surprising. Long ago Shelley said Bacon "was a poet," and *his* insight ought to be worth something, for he bore the true stamp of the divine art himself, and had only Bacon's prose to guide him. The fact seems to be that Francis Bacon began to be a concealed poet as early as 1579, and was laying the *foundations* of the Plays and Poems that were to make another man immortal during all the ten years, 1580 to 1590, of which we know so little. He was then a great admirer of Sir Philip Sidney, and we shall never perhaps know how often these two illustrious men discussed in friendly conference "the excellence of sweet Poesie." Later on, when his *Novum Organum* engrossed his thoughts, he altered his views about poetry and word-painting, and misled his critics and editors right up to the present day. He, who as plain Francis Bacon had the finest collection of "spangled" words, and the most extensive vocabulary of all the gentlemen of the "Innes of Court," when he was getting older and advancing slowly to the highest offices of the land, seemed to despise the former glories

* Spedding, *Bacon's Works*, i. 792.

of his vocabulary, as a hindrance both to philosophy and truth. "It is," he says, "the first distemper of learning when men study words and not matter. . . . It seems to me that Pygmalion's frenzy is a good emblem or portraiture of this vanity; for words are but the images of matter; and except they have life of reason and invention, to fall in love with them is all one as to fall in love with a picture." * We must be careful, however, to take these remarks as only directed against bare and excessive verbiage—words without life in them; but if they had "life of reason and invention," such as the "Tables of Invention," which were, so to speak, "living" (*tanquam vivæ*), it was a very different matter.

I will say no more just now as to the new indications I think I have discovered of Bacon's interest in poetry. That part shall be left until some future work. We have already seen how Bacon, when writing to Essex in 1594, hints that he has been writing poetry, and speaks without concealment of "the waters of Parnassus." There is another pertinent instance later on in 1599. Bacon, at that date, writes to Lord Henry Howard, a scholar and littérateur, in these terms: "For your Lordship's love, rooted upon good opinion I esteem it highly, because I have tasted of the fruits of it; *and we both have tasted of the best waters, in my account, to knit minds together.*" A plain enough confession that Bacon was a lover of the Muses.

But perhaps the strongest statement that Bacon was a poet comes from a literary enemy, a Frenchman and a rigid Roman Catholic. One of the severest attacks ever made on Bacon's philosophy was the *Examen de la Philosophie de Bacon*, by Count Joseph de Maistre, published posthumously (Paris, 1836). It is one long tirade against Bacon, calling him an atheist, a hypocrite, and a charlatan; and yet, strange to say, the tirade abates its force towards the end, and admits his poetic genius and some other good qualities in the following terms: "La nature l'avait créé bel esprit, moraliste sensé et ingénieux, écrivain

* *Advancement of Learning*, Book I. iv. 2.

élégant, avec je ne sais quelle veine poétique qui lui fournit sans cesse une foule d'images extrêmement heureuses, de manière que ses écrits, comme fables, sont encore très amusant." And elsewhere (vol. i. p. 5) he says "rarement il résiste à l'envie d'être poète." This recalls Shelley's statement that Bacon was a poet, and also Bacon's own question to his friend Tobie Matthew as to whether he had given way to his genius (poetry?) in his last words sent to his friend on approval.

My strong impression is that with Francis Bacon love for literature and poetry came long before his great passion for science, and one was in fact eventually extinguished by the other. Hear his own words: "Poetry is as it were a dream of learning. . . . But now it is time for me to become fully awake, to lift myself up from the earth, and to wing my way through the liquid ether of philosophy and the sciences."* But he could not express his simple intention without falling (as above) into poetical prose. Such was his genius, as he himself knew and admitted. How modern Shakespearians can insist upon denying to Bacon any claim whatever to pose as a poet, is one of the greatest puzzles to me in the whole controversy.

Extant seventeenth-century testimonies to the existence of a most intimate relation between Bacon and the Muses, Apollo, Poetry, Helicon, Parnassus, &c., are embarrassingly numerous. Thomas Randolph, in Latin verses published in 1640, but probably written some fourteen years earlier, says Phœbus was accessory to Bacon's death, because he was afraid lest Bacon should some day come to be crowned King of Poetry or the Muses. Further on the same writer declares that as Bacon "was himself a singer," he did not really need to be celebrated in song by others. George Herbert calls Bacon the colleague of Sol (Apollo). Thomas Campion addresses Bacon thus: "Whether the thorny volume of the Law, or the Schools, or the Sweet Muse allure thee." George Wither in his *Great Assizes at Parnassus*, 1644,

* Spedding, *Bacon's Works*, i. 539.

makes Bacon Chancellor of Parnassus and Sir Philip Sidney High Constable. And there are many other similar praises in the *Manes Verulamiani* which were prefixed to Gilbert Wats's translation of the *De Augustis* in 1640. All these evidences, and more, have been before the world for many many years and no one seems to give any heed to them. The list could easily be increased, but is it worth while? Would it avail anything to convince people who in a great majority hold a very strong opinion that Bacon was the exact opposite of a poet, and could not write a humorous line to save his life? Experience has taught me that it will not be of the slightest use. So I forbear; they must keep their opinions, and I will keep mine until I hear evidence to overthrow it. And out of the many other proofs I could give I will choose but one. It is by a contemporary poet, John Davies of Hereford, and openly addressed to Bacon in print while he was alive.

To the royall, ingenious, and all learned knight,

SIR FRANCIS BACON.

Thy *bounty* and the *Beauty* of thy witt,
 Compris'd in lists of *Law* and learnèd *Arts*,
 Each making thee for great *imploiment* fitt,
 Which now thou hast (though short of thy deserts),
 Compells my Pen to let fall shining *Inke*
 And to bedew the *Baies* that *deck* thy Front;
 And to thy health in Helicon to drinke
 As to her Bellamour, the Muse is wont:
 For thou dost her embosom; and dost use
 Her company for sport 'twixt grave affairs,
 So utterest Law the livelyer through thy *Muse*,
 And for that all thy *Notes* are sweetest Aires;
 My muse *thus notes thy worth* in every Line
 With yncke which thus she sugers; so to shine.

This seems plain enough, and I only remark that Davies could not possibly call Bacon the Muses' Bellamour or darling if he only knew the poetry of Bacon that this age recognises. Davies clearly knew (line 10) what Bacon called his "works of recreation." His last two

lines refer, I suppose, to an illuminated presentation copy.*

But, to my mind, one of the best of evidences that Bacon was a poet comes from his own words, uttered on Nov. 17, 1595, by an amateur gentleman actor "that in Cambridge played Giraldy" in the presence of the Queen and a large gathering of court notables at one of the "Triumphs" that were so much the fashion in those days. Tobie Matthew, Bacon's lifelong friend, was also there, and took a prominent part in the proceedings. He took the character of the squire of the great Lord who presented the "Device," and who also had the contemporary credit of composing the words, for it is always spoken of as "My Lord Essex's Device." But Tobie Matthew knew well enough who was the true author of the remarkable speeches it contained, and so do we now. Time reveals many mysteries, and has made known to us, by the discovery of a rough copy partly in Bacon's writing, that the Device of my Lord Essex, presented Nov. 17, 1595, was the work of that amazing genius, Francis Bacon. I have spoken somewhat of it in another

* And here I would make the bold and novel suggestion that the famous Shake-speare's Sonnets were *not* called "sugred" because they were sweet as sugar, but because they were carefully prepared for presentation by an expert scrivener, and came into the hands of the "private friends" of the author with their manuscript characters heightened and made more brilliant by the art of the illuminator and gilder, and the ink "sugred" so as to shine on the scroll. I possess several German manuscript broad-sheets addressed to great personages c. 1600 to 1650 which have been sprinkled in this manner, and still retain their shiny brightness. I suppose the "sugring" was effected by something in the form of a pepper-caster or like the pounce-box of our ancestors. I am aware that Thomas Bancroft in 1639 wrote the following:

TO SHAKESPEARE.

Thy Muse's sugred dainties seem to us
Like the fam'd apples of old Tantalus,
For we (admiring) see and hear thy straines,
But none I see or hear those sweet attaines.

This of course tells against my suggestion, but Bancroft, like others down to the present day, may have taken the primary and more obvious meaning that sugred=sweet without thinking further about it, and without knowing that Francis Bacon had at least one "sugred" sonnet addressed to himself with "sugred yncke."

chapter on the Pallas-Shake-speare evidence, and to avoid repetition shall only deal with that part of the Device which proves to me so forcibly that Bacon was a poet *par excellence*.

The scene is the "Tiltyard," and, after certain usual exercises have been successfully got through, Tobie Matthew, arrayed in the garb of an esquire to "my Lord," addresses the Queen, and asks leave to present to her Majesty three personages who wish to speak before her. They are said to be "a melancholy, dreaming Hermit, a mutinous, brain-sick Soldier, and a busy, tedious Secretary." They come forward in turn, and each makes his suitable speech. These speeches are the undoubted composition of Francis Bacon, though gossiping contemporaries and letter-writers of the day, such as Rowland Whyte, all seem to be without the slightest inkling of such a notion. They are wonderful compositions, whether we look at the wise reflections, the fine imagery and striking similitudes in which they abound, or the clever way they put the case of Essex before the Queen. The speech that most of all shows Bacon the Great Poet is the one delivered by the "melancholy, dreaming Hermit." * He is advising that the gifts of fortune, the glories of war, and the diplomacy of statecraft are wearisome and dangerous compared with the solace, variety, and eternity of the gifts and fruits the Muses offer. He goes on :

Let thy master, Squire, offer his services to the Muses. It is long since they received any into their court. They give alms continually at their gate, that many come to live upon ; but few have they ever admitted into their palace. There shall he find secrets not dangerous to know, sides and parties not factious to hold, precepts and commandments not penal to disobey. The gardens of love wherein he now playeth himself are fresh to-day and fading to-morrow, as the sun comforts them or is turned from them. But the gardens of the Muses keep the privilege of the golden age ; they ever flourish and are in league with time. The

* Cf. the "melancholy Jaques" of the Shakespeare Plays, and the many other notices spread about the earlier dramas. "What sign is it when a man of great spirit grows melancholy?" (*Love's Labour's Lost*, I. ii. 2).

monuments of wit survive the monuments of power: the verses of a poet endure without a syllable lost, while states and empires pass many periods. Let him not think he shall [not] descend, for he is now upon a hill as a ship is mounted upon the ridge of a wave; but that hill of the Muses is above tempests, always clear and calm; a hill of the goodliest discovery that man can have being a prospect upon all the errors and wanderings of the present and former times. Yea, in some cliff* it leadeth the eye beyond the horizon of time, and giveth no obscure divinations of times to come."

Do not we see here the thoughts and language of a supreme poet? Have we not reproduced here in elegant and courtly phrase many reminiscences of the Sonnets, of *Hamlet* and of the early plays, of the *Promus* and a forecast of that cloudless Parnassian summit which adorned the title-page of another book a few years later? We think of Sonnets LX. and CXXIII., and others where Time's devouring hand is scorned by the "ever-living" poet. We think of the "prophetic soul" of Hamlet and of Sonnet CVII. "dreaming on things to come," and we feel sure we are in the presence of a great and true poet, who, strangest of all literary marvels, let "this man" take his admirable "Devices," and "that man" his immortal Poems and Plays, and perhaps "another man" the contents of his carefully prepared commonplace books—content, when nearing the end of all earthly labours, to feel the inward assurance that, though only "in a despised weed," yet in all laborious earnestness he had sought the good of all men. He too it was, as I submit, subject to correction, who placed on the postern door of the *Palatium Palladis* in place of FINIS those characteristic words:

NASCIMVR IN COMMVNE BONVM.

But that is another story, belonging to my proofs reserved for a future volume, and is more conjectural than the present chapter, which I here conclude with the hope

* Spedding reads "as from a cliff"? but perhaps cliff=clef. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, V. ii. 11.

that I have given solid grounds for believing that Bacon had by many sure and infallible signs the genius and the language of a supreme poet.

But while saying this, and hoping for its favourable acceptance, I would not for one moment deny the great difficulty there must be for any man, conversant with literary style, to be able to believe that the writer of the *Novum Organum* was also the writer of the immortal Plays, Poems, and Sonnets of Shakespeare. It would be believing in a "miracle" of literature, and miracles do not occur nowadays in any department of the universe. Professor Tyrrell, as we have seen, would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud and Alcoran, than believe this miracle of letters, and the Professor is D.Litt., and should be a good judge. I quite understand the Professor's position, for it was my own once, and it was only new and unexpected evidence that dislodged me. Even now I know of no instance like Bacon's marvellous change of style, manner, and identity in the whole literary history of mankind. It is a record literary marvel, unattained to in the past, and possibly unattainable in the future. As far as the gap or immense literary chasm between the two styles is concerned, I can think of but one incident in my personal experience at all reminding me of it, and that was the private ordinary conversation that Cora L. V. Tappan once entertained me with for a few minutes (by privilege) before she went off into a trance—and her so-called inspirational utterances or lectures to her audience while in that mediumistic state. The literary chasm was very wide between the two, and I remember I was much struck with it many years ago, before I had so much as heard of the Bacon theory. Outside my personal experience, the case of T. L. Harris seems to me sometimes slightly akin to the Bacon "marvel." When I compare his plain but eloquent sermons in England with the poetry and the prose of his remarkable series of privately-printed Californian books from Santa Rosa, I seem to see a gulf of difference almost as vast and deep as lies between *Novum Organum* and *Hamlet* or *King Lear*. What if

Bacon had the mysterious power of assuming the personality and utterances of the characters he put into his plays, even as some mediums have apparently a psychical power or gift of assuming the manner, voice, and knowledge (?) of another person alive or dead? Milton was "visited" in the early watches of the morning by thoughts and phrases and fancies of a loftier character than would occur to him in the ordinary working hours of the day; and other similar examples could be adduced. I know of no scrap of evidence in Bacon's life that points this way, but, when there seem so few possible solutions that will float us out of the sea of difficulty, we are ready to catch at any straw.

CHAPTER XV

NEW EVIDENCE CONNECTING BACON WITH PALLAS AND THE HYPHENATED SHAKE-SPEARE

IN order that Baconians may get a hearing, two things must be proved either separately or in conjunction, as Professor A. R. Wallace very properly puts it :

- (1) It must be shown that Bacon wrote the Plays ; or
- (2) That Shakespeare could not possibly have written them.

The first is the easier plan, for it is proverbially difficult to prove a negative, and I have chosen the easier plan ; but the great majority of anti-Shakespearians have chosen the harder task of proving that Shakespeare the Player could not be the author of the Shakespeare Plays, and inferentially could not be author of the Sonnets and Poems either, though generally these latter works are not much dwelt upon by Baconians. They, as a rule, manage their facts and arguments so as to stand or fall by the Plays.

One of the latest and longest works on the second or harder plan, is a book just written (1902) by a Mr. W. H. Edwards, author of *The Butterflies of North America, A Voyage upon the River Amazon, &c.* It has more than 500 pages, and is entitled *Shaksper not Shakespeare*, with this motto on the title-page, "Let every tub stand on its own bottom." He begins his vast demonstration thus :

"I propose to show that William Shaksper, often called Shakspere, could not have possibly written the works attributed to him under the name of William Shakespeare or Shake-speare. That the writer was a man who was a player, whose family name was 'Shaksper,' and whose name is appended to a deed and a

mortgage 'Shaksper' and 'Shakspar,' and three times to a will 'Shaksper'—of this there is no evidence, there is nothing but inference, conjecture, unwarranted assumption, and baseless (though general) reputation. During his life of fifty-two years none of his relatives, neighbours, or intimates, and none of his contemporaries, testified that this man was the author of these works."

This is a vigorous beginning, and perhaps such all-embracing assertions would have been all the better for a little restraint and modification. However, he goes on to say :

"Halliwell-Phillips is the greatest authority on the subject of William Shakespeare by consent of all Shakespearians. His two large volumes comprise nine hundred pages,—and, after all, striking out some few elegiac verses or eulogies from the beginning of the successive folio editions of the Plays . . . *there is not one line in the whole work that identifies William Shaksper as the author of the poems and plays*—not one line. We are made to know about him in every aspect but that of author, and there history is silent."

Next he comes to his main point concerning *Shaksper* not being Shakespeare.

"The name Shakespeare is quite another etymologically and orthographically from Shagsper or Shakspere, or Shaxpeyr or Shaxper. It is not in evidence that any author lived in the age of Elizabeth whose family and baptismal name was William Shakespeare or Shake-speare. There is no such historical man—no individual known who bore that name ; and the inference is fair that the name as printed upon certain poems and plays was a pseudonym, like that of 'Mark Twain,' or of 'George Eliot.'"

A very great deal of what this writer says in his 500 pages is, I am afraid, below criticism, for he is very careless and inaccurate in his assertions ; and R. L. Ashhurst, who is Vice-Dean of the Shakspere Society of Philadelphia, read before that Society (Jan. 23, 1901) "Some Remarks" on this book, and certainly proves the author's sins of omission and commission and reckless assertion to be very numerous. But the remarkable

thing in connection with the Vice-Dean's paper is that with regard to the spelling of the name "Shaksper not Shakespeare," which is one of the main points of the book, and *its only title*. Mr. Ashhurst begins by saying: "Tradition gives us as the author of these Plays William Shakspeare—I care nothing about the spelling—an actor at the Globe Theatre, &c." I hardly remember a cooler instance of passing or slurring over the main point of the very book which the lecturer set himself to criticise.

Personally, I think there is a good deal in this peculiar change into Shake-speare, and that it points to a "concealed personality" who was very different both by culture and position from the Stratford player. I believe that Shake-speare was a man who had sought "in a despised weed the good of all men," and had tried his best to shake a spear at Ignorance, which can hardly be said of the Stratford Shaksper, who brought up some of his family in such ignorance that they could not write their own names.

Mr. Edwards further thinks that Shaksper the player went back to Stratford because "he liked the sort of people who lived there and the life they led, and would have been utterly out of place in a genteel or cultivated community." He adds: "Shaksper is never reported to have been seen with a book in his hand, or as having owned or read one, nor as seen writing poems or plays, or as having talked about such works, or as engaged in literary occupation of any description." He asks also how Shaksper could get a vocabulary of 15,000 to 20,000 words, and quotes the following to show the meanness of the man: "In the Chamberlain's accounts of Stratford is found a charge, in 1614, for one quart of sack and one quart of claret wine, given to a preacher at the New Place (Shaksper's own house). What manner of man must he have been who would require the town to pay for the wine furnished to his guests? What," he asks, "would a Virginian think of a man who charged a visiting preacher's whiskey to the county?" And so he goes on for nearly 500 pages, often not altogether accurate in his

assertions or inferences, but he writes forcibly enough for the man in the street, and sums up without mentioning Bacon, as he does not come into his line of argument. This book is the last from America (excluding Mrs. Gallup), and that is the reason I have introduced it to my readers, so that they may hear *le dernier mot* from that quarter and the line taken. It contains most of the stock arguments against the possibility of the Stratford man writing the Plays, but is not equal in lucidity and arrangement to Judge Webb's *Mystery of William Shakespeare*, which is the latest and best on our side of the Atlantic.

Before quite leaving the Shake-speare or lance-brandishing problem, I will bring forward some little discoveries of my own. I do not attach much importance to them, but there is this in their favour—they are perfectly new in the way of evidence.

Here is a sonnet addressed to Francis Bacon in 1595 or 1596, which has never been in print before, and which was preserved by his brother Anthony. It is rather important for one word which may refer to the Shake-speare authorship.

À MONSIEUR FRANÇOIS BACON.

SONNET.

Ce qu'inspiré du Ciel, et plein d'affection
 Je comble si souvent ma bouche, et ma poitrine
 Du sacré Nom fameux de ta Royne divine
 Ses valeurs en sont cause et sa perfection
 Si ce siècle de fer si mainte Nation
 Ingratte à ses honneurs, n'avait l'ame Æmantine :
 Ravis de ce beau Nom, qu'aus Graces je destine
 Avec eus nous l'aurions en admiration.
 Donc (Baccon) s'il advient que ma Muse l'on vante
 Ce n'est pas qu'elle soit ou diserte, ou sçavante :
 Bien que *vostre Pallas* me rende mieus instruit
 C'est pource que mon Lut chant sa gloire sainte
 Ou qu'en ces vers nayfz son Image est empreinte :
 Ou que ta vertu claire en mon ombre reluit.

—LA JESSÉE.

This sonnet, which is at the Lambeth Archbishopal Library, was overlooked both by Birch and Spedding, or

perhaps, I should say, passed over by them as containing nothing of historical interest. However, for a certain reason I have thought it worth transcription. La Jessée, who signs as responsible for the sonnet, was not a lady, as one might suppose at first sight, but was, as I take it, Jean de la Jessée, who was *secrétaire de la chambre* to that Francis, Duke of Anjou, who was so long a suitor for Queen Elizabeth (1570-1581). Most likely it was while Bacon was in France in the English ambassador's suite (1576-1579) that he made acquaintance with La Jessée. He was a man evidently fond of the Muses, for he wrote many sonnets to friends and patrons, published at Antwerp in 1582 in four volumes quarto. What the Duke of Anjou's private secretary seems to wish to convey to Bacon is this—that his own Muse, prolific as it was, was not a learned or eloquent one, but that Bacon's Pallas had taught it better how to speak. Now, Pallas was not one of the Muses, nor had Pallas anything to do with law; what could Bacon have to do with her? Well, she sprang fully armed from the head of Jove; she was a learned goddess; she was *Hastivibrans*, a Shaker of the Spear or Lance; and she had a vanquished serpent (Ignorance?) at her feet in Greek sculpture. With the ancient Greeks she was looked upon as the protectress and preserver of the state; she was the personification of what the Romans called *Prudentia Civilis*, and what we call Political Science. Bacon set himself to be an adept at this. Can this partly explain why Bacon called himself Shake-speare?

La Jessée wrote both in French and Latin, and I find sonnets to Seigneur Pollet,* ambassadeur d'Angleterre, to the King of Navarre, and to Queen Elizabeth; so we may conclude on several grounds that the Duke of Anjou's secretary was fairly acquainted with court life and court fashions in England.

This French sonnet to *François Bacon*, from its position in the bound-up volumes of Anthony Bacon's MSS., seems

* This was the Sir Amyas Paulet in whose train young Francis Bacon went to France for nearly three years (1576-1579).

to have been written about 1595 or 1596, and at that date the famous Essays of Francis Bacon had not been published, nor had any literary work of much significance been put forth by him, so the expression *vostre Pallas* does not seem appropriate, as nothing like a Pallas fully armed had sprung from Bacon's great brain yet, as far as the world of letters knew.

But while pondering on what La Jessée's reference to Bacon's Pallas (*vostre Pallas*) could possibly mean, I fortunately struck upon a clue to which I attach considerable importance, and if a right clue, it leads to the key which will perhaps unlock the mystery of that hyphenated and strangely-spelled word Shake-speare, which is quite different from any of the player's usual signatures, and only appears hyphenated on certain title-pages and dedications and signatures to Poems (*The Phoenix and the Turtle*) in the prefatory matter by Ben Jonson and others of the first folio, and in Willobie's *Avisa*, 1594. The clue is this: Pallas is referred to in a remarkable paper, without heading, docket, or date, found in the Lambeth collection; which paper is further proved by some notes and portions of the rough draft still extant in Bacon's handwriting to be of his composition. It is clearly a part of one of the Devices which Bacon was so clever and ready in contriving. It seems to have been a sequel to some former Device of the same kind, in which Philautia, the goddess of Self-Love, had been represented as addressing some persuasion to the Queen, and is in the form of a letter (in Bacon's handwriting, and with his notes for Essex written in the margin!) to the Queen. This letter was most likely intended to come into the Device at the point where the ambassadors introduce themselves by delivering it to the Queen. It is so important for the solution of The Mystery of William Shake-speare, that I must quote it at length.

"Excellent Queen, Making report to Pallas, upon whom Philautia depends,* of my last audience with your Majesty and of

* *Frustra sapit, qui sibimet sapit.*

the opposition I found by the feigning tongue of a disguised Squire, and also of the inclination of countenance and ear which I discerned in your Majesty rather towards my ground than to his voluntary, the Goddess allowed well of my endeavour and said no more at that time. But few days since she called me to her, and told me that my persuasions had done good,* yet that it was not amiss to refresh them. I attending in silence her furdere pleasure, after a little pause putting her shield before her eyes as she useth when she studieth to resolve. Better (said she) raise the siege than send continual succours, and that may be done by stratagem. This, Philautia, shall you do. Address yourself to Erophilus. You know the rest: we shall see what answer or invention the Goddess of fools (so many times she will call Jupiter's fair daughter) will provide for him against your assailings. And then the alone Queen † (so she ever terms your Majesty) will see that she hath had Philautia's first offer, and that if she reject it, it will be received elsewhere to her disadvantage. And upon my humble reverence to depart she cleared her countenance, and said, The time makes for you. ‡ I gladly received her instructions. Only because I had negotiated with your Majesty myself I would not vouchsafe to deal with an inferior in person: but I have put them in commission that your Majesty will see can very well acquit themselves; and will at least make you sport, which Philautia for a vale desireth you to contrive out of all others' earnest, and so kisseth your serene hands, and rested,—Your Majesty's faithful remembrancer,

PHILAUTIA."

Then follows the beginning of the speech of the Hermit—a first draft only; it was afterwards entirely rewritten, and is extant in another part of the same MS. volumes, viz., in the Gibson Papers, vol. v. No. 118.

Now this rough draft of Bacon's composition was intended solely for the eyes of the Earl of Essex, who was the supposed author of the Device, and obtained apparently the whole credit for it from his contemporaries. Bacon's name seems quite kept out of our accounts of the Device,

* That your Lordship knoweth whether the Queen have profited in Self-Love.

† I pray God she be not too much alone, but it is a name of excellency and virginity.

‡ That your Lordship knoweth, and I in part, in regard of the Queen's unkind dealing, which may persuade you to self-love.

and unless these autograph MSS. had been preserved and discovered, we should never have been sure that these parts of the Device were of his work and not by Essex.

Let us consider this important letter from Philautia to the Queen in Essex's Device of 1595 a little more in detail. Now at the very beginning of the letter or address we find that it is Pallas who is the real framer and originator of the advice to the Queen, and consequently Pallas stands for Bacon. Philautia depends upon him, and we may see in Bacon's marginal note for Essex's eye a semi-apology to the noble lord through the proverbial hint, *Frustra sapit qui sibimet sapit, i.e.* It is not always wisdom to trust to your own devices alone. Further on we are told of Pallas that when she resolveth doubtful points she puts her shield before her eyes, which rather reminds us of the thoughtful Francis sitting in his arm-chair and cogitating, with his uplifted arm supporting his head; *sic sedebat*. Then the allusion to the Goddess of Fools, Jupiter's fair daughter, by whom I suppose Venus is meant, is more in the vein of Bacon than it is of the classic Pallas who uses the slighting expression. Bacon was strongly of the opinion of Publius Syrus that *amare et sapere vix Deo conceditur*, or, as he puts it in his *Essay Of Love*, "It is impossible to love and be wise," and elsewhere frequently, as well as in the Sonnets and Plays. Then we are told that Pallas-Bacon "ever terms" her Majesty Queen Elizabeth "the alone Queen," and that "it is a name of excellency and virginity." Again our thoughts go to that strange poem, *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, written and signed by William Shake-speare, where the best scholars are agreed that the Phoenix = Elizabeth and the Turtle = Essex, and we remember the Threnos :

"Leaving no posterity—
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity."

Also the bird, "On the *sole* Arabian Tree," and it looks as if Shake-speare might be the Pallas of the Essex Device. Moreover, the name Pallas was given ἀπὸ τὸ πάλλειν τὸ

δόρυ, that is, because she was wont to *shake* her *speare* as Servius the scholiast in *Æneid*, i. 43, tells us. She was produced from Jove's head, because Wit or Intellect comes from the head, and she presided over the arts because nothing excels wit or wisdom in the supreme rule of all the arts.

Thus Pallas, Bacon, and Shake-speare seem to be intimately connected with each other, and the easiest solution of the mystery is that they are all different names of one man. William Shake-speare first appears in *Venus and Adonis* (1593), and in *Lucrece* (1594), where Bacon shows his head. Pallas first appears in the Essex Device of 1595, where we know Bacon helped, but there was an earlier Essex Device in 1592, where Bacon also supplied speeches, and so Pallas may have appeared earlier and the account of her part in the proceedings may have been lost. Anyhow, we have not sufficient materials to decide whether the pseudonym Shake-speare was borrowed by Bacon from Shakspeare the player, or from Pallas the spear-shaking Goddess of Wit, who was the representative of Bacon in early Devices prepared for the Queen. Which appellation was used first we cannot say, but we are justified, I think, in asserting that the remarkable fashion in which Pallas, Bacon, and Shake-speare are all mixed up and connected with the Devices of Essex, now known to be written by Bacon, and with the Poems and Plays attributed to William Shakspeare, or Shacksper, of Stratford, all goes to prove that Pallas and Shake-speare were identical names for that one man Francis Bacon who showed "his head" in *Lucrece*, and gave us some peculiar autobiographical selections in *Shake-speares Sonnets*.

I do not think that Baconians are at all acquainted with this little piece of Pallas-Shake-speare evidence, but it is further borne out by some evidence that they know thoroughly, and that is in Ben Jonson's famous lines before the beginning of the first folio, where he speaks of the "well-tornèd and true-filèd lines" of the great poet :

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

Many Baconians also make much of certain printers' head-pieces in the first folio and elsewhere, in which they see Wisdom under a mask shaking a Lance at Ignorance.

Why Bacon should use the name of Shakespeare for the signature of the dedications of the first and second heirs of his invention, while his own name and cipher was so designedly inserted in the second heir, *Lucrece*, we can only explain by the reason that he wished to conceal his own personality, but yet to keep a proof in the poem itself that it was really his. He had to take some mask, and he took Shake-speare, which would stand for Pallas as well as the Stratford man. There is just a possibility that he did not think of Shakspere the player at all at first in 1591; but in 1597, when scandal and treason were being attached to his name, he may then have seen how useful an *instrument* the man William Shakspeare would be, both by name and position, for the purpose of withdrawing attention from himself and fixing it on the Johannes Factotum of the stage plays. This surmise is helped by the fact that Bacon says in one of his Essays (XLVII.): "In choice of *Instruments* it is better to choose men of a plainer sort. . . . Use also such persons as affect the Business wherein they are employed, for that quickeneth much."*

Anyhow, the peculiar form Shake-speare appears very early. In one of the earliest known praises of Shakespeare the name has the strange and suggestive hyphen. *Lucrece* was entered at Stationers' Hall 9th May 1594, and Willobie's *Avisa* was entered 3rd Sept. 1594. So

* I may here say that this remark of Bacon seems a sufficient answer to what is called "the crucial question which Baconians habitually avoid." The orthodox party puts this boasted *crux* of theirs in the following terms: "How came it that Bacon, of mighty brain power and of universal knowledge, when seeking to conceal his prodigious authorship as a poet, chose for his counterfeit representative the ignorant William Shakespeare, whose weak pretence in the *rôle* would have at once been exposed and ridiculed? How is it possible to suppose that a man like Bacon could have been for a moment such a fool as thus to give himself away in public? Only a giant can wear giants' shoes. How therefore could Bacon have wrecked his own scheme by committing his shoes to the feet of the pigmy Shakespeare?" This is no *crux*. Shakespeare was just the *Instrument* for Bacon, and not such a pigmy after all.

this praise of Shake-speare must have been worked into the *Avisa* very shortly after *Lucrece* appeared. The inference is that the author of the *Avisa* was some one who took special interest in *Lucrece* and its author. What a pity he said so little. He signs himself *Contraria Contrariis Vigilantius: Dormitanus*, a possible key, but I can make nothing of it. I note, however, that A. M. (Anthony Munday?) translated from the French in 1593 *The Defence of Contraries*, and A. M. was mixed up in literary prefaces and other matters with the Bacons. Was this early notice of Shake-speare from Anthony Munday? He would know about Pallas and Court Devices.

Moreover, Bacon tells us in his Essays that the "monstrous Fable" of Jove "being delivered of *Pallas Armed* out of his Head . . . containeth a Secret of *Empire*; how Kings are to make use of their Counsel of State." Now we know that Bacon when quite a young man in 1584-5, or at about the age of twenty-three, addressed a treatise to the Queen entitled *Advice to Queen Elizabeth*. This was taking the office of Pallas very early, and becoming one of the "Counsel of State" before being called to the office. This early work of Bacon's leads me to think that he assumed or received the appellation of *Pallas before* he adopted the literary disguise of *Shake-speare*, which is so nearly synonymous.

We have no evidence to show that Bacon would be brought into any public connection with Shaksper the player from Stratford much before the *Gesta Grayorum* of 1594, when the players gave a "Comedy of Errors" at Gray's Inn, and there was so much confusion and crowding of the audience upon the stage, that the grand performance turned out a great failure. Bacon was a leading spirit at this function, although his name as usual is singularly kept in the background, and allusion is only made to a certain "sorcerer* or conjurer that was supposed to be the cause of that confused inconvenience," who is taken to be Bacon. As *Venus and Adonis* was

* A side hit, perhaps, at Roger Bacon.

signed William Shakespeare in 1593, Bacon and Southampton, both members of Gray's Inn, would seem to have known the player before the *Gesta Grayorum* incident, and Bacon must have arranged in some way for the use of the player's name to cover such literary work as the rising lawyer of Gray's Inn wished to keep behind a screen. Pallas-Bacon who could not pass a jest then dubbed himself Shake-speare, and sometimes even more pointedly wrote himself down as the hyphenated Shake-speare, which certainly ought to have suggested Pallas to any University man. I have no doubt Meres knew it well enough. But I will not pursue this Pallas-Shake-speare question any further. It will be quite enough for my purpose if I have succeeded in rendering it highly probable that in many cases that magic name Shake-speare belongs to Pallas-Bacon rather than to Shaksper of Stratford.

I have also discovered a large amount of curious evidence connecting Bacon with Pallas, and with some important Elizabethan books where no one has up to the present suspected his intervention. It is already in MS., but is far too voluminous to add to the present work; but if my arguments and views so far meet with a favourable acceptance, I shall venture to offer in a small separate volume these new, and to me most unexpected, revelations.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME NOTABLE MEGALOMANIC FEATURES IN THE CHARACTER OF FRANCIS BACON

ANOTHER favourite argument against the Bacon theory is, that Bacon had not time to write the Plays of Shakespeare even if he had the ability. This argument will hardly stand against the known facts of Bacon's life. He said himself, and he had a right to his boast, "though the world hath taken my talent from me, yet God's talent I put to use." As Professor John Nichol says :

"An activity so unparalleled neither the cares of office, nor illness, nor vexation of spirit, nor the shadow of disgrace, or of age, could impede. His work as a lawyer and statesman would have filled a life had not his labours as a philosopher and man of letters been sufficient to adorn it. With an energy like that of Scott after his ruin, he set himself to add fresh tiers to his enduring monument."

During the decade 1580 to 1590 we do not know very much how he spent his spare time, and first and last he must have had a great deal of time to himself in these years. He showed himself an amateur and youthful Pallas in giving counsel of state to Queen Elizabeth in his letter of advice, and even as early as this "his Pallas" would put her shield before her face and consider the state of Europe and the national policy of England, and the religious controversies of the kingdom. I would suggest that he occupied his spare time in filling many commonplace books with collections made in the course of his reading ; jottings, examples, similes, phrases, &c., which he laid as a kind of foundation for the literary edifices he was afterwards to build, or gathered together

in a storehouse whence they could afterwards be drawn forth to meet his requirements. The *Promus* is one of these which has been fortunately preserved; there is every reason to believe he had others as well. Sometimes I think that part of these collections got incorporated in some way in the *Palladis Tamia* of Francis Meres, and in the *Palladis Palatium* of William Wrednot; but we are not likely to get behind the scenes after this long interval of time. Anyhow, we may safely say that the great Francis was no drone at any period of his life. He was too much of a *megalomane* to be ever inactive, especially in his mind, which was so full of grand projects from his earliest days.

He felt himself to be the Pallas of the age, sprung from the brain of Jove, and equipped for a champion against ignorance, and the defender and adviser, by his well-conceived counsel, of the commonwealth and its policy. Like most great men he thoroughly believed in himself, in his powers and in his projects—all he wanted to make them effective was money and position; they were the sinews of war to him in his philanthropic designs to get the mastery over Nature in the interests of Man, and he damaged his fair fame in the attempt to procure these necessary adjuncts.

In spite of constant failure, he never lost his belief in himself. He thought he could win the Queen for this man, or for that man, or for himself; he thought he could persuade Cecil, and he looked forward to the time when he should be a better man than Coke, his constant enemy. No failure seemed to discourage him—the true sign of a *megalomane*. His Pallas was always ready to advise any great state personage, or to write letters to or for such personages, or to write letters to Kings and Queens, or to devise communications that might most likely come to their knowledge. He seemed always sanguine and confident, and when the great fall came, nothing, as Ben Jonson says, could diminish his true greatness, for *that* “could never fail him.” He was magnificent in nearly all his ways and projects—magnificent in his expenditure

and love of show, in his marriage-robcs of imperial purple from head to foot, in his *Greatest Birth of Time*, his first work—magnificent in his own estimation of his later philosophical works, which, as he told King James in the preface, had in them that which was “fixed” and “eternal”—a striking echo, as it seems to me, of those magnificent and magniloquent lines of the Shake-speare Sonnets written in the passionate fervour of earlier days :

“But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st ;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st :
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”
—*Sonnet XVIII.*

And again :

“Nor marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.
.
.
.
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth ; your praise shall still find room,
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.”

And again in Sonnet CXIV. :

“O, 'tis the first ; 'tis flattery in my seeing,
And *my great mind most kingly drinks it up.*”

Surely such magnificent self-assertion is very uncommon in literature, and, so to speak, marks out a man from his fellows. I know Elizabethan sonneteers often claimed eternity of fame, but never in such lofty phrase as this. But this was Bacon's style exactly ; he had the “'Ercles vein” if any man ever had. As Dean Church says of him : “He never affected to conceal from himself his superiority to other men in his aims and in the grasp of his intelligence.” Look too at the magisterial and

almost almighty manner in which he begins one of his works: *Francis of Verulam thought thus, and such is the method which he within himself pursued, which he thought it concerned both the living and posterity to become acquainted with.* Surely here is the writer of the magnificent Sonnets. Surely such self-confidence as we find in the Sonnets cannot be the work or utterance of the man of Stratford, or we should have heard more of the Poet-ape asserting himself in the world of letters, and building a niche for himself in the Temple of Fame. Would a man with such a consciousness of eternal superiority over his fellows desert, in the early ripeness of his career, the very stage and theatre of his triumphs to hide himself away in the commonplace society of Stratford, to brew beer and to lend money? No; a man with such an opinion of his own merits would have looked well after the recognition of them, both in the present and in the future, as did that magnificent *megalomane* Francis Bacon, both in youth and maturity.

Consider Francis Bacon on the day of his wedding. He was indeed a great man then—if not born in the “purple” he was married in it. This is what a contemporary letter says:

“Sir Francis Bacon was married yesterday to his young wench in Maribone Chapel. He was clad from top to toe in purple, and hath made himself and his wife such store of fine raiments of cloth of silver and gold that it draws deep into her portion. . . . His chief guests were the three knights, Cope, Hicks, and Beeston; and upon this conceit (as he said himself) that since he could not have my Lord of Salisbury in person, which he wished, he would have him at least in his representative body.” *

Compare this with the more modern description by Hepworth Dixon:

“Feathers and lace light up the rooms in the Strand. Cecil has been warmly urged to come over from Salisbury House. Three of his gentlemen, Sir Walter Cope, Sir Baptist Hicks, and

* Carleton to Chamberlain, 11th April 1606; Domestic Papers, James I., 1606.

Sir Hugh Beeston, hard drinkers and men about town, strut over in his stead, flaunting in their swords and plumes; yet the prodigal bridegroom, sumptuous in his tastes as in his genius, clad in a suit of Genoese velvet, purple from cap to shoe, outbraves them all; the bride, too, is richly dight, her whole dowry seeming to be piled up on her in cloth of silver and ornaments of gold."

Here we have an amusing specimen of what the journalistic spirit can produce *ex nihilo*, for Carleton's letter above is the only source of information. But even a journalist should be right in his names, and should not libel people gratuitously. It was Sir Michael Hicks, not Sir Baptist Hicks, who was at the wedding, and when Mr. Hepworth Dixon says that Cope, Hicks, and Beeston were "hard drinkers and men about town," it is probably "a mere development of the fact that he knew them to have been once the chief guests at a wedding dinner, and knew no more," as Mr. Spedding humorously remarks.

Would that other *megalomanes* could have adorned their verses with such beauties, and their philosophies with such shrewd solidity as did that magnificent "*Uebermensch*," Francis Bacon.

The more I ponder over what I read of Francis Bacon's life and character, and compare it with what is known of the life and character of William Shakespeare, the more I feel what a tremendous miracle it would be for Shakespeare to have written the Plays and Poems, and how natural and congruous it seems that they should have proceeded in all their world-wide glories from that magnificent and universal genius, the philosopher of Gorhambury. To use a vulgarised adjective, Bacon was "immense" in most things. Consider his far-reaching intellectual aspirations! He had determined at the outset of his career "to take all learning for his province," as he told his uncle Burghley with that absence of all mock-modesty which is so characteristic of the man who is not ignorant of his own parts. And what is more, he justified, as I contend, his boastful assertion in those immortal Plays, where we seem to see, in every subject mentioned,

the master-hand of an encyclopædic and universal genius.

But the best workmen require a good supply of suitable tools, and cannot be expected to produce good results without them. The genius of Pheidias would never have chiselled into divine majesty the chrys-elephantine Jove, nor Gibbon have perfected his monumental history without these necessary helps. Now, we are asked to believe that the player from Stratford executed *his* immortal work almost without any tools, or, at least, with only a few to start with which he procured when a boy at the Stratford grammar-school, and was never afterwards, as far as we know from the uneventful and commonplace history of his life, able to give the proper time to maintain them in good working order at home, nor yet to go to the manufacturers, that is to say, the libraries, to get them properly polished and up-to-date. In fact, such places as libraries were few and far between in Elizabethan days, and the great Oxford emporium was only just being started with a new stock by Sir Thomas Bodley.

It seems thus that Shakespeare the player was badly handicapped in the race for Fame. But how was it with his great competitor, "My young Lord-Keeper"? What choice of tools had he? Why, from the age of eighteen onwards he had, so to speak, his lodgings "over a tool-shop." He could walk into Gray's Inn Library without so much as putting on his beaver, and before that, his father had well supplied him at home, and also sent him betimes to that excellent Cambridge shop at the sign of "The Trinity." So here again there is no comparison between the two; one is competent for the most finished work, the other seems wellnigh disqualified; for, in spite of his two-hundred years' reputation of being the greatest literary workman of his own or any age, he is not known to have possessed a single literary tool, except perhaps a Florio's *Montaigne*, in which some one else apparently scribbled his name; and he is never known to have frequented the *emporium* where the best tools were kept.

Finally, as against those critics who dwell so much on the argument that "Bacon had not time to write the Shakespeare Plays even if he had the ability," I would add, to the considerations already mentioned, Bacon's own remark in his *Cogitata et Visa*. He says, "He finds in his own experience that the art of inventing grows by invention itself;" that is, it becomes gradually easier to produce works of invention of a literary kind (for of these he is speaking) after a little practice. Indeed, when Bacon was well set I am inclined to think he would not have much more trouble in writing one of his immortal Plays, than an able critic to-day in preparing a review for one of the Quarterlies.

Consider, too, the large quantity of matter in the Plays which is really only North's *Plutarch* and Holinshed turned into blank verse. With Bacon's peculiar facility in improving other people's language almost spontaneously, a fact for which Rawley vouches—and Rawley, his private chaplain and executor, should know this better than any one else—he would take very little time in providing the matter for even a five-act play, and he had always plenty of people about him, servants and scribes, who would save him much time and trouble in transcription. But Rawley's own words settle this matter: "With what sufficiency he wrote let the world judge; with what celerity he wrote them (his works) I can the best testify."

We have no difficulty in deciding to which of the two parties in the Church of England Bacon belonged in 1590 and earlier. He was an Anglican, and of that party to which Whitgift the Archbishop of Canterbury belonged, who indeed almost made and sustained it as against the Puritans on one side and the Roman Catholics with Spanish and Papal leanings on the other. Lady Anne Bacon makes this evident to us, for she writes to her son Anthony when in 1590 he was returning home from his long residence abroad, and urges him to testify his adherence to those who "profess the true religion of Christ" (the Puritans, she means), and to do so boldly and openly. She adds in Latin, I suppose so that the

servants should not by chance see the letter lying about, and it should thus reach the ears of Francis, *in hoc noli adhibere fratrem tuum ad consilium aut exemplum, sed plus dehinc* ; and then goes on to write in Greek that Archbishop Whitgift was the destruction of the English Church. Thus it is pretty clear that Pallas-Shakespeare-Bacon was no Puritan, but a strong Anglican of Whitgift's view of thinking ; and hence we can better explain the licensing of such a book as *Venus and Adonis* by the Archbishop's own signature. Whitgift would pass over in Bacon, his rising pupil, what he would prohibit in men of a different stamp ; for I assume that Bacon in some way did see his first two long poems through the press, for they have every appearance of being carefully revised by the author, and are thus in a very different position from the quarto plays, which are as a rule most carelessly printed, and full of such blunders as might be expected in pirated copies.

Almost directly after *Venus and Adonis* had appeared we hear of Francis Bacon at the age of thirty-four making his very tardy appearance in his first pleading in the King's Bench, and there was considerable excitement and expectation among his friends as to the impression he would make. Fortunately we are able to know the result, since a young lawyer of Gray's Inn who was present at one of these pleadings wrote an account of it to Anthony Bacon. This letter I claim as important evidence in the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, for it tells us that a marked feature of the new pleader was "the unusual words wherewith he had spangled his speech." In fact, some sentences were almost too obscure for the capacities of his hearers, as it appeared to the young lawyer, but he ended his letter facetiously by remarking that if it please her Majesty to add deeds to words "the Bacon may be too hard for the Cook !"

Now here we have Francis Bacon exhibiting in his own person one of the most marked characteristics of the Shakespeare Plays before the great majority of them were written—I mean the enormous vocabulary and the

many unusual and unique words which are found in the Plays. It has always been a difficulty, indeed almost a miracle, that the Stratford provincial should command such a wonderful stock of words; and when we find that Bacon was the very man who, even when comparatively young, astonished his learned contemporaries by this identical characteristic, it certainly seems a piece of evidence strongly in Bacon's favour as to the disputed authorship. And if any one cares to look further into some of the many unusual words in the works attributed to Shakespeare the player, they will be greatly surprised. I will put down only a few; they are all words used for the first time in the history of our language, many of them have never been used a second time, and they are all invented and used in a strict and proper scholarlike manner.

Antre, from Lat. *antrum*, a cave.—*Othello*, i. 3.

Cadent, from Lat. *cadere*, to fall.—*Lear*, i. 4.

Captious, from *capere*, to receive.

“Yet, in this captious and intenable sieve,
I still pour in the waters of my love.”

—*All's Well*, i. 3.

Circummure, to wall round.—*Measure for Measure*, iv. 1.

Conspicuities, from *conspicere*, to behold.

“What harm can your bisson conspuities glean out of this character?”

—*Coriolanus*, ii. 1.

I doubt whether any question addressed to the court in Bacon's maiden speeches reached quite so high a level as this last :

Empiricutic, from the Greek, meaning tentative.

“The most sovereign prescription in Galen is but empiricutic.”

And without going on alphabetically any further, let us take but two more, *incarnadine* and *necessary*. What lover of Shakespeare is there who does not know that wondrous line :

“The multitudinous seas incarnadine.”

—*Macbeth*, ii. 2.

Now *incarnadine* is coined by the writer out of Low Latin or some Romance language, and means, according to derivation, tinged with the colour of flesh. And *necessary* is used of a cat :

"A harmless, necessary cat."

—*As You Like It*, iii. 3.

But why is a cat "necessary" ? Because it is a domestic animal, and the Latin word *necessarius* means anything or anybody connected with one's household, and so familiar, domestic. But would Shakespeare at any period of his life be likely to call his wife's cat either at Shottery, or at their grander quarters in New Place, a "necessary cat" ?

These instances, like the identities and the parallelisms, can be almost indefinitely multiplied, and are to be found in great numbers in Baconian books, especially those of Mrs. Pott and Mr. Edwin Reed. I think they are good items of evidence, better than the identities and parallelisms, but they need not be alluded to any further here, as Mr. Reed has done them ample justice.

It is known to all acquainted with Bacon's philosophical works that he separated them into two classes :

(1) Those destined to be "publike."

(2) Those destined to be "traditionary."

This word "traditionary" comes from an original MS. in Bacon's own handwriting, entitled *Valerius Terminus*, which contained fragments of a greater work he had proposed to write, and was in fact the earliest type of the *Instauratio*. The title-page gives a list of twelve fragments, and then we have :

"13. The first chapter of [the] a booke of the same argument wrytten in Latine and destined [for] to be [traditionary] separate and not publike."

The words in brackets are crossed out in the MS., and the succeeding words placed in their stead.

There is this singular fact to record about Bacon, that from the very first he showed himself unwilling to

allow his peculiar method in Philosophy to be generally known. Like some of the ancient philosophers, he wished it to be handed down only *ad filios* (his intellectual sons), only to those who were willing to receive it and fit to understand it. The exposition of his new method or instrument he wished to be esoteric, and to make its way quietly, without contention or vulgar discussion, into the minds that could receive it—a select audience, acquainted with the Latin tongue in which it was to be presented, for Bacon thought this universal tongue of the learned would alone endure to distant posterities. It does not seem that he was jealous of his great secret, or that he wished to exclude the vulgar from the knowledge of it, but rather that it was too abstruse to be handled successfully by any but the fit and few. All preparatory knowledge tending to make plain the way to understand the new method Bacon wished to be widely spread and propagated among all classes. Here he would much rather find auditors than exclude them; and some curious suggestive evidence of this is known to me, where it seems probable that Bacon used other names to conceal his own. He wanted his great views to be received and understood, but not by means of contentious arguments but rather by chalking the door of those where he was to be received in a peaceful way, without threat of personal violence or entry by force. This curious simile, which he borrowed from one of the Borgias, is several times referred to by Bacon, and was clearly a favourite way of expressing his propaganda. He was willing to efface himself, if only the world would become able to accept his method and profit by it.

And as in Philosophy, so in the Devices and Masques he kept himself in the background, and allowed others to take the credit which solely or chiefly belonged to him. He did not put his name to any literary work till he was nearly forty years old.

But what I chiefly wish to draw attention to here is the curious self-effacement in literary matters of one whose organ of self-esteem was so highly developed.

That is one point, and the other is the two classes of writing or teaching admittedly used by him as occasion required.

Bacon had also, as I believe, and as this book is written to show, a *third* class of writings, viz. :

(3) Those destined by himself to go to posterity by another name, but still bearing the mark, the deep brand of his own vocabulary, his own scholarship, and his own philosophy—a brand, too, that none of the barber-surgeons of the press, the stage, or the higher criticism can ever erase, if they try till doomsday. Besides this unmistakable brand, one of the works that went to posterity by another name, I mean *Lucrece*, certainly bore on its very front his own name as in his early days he signed it; a “moiety” of his fuller name, but quite enough to show his head where men could prove it.

I can also show plainly from Bacon’s own words that he held the unusual view that a man’s writings should *follow* the man after he was dead, and that it was to some extent an “untimely anticipation” to let the world have them while he was alive. This opinion of this is given in a letter he wrote to his friend Dr. Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester, on the subject of his *Essays* :

“As for my *Essays*, and some other particulars of that nature, (Poems? Plays?) I count them but as the recreation of my other studies, and in that sort purpose to continue them . . . But I account the use that a man should seek of the publishing of his own writings before his death to be but an untimely anticipation of that which is proper to follow a man, and not go along with him.”

Whoever else among great and ambitious men held this strange doctrine of literary reserve? Whoever else among men of illustrious intellect did thus efface, as did Bacon, the brightest part of a glorious mind from the praise and acknowledgment of succeeding generations? Whoever else in all history allowed, of set purpose, the lofty pedestal on which he had every right to take his stand to be possessed by a money-grubbing, facetious

actor-manager whose vocabulary could not have been mentioned in the same breath with his own, to say nothing of much more significant differences.

It is this "literary miracle" that makes it so hard for people to give up the traditional Shakespeare. But surely when we have Bacon's own words in his letter above, and also that memorable testamentary device of his whereby he left his name and memory to "the next ages," we should not allow an apparent miracle to prejudice our examination of a literary problem. Speaking loosely, there are about as many miracles on one side of the problem as on the other, for if Bacon really composed this third class of writings contained in the wonderful first folio, in *Lucrece*, in the Sonnets and elsewhere, and passed them over in complete silence when he died—that is undoubtedly a literary miracle. But if the player from Stratford wrote them, and also passed them over in complete silence when he made his will and left his second-best bedstead to his wife—that is also surely a literary miracle as well; and so

"Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another,"

we may cancel the first miracle by the second and proceed to judgment unaffected by either.

And now, putting aside the disturbing miraculous element, what are we to say about the proof from *Lucrece*? Did Bacon really show his head there, both at the beginning and at the end? Did he sign that fine poem cryptogramatically on its first page and its last and let the real author lie there latent, while the letters of the name William Shakespeare were blazoned to the world at full length at the foot of the dedication? Let us not waste time by arguing whether it was *likely* or not—the signature is *there*, and we are to pronounce upon it. Is it an intricate arithmetical, multi-literal cryptogram like Donnelly's, of which the man in the street can make neither head nor tail? Certainly not; a man need not be a Sherlock Holmes to detect both the head and tail of this evidence. And slight and foolish as it

may seem to some, it is a point of prime importance, for if we accept this evidence as sufficient to show that Francis Bacon certainly wrote *Lucrece*, unless he bribed Shakespeare to hide his initials and full name at the beginning and end, then the whole controversy is practically settled. For whoever wrote *Lucrece* wrote *Venus and Adonis*, and whoever wrote that poem wrote the Sonnets and the earlier plays; for *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are so intimately connected by parallel passages with the Sonnets, that no atom of doubt remains that he who wrote the Sonnets wrote also these plays; and if these earlier plays, why not parts of the later plays also, for there are evident traces of the same immortal genius in them all, as they have been handed down to us in their last *revised* and first collected edition—the folio of 1623. Moreover, if Shakespeare really wrote *Lucrece*, why on earth should Francis Bacon want to hide his name at the beginning or end? These are just the places where Bacon would hide his name if he had written *Lucrece* himself. I admit that to the fullest, but that is a very different statement, and makes strongly for my contention.

Bacon gives us this hint himself. He calls the Foreword or Preface of a book its "Vestibule," and the Conclusion or Epilogue he calls its "Back Door," and remarks that many matters may be properly discussed and mentioned in these parts of a book which could not be fitly grappled with in the body of the work; just as a man may say and do many things at the front door or at the back door which he would not permit inside the house. Now certainly the front and back doors have been used in *Lucrece*, and I think Bacon is the man who used them—for himself and posterity solely—leaving the dedication of the Poem to be signed by Your Lordships in all *duety*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER XVII

CERTAIN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND HINTS CONNECTED WITH THE POEMS AND PLAYS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

It is worthy of remark that none of Shakespeare's Plays is dedicated to any person or patron. The Poems dedicated to Southampton seem the sole exception. They were the first works to which the name of Shakespeare was given, and afterwards no other Mæcenas was addressed. The general custom of those days was very much in favour of dedications, and gross flattery and ridiculous obsequiousness abounded everywhere in such productions. Neither player nor poet felt it below his dignity to have recourse to fulsome dedications, generally with the view to enrich his pocket with the gifts from his patron.

But Bacon has left plainly on record that he was strongly against this degradation of learning. He says :

“The gross and palpable flattery whereunto many (not unlearned) have abased and abused their wits and pens, turning (as Du Bartas saith) Hecuba into Helena and Faustina into Lucretia, hath most diminished the price and estimation of learning. Neither is the moral [*i.e.* customary] dedications of books and writings, as to patrons, to be commended : for that books (such as are worthy the name of books) ought to have no patrons but truth and reason ; and the ancient custom was to dedicate them only to private and equal friends, or to intitle the books with their names ; or if to kings and great persons it was to some such as the argument of the book was fit and proper for.” *

This we see Bacon carried out in practice in his poems of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* ; for Southampton was a private friend, and his “ sugred sonnets ” were for his

* *Advancement of Learning*, iii. 281, ed. Spedding.

“private friends,” and the poems bore the name of the friend.

Now we should like to know more about young Francis Bacon's private friends when he was at Gray's Inn in his early days, the kind of “set” he was connected with, and how he spent his evenings. There can be no doubt that he was a close student, and kept to himself and to his books very much. As we should say at Cambridge, “his oak was often sported”; and the very few notices we have of Bacon's early London days point in that direction. But there were fast young lawyers about town in those Elizabethan times. That rare tract by Thomas Middleton, entitled *Father Hubbard's Tales*, tells us what a rich young squire from the country ought to do on coming to town :

“He must acquaint himself with many gallants of the Innes of Court, and keep rank with those that spend most; . . . after dinner he must venture beyond sea, that is, in a choise paire of Noble-mens Oares to the Bankside where he must sit out the breaking up of a Comedie, or the first Cut of a Tragedie, or rather (if his humour so serve him) to call in at the Black-fryers, where he should see a neast of Boyes, able to ravish a man.”

Is it likely that Francis Bacon ever spent his evenings in this dissipated way? I think so; and remembering what Aubrey said his humour was, I have no doubt it sometimes served him to call in at the Blackfriars and see the young boy-actors in their nest. Do we not remember that curious expression in *Hamlet*, an “aery of children, little eyases”? That referred to boy-actors, and “aery” was the word for a nest of hawks, and the “eyases” were the young birds in it. So perhaps Bacon had watched them with an eye of interest, for it is Bacon and not Shakespeare who is so frequently referring to the aristocratic pursuit of hawking and using its technical terms in the Shakespeare Plays; at least that is our view, as it also is that Bacon was one of the two friends who were the Damon and Pythias of the Bankside and had “one drab” between them.

Lady Anne had great fears about her son Francis, and hinted pretty plainly in her letters to Anthony what her opinion was. She thought he was averse to taking good advice, and was producing his "own early discredit"; and this was in 1593, when Francis was at the discreet age of thirty-two. So, though we may assume that Francis was a devoted student and thinker in the days of his youth, we must not, I think, also assume that he was a perfect Joseph in matters of the moral law. *Noscitur a sociis* is a good rule in such matters, and as Perez, Essex, Southampton, and Pembroke were all far from being Sir Galahads, it may be fairly assumed that Francis Bacon, the intimate companion of such pleasure-loving grandees, was not an unlikely person to figure in those strange adventures that are depicted to us so dimly in the Sonnets.

He was certainly a much more likely person for the part than William Shakespeare, and although the Bacon of middle and later life was apparently a man of serious, learned, and philosophic tastes, we should not therefore assume that in his youth he must have been a kind of Elizabethan John Stuart Mill—a mere "book in breeches," as Mill's enemies called *him*. We may far more justly assume that his three years in France after he left college were spent in the fashionable pleasures that were usual with gay young men of position; and that though a lover of learning, he was neither a hermit nor a saint, but was qualifying himself by his social surroundings for the production of that wonderful original play *Love's Labour's Lost*, which I cannot help thinking was his first dramatic sketch, and perhaps partly autobiographical as well.

Another very singular circumstance connected with William Shakespeare is, that when he died there were no *epicedia* or *lacrymæ*, or any of the laudatory laments that were wont to be bestowed on the illustrious dead. The greatest genius of the age left the world without a word of comment for good or ill from any one. Surely there is something mysterious here. It is not even known for

certain when his memorial tomb in Stratford Church was erected. There is no mention of it until the issue of the first folio in 1623, and it and its inscriptions may have been only then recently erected in view of the outcoming folio edition of his Plays.

Such a great and popular dramatist deserved *some* notice from his contemporaries when he left the great theatre of the world for ever;—why then this singular conspiracy of silence? Was it because he was shrewdly suspected of being only a successful broker of other men's plays, and therefore the less said the better? But just now we are more concerned with the early days of Bacon than with the last days of Shakespeare, so we will consider him for a moment under his Ovidian domino, as I believe Ben Jonson depicted him in the *Poetaster*.

Bacon, like Milton, began by being a lover of Ovid. The "first heire" of his invention in poetry was of Ovidian descent, and of the "Amorous Latin" school. There was no slur on a man's breeding because he wrote poems. On the contrary, it was a proof of cultured and courtly wit. The aristocratic young bloods tried their hands at it—Pembroke, Essex, and others; and to be able to write verses for the maids of honour to sing to their virginals was in a gallant's favour. It was play-writing that was decreed to be impossible for a courtly gallant. So Bacon, who from his earliest days always aimed at the greatest and highest "births of time," did not begin with any short lyrics, but attempted a grand poem on an Ovidian subject, and enriched by such "native wood-notes wild" as never came from Ovid's lips. Who would have thought that Bacon, beginning so, should become within a few years the author of *Hamlet*? What a contrast, what a gulf between the two! It seems almost incredible that both should come from the same pen; but in *Venus and Adonis* we see the author of *Hamlet* when young, we see there the Bacon of the Sonnets and of the Master-Mistress of his passion. And in *Hamlet* we see the same personality older and wiser, having passed through a dark period

of slander and disappointment which might have wrecked a weaker man.

In the Sonnets and the Poems may we not say that Bacon, like Goethe and Schiller, was in his *Sturm und Drang* period, and that in *Hamlet* he had passed beyond it, even as *Wallenstein* succeeded the *Robbers*, and *Wilhelm Meister* blotted out *Werther*? The amorous ecstasy of youth had changed to the philosophic contemplation of maturer experience. Venus had yielded her sceptre to Philanthropia, but her subject and worshipper remained an aristocrat throughout.

“Aristocrat indeed!” exclaim the Shakespearians; “why, the frequent coarse remarks of the Plays show that he was a man of the people.” This reply seems to me very weak. In an age of extreme coarseness, the immortal Plays were much more free from this defect than the majority of contemporary dramas. The penny and twopenny public had to be considered, and certain comic scenes and broad allusions were expected by a certain class of the audience; and Bacon, aristocrat as he was, still was quite equal to supplying the need, for we are told, on good authority, that Bacon could talk with all sorts of people in their own jargon. So the occasional coarseness of the dialogue tells in Bacon’s favour rather than not.

But I must here repeat that I do not hold the extreme theory that Bacon wrote the whole of the wonderful dramas from beginning to finish, including all the excellent stage arrangement and all the subsidiary parts and scenes, and that we have not a word or a character which is due to Shakespeare the player. I think such a theory will not stand for a moment, and is absolutely impossible when we consider the contemporary attitude towards Shakespeare taken by his fellow-players, friends and enemies. Even his enemies never said he was a mere puppet in other people’s hands—they gave him credit for “locks of wool” and “shreds,” though the whole fleece was not his in their belief. There are some Warwickshire places and characters here and there in the Plays,

and some of the names of the roystering *dramatis personæ* are well-known Stratford names which appear in municipal documents, and in the proceedings against recusants in Shakespeare's father's time. I should attribute such scenes and incidents of the Plays to Shakespeare rather than to Bacon. It seems far more likely that Shakespeare, being a broker and reviser of old stage property, and an expert at it, should touch up and arrange extra stage business for Bacon's plays, rather than that he should put them on the boards just as they came neatly written from the scrivener's clerk or the scriptorium at Twickenham, and make no alteration whatever. Indeed, I see plain evidence of Ben Jonson discriminating between Bacon the dramatist and Ovidian poet and Shakespeare the player—the Luscus who rants with his buskins on, and swears "by the welkin," and is after all only a Poet-ape, and a parcel-poet with an unrestrained flow of words at times that makes him ridiculous rather than sublime. But he was not a bad fellow, had a good flowing stream of language, and a facetious grace to go with it. So, it seems, thought Ben Jonson, Henry Chettle, and others who knew him.

However, Shakespeare had no share in the writing of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, we may be pretty sure of that; they were from the hand of Francis Bacon, and he has left his mark upon them. There is also a remarkable circumstance connected with *Venus and Adonis* which points strongly to Bacon, although no Baconian has availed himself of it yet. It is this. *Venus and Adonis* was enrolled on the Stationers' Register under the special authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Now the poem is not of a nature to be gathered for protection under an Archbishop's wing, and especially such an Archbishop as Dr. Whitgift was, who took severe steps against questionable and improper books, and was the strict ecclesiastical dignitary who closed the register against Hall's *Satires*, Marlowe's *Ovid*, and several other books of the same licentious character as *Venus and Adonis*. Why this unfair favouritism, as it must have appeared

to be to all who took notice of it? If Bacon wrote it we have a good reason to give, but if Shakespeare, then it becomes much more difficult to explain. The Archbishop was very friendly to Francis Bacon, and knew him as a lad intimately, for he was his tutor when young Bacon came up to Trinity, his college. He knew nothing of Shakespeare, and would be against an actor who wrote licentious poetry, which would be a double offence in clerical eyes.

This incident, then, of the Archbishop's special favour towards *Venus and Adonis* points to an antecedent friendship with the author; and in that case the author would be Bacon, and not Shakespeare. Or we, perhaps, may put it in this way; Bacon asked his old tutor for his sanction to William Shakespeare's first attempt, and the Archbishop took Bacon's word for it, and granted his request.

The Sonnets, too, are Bacon's entirely. They were early work, and in them he practised his "pupil pen." They were only for his private friends, and not intended for the general public's eye or ear, and therefore we find they were used by him as a safe storehouse to draw from, at least up to the year 1609, when they were published (as I think) without the author's knowledge. The proof of this is in the numerous parallelisms found between the Sonnets and the early plays, such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*; all before 1598. After this date the parallel passages are few and far between, so we conclude that the Sonnets and these early plays were being composed about the same time, and that the author boldly plagiarised from himself in the Sonnets, because he thought they were not generally known, and never would be. They were only his exercise-book, the work of his "pupil pen." A good example of this appears in the Earl of Pembroke's letter to Robert Cecil, written very shortly after his release from the Fleet Prison, where he had been placed temporarily on Mary Fitton's account. In this letter (dated 1601) we find many striking phrases

and turns of thought which are evidently borrowed from one of the Sonnets. Now, this letter is supposed to have been *concocted* by the author of the Sonnets, or at least suggested to Pembroke by that author. So here we have Bacon in 1601 borrowing from his own "exercise-book" or pupil verses, as yet unpublished except in MS. to private friends. It was also hence a possible inference that Robert Cecil was *not* one of the favoured private friends who had a copy. This last inference is also on several other grounds not unlikely; and indeed if the Cecils had an author's copy it would most likely have been preserved at Hatfield House, and we should have heard something about such a precious treasure before now. An original MS. of the Sonnets in the author's handwriting, if found in the cupboard of a lumber-room at Hatfield House, would have beaten even the "record" find of Elizabethan rarities at Lamport Hall.

Another point is this :

The Shakespeare Plays were being constantly revised. No one has ever ventured to contradict this certain fact. Indeed, Mr. Fleay, the great authority on the Chronology of the Plays, says "there is not a play that can be referred even on the rashest conjecture to a date anterior to 1594, which does not bear the plainest internal evidence of having been refashioned at a later time." * No other contemporary plays were habitually recast in this way. Ben Jonson, Marston, Dekker, and the rest had their quartos published and there was an end of them, as far as any touching up was concerned. If a prologue or epilogue or some libellous allusion were prohibited in the first publishing of a play of theirs, it might appear in a later edition with a few extra remarks. This happened in some of old Ben's hard-hitting plays, and in other writers too; but there was no deliberate revision as in the Shakespeare Plays—in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *Hamlet*, and in others.

My point is that this constant revising and altering was distinctly Baconian. In his letters to Tobie Matthew,

* Fleay, *Life of Shakespeare*, 1886, p. 128.

his most intimate friend, Bacon refers to this habit of his own as well known to his friend, and we find also that he wrote and re-wrote his philosophical works, or some of them, at least four or five times over. And perhaps the *Essays* afford the best instance of all. Their successive alterations and revisions remind us of nothing so much as of the Shakespeare Plays; and they received their final revision only just a year or so after the final revision of the Plays in the first folio. Take only one or two examples from the "Contents" page of almost any modern edition; we have:

- 2 Of Death, 1612, enlarged 1625.
- 11 Of Great Place, 1612, slightly enlarged 1625.
- 28 Of Expense, 1597, enlarged 1612, and again 1625.
- 55 Of Honour and Reputation, 1597, omitted 1612, republished 1615.

The "real Shakespeare" of Ben Jonson, whose utterances "flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped," and whose manuscript was so clean because "in his writing (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line," certainly does not seem to be the kind of writer who would be always revising, touching up, and tinkering his first rapid inspiration. But Bacon seemed to enjoy this rather tedious literary labour, and on this account I think the constant changes, and the various readings and revisions on which critics have bestowed such astonishing pains, are all in favour of the Bacon theory of their origin.

As to Shakespeare's MSS. with never a line blotted out, I take *their* origin to be, either the scrivener's office or the scriptorium at Twickenham or elsewhere, where Bacon kept his "pens" (penmen). I add one extract from a letter dated Gray's Inn, 17th February 1610. Bacon says (to Tobie Matthew): "My great work (the *Wisdom of the Ancients*) goeth forward; and after my manner I alter ever when I add: so that nothing is finished till all be finished." Nor must we forget that the great folio of 1623 was itself an immense work of

revision. The early quartos were altered, passages excised, and the Plays made better for reading in the *study* than by any improvement as acting plays. If Shakespeare had done this work, it must have been at least seven years previously, for he died in 1616. Why this delay? The revision is far more likely due to Bacon, who in conjunction with Jonson is thought to have arranged the literary prefaces.

It may fairly be said that the evidence in favour of the *author* having revised several Shakespeare Plays in or about the year 1623 is too strong to be put aside. But the author had been dead seven years, and although even in this twentieth century "he being dead yet speaketh," he does not speak quite in this peculiar manner, and has never since, as far as I have heard, added 160 new lines to one of his Plays. But this remarkable occurrence took place among many similar ones in 1623, and the play was *Othello*. This play had never been printed in any form during the lifetime of Shakespeare the player. It was first published in 1622, six years after Shakespeare's death, in quarto form, and in 1623 it was published a second time in the first folio with 160 additional lines, evidently from the hand of the author. As Bacon showed his head in *Lucrece*, so also I believe he showed his hand here. For from what other source did these lines come? "Oh," replies the orthodox believer, "they came clearly from the original MS. at the playhouse, which the managers and possessors had supplied to the editors of the folio." But there are several things against this supposition. Why were not the additional lines printed in the quarto of the year before? If it be said that was an imperfect and pirated copy, we still are at a loss to know why it was not printed long before, when other quartos were being issued with or without authority. Moreover, these added lines have a very Baconian allusion about the

"Pontic sea

Whose icy current and compulsive course

Ne'er feels retiring ebb;"

which was one of Bacon's scientific facts which he referred

to in a treatise on Tides written about the time of Shakespeare's death. Here Bacon mentions the "Pontus" and "Propontis," and the words "Pontic" and "Propontic" occur in the lines added to *Othello*.

The case of the play of *Richard III.* is even stronger. There was a sixth edition of this play (quarto) in 1622, and in the folio edition of 1623 there were nearly 200 new lines added and nearly 2000 retouched, and as there were several printer's errors peculiar to the quarto of 1622 which reappeared in the same form in the folio of 1623, it looks as if the additions and alterations were made upon the sixth edition in quarto, that is, were made six years after Shakespeare's death. There is much more evidence of a similar kind with regard to other plays, and the solution that Shakespeare the player left all this mass of corrections and additions in MS. when he died in 1616, appears to be in the highest degree unlikely, when we examine what really happened in the two last editions of *Othello* and *Richard III.*, not to speak of others.

As to the *fons et origo* of all this constant revision, both early and late (but especially late), my impression is that it was mainly due to the changing and progressive philosophical conceptions of Francis Bacon. Originally the Plays may have been the Works of Recreation of his "great mind," but from a very early period it was his New Method of Philosophy which was the darling of his intellect, and other literary projects became subservient to this more important one. It was not long before some of the earlier plays were revised and brought into closer accordance with his philosophical views. *Love's Labour's Lost*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet* seem the best examples of this; while other plays, such as *The Tempest* or *Macbeth*, would be originally written to further or to illustrate the great conceptions of the New Method which so possessed his mind. But he would revise all again and again, even as he revised his *Novum Organum* every year for a long time, and the final revision took place for the great folio of 1623, when he had practically finished those

parts of his philosophical method he intended for the public.

Again, was Bacon or Shakespeare the more likely man to depict accurately and to the very life the many aristocrats by birth and intellect that figure so frequently in the unrivalled dramas? If we think of their early experiences and opportunities, their respective positions and surroundings from the ages of seventeen to twenty-one—perhaps the most impressionable years of a man's life—we shall, I think, give but one answer, and that a most decided one:—Bacon has everything in his favour; Shakespeare little, if anything.

Hepworth Dixon sums up this early part of Bacon's life very well:

“In the train of Sir Amyas Paulett, he rides at seventeen with that throng of nobles who attend the King and the Queen-mother down to Blois, to Tours, to Poitiers; mixes with the fair women on whose bright eyes the Queen relies for her success, even more than on her regiments and fleets; glides in through the hostile camps; observes the Catholic and Huguenot intrigues, and sees the great men of either Court make love and war.”*

This was surely a better *seminarium*, a more productive seed-plot, for the future everlasting flowers of courtly and cultured fancy that spring up before us in the Shake-speare Dramas, than young Shaxper of Stratford-on-Avon could possibly have access to.

Again, there is that well-known incident of Yorick's skull in *Hamlet*. I do not think that it has ever been noticed how this points to Bacon much more than to Shakespeare. The dates here evolved are most troublesome to the orthodox Shakespearians, and Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, in his last work on Shakespeare (Quaritch, 1902), has to invent a journey of young Shakespeare to London when he was about ten, on which occasion he rode on Yorick's back, as stated in *Hamlet* (!); for “Yorick the King's jester” was the famous Tarlton the clown, and

* Hepworth Dixon, *Personal Life of Lord Bacon*, p. 13.

court jester to Elizabeth. He died in 1588, when Shakespeare was about four-and-twenty, and in the first quarto of *Hamlet* it is said that Yorick had been buried "this twelve year," which would just be about 1588 if *Hamlet* were written in 1600 or 1601, as is generally supposed, and so points pretty clearly to Tarlton, who was the only famous court jester it could refer to.

As is well known, Hamlet refers to knowing this jester well, and being carried in play on his back, and to having kissed him often, and to having heard his jokes, which "were wont to set the table on a roar,"—at Court presumably. But supposing that Shakespeare's father did bring young William to town in 1574, when the boy was about ten, what likelihood would there be of his being carried pick-a-back by Tarlton or hearing his jokes among the diners at Court? But Bacon when a boy was well known at Court, and was called by the Queen, who often used to talk with him, in a half-playful manner, "My young Lord Keeper," and had much greater chances of meeting the Queen's jester Tarlton than ever Shakespeare had. For as Fuller tells us: "When Queen Elizabeth was serious, I dare not say sullen, and out of good humour, he (Tarlton) could undumpish her at his pleasure. Her highest favourites would in some cases go to Tarlton before they would go to the Queen, and he was their usher to prepare their advantageous access unto her."* But the more Hamlet is read and understood, the more clearly does John Bright's vigorous Anglo-Saxon seem to be written across every page: "Any man who believes that William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote *Hamlet* or *Lear* is a——" H'm! *Bona verba quæso*.

* Fuller's *Worthies*, ii. 312.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHY DID FRANCIS BACON CONCEAL HIS IDENTITY ? SUMMARY OF DIFFICULTIES AND OBJECTIONS

I DO not think that sufficient attention has been given to the constant withdrawal of Bacon's name from his own writings in his earlier days. He was nothing if not anonymous, and was, so to speak, nurtured in an atmosphere of secret or concealed authorship. His father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, is supposed to have made use of a living contemporary mask to hide his authorship of a certain political treatise. His mother, Lady Anne Bacon, made several learned translations from Latin and Italian, but withheld her full name. His brother Anthony, who was so clever with ciphers that he was asked to compose one, had many correspondents known well enough to him, but their signatures were very often altered, and other names assumed. The letters of Standen to Anthony Bacon are preserved at Lambeth, and he writes under two names in addition to his own.

But young Francis Bacon preferred at first to write under no name at all, and to manage, if possible, so that his productions, chiefly at that time political, might be attributed to some greater celebrity. There was that early *Letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth*, written in 1584-5, thought for a long time to be Lord Burghley's work, but known now to be written by Bacon. There was the letter to Monsieur Critoy, Secretary of France, written, to all appearance, by Sir Francis Walsingham, the English Secretary, about the year 1589, but now, after many years, shown to be drawn up by Bacon, who indeed used a great part of it almost word for word in his *Observations on a Libel* about three years afterwards. This "repeating

himself" Spedding calls "conclusive" evidence of Bacon's handiwork; what say the Shakespearians to this?

It is known too, and mentioned more fully elsewhere in this book, that Bacon was often writing letters *from* other people *to* other people, and even *from* other people *to* himself, and was indeed ready for any other variation of epistolary correspondence that might serve his turn.

I have often thought that Bacon was the "brown Ruscus" of Marston's first Satire; at least I can think of no one who suits it better. I will, however, give the critics a chance of finding one:

"Tell me, brown Ruscus, hast thou Gyges' ring,
That thou presumest as if thou wert unseen?
If not, why in thy wits half capreal
Lett'st thou a superscribèd letter fall?
And from thyself unto thyself dost send,
And in the same thyself thyself commend?
For shame! leave running to some satrapas,
Leave glavering on him in the peopled press;
Holding him on as he through Paul's doth walk,
With nods and legs and odd superfluous talk;
When he esteems thee but a parasite.
For shame! unmask; leave for to cloke intent,
And show thou art vain-glorious impudent."

—*Satire*, II. 5-18.

The date of the above would be 1597-8, when Bacon was still looking forward to Essex, the Queen's satrap, doing something for his advancement in office. But whether Bacon be Ruscus or not, there is undoubted evidence that he lived in an atmosphere of fictitious letters, masked authorship, and general literary concealment in the earlier part of his career. He was a very hard worker too, and "sportèd his oak" as persistently as a Johnian sizar in his first year. Nicholas Faunt lets us know this, for he made a grievance of it when writing to his friend Anthony, Francis's brother. In 1584 Faunt called on Francis Bacon at Gray's Inn—a friendly call to exchange news about Anthony, who was abroad. Bacon's man-servant answered the door, and presently came back to say that his

master was too much engaged to see any one, but would Mr. Faunt leave his message? No, Mr. Faunt would not, and went away rather in a huff, for he writes off at once to Anthony and tells him about what occurred at the door: "Neither was I so simple to say all to a boy at the door, his master being within. This strangeness hath at other times been used towards me by your brother," &c. I am afraid no excuse can be offered for this repeated discourtesy of young Francis. But if he were occupied with *Venus and Adonis*, or was reading or pondering over some early play, I for one would forgive him.

But to return to the question we started with—the atmosphere of concealment with regard to authorship in which Bacon habitually lived in his earlier days—we must not forget that this private literary work *under a mask* was a maxim of Bacon's which he adhered to and stated openly in his later days. Thus in his treatise *De moribus interpretis* * he says: "*Privata negotia personatus administret,*" i.e. "Let him do his private business under a mask." Spedding has a footnote to this: "I cannot say that I clearly understand the sentence." That is rather Mr. Spedding's manner when he meets anything not coinciding with his own fixed views. The sentence seems clear enough, especially with our present knowledge.

In fact, Bacon had learned by experience. When he came back from France with all the enthusiasm of youth and literary daring, he soon found that the envious critics, and his own relations too, were all inclined to depreciate and laugh to scorn his bold youthful attempts, his *Greatest Birth of Time* and other "phantasticall" conceits, as they would call them. So he imitated the "policy" of Aristotle, the very policy that in his dedication to Lord Mountjoye of *The Colours of Good and Evil* he gives to the Stagirite as a possible reason for the obscurity of some of his Greek writings. Aristotle, he says, may have wished "to keep himself close, as one that had been a challenger of all the world, and had raised infinite contradiction." This was just Bacon's case, and we find that throughout his

* Spedding, vii. 367.

life he tried as much as possible to avoid causing any violent opposition or contradiction.

But why did Francis Bacon so carefully conceal his share in the Plays of Shakespeare? This question has been asked for more than forty years, and the answers generally given are : (1) That it was beneath his dignified birth and position to have anything to do with play-writing at all. The men who devoted themselves to that class of literary composition were a scurvy, needy, and loose-living lot, and both writers and actors were under the conventional ban of polite and serious society.* (2) Bacon's mother, Lady Anne, was a strong Puritan and a determined opponent of such things, and had much influence over both her sons, even when arrived at comparatively mature age; they dreaded her scorn and displeasure. The answer has generally been confined to these two points only; but there is a reason which seems to me stronger than either, and that is, that it was a *dangerous* matter for a man with Bacon's hopes of advancement in life, and possible future political influence, to be mixed up with such plays. From their historical character many of them lent themselves of necessity to deep political and religious questions. The charge of heresy or treason could easily be brought by enemies, and as we know from the case of *Richard II.*, actually was brought. Nor is that the only instance. There is the case of the play of *Henry IV.* and Sir John Falstaff. Sir John was, when the play was first produced, not Falstaff, but Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, the Protestant martyr. The contemporary Lord Cobham strongly objected, and the play was revised—the first part in 1598, and the second in 1600, expunging Oldcastle and putting Falstaff in his

* This is well borne out by the evidence of Th. Lodge, who before 1589 had taken an oath

“ To write no more of that whence shame doth grow
[Nor] tie my pen to pennie-knaves delight.”

Lodge was the second son of Sir Thomas Lodge, Lord Mayor of London, and was about three years older than Bacon. The pennie-knaves were the groundlings of the theatre.

place, and concluding with an epilogue saying, "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man."

The Elizabethan age was one when treasons, plots, and conspiracies were matters of almost everyday occurrence. There were, metaphorically and actually, dangerous powder-mines in political circles which only required the falling of a spark to produce a most dangerous explosion. Elizabeth and some of her ministers evidently thought that the play of *Richard II.*, for instance, was a spark of this kind. It was first published in 1598, with "W. Shakespeare" on the title-page, but it had been often acted before, and was once in the Northumberland MS. (1594), but had been afterwards torn out.*

Queen Elizabeth had conceived great suspicion against this play of *Richard II.*, and when Hayward's *Henry IV.* came out in 1599 with an extravagant dedication to Essex, her suspicions became still stronger, and she was seriously annoyed. Dr. Hayward barely escaped torture, and those who had procured the players to give the old play of *Richard II.* just before the attempt of Essex risked their lives for the deed at the trial. And yet not one single word was said during the whole long trial about William Shakespeare, the author of the play considered so suggestive and dangerous by the Queen, though his name was given at full length on the title-page. There is designed concealment here for some now unknown purpose. Was it that Bacon was the author of *Richard II.* and had turned Queen's evidence and made his peace with Elizabeth by attacking his former patron and friend? and was it Alleyn who wrote and informed the authorities? † And then under pressure, did Bacon's name come out and his "cheveril" yielding conscience permit him to take the part he did. But the *Poetaster* has given us some hints already about this matter.

* We are reminded of:

" Who has a book of all that Monarchs do,
He's more secure to keep it shut than shown.

—*Pericles*, I. i. 94.

† Cf. p. 89 (*ante*).

The little volume of *Essays* was the first book that bore the name of Francis Bacon on the title-page, although he was already thirty-seven years old and of great knowledge and experience. This, according to the dedication, appeared 30th January 1598. Shakespeare's first acknowledged Play was also published this same year—perhaps in the same month, but certainly at no great interval.

The *Essays* of Francis Bacon, 1598, were dedicated to his brother Anthony, and this dedication is a very suggestive one, if well looked into in connection with the mystery of the Shakespeare Plays. He says first that he is acting now "like some that have an Orcharde il neighbored that gather their fruit before it is ripe, to prevent stealing." He goes on: "These fragments of my conceits were going to print: to labour the stay of them had bene troublesome, and subject to interpretation; to let them passe had bin to adventur the wrong they might receive by untrue coppies, or by some garnishment which it might please any that shold set them forth to bestow upon them. Therefore I held it best discretion to publish them myselfe, as they passed long agoe from my pen. . . ." Then he informs his brother that he "did ever hold there might be as great a vanity in retyring and withdrawing men's conceits (except they be of some nature) from the world, as in obtruding them."

Surely all this semi-obscure phraseology suggests to the reader concealed and "retired" writings; copies sent to press without author's revision; retouching and "garnishment" by other hands than the author's; and lastly, injunctions to "stay the printing" of some of these pirated books—although this "stay" is admitted to be a troublesome matter, and likely to rouse suspicion and false comment. Does not all this suggest that the author of the *Essays* had lately experienced troubles connected with publishers and the press-pirates, although this was ostensibly his first work?

But it may be asked, Why should Bacon write for the theatres at all if it was so fraught with danger to himself and his prospects? There seems to be at least two reason-

able replies to this objection. One is, that Bacon was by no means well supplied with ready money in his early days, or indeed at any time, for he was of lavish and extravagant habits, and a constant borrower; and so, when at Gray's Inn, and having time on his hands, he occupied himself in the agreeable task of "invention," and prepared plays, partly because it was his hobby (and he generally took a good deal of trouble about the Masques at Gray's Inn), and partly because he could dispose of them to the theatres, and so earn something to help his present wants, and could arrange such matters without publicity. The plays could be anonymous, and the early ones were all published [or pirated] without any author's name; and when, later on in 1598, circumstances arose which required *Richard II.* or other historical plays to be fathered by some one, William Shakespeare, as is supposed, either stepped into the gap, for a consideration, or allowed his name to be used for the plays, as it had been already used for the dedication of the Poems to Southampton a few years before.

The general opinion that all the Shakespearian Plays were pirated and purloined from stage copies, is, I believe, quite a mistake. Money could be made by publishing any plays that were popular or had made a reputation, and we know that Ben Jonson used to get paid twice for his work, once for the stage manuscript, and once more from the stationer to whom he gave it for publication. Sometimes stationers had to pay a good long price for important works. Mr. Sidney Lee wants to make us believe that in Shakespeare's time there was no such thing as copyright. This assertion will not stand, or at any rate is misleading. Members of the Stationers' Company who had agreed to purchase a manuscript copy of an author's work were undoubtedly protected in their sole rights to it, and thus pirates could be baffled by the author or proprietor of an MS. selling his rights to a duly authorised publisher. Bacon, who wanted money, and knew the law well enough, would certainly adopt the best plan for his own interest.

Another reason was, there being no daily papers or

periodicals in the Elizabethan times, the stage was one of the best and readiest means for publishing opinions on any subject. A large public could be reached; many people who never opened a book could have their minds opened and their views modified while listening to the sentiments uttered by the characters on the stage. There was a fine chance for instilling lofty thoughts and inspiring principles by means of what was seen and heard on the boards of the theatre—and the author of the Shakespeare Plays used his opportunity well, as we must admit. Now Bacon was a man who would use such an opportunity well for the common good of humanity, for there was in Francis Bacon by nature a serious and lofty philanthropy, a desire to make the world better than he found it, which all the students of Bacon who know him best are the first to acknowledge.

The author of the Plays has been thought to be self-revealed in many of the characters of his Plays, and, amongst others, especially in the melancholy Jacques of *As You Like It*, who exclaims :

“ Invest me in my motley ; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of th’ infected world.”

If this be Bacon, as I believe it was, it will help us to a good reason why he wrote the Plays.

Nay, has not Bacon revealed his secret pretty plainly to those who can read between the lines in his last beautiful Prayer : “ I have hated all cruelty and hardness of heart ; I have, *though in a despised weed, sought the good of all men.*” Now, this word *weed* had then ordinarily the meaning of a garment—it yet survives in our “ widows’ weeds ”—and in the Baconian and Shakespearian use of the word there seems generally a half-meaning of a garment or dress that *disguises* the wearer. Thus in Sonnet LXXVI. :

“ Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth, and whence they did proceed ? ”

In both cases I believe Bacon is referring to the same things—to the works of his “invention,” or, as he sometimes phrased it, “works of his recreation.” He means that in his Plays he had sought the good of all his audience. He means, I think, that he had sought to influence his countrymen for their good in politics, national history, and patriotism, as represented vividly before their eyes in the theatres, and by the despised companies of vagrant actors, men indeed contemned by serious culture (Sir Thomas Bodley, to wit) and Puritanical self-righteousness, but still members of a profession and practisers of an art whose increasing future influence on the general public Bacon’s keen eyes would not fail to detect.

To me, that very word “invention” seems to point directly to “plays” and “masques” and “long poems” like *Venus and Adonis*, that “first heir of my invention,” as its author called it.

We have good proof that about this very time—viz., the year 1580—this word was so applied: “I confesse that ere this I have bene a great affecter of that vaine art of Plaie-making, insomuch that I have thought no time so wel bestowed, as when my wits were exercised in the *invention* of those follies.” This is taken from “*A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and theatres . . . set forth by Anglo-phile Eutheo*,” 1580, 16mo, p. 49. Herein is a very strong indictment of the Elizabethan theatres of the year 1580. It would, I judge, be a book dear to the heart of Lady Anne Bacon and all who thought as she did on this subject.

The theatres during Bacon’s time were the resort of many profligate and noisy persons. Halliwell-Phillipps gives many instances proving from contemporary writers that the theatres were sinks of iniquity, with a very bad reputation for brawling, low company, and general debauchery. Girls of good character would be afraid of risking their reputation by visiting such places, or if they did they would be masked. It is to be feared also that the custom (which was universal then) of dressing up men and boys in women’s clothes was sometimes an incentive

to perverted or Italianated instincts, and Italian morals were probably more known and imitated among the followers and patrons of the theatrical companies than in any other class of society. The University men who came to town to make a living somehow among people of this grade of society, were nearly always loose and profligate livers. Ben Jonson boasted that he could brand all his opponents in the Theatre War so deeply that no barber-surgeon could get the damning mark from their skin. It seems from what is said elsewhere in this book, that Bacon was one of this company in Jonson's eyes, and that probably Bacon himself thought he was aimed at, and sued for legal protection to shut Ben's virulent mouth. When we consider the very mixed and partly disreputable company before whom the plays of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, and the rest were acted, the author deserves great credit for the endeavour to elevate the rough groundlings and stinkards who formed so large a part of the audience. The constant revision, too, and improvement of the plays—a real improvement and not merely *ad captandum vulgus*, nor yet *ad captandam pecuniam*—all this seems to point away from the money-getting player and part proprietor who hailed from Stratford, and to point in the direction of Francis Bacon, the great literary workman, who in his high philanthropy used a despised weed for the good of all men.

The Shakespeare Plays are superior in moral tone and decency to the ordinary plays of the period. This is generally admitted, and is a credit to the author. Certain free passages here and there would be much better omitted, but they may be due to the work of an ill-advised collaborator at the theatre, or may have been put in for the benefit of the groundlings, stinkards, and prostitutes who crowded the open space where they had standing room at a penny a head. But even in their best aspect they would have been an abomination to Lady Anne and her preachers, and after reading her letters to her son Anthony about his brother's shortcomings, his wastefulness, his "cormorant seducers," and his filthy Welsh knaves, we may well

imagine that her ladyship would not be sparing of her invective if she had been told that Francis often went to Blackfriars to see the young eyases, that nest of boys "fit to ravish a man," to use Thomas Middleton's Italianated expression. This would indeed have roused her ire, for if Lady Anne hated one thing more than another, it was riotous living, and sinful Popish practices and corrupt ways of life.

It seems from what we read in the second Act of *Hamlet* that these little boy-actors, this "aiery of children," became quite the fashion among the smart set of court gallants, and "so berattle the common stages (as they call them) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills, and dare scarce come thither." What harm the goose quills could do except write scandalous libels or vilifying ridicule, I know not. The passage is not quite clear to me. However, in the Induction to *Cynthia's Revels*, where three of the boy-actors were struggling with each other for the usual cloak for the Prologue, we see plain enough that these children were old in the ways of the world. "What!" says the third child to the other two, "will you ravish me? . . . I'd cry a rape but that you are children." Ben Jonson knew his Italianated courtiers well enough.

There is a general impression with regard to Bacon's prose style which deserves to be removed, for it is a primary cause by which many people are led to refuse any hearing whatever to the Bacon-Shakespeare question. Bacon is really very little read nowadays, even by fairly educated people; and the general impression gained by turning over the leaves of his voluminous works is that he is dreadfully dry, prosy, and dull—a superficial view only, but it remains with many as a permanent one. Therefore, when it is suggested that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, such people, recalling their impression of Bacon's style, reject the idea as not worth further consideration. But thorough students of Bacon speak of the "marvellous language in which Bacon often clothes his thoughts. His utterances are not unfrequently

marked with a grandeur and solemnity of tone, a majesty of diction, which renders it impossible to forget and difficult even to criticise them." They say that "whenever he wishes to be emphatic, there is a true ring of genius in all that he says. There is no author so stimulating. Bacon might well be called the British Socrates." * If such a description be true, and its high authority forbids doubt, why should Bacon's style be an *insuperable objection* to his being the author of Shakespeare?

Bacon then, it seems, was a "British Socrates." Now Shakespeare was called *a Socrates* in the epitaph at Stratford Church. Which was really a *Socrates*? Surely not Shakespeare. Whoever *could* have put up such an inappropriate inscription with such a howling false quantity as that which now greets the eye of the Shakespeare pilgrim:

"Judicio Pylum Socratem ingenio, arte Maronem
Terra tegit, populus mæret, Olympus habet"?

Besides, it suits Bacon so much better. But I deal with this point in my chapter on Jonson and Shakespeare.

Nor are we justified in saying that since Bacon's prose style seems in general so heavy and so often quite unilluminated by any brightness of wit and fancy, that therefore he had not the qualification necessary for a great poet or dramatist. Dulness of treatment in a prose work on politics, philosophy, or religion, and page after page unilluminated by any light of wit or fancy, is by no means a certain proof that the author cannot excel in the high poetic treatment of a congenial theme. Take Milton, for instance. We might parody Mr. Spedding, and say, "Whoever wrote the *Colasterion* and the *De Doctrinâ Christianâ*, of this I am quite sure, it was *not* the author of *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*." But we should be utterly wrong. One sublime intellect wrote both the dull and the lofty subjects. And may not the same be true of the lofty tragedies of Shakespeare, abounding in poetic conceptions of the highest order, and the excellent but somewhat

* *Nat. Dict. Biog.*, s.v. Bacon.

dull and tedious philosophy of Francis Bacon? And just as Milton had purple patches of echoing thunder and rhythmical charm in the midst sometimes of his most prosaic discourse, so we find that Bacon too was not wanting in these unexpected variations. We often meet in his solid and scientific prose the imagery of a true poet, combined sometimes with a rhythmic cadence that seems as involuntary as it is beautiful.

And besides we have the speeches of the Hermit and others in the "Essex Device"—now acknowledged to be Bacon's work—speeches full of lofty imagination, and abounding in the deep-brained similitudes for which Bacon declared he had a kind of natural talent, and which we also meet with so often in the Poems and Plays.

But let us hear another great authority on Bacon's style—I mean Dr. Abbott—and we shall find that many difficulties of the Bacon-Shakespeare theory vanish entirely. He says :

"Bacon's style varied almost as much as his handwriting ; but it was influenced more by the subject-matter than by youth or old age. Few men have shown equal versatility in adapting their language to the slightest shade of circumstance and purpose. His style depended upon whether he was addressing a king, or a great nobleman, or a philosopher, or a friend ; whether he was composing a State paper, pleading in a State trial, magnifying the Prerogative, extolling Truth, discussing studies, exhorting a judge, sending a New Year's present, or sounding a trumpet to prepare the way for the Kingdom of Man over Nature. It is a mistake to suppose that Bacon was never florid till he grew old. On the contrary, in the early Devices written during his connection with Essex, he uses a rich exuberant style and poetic rhythm ; but he prefers the rhetorical question of appeal to the complex period. . . . The Essays, both early and late, abound in pithy metaphor as their natural illustration. . . . It would seem that Bacon's habit of collecting choice words and phrases, to express his meaning exactly, or ornately, had from a very early date the effect of repelling some of his hearers by the interspersions of unusual expressions and metaphors. . . . He seems gradually to have succeeded, with the aid of friendly

critics, in shaking off his early tendency to 'spangle his speech' with fit and terse, but unusual, expressions. But that he felt any pride in, or even set a just value on, his unique mastery of the English language, there is scarcely any indication."

As is well known, one of the most curious of Bacon's literary opinions is his view that the English language was not permanent, and that only works written in the learned Latin tongue would descend to distant posterity. Hence he was more proud of his Latin works than his English ones—at least that was his view in his last years; and he took great pains to have his acknowledged works, and his Essays especially, translated into Latin. What induced him eventually to hold this view seems very hard to discover. Clearly he did not hold it in his younger sonneteering days, as we know by those beautiful lines addressed to his "lovely boy":

"Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

But in any case, the strange fact remains that this most wonderful intellect, this "wisest of mankind," was apparently so careless of his literary reputation that he did not publish anything till he was nearly forty years old. He seems, by his letter to his uncle, Lord Treasurer Burghley, in 1592, to have determined to put his "care of (public) service" before the care of his books and "inventions," although in after life he admitted with sorrow how that his soul had long dwelt among such things as were enemies to his peace—*multum fuit incola anima mea*—or, as he paraphrased it in his last Prayer and Confession, "I may truly say my soul hath been a stranger in the course of my pilgrimage." That was his frequent cry. Bacon, like Milton, was not ignorant of his own parts; he knew better than most men how much there needed to be done in the world, and in his "vast contemplative ends" he no doubt often thought that he was the man to do it. But he also knew that no man could

effect much without power, and means, and interest, and so he set himself to obtain those *fulcra* for moving the world as his first object. He allied himself so closely to Essex because he thought power lay in that direction rather than with the humdrum and commonplace policy of the Cecil party, although he was allied by blood to the Cecils. Indeed, in this letter to Burghley of 1592, Bacon opens his mind more than he had ever done before in writing. He says, "I have taken all knowledge to be my province"; and adds that if he could get rid of certain "rovers," who by "frivolous disputations, confutations, and verbosities" in one part of the province, and by "blind experiments" and "impostures" in another part, had done so much damage, that then he hoped that he could "bring in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries; the best state of that province. This, whether it be curiosity or vainglory, or nature, or (if one take it favourably) *philanthropia*, is so fixed in my mind as it cannot be removed."

It never was removed, and all his life long this marvellous and mysterious * man could have truly said of the "Cup of Knowledge" in a line of his own Sonnets (CXIV.),

"And my great minde most kingly drinks it up."

And with him it would not have been a vain or foolish boast. If ever there was a great and kingly intellect, it was that of Francis Bacon, the "broad-brow'd Verulam."

That intellectual *philanthropia* never was removed while he was one of the breathers of the world, and when the inevitable hour came, and he had to meet the

"Barren rage of death's eternal cold,"

he could again say truly, "*I have, though in a despised weed, sought the good of all men.*" And wrapping himself round with his virtues as with a cloak, he glides away,

* Cf. Ben Jonson's Epigram on Bacon's sixteenth birthday in 1621:

"And in the midst
Thou stand'st as if some *mystery* thou didst."

still a mystery, from the knowledge of his generation, and leaves his fame and his secret to the generations to come.

In prose Bacon wrote only one important work of the imagination, and that but a fragment—*The New Atlantis* ; but he has put into it more of himself, his aims, his desires, his tastes, and his ideals, than into any other prose work we have from him, and we see there the manner of man he was at heart. As Dr. Abbott well remarks :

“Rising from the perusal of this little book we can better understand Bacon’s whole life and character, and especially his unbounded self-respect, and the self-confidence which was the source of some of his best literary efforts, and some of his worst political errors. . . . He always regarded himself as a philanthropist on a large scale, a true Priest of Science, after the manner of the Father of Salomon’s House, having in his heart that true *philanthropia* which is ‘the character of God Himself.’”

In my opinion we are not far from the time when our fellow-countrymen and the English-speaking peoples throughout the world will unanimously admit that the most wonderful genius that ever spoke and wrote the English language was the man who combined in *one brain*, and produced from *one brain*, the Essays and Philosophy of Francis Bacon and the Plays, Sonnets, and Poems of William Shake-speare—undoubtedly the greatest miracle of intellect the world has ever seen, and a most extraordinary termination of the greatest literary mystification that ever passed unchallenged for nearly three hundred years. That Bacon and Shakespeare should live for years in the same city and neither know nor mention each other—being such men as they were—is an astonishing fact. That two men should write such an enormous amount of original literary matter, matter so unlike and so superior to what their contemporaries could produce, is an acknowledged marvel in the case of each of them. But that one of them, viz., Bacon, wrote his own works and the other man’s as well, is next door to a miracle, and has been voted an impossibility by millions. And how could Bacon, whose last and supreme poetical effort was a doggerel translation of a few of the Psalms, by any

possibility write *Venus and Adonis*, the Sonnets, and that marvellous poetry of the highest order of expression contained in the Plays ?

Such things do seem impossible when first stated in their bare simplicity ; and that is why so many people are orthodox and follow their fathers' and grandfathers' beliefs on the subject, and why so few are heterodox or Baconians. But the more the matter is looked into, the more difficult does the Shakespeare hypothesis become, and the more easy the Baconian. Insuperable difficulties seem to disappear, or to be so modified as to be almost negligible. I hope it will not be thought egotism if I give a part of my own case.

I was orthodox like my forebears for many years. I heard occasionally of the Baconian heresy, but I had an "insuperable difficulty" which quite prevented me becoming a heretic. I thought some of the heretical arguments very forcible, but my "insuperable difficulty" effectually prevented me from following up such arguments. This was my difficulty : I could not believe that Bacon, whose highest and most serious effort in poetry seemed to have been reached in his translation of a few of the Psalms in his old age, could have possibly produced, at any time of his life, the Sonnets, the Plays, or the Poems. However, one day I bought from an old book-stall a little book of Greek Epigrams, with Latin translations, for the modest sum of sixpence, being attracted by a very pretty printer's mark (Felix Kyngston) on the title-page. On looking into it at home I found to my surprise an English poem in it, translated into similar rhyming Greek verse by Thomas Farnaby the famous schoolmaster, who attributed the English Poem to Lord Verulam. The first verse was :

"The world's a bubble and the life of man lesse than a span,
 In his conception wretched, from the wombe so to the tombe ;
 Curst from the cradle, and brought up to yeares with cares
 and feares
 Who then to fraile mortality shall trust
 But limmes the water, or but writes in dust."

I remember that I thought the last two lines rather good, and that Farnaby's authority was contemporary and sufficient. This made me read Bacon's Psalms again, and they seemed more passable; and the thought struck me that as Bacon was known to have in a high degree the faculty of throwing himself into the character he wished to represent, and to adapt his literary expression to the peculiarities of the person represented, so he had proceeded here, and had attempted the Psalms in the popular manner of Sternhold and Hopkins and the other writers of the old version of the Psalter. The Elizabethan Psalms were written down to the level of the people, and if they had been more poetically translated, and finer or loftier language used, they would not have been so acceptable to the class of people for whom they were mainly intended. There was an archaic roughness of metre which those people expected and preferred. I thought therefore that Bacon had most probably adapted his Muse to those same ends, and hence the apparently low standard of poetry. Thus did I leap over my "insuperable difficulty," and it has not troubled me since. Besides, I know that Bacon, to use his favourite expression, would always wish to "chalk a door" for his reception rather than try to enter by force, "pugnacity, or contention."

But some one may object to me that after all I have said as to the reasons why Bacon did not acknowledge his dramatic works, such as—(1) fear of offence to friends and relations, especially his mother; (2) damage to his own political reputation and prospects; (3) danger of associating his name with the public exposition on the stage of historical incidents and characters, whereby charges of treason and heresy might be incurred—that still I have given no good reason why Bacon should not have acknowledged the immortal dramas *either by his will or just before his death*. There was no Lady Anne then to fear, no political prospects to damage, no danger of a charge of treason then.

This has seemed another "insuperable objection" to many people, and is undoubtedly a strong argument against the Baconian authorship. The only reasons that struck me (and I think I have mentioned them somewhere in this volume) were that this "last confession" would call attention to the scandal of the Sonnets, and Southampton and other parties concerned were still alive. That was one grave and forcible reason; and another might be that Bacon still hoped, even to his dying day, to take his seat in the august assembly of the House of Lords, and felt that the acknowledged authorship of the actor's plays would be a decided bar to that. Or again, it has been supposed that his great admiration for Natural Philosophy, and his devotion to it in his later years, had made him undervalue the former fruits of his invention, which after all he always considered as works of his "recreation," and not as the serious business of his life. In his great mind eventually they did not bear comparison with his *Instauratio Magna*, his *Novum Organum*, and his other philosophical treatises, which he was so careful to have turned into Latin so that they might "live" to future ages. The "recreations" and the poems might die for any *Resuscitatio* that should ever come from his living lips; but he must have known that some of them, perhaps many more than we know, bore his private mark stamped on their head and tail, and that was left to the next ages and to the eyes of future generations to discover. If, however, these reasons seem insufficient for such a tremendous difficulty, I will add another which has lately come under my notice, and seems sweetly reasonable, for I firmly believe that our greatest Englishman died a truly religious man.

I will introduce it by quoting Henry Vaughan from the preface of his *Silex Scintillans*, 1655.

"It is a sentence of sacred authority that he that is dead is freed from sin; because he cannot in that state which is without the body, sin any more; but he that writes idle books makes for himself another body in which he lives and sins after death as fast and as foul as ever he did in his life: which consideration

deserves to be a sufficient antidote against this foul disease. . . . I myself have for many years languished of this very sickness ; and it is no long time since I have recovered. . . . The first that with any effectual success attempted a diversion of this font and ever-flowing stream (of vain and vicious books) was the blessed man Mr. George Herbert, whose holy life and verse gained many pious converts, of whom I am the least ; and gave the first check to a most flourishing and admired Wit of his time."

What if Francis Bacon was the greatest of these "pious converts" of whom Vaughan professed himself the "least" ? Many things are more unlikely, for Bacon, we are told, "put such a value on" George Herbert's judgment, "that he usually desired his approbation before he would expose any of his books to be printed, and thought him so worthy of his friendship, that having translated many of the prophet David's Psalms into English verse, he made George Herbert his patron by a public dedication of them to him, as the best judge of divine poetry." *

What if one of the greatest masters of varied poetic expression made a renunciation of that most excellent gift in his later years, and put all his best thoughts on other objects, and despised comparatively that immortal possession and inheritance of his, that *κτῆμα εἰς ἀεί*, the Plays of Shake-speare ? Well, he did, there is really no question about it at all. Hear his own words in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623). "Poesy is as it were a dream of learning : a thing sweet and varied and fain to be thought partly divine, a quality which dreams also sometimes affect. But now it is time for me to become fully awake, to lift myself up from the earth, and to wing my way through the liquid ether of philosophy and the sciences."

This is a pathetic renunciation, contained in, and surrounded by, the prose of a scientific work ; but had not the same master-mind some years before, under the

* *Life of Herbert*, by Izaak Walton.

guise of Prospero, in that last great semi-masque *The Tempest*, expressed the same resolve :

“ But this rough magic
I here abjure.
I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.”

And then his “dainty Ariel” is dismissed somewhat regretfully. “I shall miss thee,” he says, but his decision is to devote himself to his only daughter, the adorable Miranda.

I must admit that all this last reasoning about Bacon's renouncing the vain delights and dreams of Poesy is hardly consistent with the preparation of the first folio for publication in co-operation with Ben Jonson, which is my assumption throughout; but it may partly account for the folio not being claimed by its rightful author, and in any case Bacon's view of Poesy in 1623, and no doubt earlier, is, I think, worthy of record. I owe it to an Essay on Shakespeare-Bacon, which is anonymous, but has a postscript signed “E. W. S.: Rome, March 1899.” It is one of the best contributions to the controversy that I know.

Most people think that the very fact of Shakespeare's name being signed in full to the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* quite settles the authorship, and that to attempt to upset such plain evidence is the work only of self-deluded cranks. But the fact is, that the majority of Shakespeare readers are unable properly to grasp the situation. Concealed and feigned authorship was not an unheard-of thing in those days by any means. Greene tells us this in his *Farewell to Folly* (1591). “Others—if they come to write or publish anything in print—which for their *calling and gravity* being loth to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery.” I certainly think there was

“brokery” at work in the matter of the Shakespeare Plays and Poems.

One reason for the determined and obstinate opposition to the Bacon hypothesis is the way in which the heresy is stated. Often enough, indeed far too often, it is put in the bald form “Bacon wrote Shakespeare”; which is almost like a blow in the face to devoted Shakespearians of all degrees. It is an irritating way of stating the case, especially to many who, like myself, think it an incorrect and loose statement. If people would only set forth the heresy in the way I am now going to suggest, it would be much less annoying, much more likely to be listened to and accepted, and, in my opinion, much nearer the truth. Don’t say “Bacon wrote Shakespeare,” for at first blush it sounds absurd both to the learned and unlearned, but invert the proposition thus: “There seems strong evidence that Shakespeare, the shrewd actor-manager, was always ready to use up for his stage purposes any suitable plays, new or old, that came into his hands; he would ‘take up all’ and think no particular harm of it. He was in the habit of ‘gagging’ as well; Ben Jonson hints at that practice being used in one of his plays, and Ben took the trouble to exclude the actor-manager’s stage additions from the printed copy. But with so many book-pirates about, it was impossible for Bacon to exclude the stage gag, and so no doubt it forms *part* of the immortal plays; but only a small part fortunately. There is also strong evidence that very many of the Plays that Shakespeare took up, and which passed under his name, really came in the main from Francis Bacon. Putting aside many suspicious circumstances connected with their production both first and last, which rather tell against the Stratford man, the Plays possess a language, a philosophy, and a learning which preponderantly point to the great Francis Bacon, as against any other writer of that period.”

Shakespeare’s friends and fellow-actors must have known very well whether Shakespeare was equal to writing something for the stage, or whether he was

unequal to such an effort altogether. No doubt Shakespeare could gag if required, could touch up and add to old plays and arrange them for the stage. All his friends must have known that, or supposed it, and that is why his productions were received as a rule without comment or derision. He was a "broker" of plays, and managed to get some first-class work into his hands; we must give his fellow-actors Burbage and Kemp, and Lewin and Arnim, and such-like persons "behind the scenes," credit for being sharp enough to know *that*. But he was a "shrewd fellow" and honest in his dealings, and could send out scrip that beat all the University men's work; and he was a peaceable, good-natured fellow, was gentle Shakespeare, and patrons of the drama and men of worship spoke well of him; and he had a facetious manner of writing, and quick natural talent too. And so Shakespeare's Plays were a success, and Shakespeare deserved it, they said. Somehow thus must we account for the attitude of the age.

It has been possible to use this statement for many years now, and if the heresy could have confined itself to such statements and to the proofs of them, and if also the cranks and fanatics and "frauds" had been kept out of the controversy, then I think the world of literature would have turned Baconian long before now. Moreover, if the present writer be thought worthy of notice, a stronger statement can now be made in addition to the above. It can, I hope, now be said: "There is also apparently good external, internal, and direct evidence that Francis Bacon wrote *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the Sonnets, and since it is an admitted axiom that the man who wrote the Shakespeare Poems and Sonnets also wrote the Plays, we must now give up the Stratford Shaksper with the best grace we can, and allow Bacon his glorious seat wellnigh on the highest peak of Parnassus."

The facts that Shakespeare's name appeared on the title-pages of his Plays and was never objected to at the time, that no one of his contemporary playwrights ever claimed the Plays, that his authorship of them was gene-

rally admitted by the public, have always been held by the orthodox party to be facts that could not possibly be put aside or denied. But these facts are always taken to be much stronger than they really are. If properly weighed as evidence they are very light. We must not estimate them according to modern literary standards. Authors and printers alike, in Elizabethan days, were constantly deceiving people as to the authorship of the books that were published, and were often "hand and glove" together in managing it. Authors frequently put on the mask of their printer, especially on the threshold, or in the vestibule of their books. Gervase Markham and others are well known to have done this, and also to have joined with other authors in producing plays, and the joint production would go before the public in the name of one author only. Consequently, in many cases people could never be sure who had helped in the work besides the man whose name was on the title-page. Curiosity was rather repressed than stimulated by this collaboration of authors, for if there was little chance of finding out what special parts each author wrote, what was the use of making curious inquiries about them?

So when William Shakespeare's name began to appear on the printed Plays in 1597 and 1598, no one had anything particular to say about it. There was no literary enthusiasm, no great discovery of a new genius. William Shakespeare was, I suppose, pretty well known as an active *factotum* who had to get somehow or other as many plays for the theatre as he could. They appeared under his name; there was nothing strange to people in that, and so long as Shakespeare's Plays were attractive no one troubled much as to where they came from. That was Mr. Shakespeare's business, not theirs. A fellow-player or critic, here and there, might hint, and did hint, that this active *factotum* of the stage did not supply all the wool for the new materials offered to the public, but only a few shreds; or again hint that "his feathers might be very fine, but were they his own?" But for the general public, whether against plays or fond of them, whether

Puritan or gallant, the authorship or qualifications of Shakespeare troubled them not for one moment. For these and other reasons I hold that the "otiose assent" of contemporaries to Shakespeare being the man who wrote the Plays, is not a proof of much importance.

One favourite argument against the Baconian authorship of the Sonnets is, that they are so thoroughly unlike, in tone and manner, the staid and learned philosopher of Gorhambury. But look at the case of the learned and religious Giles Fletcher, D.D. ; who would have expected that he would write such a collection of amatory sonnets as *Licia* (1593, 4to) ? They were anonymous, and no one suspected the real author till a few years ago, when he was found out by some one noticing an allusion in the ninth stanza of the First Piscatory Dialogue, written by his son. This divine did not, like Bacon, show his own head, but his son showed it for him.

Moreover, it was not at all unusual for a man in Francis Bacon's position at Gray's Inn to be mixed up with stage matters and dramatic pageants and court interludes. Indeed, it was to a man who almost in all things held a similar position in life to Francis Bacon that we owe the beginnings of the historic drama. Ferrers, a lawyer, who maintained himself in court favour under Henry, Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth, was noted as a director of dramatic pageants, and he it was who composed the first English historic legend in the *Mirror for Magistrates* in 1559. There were nineteen legends, from the reigns of Richard II., Henry IV., Henry V., Henry VI., &c., and Ferrers was responsible for three. If one lawyer—Ferrers—laid such a good foundation for the historic drama, why should not another lawyer—Bacon—build upon it ?

Only a few years later another novelty was added to the drama. This too came from the lawyers, and was carried out amongst them. In 1566, George Gascoigne translated from Ariosto, for representation at Gray's Inn, the prose comedy *Gli Suppositi*. This, acted under the title of *The Supposes*, is the first comedy written in English

prose, and was thought good enough to be borrowed from in the underplot of the *Taming of the Shrew*. And who was George Gascoigne? We are told he was "well-born, tenderly-fostered, and delicately accompanied." He was sent to Cambridge, and thence proceeded to the Inns of Court. Entering into the fashion of the time, he wrote love-verses which gained him no credit with the graver sort. Aspiring to political distinction, he sat some time as a Burgess for Bedford. When play-writing became the rage he at once figured in the front of playwrights. He was very extravagant; and being disinherited, he sought to retrieve his fortunes by marrying a rich widow. So far his biography is very like that of Francis Bacon, but afterwards he came to grief socially, and went to fight under the Prince of Orange, and the end of his days was not fortunate. However, his early biography shows that there was no bar or boycott if a man of good birth and position wrote for the stage.

Why then, it may be asked, was there so much concealment in Bacon's case? Surely Lady Anne's rooted objection to the play-houses would not sufficiently account for it; and granting this as for the plays, why should Bacon have all his life long been a concealed poet, and professed "not to be a poet" at all? May not his early love-poems to young men, the peculiar circumstances connected with them, and some current vulgar scandal to boot, all have tended to make Bacon renounce any open profession of poetry, and to try to conceal his identity and connection with this kind of literature altogether—nay, more, to pass it off under another's name?

My arguments throughout are chiefly concerned with the Sonnets and Poems, which are comparatively new ground for the Bacon theory. As may be supposed, I strongly hold that Francis Bacon wrote at least the finer passages of the Plays, and that the frequent revisions and additions were due to his habit of constantly rewriting and altering his work. But it must not be thought that I consider Shakespeare a mere mask for Bacon and

nothing more. I know some hold this view. I cannot support it for a moment.

I think it is a great mistake to depreciate Shakespeare's professional and business capabilities. He could hardly have been the successful man he was without possessing them in a high degree. Mere money gifts by Southampton or Bacon would never have permanently enriched an incapable or ordinary playwright. By the year 1594 Shakespeare had served, as it were, a seven years' apprenticeship, and a most "industrious apprentice" he had, without doubt, been; one worthy of the canvas of a contemporary Hogarth. From this year he takes his place as one of the chief actors in the principal company in London, and he is the acknowledged writer of the most popular love-poems of the time. This last qualification was by far the most esteemed by all people. *Lucrece* and *Adonis* were far above any plays. Poems were, it was thought, fit work for a prince, but plays were connected with strolling vagabondism only.

I do not profess to be a critic of the Plays or of their assumed dates. With our present bibliographical knowledge the latter subject is too intricate and obscure to handle with any confidence. But I submit that we give many of the Plays far too late a date for their original conception and production. Especially is that the case for many of the Plays which appeared for the first time in print in the first folio of 1623. Such plays as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and others not published till 1623, may well have been written about the time that Shakespeare first came to London, or a year or two later. Indeed, this has seemed so probable with some Shakespearians that they have suggested that young William brought several of these MS. plays up to town with him, carefully stowed away in his pocket when he first left Stratford for good.

Such views undoubtedly favour the Baconian authorship. For Francis Bacon was the elder of the two men, both in years and experience of life; he had far greater educational facilities, and considerably more leisure time

at Gray's Inn for writing and thinking and seeing the fashionable world, so admirably depicted in the early plays, than ever Shakespeare had. And so it seems far more likely that these precious and immortal MSS. were lying roughly sketched and ready for revision and enlargement in *his* desk, rather than in Shakespeare's pocket. Besides, if they were really safely packed under the Swan of Avon's wings when he took flight for London town, why did he not bring them out in his own name at once? They would not have disgraced him. He had no strong-willed mother of whom he stood in awe. He had no reputation to lose, but everything to gain. In fact, there was only one thing to prevent him from offering them at once to his fellow-townsmen then in London, and that one thing was—he had not got them. However, they came in course of time, and a very good thing he made out of them. I know this is rather a vulgar way of putting it, but sometimes the "man in the street" blurts out a conviction in his own tongue which effectually breaks through the elegant and finely-spun meshes of *doctrinaire* arguments.

There is the intuitional argument as well as the logical one. It may be more liable to error, it may be the special argument of the weaker sex and of the uneducated, but it sometimes goes straight to the bull's eye which logic, with all its artillery, fails to hit. Logic is of course by far the safer weapon of the two, and I have tried to make the best use I can of it in this present work. The other weapon, the woman's weapon, is apt to be sometimes very erratic; it will even seem to turn round at times and shoot the person who uses it. Some Baconians, I fear, have suffered in this way; it is then called literary suicide or literary self-effacement. The man who states publicly that Shakespeare could only write his own name, and hardly that, is a case in point. The men and women who write voluminous and ridiculous romances which they read letter by letter or word by word from Bacon's printed works are other cases in point; they are literary self-effacers or something worse. Such are the necessary evils of unsupported and unrestrained intuition. Delia

Bacon suffered originally from an attack of this kind which developed into something much more pitiable. It has been said of the commentators on the last book in the Bible, that "the Apocalypse either finds men mad or leaves them so." I pray that there may never be cause to apply this remark either generally or specially to those who meddle with the Bacon-Shakespeare question. To me it is one of the most interesting and curious questions that we meet with in the whole domain of literary history, and when people say, as has been said frequently to me, What *does* it matter whether Bacon or Shakespeare is the author? I can give no other answer but a stare of amazement. I feel I *could* give an answer, but that it would be lost on such questioners.

I know that he who writes on this subject poses as "a crank" before the great majority of educated people; so it is not an inviting field of literature by any means, and publishers say it means a dead loss. Well, it is a pleasure to me, and we must, I suppose, sometimes pay for our pleasures. But in self-defence I may be allowed to say this, that I have endeavoured to use the safe weapon of logic and reason wherever that weapon was available; but I submit that the more dangerous weapon of intuition cannot be wholly dispensed with in this contest. We must deal with the *probable*, the *possible*, and with what seems *likely* to have occurred judging from the facts before us. Here intuition, the historic conscience, and some acquaintance with the lights and shadows of the literary atmosphere of the Tudor period must go hand in hand with bare logic, or the whole controversy becomes stiff and lifeless. Probability is one great guide of life, and intuition sometimes helps us to what is really probable better than logic does. When intuition takes the form of a predominant and overmastering idea, then—that way madness lies.

However, I feel pretty sane when nearing now the end of my book, and if I have had an attack, it has been a very mild one. For I have certainly no predominant idea, which my mind would steadfastly refuse to give up, on this vexed question. With me it is an intensely

interesting and difficult problem—a kind of literary chess problem, where there are very many possible moves, and much foresight and general knowledge of the game is necessary to become a good player. I have studied the game because it interests me, and therefore I feel that I am somewhat more capable of making a fairly correct move than an ordinary policeman or detective, or even Sherlock Holmes himself, and certainly more capable than the city men who go down first-class or in a Pullman car to their daily business ; for from my own experience they seem to have, as a rule, no knowledge of the game and no interest in it. But perhaps I have travelled in the wrong carriage and conversed with the wrong people.

Finally, then, I wish this work to be considered tentative, and not the creature of a predominant idea. I would give up my Rival Poet and my Dark Lady, would renounce Mary Fitton and all the Adonis-like young damsels with their doublet and hose, and the codpiece which may have taken Bacon's curious fancy ; I would renounce them all, or any other false or irregular moves I may have made in this difficult game ;—nay, I would suffer fools gladly and take a checkmate from wise critics with a joyful countenance, if they will only treat the matter seriously and play fair.

I have already made this appeal in the Preface or Vestibule of this House of Controversy, and having passed through various chambers I have now arrived at the back door or exit. I here repeat my appeal, make my bow, and leave my literary card :—

*So, Reviewers, save my Bacon,
O let not Folly mar Delight ;
Here my name and claim unriddle,
All ye who fix the italics right.
The discoverer in the middle
My last book will to me unite.*

APPENDIX
OF
LITERARY CURIOS
CONNECTED WITH
THE BACON-SHAKESPEARE
PROBLEM

APPENDIX

THE "TEMPEST" ANAGRAM

AMONG the curiosities of the literature of the Bacon-Shakespeare theory, there is hardly a more remarkable one than what is called the *Tempest* Anagram. Who the ingenious discoverer was, and when it was first given to the public, I know not. I first met with it in *Notes and Queries*, and I think it worthy of reproduction here outside the body of my evidence.

The anagram is formed from the last two lines of the Epilogue to *The Tempest*, viz. :

"As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free."

ANAGRAM.

"Tempest of Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam,
Do ye ne'er divulge me ye words."

This *Tempest* anagram is, to say the very least in its favour, a remarkable coincidence. Take the supposition that Bacon, or the editor of the folio collection of printed and unprinted plays in 1623, wished to insert a cryptic distich which contained anagrammatically the key to the real authorship of the volume—then I say no more suitable and likely place could be found, for it was the concluding distich of the first play in the book, and of the last play that had been produced by the author. It was in exactly the same position as the two concluding lines of *Lucrece*, which gave us BACON as the author of that poem by the singular device we have already noticed. It was the *Envoy* (l'envoi) or last two lines of the Epilogue, and this *Envoy* was generally supposed in sonnets or similar short poems to have a peculiar significance, and if anything was to be specially conveyed it was, so to speak, relegated to this last distich, which was set back a little, in the letterpress, from the preceding lines of the sonnet or poem. And this was the case in the *Tempest* epilogue, and in all the Shakespeare Sonnets in their original edition of 1608.

And there is this curious extra fact in the original edition of the Sonnets, that the famous Sonnet cxxvi., beginning "O thou, my lovely boy," a sonnet supposed to be the *Envoy* sonnet of the whole first series (I.-cxxvi.), has of itself no *Envoy* at all, but only a blank space enclosed in brackets, as a sign that the *Envoy* was either never written, or else had been blotted out or erased by the author for some purpose known best to himself. Possibly, and I think very probably, this missing distich or *Envoy* contained some statement or allusion which would have proved a key to the whole series, and therefore too dangerous to be set down in black and white, or left to the tender mercies of a piratic or indiscreet copyist. In fact, the *locale* of the *Tempest* anagram is exceptionally appropriate, and the anagram and its *programma* are both fairly suitable, and as to sense and meaning are consonant with the supposed purpose. For the anagram to be defective by one letter is no great objection in one of that length. And the chief objection, viz. that Francis Bacon was not yet created Lord Verulam when the play was originally written, is hardly a valid objection at all; for the very assumption that we have taken is that this *Envoy* (and perhaps the whole epilogue) was *added* of set purpose when *The Tempest* was edited and printed and put in the forefront of the famous folio, some years after its first production on the stage, and *then* Lord Verulam was a correct title of Francis Bacon.

THE FIGURE ANAGRAM

This is another ingenious discovery in connection with our subject, called an anagram by a misnomer; for it is really only a progressive spelling out of names, beginning at stated points of a poem or paragraph, and ending exactly at the last letter or letters of the same.

The discoverer, who gives himself no other name but that of a "Shake-spearian," takes Ben Jonson's Address to the Reader facing the famous Droeshout engraving, and extracts from it, beginning always at the letter F or f, the following keys, which sufficiently, as he thinks, unlock the difficult mystery of authorship.

Beginning with the first F of the word Figure in the first line he gets :

(1) Francis Saint Albans his Booke (F₁)

in this way : beginning with F he next proceeds to look for the

nearest letter *r*, and then for the next *a*, and so spelling steadily on and not turning back, he goes on till he gets Francis; and then still proceeding in the same way to the very last letters of Ben's poetical address, he gets the decisive statement as above.

Then he takes the second *f* in the word *for*, in the second line, and proceeding as before right to the end he gets again :

(2) Francis Saint Albans his Booke (F₂)

There being three more *f*'s he treats them in the same way and gets :

(3) Francis Saint Alb. his Booke (F₃)

(4) Francis Saint Alb. his Booke (F₄)

(5) Francis his Booke } (F₅)

 or } (F₆)

(6) Francis B his Booke } (F₆)

But these apparently decisive readings do not satisfy our persistent solver of enigmas. He starts again with the fourth *f* and gets :

(7) Francis Bacon his Booke (F₄)

From the third *f*—

(8) Francis Bacon his Booke (F₃)

From the second *f*—

(9) Francis Bacon his Booke (F₂)

From the first *f*—

(10) Francis Bacon his Booke (F₁)

These last two spellings end on the word "lookke." In order that my readers may conveniently test the results of F₁, F₂, F₃, &c., I reproduce Ben Jonson's famous address in the Folio :

TO THE READER.

This Figure that thou here seest put
 It was for gentler Shakespeare cut ;
 Wherein the Graver had a strife
 With Nature to out-doo the life :
 O, could he but have drawne his wit
 As well in brasse, as he has hit
 His face ; the Print would then surpasse
 All, that was ever writ in brasse.
 But since he cannot, Reader, looke
 Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

I will not leave this feast of literary ingenuity ἀσίμβολος, and therefore supply as my own contribution an additional F formed on the same principle from the capital letters only of Ben Jonson's lines above, which spells out FR.B. or the very head which Bacon shows in the first lines of *Lucrece*, F^R_B. And besides this, notice the care and ingenuity that has been displayed in working up this literary device. It is truly Baconian, for it takes the vestibule or foreword, and the endlines or last distich, as the places he determines on for the concealment of his head. This was exactly the device in *Lucrece*, where we had a moiety in the foreword or vestibule, and he "saved his bacon" till the last couplet. As in *Lucrece* he drew attention to the device by an artfully concealed phraseology in the dedication, so here he draws attention (as I suggest) by a good downright *N.B.* in the last line—the *N* being in the first word and the *B* in the last word of the concluding line of the whole poem.

I am no believer in Mrs. Gallup, nor yet in her ciphers—or any one's ciphers much; but I will back my bi-literal N.B. against hers any day. It starts well, runs straight, and comes in by a head at the finish; what more can a backer want? However, I will not back it as a bookmaker, and therefore it is not jotted down in the body of my book, but is put with the rank outsiders in the appendix. But in a fairly arranged "freak" handicap, with nominations limited to *four litteraires* only, I would nominate N.B. if they would take me as qualified, and would nominate FR.B. as well, and declare to win with FR.B., and back N.B. for a place.

WHO WAS MR. HEWS?

SONNET XX.

In this Sonnet, which may be called the "Master-Mistress" Sonnet, both from its using this very expression, and also from its general tone, there is at line seven the following description of that lovely youth to whom the Procreation Sonnets and many other early ones were addressed:

"A man in hew all *Hews* in his controlling."

This line has exercised the critics and expounders very considerably, and mainly for this reason, that the word *Hews* is put into italics, and begins with a capital letter. This evidently looks

primâ facie as intending some hidden allusion, and I believe that is the correct view to take, although I fear that I can add little or nothing of an elucidatory character.

But for the amusement of those who have not troubled to make many researches into the Sonnets, I will give a few of the solutions, partly on account of their being literary curios.

Almost the first solution given was that we had here the full name of the mysterious Mr. W. H., who was the "sole begetter" of the Sonnets, and that he was a Mr. W. Hews or Hughes. But as no one ventured to fix upon any Mr. Hughes who would suit the required conditions, the suggestion fell to the ground, at least for some time. Some one then thought of Hughes the friend of Chapman, but he too was clearly out of court. Then came the ingenious Mr. Gerald Massey, who holds the record for having devoted more pages to the puzzling Sonnets than any two men living or dead. He said: "It is EWES that was aimed at by the *double entendre*, which leads us beyond the mere name to a person of importance; for EWE was a title of Essex! The earldom was that of "Essex and Ewe." Thus Mr. Massey takes the line to mean that Southampton's "comeliness and favour were far superior" to those of Queen Elizabeth's favourite Essex, and thus he was in the position to get the upper hand at court. "Such punning upon names was a common practice of the time, and had been done before on this very name." We are then given a quotation from Peele in his *Polyhymnia*, speaking of Essex:

"That from his armour borrowed such a light,
As boughs of yew (= Ewe) receive from shady stream."

This seemed to Massey to settle the matter, and also to exclude Herbert from being the man addressed, for "Herbert came too late for any rivalry with 'Essex and Ewe'; his rivalry was with 'young Carey,' a much later favourite."

Ingenious as this was, it would not, however, satisfy a writer in *Blackwood* (May 1901), who was a pronounced Herbertite, and was not going to have his theory spoiled by any Ewes, or courtesy titles of Essex. He had a courtesy title of Herbert, Earl of Pembroke that would put all the Ewes out of the running, and that was the title Lord Fitzhugh or Fitzhew, which belonged to William Herbert through one of the baronies of the Earls of Pembroke. So his solution was:

"A man in hew—the Lord Fitzhew,—the lord of all the sons of Hew—all the Hews."

What could be plainer? But it is a hopeless task to please everybody, and very soon up starts a "wild" theory that the man meant was the *William Hughes* who always took women's parts in Shakespeare's Company, and that from the force of circumstance and from Shakespeare's (?) "sportive blood" this William Hughes became the master-mistress of that intense passion—so wondrous, so un-English, so semi-pagan and Italianated;—that passion that appears to us clothed in such a robe of beauty and with such an exquisite texture of interwoven words and rhythm in the Sonnets of the ever-living Poet. The discoverer backs up his theory by quotations and illustrations from other Sonnets. Thus in Sonnet LIII. we have Willie Hughes described in terms that would most suitably represent a quick-change female impersonator. Willie Hughes is a perfect Proteus :

"What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
And you, but one, can every shadow lend."

—*Sonnet LIII.*

What can this last line mean, asks our wild *Œdipus*, unless it refers to him who had all Hews or Hughes or hues in his "controlling"? And does not this same Sonnet proceed to call him "Adonis" in one line, and then in the next lines "a painted Helen"? Ergo, Mr. Willie Hughes as a female impersonator used the hare's-foot with splendid effect (*splendide mendax*), and was a handsome young man to boot.

Nor is this all the evidence. Sonnet LXXVIII. gives us a most convincing piece of proof, all the stronger because it is so artfully hidden from the reader's view. The poet is here evidently addressing "Willie Hughes," and says in the third and fourth lines :

"As every *alien* pen has got *my use*,
And under thee their poesy disperse."

This undoubtedly refers, though the ordinary reader would hardly have suspected such a thing, to Willie Hughes leaving Shakespeare's Company for the rival theatre of Alleyn (= alien) and Henslowe, the inducement being, most likely, better pay. The reference is "as plain as a pikestaff" as soon as it is revealed to us. The words *my use* = my Hughes = my Willie. They have to rhyme with *Muse* in the first line, and *Hughes* is a far

better rhyme than *use*, and explains the italicised *alien* (= Alleyn) and the whole sad separation of the lovers much better than *my use*, which is a very bald expression, and indeed one hardly capable of a rational explanation.

And again there is the famous Sonnet LXXXVI. concerning the "Rival Poet," or Chapman as most good critics hold him to be. The "ever-living" author of the Sonnets declares here that he was not afraid of the Rival Poet's verse, but when it was declaimed by his beloved "Willie" at a rival theatre the flow of his own Muse was stopped. The words of the Sonnet are :

" I was not sick of any fear from thence :
But when your countenance fil'd up his line,
Then lack'd I matter ; that enfeebled mine."

—Sonnet LXXXVI., lines 12-14.

As the ingenious discoverer tells us, "Willie Hughes left Shakespeare for Alleyn and Henslowe's rival company of actors, and played a part in Chapman's plays, which were then being produced there. Willie's countenance filled up, or filed up, as another reading has it, the Rival Poet's lines. This was too much for Shakespeare, and went near to silencing his Muse altogether. Looked at in this light the Sonnet becomes free from haze or obscurity."

This attempt, of which only 200 copies were privately printed, is, as all must allow, a clever pretence for unravelling a skein of mystery. It is unfortunately marred by one defect, and that is, that Willie Hughes the beloved female impersonator only exists in the "wilde" imagination of the discoverer. However, if we are enthusiasts, that is a mere detail. We can look such facts boldly in the face, take their measure, brush them aside, and go on our old paths with unabated confidence. The true enthusiast will alway have the courage of his convictions ; and a true Shakespearian (as the discoverer was) would be the last to allow that Willie Hughes, or Willie Shakespeare, or any Willie whatever, could exist *only* in his imagination. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. Ergo, if Willie Hughes existed in my imagination, he could not exist *only* there, but must have existed somewhere else previously ; he could not have been nowhere or non-existent, for *ex nihilo nihil fit* is incontrovertible ; he could not therefore be the simple product of my brain, and only to be found there ; he must previously have been somewhere else, and why not possibly in the *Hews* of the Sonnets ? When enthusiasts,

whether Baconian or Shakesperian, tackle you in this manner, what are you to say or do? My advice is, go out for a little fresh air, and have a quiet talk with the policeman at the nearest corner. He, at least, is not likely to be a metaphysician. A conversational tonic of this kind will be found to be a great relief. *Crede Roberto experto!*

Another explanation is by a gentleman who claims Sir Philip Sidney as the author of the Sonnets, and holds that this particular Sonnet is addressed to Sidney's great friend, Sir Edward Dyer. The line is an evident punning allusion to his name, for a Dyer can control all hues. This ingenious solution comes from America, and its author's name is J. Stotsenburg; so it looks as if we had here a good "blend" of German research and American smartness.

It appears also that there was a contemporary William Hughes, a musician, but there is nothing to connect him with the Sonnets. Also, by a singular coincidence of name, a Mrs. Hughes, who was Prince Rupert's mistress, was the first woman to take female parts on the stage, playing Desdemona in 1660.

Another explanation is that *Hews* stands for a faithful retainer of the Earl of Essex, who had great influence with the Earl, and the meaning of the line is that the young Adonis, Southampton, the Child of State, the world's fresh ornament, and coming favourite of the court, would soon take the place of *Hews* and control him and the Earl as well. I believe there was a man of such a name in the Earl of Essex's household, but that is about all that is known.

I have collected these comments on this line of Sonnet xx. more for amusement than for any critical purpose. Perhaps all that we can really say with any confidence is, that the "sweet boy" (Southampton, as I think) had a complexion of the *hue* of "rose-cheeked Adonis." In Sonnet civ. this hue is again referred to as "your sweet hue," and the ever-living Poet declares after "three winters' cold" and after :

"Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd,"

this fine complexion, this special beauty, this sweet hue "methinks still doth stand."

Elizabeth was wont to choose her favourites for their youthful grace and high complexion, and no one would know better how suitable in this way young Southampton was, than those who associated with him intimately at Gray's Inn.

The author of the Sonnets seems to lay a good deal of stress on this rosy beauty of his own sweet "Rose," and to consider it a valuable asset for a young man to possess. It strikes me that Francis Bacon is far more likely to have thought and said such things than William Shakespeare. I go no further, and I leave Mr. W. H., Mr. William Hughes, Mr. William Hall, for the next writer who feels inclined to thoroughly tackle the question of "Who's who in the Sonnets," and will leave this title at his own service if he wants to choose one. Sometimes an author would give his last penny for a really catching title.

HAMLET AND PLATO'S CAVE

It has been thought that in the first scene of the second Act of *Hamlet* the author had the seventh book of Plato's *Republic* in his mind. For Hamlet is described as coming to Ophelia while sewing in her chamber "as if he had been unloosed out of hell," and from the description of his appearance it would seem that he had come forth from some prison or dungeon. Now, in Plato's remarkable allegory the world is represented as a subterranean cavern where men are kept prisoners, and so fettered and bound that they can only look to the rear of the cave and see the shadows cast on the inner wall from the light at the cave's entrance. Objects pass by the entrance, but the prisoners see them not; they see only their shadows cast on the wall. That this allegory was alluded to in *Hamlet* seems further shown by a passage later on in the play, where it is said, "Then are our beggars' bodies and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows." Now Plato had described (*Rep.*, vii. 521) evil consequences which would ensue if the government of the state were seized by beggars or persons destitute of appropriate qualifications. So the curious expression about beggars and heroes quoted above from *Hamlet* seems to mean that the monarchs and heroes of the world are as the shadows of such beggars. Moreover, that most difficult expression, "*outstretched* heroes," becomes perfectly clear if Plato's allegory is meant, for then their shadows would be *lengthened* on the wall. We should also be able to account for another difficulty—that of Hamlet being thirty years old when intending to resume his studies at Wittenberg (Act. V. sc. 6), for Plato (*Rep.*, vii. 539) fixes the age of thirty as the age when the serious study of dialectic or philosophy should be commenced.

Mr. Th. Tyler was the first to draw attention to this abstruse reference to Plato in the *Academy*, June 25, 1898, but it did not, as far as I know, call forth any further remarks. It seems not unlikely, and certain passages of the Sonnets rather bear it out, e.g. Sonnet cxx. :

“For if you were by my unkindnesse shaken,
As I by yours, y’have pass’d a hell of time” ;

also Sonnet LVIII. :

“I am to wait, though waiting so be hell” ;

and *Lucrece*, 1286 :

“And that deep torture may be called a hell
When more is felt than one hath power to tell.”

Hamlet no doubt had “pass’d a hell of Time” before he thus made his appearance to Ophelia,

“His doublet all unbrac’d,
No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ancle.”

“Down-gyved” is an odd word to explain, if we will not think of Plato’s fettered prisoners.

By the time that *Hamlet* was written Bacon had come to see that if he or the world in general were to embrace the new philosophy, the new method, the *Novum Organum* that was developing in his mind, then all the fallacies and false appearances, all the “Idols of the Cave,” must be stripped off or escaped from, and the fetters of the prison-house unshackled. The ordinary conventional dress of the schools must be disarranged or thrown aside ; “no hat” and “doublet all unbrac’d,” and stockings “down-gyved to the ancle,” if we are to escape from the “confines, wards, and dungeons” of our “goodly prison” in this world below. In Scene ii. of the same Act, a little farther on, Hamlet gives his philosophy of the world’s prison-house in his finest pessimistic vein ; but enough has been adduced to show that we have Bacon’s language all through, and not that of Shaksper the Player.

SOME ECCENTRIC CRITICS OF THE SONNETS

The interpretations given to the Sonnets have been almost endless, and no two commentators have ever thoroughly agreed with each other.

For eccentricity I think a gentleman named Heraud carries off the palm. The poet’s “Two Loves” were the Roman Catholic and

Reformed Churches, and there is not a single Sonnet addressed to any individual at all. In the later Sonnets we are to think of the author as having his Bible open before him, and reading the Canticles. There he finds that lady "black but comely," who is the spouse of his celestial friend and himself too. M. Fernand Henry, who has lately edited the Sonnets in a French translation, is reminded by this eccentric expositor of Father Hardouin the learned Jesuit, who held the opinion that the Odes of Horace were written by the monks of the Middle Ages (13th century), and that Lalage the poet's mistress was but a symbol of the Christian religion.

This same M. Fernand Henry is much disgusted with those English critics who will not hear a word against the morality of their great literary idol—who will have it that their national poet was a faithful husband and a devoted admirer of the sex in the highest and purest bonds of affection, and a man who lived all through his London life in a singularly gentle and pure way, and joined his dear wife in his country home to end his days with her and his family in peace—a respectable and ideal Englishman.

No, our French critic will not stand this. "Il n'est que la pruderie et le cant anglais capables de s'offusquer à si bon marché." No, Shakespeare had his moral weaknesses, and we must admit them; but they are not to blast his character or his reputation. He holds that his very avowal of them, and the way he makes it in the Sonnets, carries forgiveness with it, and induces pity for that wonderful intellect, that it should be fated to ride so "sorry a beast" as was at times no doubt that mortal body that carried him. Our complaisant Frenchman finishes thus: "On ne trouve pas dans Saint Augustin un aveu plus humilié, et combien le contraste est plus frappant si l'on rapproche les sonnets des *Confessions* où Jean-Jacques révèle, avec une sorte d'ostentation, les secrets les plus cachés de sa vie, poussant le cynisme jusqu'à inventer parfois des choses qui ne sont rien moins que certaines!"

Another Frenchman, M. Louis Direy, who prints his contribution at Poverty Bay, New Zealand (1890), holds the view that the Sonnets of Shakespeare are the "lyrical drama of his inner life." In brief, "The Orpheus is alone on the stage. He there evokes two personages—his Friend and his Mistress. Who are they? His Friend is his heavenly spirit, his immortal; his Mistress is his earthly passion, his perishable. There is

besides 'the Beast that bears him'—his body. This trio is himself."

This Frenchman from the Antipodes is quite an enthusiast in his way, and has somewhat the temper of a prophet of Israel. He ends with a

"QUOUSQUE TANDEM!"

"For now three centuries of fiery ordeal our twin stars, William and Anne,* been jointly defamed, nay divorced, as it were, before the world by the infamous verdict of worser England, even such as Shakespeare's biographers and the Shakespearian Judases, who in recent times having failed to filch the thorn-and-laurel crown from Shakespeare's seraphic head, for to clap it on Bacon's barren brow, are nowadays viciously, insidiously attempting in Christian England, in the native country of gentle William, the Poet of poets, to erect altars to Baal, under the lurid meteor of Goth Goethe and his Mephistopheles.

"It is for you, fairer, better, truer England to quash now that odious verdict, and to piously celebrate the trieval jewel-wedding of William and Anne, in Shakespeare's spiritual Church of the Future, singing in unison the chaste Canticle of Canticles, the song of the Swan of Avon, as once sung by 'the bird of loudest lay.' Thus will the eye of the living God smile on the inauguration of the promised Jerusalem."

We are generally taught that French writers are distinguished for their lucidity. Perhaps the climate of the Antipodes has not been favourable to this quality, or else it was the English language that did not give him a fair chance.

Among the curiosities of the Sonnets the following is too good to be left out. A Mr. Samuel Smith Travers, who hails from Tasmania, published in 1881 at Hobart Town a small work, entitled *Shakespeare's Sonnets. To whom were they addressed?* On the leaf before the preface we have :

TO · J.O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPS

THESE · INSVING · LINES

ARE · DEDICATED

BY

THE · WELL-WISHING

ADVENTVRER · IN

SETTING

FORTH.

—S. S. T.

* Why is it that the New World will persist in bringing in Mistress Anne Hathaway? At home we seldom, if ever, connect her with the Sonnets.

Page 13 gives his answer. "They were addressed to his [Shakespeare's] son. Not a son by Anne Hathaway, but to an illegitimate son by some other woman—as evidence would go to show, by some woman of high rank. . . . Can we imagine that any mere woman could resist him?" The proof takes twenty-four pages altogether.

DID SHAKESPEARE WRITE BACON'S WORKS?

The next Bacon-Shakespeare curio that seems to me worthy of preservation here, is an elaborate article by an American named J. Freeman Clarke, who shows to his own satisfaction that it was far more likely that Shakespeare wrote all the great philosophical works of Bacon than that Bacon, being the man he was, should have been able to write the Plays and Poems of Shakespeare. This essay appears in *Nineteenth Century Questions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1898), and I have reduced it in compass considerably, but have not omitted, I believe, any important point.

I may say, first of all, that I believe each man wrote his own works as we have had them from the beginning. I regard the monistic view that one man wrote both Bacon and Shakespeare as in the last degree improbable, not merely a marvel, but a miracle. But if we are compelled to accept the view which ascribes a common source to the Shakespeare Drama and the Baconian Philosophy, I think there are good reasons for preferring Shakespeare to Bacon as the author of both.

It will not be sufficient to say that Shakespeare could not have acquired the necessary knowledge, for we cannot understand now the rapidity with which all sorts of knowledge were imbibed in the period of the Renaissance. It was the fashion of that day to study all languages, all subjects, all authors. Thus speaks Robert Burton, who was forty years old when Shakespeare died: "What a world of books offers itself, in all subjects, arts, and sciences to the sweet content and capacity of the reader!" A mind like that of Shakespeare could not have failed to share this universal desire for knowledge. After leaving the grammar-school at Stratford, he had nine years for such studies before he went to London, and when he began to write plays, or dress up old ones, he had new motives for study, and would have to keep up his classics for his own interest.

Look at Ben Jonson's case; that furnishes the best reply to those who think that Shakespeare could not have gained much knowledge of science or literature, because he did not go to Oxford or Cambridge. What opportunities had Ben? A bricklayer by trade, called back

immediately from his studies to use the trowel ; then running away and enlisting as a common soldier ; fighting in the Low Countries ; coming home at nineteen, and going on the stage ; sent to prison for fighting a duel—what opportunities for study had he? He was of strong animal nature, combative, in perpetual quarrels, fond of drink, in pecuniary troubles, married at twenty, with a wife and children to support. Yet Jonson was celebrated for his learning. He was master of Greek and Latin literature. If then Ben Jonson, thus handicapped, could manage to acquire this vast knowledge, is there any reason why Shakespeare, with much more leisure, might not have done the like?

But my position is that if either of these writers wrote the works attributed to the other, it is much more likely that Shakespeare the Poet wrote the works of Bacon the Philosopher than that Bacon the Philosopher wrote the poetical works of Shakespeare. For where can you find any good examples of philosophers becoming supreme poets? But, on the other hand, authors whose primary quality is poetic genius have often been eminent as philosophers. Milton, Petrarch, Goethe, Voltaire, Coleridge, were primarily and eminently poets ; but they turned out very excellent metaphysicians, men of science and philosophers as well.

But what instance have we of any man like Bacon, chiefly eminent as lawyer, statesman, and philosopher, who was also distinguished as a supreme poet? What great lawyer ever became eminent as a dramatic or lyric author? Cicero tried it, but his verses are doggerel. If Bacon wrote Shakespeare, he is the one exception to an otherwise universal rule.

Again, this assumption that Shakespeare wrote Bacon will explain at once the insoluble problem of the contradiction between Bacon's character and conduct and his works. In Bacon's writings he is calm, dignified, noble. In his life he was an office-seeker through long years, seeking place by cringing subservience to men in power. To gain and keep office he would desert his friends, attack his benefactors, and make abject apologies for any manly word he might have incautiously uttered. . . . How was it possible for a man to spend half of his life in the meanest of pursuits, and the other half in the noblest? We cannot marry his low conduct to his high philosophy. But we are really not required to do so, for the difficulty is quite removed if we suppose that Bacon, the pushing courtier and lawyer, with his other ambitions, had also the desire to be a philosopher, or at least the fame of it, and so induced Shakespeare, then in the prime of his powers, to help him to write the prose essays and treatises which are his chief works, and to allow Bacon's name to appear on the title-pages. In fact, Bacon, writing to Tobie Matthew, his one great friend to whom he was least reserved, in 1623, says that he was then making his writings more perfect "by the help of some good pens which forsake me not." If Bacon used other people's

pens then, why not earlier in life, when Shakespeare was alive? We also can explain on this assumption that very curious fact that Shakespeare seemed to leave no books or MSS., or even to mention them in his Will. This is quite accounted for—he had let Bacon have them all before he died, and Bacon went on working at this material till he finished his (Shakespearian) *Novum Organum*, and the rest. No doubt Ben Jonson gave Bacon considerable help too—he would be one of his “best pens”; and since in 1613 Shakespeare bought a house in Blackfriars, where Ben Jonson also lived, these two great men would be very conveniently situated for co-operating with Bacon in writing his *Novum Organum*. There can be very little doubt that from Bacon’s character and court-attendance and busy official life, he had neither time, nor inclination, nor ability for such laborious moral and philosophical work—Shakespeare and Ben Jonson did it for him, and he took the fame and glory.

Another writer (W. D. G.) in the Aberdeen *Alma Mater*, Jan. 12, 1898, mentions a friend who was so ultra-Shakespearian that he claimed Bacon’s Essays to be the work of the poet Shakespeare. They bore the stamp of the Bard of Avon on their very first line, it being a fine example of an English hexameter; only some interpolator had inserted a bloated epithet, making the line a Heptameter:

“*What is truth said [jesting] Pilate, and would not wait for an answer.*”

THE SHAKESPEARE ANNIVERSARY, 1902

I confess I am not a very great reader of newspapers, but as St. George’s Day of this year (April 23, 1902) was also the Shakespeare anniversary day, and beginning now to be honoured much more than in my College days, when we hardly noticed it, my attention was drawn to several matters akin to my book.

(1) The Sonnets of Shakespeare were quoted in the House of Commons. This, I believe, is an almost unique instance. Stranger still, it was in connection with the Beer Bill introduced to help the use of barley and prevent sugar and chemical products being too freely used in the brewing. Mr. Fletcher Moulton, the well-known K.C. and expert in patents and commercial matters, delivered an eloquent and well-argued speech against prohibitive legislation in this matter. He asked the House to consider the injury that would be effected by Parliament putting a stop to the development of industry. The proposal of the Bill reminded him of Shakespeare’s lines, “Art made dumb by authority and folly controlling skill?” (Cheers.)

It is to be hoped that his quotation was a little more accurate than the above, otherwise he certainly did not deserve the cheers. It seems to have been a little bit too much for the reporters to grapple with, for the *Times*, which gives much the longest report, and the *Daily Chronicle* and many other papers, do not mention the quotation at all—my authorities being only the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily News*, which both agree verbally, and consequently, I suppose, obtained the quotation from the same reporter. I need hardly tell lovers of the Sonnets that the orator was referring to the pessimistic Sonnet LXVI. and the lines :

“ And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill.”

But whether Mr. Fletcher Moulton uttered them correctly with the loving intonation of an enthusiast, or mangled them on the spur of the moment, it is rather a pleasing novelty to have the Sonnets in Parliament at all, and deserves a record.

(2) On the same day the *British Weekly* in its long primer leading critique on Dr. Cheyne and his *Encyclopædia Biblica*, or “The Bible in Tatters,” as the paper preferred to call it, tried to make out that the learned D.D. was the victim of a craze, and that his arguments were no better than those of the Baconians. “We have,” it says, a precise parallel to the Bacon-Shakespeare craze. Of course no real man of letters who knows Shakespeare would ever give the theory a thought. There is nothing in the evidence that has even the smallest force, and yet, speaking from a fair acquaintance with the books, we confidently affirm that the argument is far more plausible than many arguments used by Biblical critics ; in fact, if the advocates of Bacon had been dealing with some book in the Bible they would have been enthusiastically supported by all the Professors of Leyden, by Dr. Cheyne, and by a good many more.”

(3) In an evening paper (same day) the following met my eyes: “Yesterday was Shakespeare’s day, the birth day and death day, according to repute, of the late Mr. William Shakespeare, a gentleman who is stated to have been the author of a large number of elegant quotations. I did not, however, notice any one immersed in the notable tome attributed to him, and the city continued at its usual gallup. For my part, I rose betimes, and thinking not of Shakespeare, contented myself with bacon.”

The subject thus seems to go

“From grave to gay, from lively to severe”;

and ends in a business-like manner with the following newspaper announcements of “Publications received”:

The Mystery of William Shakespeare: a Summary of Evidence.

By his Honour Judge WEBB. Longmans, 10s. 6d. net.

The Early Life of Lord Bacon. Newly studied by PARKER WOODWARD. Gay & Bird, 2s. 6d. net.

Altogether the Shakespeare Anniversary Day of 1902 was the most notable one that I remember.

THE AUTHOR'S OWN CURIO

HIS SOLUTION OF THE FAMOUS EXPRESSION—

SWAN OF AVON

I have at end of Chapter VI. referred ironically to a Baconian solution of the well-known words *Swan of Avon*, for, seriously speaking, I cannot accept the Cheltenham solution. But if we may allow our imagination sometimes to lift us from *terra firma* into the realms of hypothesis, I would rather search for the solution among the Swans which Bacon mentions in his *De Augmentis*, lib. 2, cap. vii., and which he had taken from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Bk. xxxv. 14. I allow myself in imagination to overhear Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon discussing together the rough draft of the famous vestibule of the 1623 folio. “What title shall I give him?” says the obliging Jonson. “Oh,” says the great man of mystery, “call him the Swan of Avon, for he flew away from London to his native Avon with my medal in his mouth, and he is the swan who is to take it to the ‘temple consecrated to immortality.’ But the medal has my name and cipher impressed on it all the time, if people would only look in the right place.”

What Bacon says about the swans is as follows: “He [Ariosto] feigns that at the end of the thread of every man's life, there hangs a little medal or collar (*monile*) on which his name is stamped; and that Time waits upon the shears of Atropos, and as soon as the thread is cut, snatches the medals, carries them off, and presently throws them into the river Lethe;

and about the river there are many birds flying up and down, who catch the medals, and after carrying them round and round in their beak a little while, let them fall into the river; only there are some swans which if they get a medal with a name, immediately carry it off to a temple consecrated to immortality.”*

* Spedding, *Bacon's Works*, iv. 307.

INDEX

INDEX

- ABBOTT, Dr., and the squabble between Bacon and Coke, 41; and Lady Anne Bacon's complaints against Perez and Francis Bacon's male servants, 51; his *Bacon and Essex*, *ib.*; his solution of Bacon's character, 63, 258; and Bacon's humour, 127; and Bacon's style, 332
- Actresses, absence of, from the Elizabethan stage, 61
- Adagia*, Erasmus's, account in, of the "Gardens of Adonis," 69
- Adonis, the counterfeit of Southampton in the Sonnets, 57; the "gardens" of, 69; of the Sonnets, 137
- Advancement of Learning*, Bacon's, and Sonnet CXXV., 233; his remarks on poetry in, 268; difference between Bacon's views expressed in the edition of 1605 and those in the revised one of 1623, 269.
- Advice to Queen Elizabeth*, Bacon's, and the Pallas-Shakespeare question, 291
- Alasco, Alberto, honour paid to, at Oxford, 219
- Alleyn, the actor-manager, allusions to, in the Sonnets, 220; his silence as to Shakespeare, 235; and the authorship of *Richard II.*, 324
- All's Well That Ends Well*, date of the publication of, 346
- Alma Mater*, the Aberdeen, a writer in, and the authorship of Bacon's Essays, 367
- A Lover's Complaint*, suggestive passages in, of Bacon's authorship, 58
- Andrewes, Bishop, and Bacon's authorship, 271; Bacon's view on a man's writings expressed to him, 304
- Angelo, Michael, his relation to Tommaso de' Cavalieri a parallel to the attitude of the author of the Sonnets towards William Herbert, 257
- Anthologia Polyglotta*, Dr. Wellesley's, 71
- Antonio and Mellida*, Marston's, 30
- "Apogetical Dialogue," the, prohibition of, 88; vicious allusions in, 89
- Apology Concerning the late Earl of Essex*, Bacon's 141, 188; and his travels and studies, 208
- Apophthegms*, Bacon's, proof of his philosophic spirit in, 105
- Arcadia*, Sidney's, and the Sonnets, 143, 201
- Archer, William, and the "Dark Lady," 146
- Arena*, the, opinions of distinguished men in, on Shakespeare-Bacon problem, 118
- "Aretine," the appellation, applied to Bacon, 24; applied to Nash, 25
- Aristotle, the policy of, imitated by Bacon, 322
- Art of Poesie*, Puttenham's, 30
- Ashurst, R. L., his remarks on W. H. Edwards's *Shaksper not Shakespeare*, 282
- Astrophel and Stella*, Sidney's, traces of similiarity between, and some of the Sonnets, 202
- As You Like It*, and Vincenzo Saviolo's Book, 186; the disguise of Rosalind in, 263; alleged self-revelation of the author in the character of Jacques, 327; date of the publication of, 346
- Aubrey, John, the value of his literary records, 36
- Authors and Printers in Elizabethan days, 343
- Avisa*, Willobie's, called in, 15; date of its entry at Stationers' Hall, 290; interest taken in *Lucrece* by the author, 291
- BACON, Anthony, his intimacy with Antonio Perez, 44; letters to, from Lady Anne, complaining of behaviour of Francis Bacon's male servants, 49
- Bacon, Francis, monogram of, in dedication to *Rape of Lucrece*, 3, 4; his signature to his letters written to Lord and Lady Burghley, 5; his authorship of the Shakespeare Poems known to Marston and Hall, 11, 12 *et seq.*; known to contemporaries to be the author of *Venus and Adonis*, 14; the "Labeo" of Marston and Hall, 17, 20; and the cynic of Hall's *Satires*, 18; his motto, 21; and the appellation "Aretine," 24; his early licence of love, 25; scandals about, *ib.*; the author of the Shakespearian Poems and

Bacon, Francis—*continued*

Sonnets, 29; allusions to, in Marston's *Satires*, 29-31; his connection with the "scandal" of the Sonnets, 35; John Aubrey and his moral character, 36; and the treatment of official records, 38; his connection with masques at Gray's Inn, and devices for the Earl of Essex, 38, 276; a great literary fabricator, 39; peculiarities of his literary life, 38, 39; his squabble with Attorney-General Coke, 40-42; protection of, by Cecil, 41; the youth of, 43; his associates, *ib.*, 78, 88; letter to, from a Mr. Standen, 45; letters written by him for others, 47; his want of authority over his male servants, 48; reason why he concealed his authorship of *Venus and Adonis*, 49; pecuniary difficulties of, 49; his intimacy with Mary Fitton, 55; evil reports of, 62; Pope's false judgment on, 63; Dr. Abbott's solution of his character, *ib.*; the last five years of his life, 64; and the "gardens of Adonis," 70; his power of paraphrasing other men's phraseology, 73; his character as portrayed by Sir Toby Matthews, 75; his qualifications for the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays and Poems, 76; Ben Jonson's early attitude towards, 81; portrayed in Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman*, 84; in the *Poetaster*, 85; his dislike of his profession, 88; his connection with *Richard II.*, 89, 155, 166, 180, 324; his predicament at Essex's trial, 90; under a cloud, *ib.*; his friendship with Ben Jonson, 93; one of his favourite literary devices, 112; as we know him, 120; date of his greater works, *ib.*; on love, 121; his early levity and his later life, 123; and the love scenes in the Shakespeare Plays, *ib.*; a natural humorist, 127; his intimacy with Southampton, Pembroke, and Essex, 129; and the "Procreation Sonnets," 136; proof that he wrote Sonnets, 141; his alienation from Southampton, 142; a remarkable letter from, to Southampton, *ib.*; in his early Gray's Inn days, 145; probability of his authorship of *Venus and Adonis*, 145; his opportunities of meeting Herbert and Mary Fitton, 148; his intimacy with Mary Fitton, 149; depicted in *The Silent Woman*, 152; allusions to, by Ben Jonson, 155; his views as to the value of our plantations in America, 160; a true patriot, *ib.*; depicted in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, 161; his correspondence with Essex and Southampton, 169; the probable author of Pembroke's letter from prison to Cecil, 171; and of Essex's letters, 173; poem

Bacon, Francis—*continued*

composed by him when Essex was in danger of losing the Queen's favour, 176; his letter to Lord Essex, 177; his breach with Southampton, 178; his letter to Southampton just before his release from prison, *ib.*; his personal relations with Southampton, 179; and the trial of Essex, *ib.*; reason why he never mentions Shakespeare or Jonson, *ib.*; his reason for avoiding open correspondence with Southampton, 180; on his own literary powers, 181; similarity between his letter to Lord Burghley and Sonnet II., 181; and the "Sonnet to Florio," 182; his connection with Florio, 185; and *As You Like It*, 186; poems attributable to, 187; and the "Farnaby" poem, 188; his identities of thought with Shakespeare, 189; his five concealed poems, *ib.*; his opportunities for visiting Italy, 200; and Sidney's *Arcadia*, 201; and *Astrophel and Stella*, 202; at Twickenham Lodge, 204; the "northern journey" of, 207, 217; dedication of his "Travels and Studies," 208; his period of depression, 210; his personal relationship with Southampton, 210; absence of correspondence between him and Southampton, 211; nature of his relationship with Southampton, 213; his tardy success in mounting the ladder of ambition, 213; and the threatening of his life, 218; and Bruno's philosophy, *ib.*; possible connection between him and Bruno, 219; and Bruno's visit to Oxford, 219, 229; and the "eclipse" of the Queen, 225; odium incurred by him through taking part in the prosecution of Essex, 227; and Italian free-thinkers, 229; his intimacy with Sir Fulke Greville, 230; his friendship with Sir Thomas Heneage, 234; possible reasons why he never mentions Shakespeare, *ib.*; his theory of the nature of fire, 243; probably the writer of Sonnets for Southampton and Herbert to send to their lady-loves, 249; his confirmed habit of writing letters for other people, 249; Ben Jonson's earlier and later view about him, 250; parallelisms between his acknowledged works and the Plays of Shakespeare, 251; the question whether he had a mistress, 253; his misogynism, 255; the mystery of his real character, 258; Mr. Abbott's view of his life, *ib.*; his prayers found after his death, 259; maligning by Pope, *ib.*; religious calm of his later life, 260; his "Confession of Faith," *ib.*; his wild oats, 261; the chosen companions of the early middle period of his life, 262; effect

Bacon, Francis—*continued*

on his personal character of the ill odour in which he found himself before and after the trial of Essex, *ib.*; a clue to the date when the adverse rumours against him were strongest, *ib.*; his connection with the authorship of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 264; his reason for concealing his authorship of Shakespeare, 265; his mistress, 266; as a poet, 267; true estimate of, *ib.*; his intimacy with Sir Tobie Matthew, *ib.*; the period of his life about which so little is known, 268, 293; his concealment of his real attitude to poetry and the drama, 268; his views in later life with regard to poetry, 269; the friends to whom he lifted off the mask, 271; his early genius, *ib.*; the period when he was laying the foundation of the Plays and Poems, 272; his admiration of Sir Philip Sidney, 272; evidence of his love of poetry, 273; his love for literature anterior to his passion for science, 274; seventeenth-century testimonies to the intimate relation between him and poetry, *ib.*; his connection with Pallas, 281 *et seq.*; reason why he called himself Shakespeare, 285; reason why he used the name of Shakespeare, 290; evidence of his connection with Shaksper, 291; his unparalleled activity, 293; his commonplace books, *ib.*; his belief in himself, *ib.*; his estimation of his later philosophical works, 295; his magnificence on the day of his wedding, 296; his far-reaching intellectual aspirations, 297; his facilities for producing the Shakespeare plays, &c., 298; rapidity of his work, 299; his peculiar facility for improving other people's language, *ib.*; the party in the Church of England to which he belonged, 299; his first pleading in the King's Bench, 300; his enormous vocabulary, *ib.*; unique words used by him, 301; the classification of his philosophical works, 302; his self-effacement in literary matters, 303; the view he held on a man's writings, 304; his private friends when at Gray's Inn, 308; under his Ovidian domino, 310; his habit of constant revision, 315, 345; reason why he concealed his identity, 320 *et seq.*; his lofty philanthropy, 327; parallel between his literary style and that of Milton, 331; his view upon the permanency of the English language, 333; reason of his close alliance with Essex, 334; his genius, 335; the reason why he did not acknowledge his dramas either by his will or before his death, 338; the value in which he held George Her-

Bacon, Francis—*continued*

bert's judgment, 339; his renunciation of poetry, *ib.*; contrast between his life and his writings, 366

Bacon, Lady Anne, complaint of against Lord Essex, 43, 79, 240; her alarm at Bacon's intimacy with Perez, 44, 79; and the dangers of London life, *ib.*, 309; the letters of, 49; and the sale of "markes," 50; and Francis Bacon's religious views, 299; and her publications, 320; her objection to acting and writing, 323; to riotous living, 330

Bacon, Sir Nicholas, and the use of a contemporary mask to hide his authorship, 320

Bacon-Shakespeare Question, the, the evidence of dialect on, 77; Sir Theodore Martin on, 116; Professor A. R. Wallace on, 118; Sir Henry Irving on, 124; and the Earls of Essex, Pembroke, and Southampton, 129; curiosities of the literature of, 353

Bacon versus Shakespeare, Edwin Reed's, 130

Baconians, the, their neglect of the Sonnets and Plays, 1; their view of the scholarship of the author of the Shakespeare Plays and Sonnets, 68; and the Pallas-Shakespeare evidence, 281 *et seq.*; the extreme, 311; and the *British Weekly*, 368

Bacon's works, the theory that Shakespeare might have written, 365

Banbury, Earl of, the paternity case of, 238 (*note*)

Bandello's Tales, male impersonators in, 264

Bartholomew Fair, Jonson's exposition of the triangular love-picture of Bacon, Southampton, and the "Dark Lady" in, 161

Baynes, Professor, and Shakespeare's familiarity with Ovid, 92; and the authorship of the Sonnet to Florio, 182

Beeching, Rev. Professor, and parallels to the Platonism of the Sonnets, 257

"Better angel, the," the identity of, 247

Birch's Memoirs, and Antonio Perez, 51

Blackie, John Stuart, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 269

Blackwood's Magazine, a writer in, and the "Rival Poets," 221; and the identity of *Hewo's* Sonnet xx., 357

Blount, Edward, and the Dedication and Address over the signatures of Heminge and Condell, 113; his knowledge of Bacon's authorship, 271

Bodley, Sir Thomas, and Bacon's later life, 123

Bonstetten, the Swiss, friendship of, with the poet Gray, 257

Bowden, Father, and Shakespeare's religion, 97

- Boy-actors, the earliest mention of, 61; reference to, in *Hamlet*, 62, 330; and court gallants, *ib.*
- Brandes, George, and the Italian scholarship of the author of the Shakespeare Plays, 72; and Bacon's visit to Italy, 200; and parallels to the Platonism of the Sonnets, 257
- British Weekly*, the, and the Baconians, 368
- Brown, Charles Armytage, and the Herbert theory of the Sonnets, 138
- Bruno, Giordano, traces of his philosophy in the Sonnets, 218, 226, 229; in London, 219; at Oxford, *ib.*, 229; the date of his works, 230
- Brydges, Mistress, and the Earl of Essex, 79
- Burbage, John, and William Shakespeare, 77
- Burghley, Lord, favourite cipher device of, 8; his objection to waste of time over Sonnets, &c., 86; similarity between a letter to, from Bacon, and Sonnet II., 181; and Giordano Bruno, 219
- Burke's Bible, 21
- Bushell, Thomas, 52
- Butler, Samuel, and the Sonnets, 32; and the "Scandal," 33; and Mr. Sidney Lee, 247
- Calendar of State Papers*, letter in, from Ben Jonson to Lord Salisbury, 111
- Campion, Thomas, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 274
- Canaidos*, use of the term by Marston, 25
- "Canopy Sonnet," the. See Sonnet CXXV.
- Capell and the "lameness" of Shakespeare, 223
- Capias utlegatum*, the old legal term, 42; its reference to Bacon, 263
- Carew family, projected alliance of, with William Herbert, 203
- Cecil, Mr. Secretary, two letters to, 41; his protection of Bacon, 41; striking phrases in the letter to, from William Herbert, shortly after his release from the Fleet Prison, 170, 313; and the scandal about Mary Fitton, 238
- Chapman, reference to, in the Sonnets, 209, 220
- Characteristics*, Professor Minto's, and the authorship of the Sonnet to Florio, 184
- Children of the Chapel Stript and Whipt, The*, 61
- Church, Dean, and Bacon's self-assertion, 295
- Churchyard, T., contemporary court satire by, 150
- Ciphers, bilateral, 7; and politicians of the Essex and Burghley parties, 8; Anthony and Francis Bacon experts in, *ib.*; varied kinds of, *ib.*
- Clarke, J. Freeman, and the theory that Shakespeare might have written Bacon's works, 365
- Cobham, Lord, his objection to the introduction of Sir John Oldcastle into *Henry IV.*, 323
- Cogitata et Visa*, Bacon's, and the question of Bacon's lack of time for play-writing, 299
- Coke, Attorney-General, his squabble with Bacon, 40-42.
- Colours of Good and Evil*, Bacon's Essay on, and the "woman coloured ill" of the Sonnets, 246
- Concealed authorship in Elizabethan days, 340
- "Confession of Faith," Bacon's, nobility of, 260; self-revelation in, 327
- Copyright in Shakespeare's time, 326
- Coriolanus*, Baconian simile in, 241 (*note*)
- Critoy, Monsieur, authorship of the letter to, 320
- Cryptograms, worthlessness of, 7
- "Cynthia," The address to, authorship of, 174, 175
- Cynthia's Revels*, attacks on Marston and Dekker in, 82
- DAMON and Pythias, in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, 161
- Daniel, Samuel, and the Sonnet to Florio, 184; reference to, in the Sonnets, 209, 220
- "Dark Lady," the, Sonnets referring to, 131, 254; identified by Mr. Tyler as Mistress Fitton, 132; the last Sonnets to, 145; her intrigues, 146; evidence in the Newdigate documents identifying her with Mistress Fitton, 146; the chronology of the episode of, 195; allusions to, in Sonnets CXXVII. to CLII., 235; moral character of, 239; Massey and the love of the author of the Sonnets for her, 254
- Davies of Hereford, John, testimony borne by him in a sonnet to Bacon of Bacon's poetic faculty, 275
- De Augmentis Scientiarum*, Bacon's remarks in, on Poetry, 339; the Swans mentioned in, and the expression "Swan of Avon," 369
- Defence of Contraries, The*, the translator of, and the Bacons, 291
- Defiance to Enoy*, Hall's, 20
- Dekker, Thomas, and the War of the Theatres, 82; his *Satiromastix*, 83
- Delia*, Daniel's, dedication of, 192; a model for the form of verse used in the Sonnets, 203

- De moribus interpretis*, Bacon's reference in, to the habit of working under a mask, 322
- Device of the Indian Prince, The*, similarity of, to the Sonnets, 187
- Devices for the Earl of Essex, Bacon's connection with, 38; descriptions of, by Rowland White, *ib.*; evidence in, of Bacon's poetic faculty, 276; reminiscences in, of the Sonnets of *Hamlet*, the early Plays, and of *Promus*, 278; speeches of the Hermit in, 277, 332
- Diana*, Montemayor's, male impersonators in, 264; its connection with the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, *ib.*; date of its translation into English, 265; English MS. versions of, *ib.*
- Digges, Leonard, and the Stratford monument to Shakespeare, 105
- Direy, M. Louis, and the Sonnets, 363
- Dixon, Hepworth, on Bacon's magnificence at his wedding, 296; and the early part of Bacon's life, 318
- Dowden, Professor, and Judge Webb's Baconian errors, 22; his triangular duel with Professor Tyrrell and Webb, 109; and the Earl of Southampton, 138
- Drake, Dr., and the individual to whom the majority of the Shakespeare Sonnets were addressed, 131
- Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare, the, 98, 101; Ben Jonson's address to the reader facing, 354
- Dyer, Sir Edward, alleged dedication of Sonnet XX. to, 360
- EDMONDS, Charles, discovery by, 192
- Edney, or Enney, Francis Bacon's servant, 49; identity of, 52
- Edwards, W. H., his effort to prove that Shakespeare could not have written the plays attributed to him, 281
- Elizabeth, Queen, dinner to, at Oxford, 139; pleasures and recreations of, 144; allusions to, in the Sonnets, 225, 226; her suspicion of *Richard II.*, 324
- Elizabethan age, the, one of treasons and conspiracies, 324; authors and printers in, 343
- Elizabethan court, masques and revels of, 240
- Elizabethan London, vice in, 216
- Elizabethan maids of honour, 237; morality of, 240
- Elizabethan stage, the, character of, 62
- Emery, Abbas Jac. Andr., and Bacon's religious faith, 261
- England's Helicon*, the address to "Cynthia" in, 174
- Envoy of Sonnets and poems*, the, peculiar significance of, 353
- Epictetus*, Healey's, dedication of, 193
- Epigrams*, Ben Jonson's, dedication of, 6
- Erasmus and the "Gardens of Adonis," 69
- Essays*, Bacon's, proof of his philosophical spirit in, 105; date of their publication, 120; successive alterations and revisions of, 315; the first book which bore the name of Francis Bacon on the title-page, 325; the dedication of, 325
- Essex, the Earl of, and devices, 39; his friendship with Bacon, 43; his intrigues with Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, *ib.*; Lady Anne Bacon's complaint against, 43; procures a pension for Antonio Perez, 44; amours of, 79; the trial of, and Bacon, 90; a hostile influence to Bacon and the Cecils, 137; rebellious uprising of, 142; scant allusions to, in the Sonnets, 166; references to, in the plays of Shakespeare, 166; execution of, 167; no evidence that he knew Shakespeare, 167; his friendship with Bacon, 168; his correspondence with Bacon and Cecil, 169, 172; resemblance of thought in his letters and two of the Sonnets, 173; his letter to the Earl of Rutland, *ib.*; letter from Bacon to, 177; mystery of the Sonnets known to, *ib.*; beheaded, 178; the part taken by Bacon in his trial, 179; dedication to, of Bacon's "Travels and Studies," 208; contemporary evidence that he had literary work composed for him by others, 249; and the remarkable paper discovered in the Lambeth Collection, 287
- Essex's Device before the Queen*, mention of the "Gardens of Adonis" in, 70; letter in, to the Queen, 288. *See also* Device
- Essex Treason Case, the, breach in friendship between Bacon and Southampton caused by, 178
- Examen de la Philosophie de Bacon*, Count Joseph de Maistre's admission in, of Bacon's poetic genius, 273
- Farewell to Folly*, Greene's, and concealed authorship, 340
- Farmer, Dr., and the identification of H. S. in Florio's *A Worlde of Wordes*, 184
- "Farnaby" poem, the, authorship of, 188, 336
- Father Hubbard's Tales*, Thomas Middleton's, and rich young squires from the country, 308
- Faunt, Nicholas, his complaint of Francis Bacon's refusal to see him at his chambers, 321

- Ferrers, the lawyer, and dramatic pageants, 344; his *Mirrors for Magistrates*, ib.
- Field, Richard, date of his publication of *Venus and Adonis*, 266
- Figure Anagram, the, 354
- Fitton, Mistress, her acquaintanceship with Shakespeare, 9; her possible connection with the "scandal" of the Sonnets, 55; and William Herbert, 55; identified by Mr. Tyler as the "Dark Lady" of the Sonnets, 132; the number of people who believe her to be the "Dark Lady," 146; Bacon's intimacy with, 149; allegation that she was Shakespeare's mistress, 151; and William Herbert, 156; birth of a child by, 156; Mr. Tyler's researches into her history, 163; her marriage with Captain Polwhele, 164; Sarrazin's view that she is not the lady of the Sonnets or early Plays, 195; and the question of the robbery of the mistress of the author of the Sonnets, 214; apparent allusion to, in Sonnet CXXI., 228; her *liaison* with the Earl of Pembroke, 238; MS. pedigree of, 240; improbability that she was Bacon's mistress, 253; possible reason why she went to meet Pembroke with her clothes tucked up like a man, 264
- Fitton family, the, punning line on the monument to, 246
- Fletcher, LL.D., Giles, sonnet by, 248; parallel between his authorship and Bacon's, 344
- Florio, John, and the Earl of Southampton, 183, 185; dedication to, 193
- Florio, the Sonnet to, probable author of, 182; the date of, 203
- Folio of 1623, the, passage withdrawn from, 58; mystery surrounding the production of, 101; an immense work of revision, 315, 316; the preparation of, for publication, and Bacon's renunciation of poetry, 340
- Forest of Fancy*, the, the author of, and the writing of poems for others, 249
- Furness, Howard, and the dates of Shakespeare's Plays, 140
- GALLUP, Mrs., cryptograms of, 7, 356; and the parentage of Bacon, 216; and the reason why Bacon concealed his authorship of the works of Shakespeare, 265
- "Gardens of Adonis," the, allusion to, in *Henry IV.*, 69
- Garnett, Richard, C.B., and the Baconian authorship, 272
- Gascoigne, George, and the writing of Sonnets for others, 249; his comedy *The Supposes*, 344; his career, 345
- Gawsworth, monument to the Fitton family at, 246
- Genius, the power of, 126
- German Shakespeare Society, the, and criticism of the Shakespeare Plays and Sonnets, 243
- Gesta Grayorum*, Francis Bacon's, 17, 18; evidence in, of Bacon being brought into public connection with Shakespeare, 291
- Gibson Papers, rough drafts in, of speeches in the devices in Bacon's writing, 39
- Gray, the poet, friendship of, for Bonstetten, 257; his letters to Nicholls and Bonstetten parallels to the feelings phrased in the Sonnets, ib.
- Great Assizes at Parnassus*, George Wither's, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 274
- Greatest Birth of Time*, Bacon's, 210; his magnificence in, 295
- Greene, Robert, his jealousy of Shakespeare, 124
- Greville, Sir Fulke, 96; Essex's letter of advice to, 174; and Giordano Bruno, 219; his intimacy with Bacon, 230
- Grosart, Dr., and Hall's poems, 16; and the interpretation of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, 167
- HALL, Joseph, his use of "Labeo," 14; his literary war with Marston, ib.; burning of his *Satires*, 15; his *Virgidemix*, ib.; Bacon's authorship of *Venus and Adonis* known to, ib.; his attack on "Labeo," 20; a moral satirist, 24; allusions to Shakespearian drama in his satires, 27; his knowledge of Bacon's authorship, 271
- Hall, W., suggested as W. H. by Sidney Lee, 151; name of, in front of the Shakespeare Sonnets, 192
- Halliwell-Phillips, H. O., and the theatres in Bacon's days, 328
- Hamlet*, Marston's imitation of, 22; lines struck from, in the last revision of the Plays, 58; reference to boy-actors in, 62; French scholarship of the author of, 73; the date of, a clue to the date of the adverse rumours about Bacon, 262; the personality of Bacon in, 310; revision of, 317; and boy-actors, 330; and Plato's *Republic*, 361
- Harris, T. L., parallel between his literary history and that of Bacon, 279
- Harvey, Sir William, and W. H., 197
- Hatton, Lady, her contemplated marriage with Wm. Herbert, 149
- Hayward, Dr., allusion to in *The Silent Woman*, 155
- Hazlitt, W. C., his *Shakespear* (*sic*), 59; his knowledge of Elizabethan litera-

- Hazlitt, W. C.—*continued*
 ture, *ib.*; and Shakespeare's journey to London when a boy, *ib.*; and Jonson's "eulogy" on Shakespeare in the *Poetaster*, *ib.*; and "the scandal," 60; and the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *ib.*; and Thorpe's estimate of Shakespeare, 193; and Bacon's poetic faculty, 269; and the incident of Yorick's skull in *Hamlet*, 318
- Heminge and Condell, the Dedication and Address over the signature of, 112
- Heneage, Sir Thomas, and Bacon's promotion, 205, 234; his connection with the theatres, 234
- Henry IV.*, Lord Cobham and the character of Sir John Oldcastle in, 323
- Henry IV.*, Dr. Hayward's, the dedication in to Essex, 324
- Henry V.*, French scholarship of the author of, 73; references to Essex in, 166
- Henry VI.*, scholarship displayed by the author of, 69
- Henry, M. Fernand, and the Sonnets, 363
- Henslowe, his theatre, 233; his silence as to Shakespeare, 235
- Henslowe's Diary, reference in to Dekker and Chettle's *Troilus and Cressida*, 83
- Herbert, George, evidence borne by to Bacon's poetic faculty, 274; the value Bacon placed on his judgment, 339
- Herbert, William, Earl of Pembroke, acquaintanceship of, with Shakespeare, 9, 129; friendship with Bacon, 43; and Mary Fitton, 55; date of his first intimacy with Shakespeare, 133; his presence at the dinner given at Oxford to Queen Elizabeth, 139; his *liaison* with Mistress Fitton, 146, 238; one of the three *Wills*, 146, 236; his visit to London in 1595, 148; marriage contemplated between him and Lady Hatton, 149, 262; his frequent appearances at court, *ib.*; depicted in *The Silent Woman*, 152; and the blandishments of Mary Fitton, 156; Sonnet by, *ib.*; one of the true founders of the United States, 160; lack of evidence of friendship with Shakespeare, 165; analogies with the Sonnets in his letter to Cecil, 170, 313; resemblance between the wording of the letter and that of the Sonnets, 171; dedication to, 193; project of marrying him into the Carew family, 203; the fugitive in Sonnet CXLIII., 242
- Herard, John A., and the Shakespeare Sonnets, 131; and the "two loves" of the author of the Sonnets, 362
- "Herbertites," the, their battle with the "Southamptonites," 8; and the intimacy between Shakespeare and young Herbert, 133
- Hero and Leander*, Marlowe's, dedication of, 193
- Hertzberg, Herr, and the original source of the last two Sonnets, 70
- Hews*, "Mr.," the identity of, in Sonnet xx., 356 *et seq.*
- History of Felix and Philomena, The*, the performance of, and the date of the production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 264
- History of King Henry VII.*, allusion in, to treatment of official records, 38; allusion in, to the "eclipse" of the Queen, 226; allusion in, to Bacon's theory of the nature of fire, 244
- Howard, Lady Mary, and the Earl of Essex, 79
- Howard, Lord Henry, Bacon's reference to the threat on his life in his letter to, 218
- H. S., in Florio's *Worlde of Wordes*, identification of, 184
- Hughes, Mrs., and female parts on the stage, 360
- Hughes, William, and the *Hews* of Sonnet xx., 358; description of him in Sonnet LIII., *ib.*; his leaving Shakespeare's company for Alleyn's, 358, 359
- Hughes, William, the musician, 360
- Iliad*, Chapman's, allusions to, in the Sonnets, 220
- Informers*, The expression, used in Sonnet CXXV., 56, 232
- Instauratio Magna*, Bacon's, proof of his philosophical spirit in, 105; and his earlier aspirations, 270
- Interpretation of Nature, The*, Bacon's, autobiographical passage in, 181
- "Invention," the word, significance of its use by Bacon, 328
- Irving, Sir Henry, and the Bacon-Shakespeare question, 124
- "Isham Reprints," The, a dedication in, 192
- Italian free thinkers, Bacon's fondness for meeting, 229
- Italian Renaissance culture, the refined Platonism of, 257
- Italian morals, imitated by patrons of the theatrical companies, 329
- Italian Sonnets, and the study of Plato, 214
- Italy, improbability of Shakespeare having visited, 200; Bacon's opportunities for visiting, *ib.*
- JAGGARD and the printing of Sonnet CXXXVIII., 241
- Jonson, Ben, ingenious prevarications of, 29; his early attitude towards Shakespeare and Bacon, 81; his in-

Jonson, Ben—*continued*

timacy with Pembroke, *ib.*; his satirical comments on actors having arms from Herald's College, *ib.*; concealed personalities in his plays, 82; his enmity and friendship with Marston, 83; his friendship with Bacon, 93; his view of Shakespeare, 94; his respect for Shakespeare's genius, *ib.*, 97; misleading character of his laudatory verses of Shakespeare, 98; his reconciliation to Bacon, 101; Shakespeareans and his testimony, 111; letter from, to Lord Salisbury, 111; allusions by, to Southampton and Bacon, 155; his knowledge of the scandal of the town, 157; his knowledge of Mary Fitton's character, 157; mystery of the Sonnets known to, 177, 180; his earlier and later view about Bacon, 250; the reason why he did not divulge Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare, 266; the "real Shakespeare" of, 315; the money made by him over his Plays, 326; and his opponents in the war of the theatres, 329; his address to the reader facing the Droeshout engraving, 354; his opportunities for culture, 365

KEATS, what is known of, 125; his works not a parallel case to those of Shakespeare, *ib.*

Kemp, Will, one of the three *Wills*, 146, 150, 236; dedication of his *Nine daies Wonder*, 150

Kind Hartes Dreame, Chettle's, references in, to topical jests, 62

King Lear, revision of, 317

Knight, Charles, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 269

Knights of the Helmet, the order of the, 17

Knollys, Sir William, the *Informer* of Sonnet CXXV., 56, 232; his admiration for Mary Fitton, 146, 232, 237; one of the three *Wills*, 146, 236; and Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour, 237

"LABEO," the character, in Marston's *Pigmalion's Image*, 12 *et seq.*; in Hall's *Satires*, 13 *et seq.*; his identity, *ib.*; and Bacon—one person, 17; in the *Reactio*, 21

La Jessée, Jean de, Sonnet addressed by, to Bacon, 284; overlooked by Birch and Spedding, *ib.*; his acquaintance with English court life, 285; clue to his reference to Pallas, 286

Lee, Sidney, and ciphers in the folio Shakespeare, 7; and Shakespeare's acquaintanceship with Wm. Herbert and Mistress Fitton, 9, 132; and the Earls of Pembroke and Southampton,

Lee, Sidney—*continued*

147; and W. H., 151; and *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, 167; and the three *Wills* in the *Fortnightly Review*, 239; his change of opinion as to Mr. W. H., 247; and the colour of Southampton's hair, *ib.*; appeal to, 249; his knowledge of Shakespeare's times, 249; and copyright in Shakespeare's time, 326

Leicester, Lord, with Alasco and a company of court notables at Oxford, 219
Letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth, the, authorship of, 320

Licia, Giles Fletcher's, Sonnet in, 248

Life and Letters of Francis Bacon, letters in, accepted as Bacon's by Mr. Spedding, 171; and the personal relationship between Bacon and Southampton, 210

Life of Bacon, Montagu's, 142

Lives of Eminent Persons, John Aubrey's, 164

Long Meg of Westminster, 216

"Loose-legged Lais," the, in Marston's *Satyres*, 215; Dr. Brinsley Nicholson's suggestion as to, 216

Lougher, Capt., and Mary Fitton, 240, 241

Lover's Lament, The, 145

Love's Labour's Lost, the work of a highly educated genius, 29; signs of the "Dark Lady" episode in, 195; revision of, 196; date of, 199; intimately connected with the Sonnets, 306, 313; possibly Bacon's first dramatic sketch, 309; revision of, 317

Love's Martyr or *Rosalind's Complaint*, Robert Chester's, 167

Lucrece, resemblance between the dedication of, and Sonnet XXXVI., 2, 206; the dedication of, 3, 143; cipher device at the beginning of, 4, 7, 356; value of the cipher in, as proof of authorship, 8; date of the registration of, 207; date of the dedication to Southampton, 209; first appearance of William Shakespeare in, 289; date of its entry at Stationers' Hall, 290; proof of Baconian authorship in, 305; the author of, also the author of *Venus and Adonis*, 306; Shakespeare had no share in writing, 312

Lucy, Sir Thomas, 96

Lytton, E. Bulwer, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 269

MACAULAY, Thomas Babington, afterwards Lord, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 269

Macbeth, the writing of, 317

Magistrates' Mirror, the, 20

Maistre, Count Joseph de, his attack on Bacon's philosophy, 273

- "Man right fair, The," identity of, 247
Manes Verulamiani, the, testimony in, to Bacon's poetic faculty, 275
 Markes, Francis Bacon's estate, sale of, 49
 Markham, Gervase, and the publication of his works, 343
 Marlowe, Kit, and Marston's "Tubrio," 216; and the "Rival Poets," 220
 Marston, John, his use of "Labeo," 14; his literary war with Hall, *ib.*; suppression of his *Pigmalion* and *Scourge of Villanie*, 15; Bacon's authorship of *Venus and Adonis* known to, *ib.*; his appreciation of Shakespeare, 22; a moral satirist, 24; allusion to Shakespearean drama in his *Satyres*, 27; allusions to Bacon in, 29-31; and the War of the Theatres, 82; commencement of his literary career, 208; reference to, in Sonnet xxxii., 209; contemporary evidence by him that certain aristocrats had literary work composed for them, 249; his knowledge of Bacon's authorship, 271
 Martin, Sir Theodore, and the view of Shakespeare's contemporaries as to the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, 116
Masculus Partus Temporis, Bacon's, 218
 "Master-mistress" Sonnet. *See* Sonnet xx.
Masque of the Indian Prince, Bacon's, 159
 Masques and revels at the court, and morality, 240
 Masques at Gray's Inn, Bacon's connection with, 38; descriptions of, by Rowland White, *ib.*
 Massey, Gerald, his work on the Sonnets, 9; and Sonnet cix., 54; his view of the scholarship of the author of the Shakespeare Plays and Sonnets, 67; and the Earl of Southampton, 137, 166; and the alleged allusions in Sonnet cxi. to Shakespeare's profession as an actor, 228 (*note*); and "The Dark Lady," 255; and the *Hews* of Sonnet xx. 357
 Masson, David, and the Shakespeare Sonnets, 190
 Matthew, Sir Toby, his account of Bacon's character, 75; his intimacy with Bacon, 267; his knowledge of Bacon's authorship, 271; the part taken by him in playing "Lord Essex's Device" at Cambridge, 276
 Meautys, Sir Thomas, 52
Menaphon, Greene's, phrase used by Nash in his preface to, 210
 Meres, Francis, and Sonnet lv., 217; and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 264; and the Pallas-Shakespeare question, 292
Midsummer Night's Dream, A, intimate connection of, with the Sonnets, 306, 313
 Milton's vocabulary, 72; his expressed views on love, 121; parallel between his literary style and Bacon's, 331
 Minto, Professor, and the authorship of the Sonnet to Florio, 182; and allusions to Chapman in the Sonnets, 220
 Miracles, Literary, 279, 305
Mirror for Magistrates, Ferrers's, the first English historic legend, 344
 Moll Cutpurse, 216
 Montaigne's Essays, Florio's translation of, 185
 Morgan, Appleton, and the provincialisms in Shakespeare's Plays and Poems, 77
 "Mortal Moon, The," allusion to the eclipse of, 225
 Moulton, K. C., Mrs. Fletcher, and a quotation from the Sonnets, 367
Mystery of William Shakespeare, The, Judge Webb's, 107; lucidity and arrangement of, 284
 NASH, branded with opprobrium in the *Scourge of Villanie*, 25; phrase used by him in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, 210; the nobleman addressed in his *Pierce Penilesse*, 212
New Atlantis, The, Bacon's only important prose work of imagination, 335; evidence in, of his aims and tastes, *ib.*
 Newdegate, Anne, evidence in Sir William Knollys's letters to, of his admiration for Mary Fitton, 237
 Newdegate family, the, documents of, bearing on the identification of the "Dark Lady," 146; the records of, and the morality of the Elizabethan maids of honour, 240
New method, Bacon's, and his earlier aspirations, 270
 Nichol, Professor John, and Bacon's unparalleled activity, 293
 Nicholson, Dr. Brinsley, and the "loose-legged Lais" of Marston's *Satyres*, 216
Nine daies wonder, dedication of Will Kemp's, 150
 Nomentack, the Indian, the personality of, 159
 Northumberland MS., the, almost the only piece of evidence connecting the names Shakespeare and Bacon, 5; Mr. Spedding and, 6; zodiacal devices in, 8; rough drafts in Bacon's handwriting of speeches in the devices, 39
Notes and Queries, and Shakespeare's facial expression, 12

- Novum Organum*, proof of Bacon's philosophic spirit in, 105; and his earlier aspirations, 270, 272; difficulty in believing that the author was also the writer of the Plays, &c., of Shakespeare, 279; revision of, 317
- Observations on a Libel*, Bacon's, use of a portion of the letter to Monsieur Critoy in, 320
- Official records, the treatment of, 38
- "Of Love," Bacon's Essay, analogy between and the "syren tears" of Sonnet CXIX., 228
- Othello*, use of the word *preposterous* in, 54; date of its publication, 316; additions to, ib.; Baconian allusions in, ib.
- Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, Chapman's, allusions in the Sonnets to, 221
- PALGRAVE, Francis Turner, and the Sonnet-scandal, 62
- Palladis Palatium*, William Wrednot's, and Bacon's commonplace books, 294
- Palladis Tamia*, Francis Mere's, and Bacon's commonplace books, 294
- Pallas, connection of, with Bacon, 285; La Jessée's reference to, 286; reference to, in a paper found in the Lambeth collection, ib.; first appearance of, 289
- Pallas Shake-speare evidence, the Baconians and, 281 *et seq.*; and Ben Jonson, 289
- Passionate Pilgrim*, the, probable date of, 243
- Pembroke, Earl of. *See* Herbert, William
- Percy, Francis Bacon's man-servant, 50
- Perez, Antonio, friendship of, with Bacon, 43; suspected of the murder of Escovedo, 44; his intimacy with Lady Rich, 45; his baseness, 46
- Phoenix and the Turtle, The*, 167; and "the alone Queen," 288
- Pickering, Lord Keeper, and Bacon's allusion to the "eclipse" of the Queen, 225
- Pierce Penilesse*, the nobleman addressed in Nash's, 212
- Pigmalion's Image*, Marston's, the character "Labeo" in, 12 *et seq.*; reference to *Venus and Adonis*, 12, 19; the spelling of, 19; an imitation of *Venus and Adonis*, 23; date of the publication of, 208; similar line in and Sonnet XXXII., 209
- Platonism of the Sonnets, the, parallel cases to, 257
- Plays, money made by the publication of, 326
- Poems of Shakespeare*, Mr. Wyndham's edition of, 191
- Poems, the writings of, not a slur on a man's character in Elizabethan times, 310
- Poetaster*, Ben Jonson's, "Crispinus" in, 13; attacks on play-writers in, 54; references in, to topical jests, 62; his allusions in, 84; light which it throws on the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, 85; Bacon depicted in, ib., 310; threatened with a prosecution, ib.; main points of, as aiming at Bacon, 86; Shakespeare depicted in, 93
- Poetical Rhapsody*, Francis Davidson's, 165
- Poetomachia*, the. *See* War of the Theatres
- Polwhele, Captain, his marriage with Mary Fitton, 164
- Polyhymnia*, Peele's, the allusion in, to Essex, and the identity of *Hews*, 357
- Pope, Alexander, his false judgment on Bacon, 63, 259
- Posthumous Letters*, William Huntingdon's, 248 (*note*)
- Preposterous*, use of the word, 53, 54
- "Procreation Sonnets," the, 132; the Earl of Southampton in, 134; and Bacon, 136; the subject of, 191, 202
- Promus*, Bacon's, mention of the "Gardens of Adonis" in, 70; allusion in, to Bacon's theory of the nature of fire, 244; a storehouse for subsequent literary edifices, 294
- Psalms, Bacon's, the standard of poetry in, 337; the dedication of, 339
- RALEIGH, Sir Walter, one of the true founders of the United States, 161
- Randolph, Thomas, evidence borne by, to Bacon's poetic faculty, 274
- Rape of Lucrece*. *See* *Lucrece*
- Rawley, William, and Bacon's power of paraphrasing, 73; and Bacon's character, 259; the reason why he did not divulge Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare, 266; and Bacon's facility for improving other people's language, 299
- Reactio*, Marston's, 20; "Labeo" in, 21
- Recusants, the, search for, 96; characters of the Shakespeare Plays amongst, ib.
- Reed, Edwin, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 269
- Remusat, C. de, and Bacon's "Confession of Faith," 260
- Renaissance literature, and young girls attiring themselves as pages, 264
- Returne from Parnassus*, the, Burbage and Kemp in, 82
- Rich Lady, her intimacy with Antonio Perez, 45; identified by Gerald Massey with the "Dark Lady," 255

- Richard II.*, allusion to, by Ben Jonson, 85; performance of, 89 (*note*); allusion to, in *The Silent Woman*, 155; and the rising of Essex, 166; its connection with the rising of Essex, and Bacon's silence about Shakespeare, 180, 324; date of its publication, 324; Queen Elizabeth's suspicion against, *ib.*
- Richard III.*, revision of, and additions to, 317
- "Rival Poets," the, allusions to, in the Sonnets, 209, 220, 359
- Romeo and Juliet*, a clever parody on, 91; signs of the "Dark Lady" episode in, 195; intimate connection of, with the Sonnets, 306, 313
- "Rose," the, Henslowe's theatre, 233
- "Rose," the term of endearment, possible reason for the use of, in the Sonnets, 233
- Ruscus, the identity of, 321
- Russell, Mistress Ann, marriage of, 149, 231
- Russells, the, and masques before the Queen, 43, 55; and the Earl of Essex, 79
- Rutland, the Earl of, Lord Essex's letter to, 173
- SANFORD, John, and the Earl of Southampton's beauty, 139
- Sarrazin, Gregor, and the "Dark Lady," 195
- Satiromastix*, Dekker's, light which it throws on the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, 85
- Satyres*, Marston's, light which they throw on the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, 85; allusions to Southampton in, 215; the "loose-legged Lais" in, *ib.*
- Saviolo, Vincenzo, book by, and *As You Like It*, 186
- "Scandal," the, in the Sonnets, 25, 32 *et seq.*; in contemporary Satires, 26; Bacon's connection with, 35; less repulsive than generally considered, 40; what it really was, 40 *et seq.*; compromising letters, 49; references to, in Sonnets CXX., CXXI., 53; possibility of its connection with Mary Fitton, 55; W. C. Hazlitt on, 60
- Schmidt, Alexander, and the "Gardens of Adonis" in *Henry VI.*, 69
- Scourge of Folly*, John Davies's, 27
- Scourge of Villanie*, Marston's, suppression of, 15; evidence in, of Bacon's authorship of *Venus and Adonis*, 22; Nash branded in, 25; the passage in, concerning "Luscus," 28; Shakespeare depicted in, 93
- Second Fruits*, Florio's, 183
- Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, *The*, Gerald Massey's, 9; view expressed in, on the author's scholarship, 67; and the "Procreation Sonnets," 134
- Sejanus*, Ben Jonson's, the production of, 27; pages inserted in, 28
- Shadow of Night*, Chapman's, allusions to, in the Sonnets, 220
- Shakespeare and His Times*, Drake's, and the individual so affectionately addressed in the Sonnets, 131
- Shakespeare Anniversary of 1902, the, 367
- Shakespeare, John, 96
- Shakespeare, William, the facial expression of, 12; his over-editing of plays, 27; his lack of classic art, 28; his true position, 29; his breaches of the moral law, 34; absence of biographical hints that he was a universal scholar, 72; his vocabulary, *ib.*; his lack of qualifications for the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays and Poems, 76; his inability to have written *Venus and Adonis*, 77; Ben Jonson's early attitude towards, 81; his familiarity with Ovid, 92; his love of the stage, 93; a busy actor-manager, 94; his hand in the Shakespeare Plays, 95; his religion, 97; and the ghost in Kyd's *Ur-Hamlet*, 123; Robert Greene's jealousy of, 124; improbability of his being closely intimate with the court, 148; his signature to *The Phoenix and Turtle*, 167; want of evidence that he knew Essex, 168; and Italian dialogues and aphorisms, 185; Thorpe's estimate of, 193; his opportunities for visiting Italy, 200; and Bruno's philosophy, 218; the "lame-ness" of, 223; allusions in the Sonnets to his profession as an actor, 228; courtly favour in which his theatrical company was held, 234; possible reasons why he is never mentioned by Bacon, 234; silence of other contemporaries as to him, 235; lack of evidence implicating him with the scandal about Mary Fitton, 238; resentment of his dethroning pure idol-worship, 260; and Montemayor's *Diana*, 265; the hyphen in his name, 283, 286, 288; his lack of facilities for producing the plays, &c., 296; absence of laudatory laments at his death, 309; his memorial tomb in Stratford Church, 310; the conspiracy of silence about him, *ib.*; and the authorship of *Hamlet* or *King Lear*, 319; the date of his first acknowledged play, 325; the supposition that he allowed his name to be used for the plays, 326; the signature of his name to the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*, 340; the

- Shakespeare, William—*continued*
 first appearance of his name on the printed plays, 343; his professional and business capabilities, 346; the acknowledged writer of the most popular love-poems of the time, *ib.*; why his name as the author of the plays was not given out at once, 347; the theory that he wrote Bacon's works, 365; reason why he left no MSS. or mentioned any in his will, 367
- Shakespeare-Bacon, essay on, and Bacon's view of poetry, 340
- Shakespeare Monument, the, 102; Latin inscription on, 103; the composer of the inscription, 105
- Shakespeare Plays, the, Welsh characters in, 50; historical rather than autobiographical, 57; Italian scholarship of the author of, 72; French scholarship shown in, 73; proof of authorship of, inferred from contemporary assent, 94; the love scenes in, 123; the dates of, 140; continual alteration of the early, 196, 314; parallelisms and identities between the Plays and the acknowledged works of Bacon, 251; strange love ideals in the earlier plays, 255; frequent dwelling upon certain changes of sexual appearance in young lads and girls, *ib.*, 263; loftiness of the infused religious element in, 261; and the argument that Bacon had no time to write them, 293; unique words in, 301; not dedicated to any person or patron, 307; the coarseness of the dialogue in, 311; news of the extreme Baconians on, *ib.*; scenes and incidents attributable to Shakespeare, 312; origin of the constant revision of, 317; the opinion that all the plays were pirated, 326; supposed self-revelation in, of the author, 327; the superiority of their moral tone over that of ordinary plays of the period, 329; reason for the opposition to the Bacon hypothesis of, 341; supposed dates of, 346
- Shakespeare Plays and Poems, scholarship of the author of, 66; views of the Shakespearians on author's scholarship, *ib.*, 67; Sir Theodore Martin and the view of Shakespeare's contemporaries on the authorship of, 116; view of Professor A. R. Wallace on the authorship of, 118; view of Sir Henry Irving on, 124; signs in, of depression caused to Bacon by his breach with Southampton, 178; date of publication of Poems, 194; unusual circumstances connected with, 307 *et seq.*; the poems dedicated to Southampton, *ib.*
- Shakespeare's MSS., the absence of revision in, 315
- Shakespeare's Purge, 83
- Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Samuel Butler's, 33
- Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Samuel Smith Travers's, 364
- Shakesper not Shakespeare*, W. H. Edwards's, 281; R. L. Ashurst's remarks on, 282
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 272
- Sidney, Sir Philip, his influence over the author of *Venus and Adonis* and the Sonnets, 143, 201; and Giordano Bruno, 219
- "Silent Name," the, in Marston's *Scourge of Villanie*, 23
- Silent Woman*, Ben Jonson's, Bacon portrayed in, 84, 152; Herbert portrayed in, 152; date of, 154; allusion to *Richard II.*, 155; allusion in, to a work on Tacitus, 155
- Silex Scintillans*, the preface to, 338
- Some Elizabethan Cipher Books*, 7
- Sonnet, by William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, the "blushing rose" in, 156, 157
- Sonnets, the, autobiographical character of, 1, 55, 190; the real keys to the Bacon-Shakespearian question, 1; and Plays, the work of the same author, 1; labour devoted to the elucidation of, 9; the "scandal" of, 25; external evidence of, 32-52; internal evidence of, 53-65; which deal with the "bewailed guilt" of the author, 55; aristocratic and refined atmosphere of, 56, 191; original source of the last two, 70; the great majority addressed to a high-born young man, 130; references to the "Dark Lady" in, 131; the William Herbert theory of, 132; date of the earliest, 133; the Adonis of, 137; the "Wills" in, 146, 236; intimacy of Shakespeare and Pembroke revealed in, 147; resemblance between their wording and that of Lord Pembroke's letter to Cecil, 171; the mystery of, known to Essex and Southampton and Ben Jonson, 177; signs in, of the depression caused to Bacon by his breach with Southampton, 178; subject of the earlier, 191, 202; the dedication of, 192; the printer of, *ib.*; not intended for the public eye, 194; enigmas in, 195; date of the first seventeen, 201; and Sidney's *Arcadia*, *ib.*; traces of similarity in, with *Astrophel and Stella*, 202; date of, 202; allusions in, and parallels to, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, *ib.*; a likely date for, 204; melancholy feeling in the author of the earlier, 205; platonic relationship between Bacon and Southampton revealed in, 211;

- Sonnets, the—*continued*
 clue to the reason why the mystery of, was never revealed, 211; chronological order of, 214; traces of Bruno's philosophy in, 218, 226, 229; allusions to Chapman, Daniel, and Marston in, 209, 220; allusions in, to Queen Elizabeth, 225, 226; and German critics, 242, 243; hidden allusions (in the second series), to the author's "infection of nature," 244; admission in, by the author, of his folly in being attracted to a wanton, 246; the practice of writing for others, 249; the probability that some were written by Bacon for some one else, *ib.*, 250; the possibility that some of those which seem to connect their author with the "Dark Lady" or Mary Fitton were written by Bacon for Pembroke, 253; the two loves of the author, 254; nature of the love of the author for the "Dark Lady," *ib.*; depreciatory remarks about the love of women in, 255; the ideal of, *ib.*; reason why they were called "sugred," 276 (*note*); self-assertion in, of the author, 295, 296; numerous parallels between them and the early plays, 306, 313; parallel to the Baconian authorship of, 344; some eccentric critics of, 362; quoted in the House of Commons, 367
- Sonnets, the, autobiographical, abrupt close of, 248; nature of the last two, 248; scholarship of, *ib.*
- Sonnets, the last two, scholarship shown in, 70; source of, *ib.*
- Sonnets xviii.—xxvi., date of, 203
- Sonnet xx., the love referred to in, probably Platonical, 256; the "Mr." Hews of, 356
- Sonnet xxvi., reveals the name of the hidden author, 2; remarkable resemblance of, to the dedication of *Lucrece*, *ib.*, 206; the date of, 207
- Sonnets xxvii.—xxviii., allusion to the author's journey to the North, 217; their striking parallelism to *Lucrece* and *Romeo and Juliet*, 205; subject of, 207
- Sonnets xxix.—xxxvii., reference in, to a period of disgrace, 208
- Sonnet xxxii., reference to Marston in, 209
- Sonnet xxxvi., supplies the answer to the reason why we do not hear of any personal relationship between Bacon and Southampton, 211
- Sonnets xxxviii.—xxxix., period of, 213
- Sonnets xl.—xlii., importance of, with regard to the relations between the author and the friend who robbed the poet of his mistress, 24
- Sonnets XLVIII.—LI., allusion in, to a journey taken by the author, 217
- Sonnets LI.—LV., and Southampton, 217
- Sonnets LVII. and LVIII., and Pembroke's letter to Cecil, 217
- Sonnets LIX.—LXXIV., pessimistic philosophy of, 217; hint of assassination in, 217; ideas and phrases in, pointing to Bacon, 218
- Sonnets LXXV.—LXXXVI., the "rival poets" referred to in, 209; prospect of death referred to in, 210
- Sonnets LXXV.—LXXXVII., excuses in, for the author's verse being "barren of new pride and tongue-tied," and allusion in, to rival poets, 219; legal allusions in, 222
- Sonnet LXXVIII., reference in, to Willie Hughes leaving Shakespeare's company, 358
- Sonnet LXXXII., the first line of, 222
- Sonnet LXXXVI., and the "rival poet," 359
- Sonnets LXXXVIII.—CV., references in, to Southampton's life at court, 223; to the "lameness" of the author, *ib.*; chronological allusion in, 225
- Sonnet LXXXIX., and the reason why Southampton was ignored by Bacon, 211
- Sonnet CVII., date of, 225; allusion in, to the eclipse of "the mortal moon," *ib.*
- Sonnets CIX.—CXXV., self-accusation in, by the author, 53; use of the word "*preposterouslie*" in, *ib.*; date of, 226; allusion in, to a threefold charge hanging over the author's head, 227; apparent allusion in, to Mary Fitton, 228; allusions in, to Shakespeare's profession as an actor, *ib.*
- Sonnet CXXIV., Baconian character of, 230; the author of, a man of quality, *ib.*
- Sonnet CXXV., the expression *informer* in, 56, 232; and the marriage of Mistress Anne Russell, 149; suggested dates of, 231
- Sonnet CXXVI., forms a break in the Sonnets, 233; part played in, by a certain *Will*, *ib.*; absence of an *envoy* from, 354
- Sonnets CXXVII.—CLII., allusions in, to the "Dark Lady," 235; play on the word *Will* in, 236
- Sonnet CXXXVI., enigma of the closing distich of, 238
- Sonnet CXXXVIII., and the moral character of the "Dark Lady," 239; the printer of, 291; probable Baconian authorship of, *ib.*
- Sonnet CXLIII., similarity between simile in, and one in Bacon's letter to Fulke Greville in 1595, 241; one of the *Will* Herbert series, 242; alleged allusion in, to the Earl of Southampton, *ib.*

- Sonnet CXLIV., the "Two Loves" of, [191; hints in, 243; limit of date in, for the *Passionate Pilgrim*, ib.; allusion in, to Bacon's theory of the nature of fire, ib.; identity of "the man right fair" of, 247
- Sonnets CXLV.—CLII., the questionings and meditations of the author in, 247
- Sonnet CLI., moral unworthiness of, 244; allusion in, to misconduct of the author with a lady of rank, 246; the difficulty of believing Bacon to be the author, 250; diversity of its spirit from that of Sonnet CXXI., ib.
- Sonnet CLII., self-accusation of the author in, 248
- Southampton, Earl of, his friendship with Bacon, 43, 123, 129; his first appearance at Gray's Inn, 120; his friendship with Shakespeare, 129; addressed in the Sonnets, 134; his proposed marriage, 135, 202; beauty of, 139; alienation of, from Bacon, 142; improbability of his being intimate with Shakespeare, 143; allusions to, by Ben Jonson, 155; one of the true founders of the United States, 160; mystery of the Sonnets known to, 177; his breach with Bacon, 178; imprisonment of, 178; release of, ib.; Bacon's letter to, ib.; and the earlier Sonnets, 191; Sonnets sent to, 203; personal relationship with Bacon, 210; anagrams with his name, 212; and the robbery of the mistress of the author of the Sonnets, 214; the youth of, 215; allusions to, in Marston's *Satyres*, ib.; references in the Sonnets to his life at court, 223; allusions in the Sonnets to his imprisonment, 226; his influence in advancing or favouring theatrical companies, 234; alleged allusion to, in Sonnet CXLIII., 242; the colour of his hair, 247; contemporary evidence that he had literary work composed for him by others, 249; the poems dedicated to him, 307
- Southampton theory of the Sonnets, the, opponents of, 138
- Southwell, Elizabeth, and the Earl of Essex, 79
- Southwell, Robert, printing of a poem by, 192
- Spedding, Mr., and Bacon's style, 46; and Lady Anne Bacon's letters, 51; and Bacon's "Confession of Faith," 260; and the absence of poetic fire in Bacon's writings, 267
- Stage, the, in Queen Elizabeth's time, as a means of publishing opinions, 327
- Standen, Mr., letter from, to Francis Bacon, 45; his letters to Anthony Bacon written under different names, 320
- Stationers' company, members of, and the purchase of MSS. in Queen Elizabeth's time, 326
- Stopes, Mrs. C. C., and the "Dark Lady," 197; and W. H., ib.; and Bacon's mistress, 266
- Strange's players, Lord, and Henslowe's theatre, 233
- Stratford tomb, the, the head of Shakespeare on, 102
- Supposes, The*, and the *Taming of the Shrew*, 345
- "Swan of Avon," the, a possible allusion to Bacon, 106; suggested solution of the expression, 369
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles, and the "lameness" of Shakespeare, 223
- Sydney, Sir Robert, letter to, from Rowland White, 148
- Sylva Sylvarum*, Bacon's, 21
- TACITUS and Bacon, 155
- Taming of the Shrew*, the, source of the under plot of, 345
- Tarlton, the Clown, the improbability of Shakespeare meeting, 56, 319
- Tears of the Isle of Wight, &c.*, *The*, anagrams in, 212
- Tempest, The*, the writing of, 317; expression of the author's resolve to abjure poetry, 340; the *anagram* in, 353
- Theatres in Elizabethan days, 91; the resort of profligate people, 328
- Thorpe, Thos., and the dedication of the Sonnets, 192; other dedications by, 193; his estimate of Shakespeare, 193
- Toothless Satires*, Hall's, publication of, 14; suppression of, 15
- "Trask" Lecture, the, by Sir Henry Irving, 124
- Travers, Samuel Smith, and Shakespeare's Sonnets, 364
- Troilus and Cressida*, use of the word *preposterous* in, 54; Shakespeare's Purge, 83; light which it throws on the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, 85; the preface to, 193
- "Tubrio," Marston's, and Kit Marlowe, 216
- Two Gentlemen of Verona, The*, signs of the "Dark Lady" episode in, 195; the Proteus in, 215; Thurio and the writing of sonnets for others, 249; strange love ideals in, 255; its connection with Montemayor's *Diana*, 264; aristocratic atmosphere of, ib.; intimately connected with the Sonnets, 306, 313; date of the publication of, 346
- Tyler, Thomas, his work on the Sonnets, 9; and the individual addressed in the Sonnets, 132; his

- Tyler, Thomas—*continued*
 researches into the history of Mrs. Fitton, 163; his exposition of the Sonnets and the Pembroke theory, 191; and the W. H. of the dedication, 192; and allusions to Chapman in the Sonnets, 220; and the reference to Plato in *Hamlet*, 362
- Tyrrell, Prof. R. Y., his triangular duel with Dowden and Judge Webb, 109; and the authorship of the Plays, &c., of Shakespeare, 279
- UNITED STATES, the, true founders of, 160
- Ur-Hamlet*, the production of Kyd, 262
- Valerius Terminus*, the earliest type of Bacon's *Instauratio*, 302
- Vanini, the Italian, in London, and Bacon, 229
- Vaughan, Henry, the *Silex Scintillans* of, 338
- Vautrollier, Jacquinetta, suggested as Bacon's mistress, by Mrs. Stopes, 266
- Venus and Adonis*, the authorship of, 14, 20; the Latin distich prefixed to, 18; the author of, under a Latin veil, 21; reason for concealment of the authorship of, 49; Shakespeare's inability to have written, 77; absence of dialect in, *ib.*; dedication of, 143, 145; the last stanzas of, 145; and Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, 221; date of the publication of, 256; first appearance in, of William Shakespeare, 289; the licensing of, 300; the author of, also the author of the Shakespeare Sonnets and earlier Plays, 306; the author of *Hamlet* visible in, 310; the Bacon of the Sonnets visible in, *ib.*; Shakespeare had no share in writing, 312; enrollment of, on the register at Stationers' Hall, 321; the signature of Shakespeare's name in the dedication and the question of the authorship, 340
- Virgidemia*, Hall's, 15; lines from, quoted by Dr. Grosart, 16
- WALLACE, Alfred Russell, and the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays and Poems, 118; and the proof of the authorship, 281
- Walsingham, Sir Francis, and the letter to Monsieur Critoy, 320
- War of the Theatres, the, 81; duration of, 82; authors involved in, *ib.*
- "Waters of Parnassus," the, Bacon's allusion to, in his letter to Essex, 177, 273; in writing to Lord Henry Howard, 273
- "Waverley Novels," the, lesson to be learnt from, 113
- Webb, Judge, and the "noted weed," 23, 107; his work *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, 107; his triangular duel with Professor Tyrrell and Dowden, 109
- What You Will*, Marston's, 24
- W. H., Sidney Lee and, 151; a clue to the words "sole begetter," 164; Mr. Tyler and, 192; and Mrs. C. C. Stopes, 197; and the *Hews of Sonnet* xx.
- White, Richard Grant, and the "gardens of Adonis" in Henry VI., 69
- White, Rowland, his descriptions of masques and devices, 38; and William Herbert's first appearance in London, 133; his letter to Sir Robert Sydney, 148
- Whitgift, Archbishop, and the burning of Marston's and Hall's works, 15; and the licensing of *Venus and Adonis*, 300, 312; and the refusal to license Hall's *Satires* and Marlowe's *Ovid*, *ib.*; his friendship for Francis Bacon, 313
- Willobie, interest taken by him in *Lucrece* and its author, 291
- "Wills," the three, in the Sonnets, 146, 236; Mr. Sidney Lee on, in the *Fortnightly Review*, 239
- Wilson, Thomas, his English MS. version of Montemayor's *Diana*, 265
- Wisdom of the Ancients*, Bacon's, alterations in, 315
- Wither, George, and Bacon's poetic faculty, 274
- "Woman Coloured Ill," the, meaning of the words, 246
- World of Wordes*, A. John Florio's dedication to, 183; the copy of, belonging to Dr. Farmer, 184
- YONGE, Barth, his English MS. version of Montemayor's *Diana*, 265
- Yorick's skull, the incident of, 59, 318

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