

once to his companion singer, George Eliot, and asked her to take him as he was and name the day. And oh that she,—of course in a sweet, low voice,—had uttered the fateful maiden's 'Yes,' and thus at least given him the chance to procure or beget 'that eternitie promised by our ever living poet.'

Dr. F. C. Furnivall took great interest in Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady,' and went down to Lady Newdegate's in company with Mr. Tyler, to see if they two could obtain any light on the subject by a thorough examination of the existing portraits in the possession of the descendants of the Fitton family. They believed that Mary Fitton made a complete capture of old Sir William Knollys, but for some unexplained reason Dr. Furnivall will not accept the suggestion of Mr. Archer, that old Sir William was the "Will" in 'overplus' of Sonnet CXXXV. His remark is :\*

'No doubt Shakspeare would have enjoyed calling an amorous old billy-goat "Will in overplus," but the epithet is too doubtful to base any theory on.'

The Doctor accepts Herbert fully for the second

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\* *The Theatre*, December 1, 1897.

division of the 'Sonnets' (CXXVII. *ad fin.*), and defends his position by saying that,—

'As to Shakspeare's love for Herbert giving "the lie" to his professions of devotion in the "Adonis" and "Lucrece" to Southampton, a great deal may have happened in four years. There is no evidence that Southampton kept up his alliance with Shakspeare after 1594. He had plenty of other folk and work to look after, and we can't tie an enthusiastic young poet down to his dedications for his whole life. If Shakspeare hadn't turned up Southampton before that nobleman joined in Essex's rebellion in 1601, he surely did so then.'

The idea of Shakspeare turning up Southampton (as the Doctor elegantly phrases it) is surely rather a ridiculous one. But Shakespearians following out their theory are bound to become ridiculous.

Shakespearians have always some difficulty in explaining how a person in Shakespeare's position could become in any way intimate, or even on friendly terms, with Southampton, who was one of the highest and richest aristocrats in the whole kingdom.

Knight especially, in his biography of William Shakespeare, seems struck with surprise at the free and independent manner in which such a

noble lord is addressed by the player in the two poems which he dedicated to him.

‘Both the dedications,’ says Knight, ‘and especially that of “Lucrece,” are conceived in a modest and a manly spirit, entirely different from the ordinary language of literary adulation.’

And further on he says,—

‘There is evidence in that dedication [‘Lucrece’] of a higher sort of intercourse between the two minds than consists with any forced adulation of any kind, and especially with any extravagant compliments to the learning and to the abilities of a superior in rank.’

Also the curious fact is noticed that Shakespeare, in an age when all professional writers were constantly addressing flattering and obsequious dedications to their patrons and Mæcenases, never wrote dedications to any person whatever, except these two, and was not himself the recipient of such addresses or dedications from personal friends as we might expect in the case of so distinguished a genius, and, stranger still, died in 1616 at Stratford with scarce any voice of praise or lament in those days when funeral verses were almost considered to be a part of the obsequies. Shakespearians cannot explain this,

and never will so long as they try to make Shakspeare suit the difficulty. Try Bacon, and all becomes very plain.

I have another argument in favour of the Baconian authorship of the 'Sonnets,' which I believe no one has yet brought forward. It has to do with Ronsard, Jodelle, and the French 'Pléiade.' I think we may justly assume that Alleyn, and Burbage, and Heminge, and Condell, were men of the same stamp and standard of culture as their fellow actor Shakspeare. Can we imagine them writing deep brained sonnets, infused with the fashionable Neo Platonic theories, and framed on the learned and cultured structure which was common to Ronsard, Jodelle, and other famous French poets of the period, and was derived mainly from Petrarch, and other less known Italian predecessors? Can we imagine this, I say, when, in addition to their prosaic, money making life, they no more than Shakspeare, had any knowledge of either of the two languages in which these poems of the higher classes were written?

Ronsard began with sonnets and love-songs, and was criticised unfavourably by some of his contemporaries for using long new words which

he had formed from the classic use, and was also noted for his attempts to bring again into use obsolete words belonging to the French of an earlier age.

We see Puttenham and Shakespeare doing the very same thing. In Puttenham's 'Partheniades' especially there seems to be the 'form and pressure' of Ronsard.

So much for poetical influence on Bacon. As for dramatic influence, it is a curious coincidence, if nothing else, that Jodelle, the friend of Ronsard, and originator of classical French drama, chose Cleopatra and Dido for the heroines of his first plays. However, Jodelle's tragedies have a long chorus here and there, after the Greek style, and are thoroughly classical in form, and even in dialogue. Shakespeare, fortunately, did not follow in Jodelle's steps, which were eventually to lead to Racine, but, at least so far as heroines were concerned, chose the glorious, inimitable, immortal style of the romantic rather than the classical school, and gave us certainly Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, Desdemona, and perhaps Dido.

'Les Œuvres et Meslanges Poétiques D'Estienne Jodelle' (1574) had a preface on poetry by Charles de la Mothe, and it begins ;—

'Nos vieux Gaulois faisoient grand cas de la Poesie, et entretenoyent les Poëtes non pour la volupté, mais pour la police et pour l'erudition, les estimans les vrais et premiers Philosophes.'

Jodelle was the real founder of the French classical and historical drama, and his play of 'Cleopatra' (1552), acted before the King, may be taken as the first step away from the miracle plays and moralities of earlier times. His sonnets were numerous, and he also wrote love songs and marriage odes, but his most peculiar composition was his 'Contr'amours,' or sonnets of *dispraise* to his mistress—'odious-amorous sonnets' as they may be called. Francis Bacon gives us one or two in the Shakespeare 'Sonnets,' and there is one by Shepheard Tony (possibly Antony Bacon) in 'England's Helicon.'

Jodelle, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and others of 'La Pléiade,' could hardly fail to have an influence on such a clever young literary genius as Francis Bacon when he was spending part of the years 1577-1579 in France. Indeed, there are many traces of this influence to be found in Puttenham's 'Arte of English Poesie' and in the Shakespeare works.

Puttenham refers to Ronsard more than once, and begins his work on poetry by saying that the

poets were the first philosophers and politicians, which is the very thing referred to in the prefatory account of French poetry which is placed as a preface to Jodelle's collected works in 1574, only about three years before Bacon came to France.

Besides the poetic influence on young Bacon that Ronsard, the acknowledged master of French poetry, would naturally possess, there is a curious parallelism in their early careers. Ronsard was the older man, and so Bacon would be able to look back on Ronsard's career, and might thereby gain encouragement or warning with regard to his own prospects in poetry or elsewhere.

Ronsard when not more than sixteen was sent on a mission to Flanders and Scotland by the Duke of Orleans, who had a high opinion of him as the best of his pages.

Bacon when a little older was sent on an important mission to Queen Elizabeth, conducted the business well, and was probably engaged in other political missions afterwards.

Ronsard from his eighteenth to his twenty-fifth year devoted himself to almost constant study, first of the classical authors and of the wide range of general knowledge which must be acquired so as to do them justice and catch their spirit, and then he determined, when about twenty-six years

old, to revive the poetry of his own country and place it on a firm classical foundation.

Now, these years of Bacon's life (eighteen to twenty-six) were spent in almost exactly the same way; and if, as I think, Bacon wrote Puttenham's 'Arte of English Poesie' about the year 1587, then he also would be twenty-six, as Ronsard was, and the parallel would be strikingly close.

It was Meres, in 1598, who first mentioned Shakespeare's 'sugred Sonnets' among his private friends. But who are known to be the actor's 'private friends' in 1598 or earlier? Why, Burbage, Heminge, Condell, Henslowe the comic speller, and, generally speaking, the actors connected with his own company. If these were the persons among whom the 'Sonnets' were circulated in manuscript from their author and private friend, the actor from Stratford, they would not form a very appreciative circle. Alleyn, the famous actor, might also be a private friend and a privileged member of the circle; but, as he is the only person we know for certain to have bought a copy when they came forth to the world, the inference is that he had not read them nor received them, otherwise he would not have been in such a hurry to buy them directly they were for sale. Moreover, they were Shakespeare's 'Sonnets,'

*But who  
may not  
be known?*



so called in largest of type on the title-page, and it is well known that, among the many ways the actor and his family had of spelling their own name, they never spelled it in the form given in the 'Sonnets' and poems, and never once used a hyphen in deeds or documents during all the centuries of their existence as a family.

How vastly improbable all these curious details make it for the actor to be author of either the 'Sonnets' or the poems, while at the same time there is not a single detail among them all which does not easily lend itself to the theory that Bacon was the real Shakespeare.

I have just noticed the absurdity of the Shakespeare 'Sonnets' being circulated among the Stratford player's 'private friends,' who, as far as we can judge, would be quite unable to appreciate the peculiar kind of sugar they contained.

Now, Meres, who is our authority for this, is certainly worthy of credit, for he was evidently well acquainted with Shakespeare's productions in 1598, and tells us more about them than all his contemporaries put together. But did Meres know the Stratford man, or did he mention him *as such*? There is not the smallest scrap of evidence that he did. In fact, Meres was not referring to Shakspere the actor, but to Shakespeare the aristocrat, who signed the dedications

of 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece,' and 'showed his head' in the latter.

I have always had a suspicion in this direction, but it is only recently that I have obtained what seems a good piece of corroboration. It turns out, I find now, that Meres was the brother-in-law of Florio, and therefore naturally belonged to the Bacon-Southampton circle, and would know well enough who wrote the fine 'Florio Sonnet,'\* and that he was a gentleman, a friend of Florio, and one 'that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so.' In fact, Meres would know that Bacon was the Phaethon who signed this. So there is every probability that among the private friends of Phaethon-Shakespeare-Bacon who were privileged to know somewhat of the 'sugred Sonnets' Meres was one.

I treated the 'Sonnets' at considerable length in 'Is it Shakespeare?' and I have nothing of importance to add to what I said then, nor have the critics adduced anything to make me alter my general statements and inferences. I should have said on p. 184 that Sidney *generally* followed the Italian model instead of *always* followed it; but this slip is not a very important one, and I still hold that my evidence connecting Bacon with the

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\* Cf. 'Is it Shakespeare?' p. 183, where this fine Baconian sonnet is quoted in full.

authorship of the 'Sonnets' and other poems hitherto attributed to Shakspeare is the strongest evidence before the public for the Baconian theory, because it is *positive* evidence for Bacon's authorship of these, while the evidence generally adduced, with the exception of the Baconian parallelisms, is chiefly of a *negative* character, with the object of showing that the Shakspeare from Stratford could not have written the plays. This is a much less convincing line to take, for the orthodox hold that Shakspeare's receptive genius was equal to anything he tried his hand upon in the world of poetry and drama. Such a loose assertion is hard to disprove to their satisfaction.

Next take that fine sonnet,—

' If Music and sweet Poetry agree,  
 As they must needs, the sister and the brother,  
 Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me,  
 Because thou lovest the one and I the other.  
 Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch  
 Upon the lute doth ravish human sense ;  
 Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such  
 As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.  
 Thou lovest to hear the sweet melodious sound  
 That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes :  
 And I, in deep delight, am chiefly drown'd  
 When as himself to singing he betakes.  
 One God is God of both as poets feign ;  
 One knight loves both, and both in thee remain.'

In this by  
 55?

How anyone can suppose this sonnet to have been written by Will Shakspeare of Stratford is a marvel to me. The reference to Dowland, the fashionable lute player and maestro for Court gallants and fair Maids of Honour and other amorists of high Elizabethan society, points out the sonneteer as being a gentleman of very different social rank and manners from the shrewd, money making actor-manager Shakspeare. This gentleman and courtly minded poet was, as we see, as equally privileged to listen to Dowland's voice 'in deep delight' as the lady of his love was privileged to enjoy the results of the artist's 'heavenly touch upon the lute.'

The sonnet gives not the slightest hint of any social inequality between these votaries of music and song. Indeed, the last line strikes me as affording excellent evidence for the good social position of the man, though I believe no one has noticed it.

'One knight loves both.' What can this mean, unless the writer of the line refers to himself as a knight who loves 'both,' — *i.e.*, poetry and singing?

Now, Shakspeare was certainly never a knight, even if he obtained the privilege of becoming the son of John Shakspeare of Stratford, Gentle-

man. So *he* did not compose this elegant piece.

How about Francis Bacon? Was he a knight at this date (1599)? No, he was not. He was not dubbed knight by the royal sword till King James came to the throne. Therefore Bacon did not write this line or this sonnet.

Thank goodness! says my orthodox reader; at least, we are not going to have any Baconian nonsense here! Do not be too sure of that! Our great 'concealed poet' had many an artful dodge, and left his mark and showed his head in various skilful ways. He *was* a Knight, and a merry Knight too; he was a Knight of the Helmet, and to those in the swim of Royal and Inns of Court Devices and Interludes Mr. Francis Bacon was doubtless as well known for being a capable manager of such 'society tricks,' and had as good a reputation then, and perhaps as suitable a *nom de guerre*, as ever the best known manager of cleverly arranged cotillons at our large country houses now-a-days is honoured with. What if the last line of this sonnet should be a playful semi-concealed device for unveiling the author? No doubt Bacon had his jocular nicknames; this was nothing uncommon, either on the stage or off, in those days, and they might be friendly or unfriendly.

We know one of his *noms de guerre*, which hailed from Gray's Inn and its 'Gesta.' He was called 'the Conjuror,' being supposed to have, and charged with having, a great hand in that memorable fiasco when the 'Comedy of Errors' was played both on the boards and in the great hall; and there is no reason why he should not also be jocularly known as 'the Knight,' the merry Knight, the merry Lord Valerius, Sir Oliver Owlet of the Ivy Bush, as well as Ovid junior, Sir John Daw, Labeo, and other nick-names even more opprobrious.

My first impression about this sonnet was, I admit, that it was *not* Bacon's, and that because of the plain and unconcealed mention of Dowland and Spenser. It is characteristic of the Shakespeare 'Sonnets' (though not of them alone), that no names of persons are ever mentioned in them, and, indeed, any allusion to a person in the 'Sonnets' is always a very distant one, and one artfully veiled as well. Thus, Bacon would be clearly excluded here. It may be so, but our 'Knight' in the last line made me change my opinion, and on reading it through once more it struck me that it was possibly addressed to a man, and not to his 'lady love,' as I took for granted at first. Now, love sonnets to men are

distinctly Baconian; I therefore adhere with greater confidence to my second thoughts.

I am aware that this sonnet appeared in John Jaggard's edition of Barnfield's poems in 1598, and that it was excluded from the later edition of the same poems in 1605. I should suppose that William Jaggard in 1599 was acquainted with John Jaggard's book of 1598, and perhaps asked or took permission to print this sonnet with his own little collection. It appears to be a kind of vagrant sonnet without a permanent residence.

Some critics are *quite sure* that it is Barnfield's; but this is hardly the occasion to go so far as that, when the authorship is partly dependent upon such shady publishers as the Jaggards, and is given one year to Barnfield, the next year to Shakespeare, and a few years afterwards withdrawn from under Barnfield's name.

If the sonnet is really written to a man, I should certainly suggest that the man intended was the Briseus of Marston's first satire, who was addressed thus,—

‘Thy gambo violl placed betwixt thy thighes  
Wherein the best part of thy courtship lyes.’

This and other Marstonian allusions to Briseus

fit in better with that Earl of Southampton, that Proteus with varied 'hues,'

'That fairest bud the red rose ever bare,'\*

for whom 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece' were written, and who was undoubtedly closely and personally connected with both Bacon and Essex. This fact is historical, whereas the connection between Southampton and the Stratford 'Poet Ape' is not historical. My conclusion therefore is that this courtly sonnet is *not* by 'our Shakspeare' the actor; of that I do feel confident. It *may* be by Barnfield, who was a gentleman well connected, and possibly not unequal to the composition of it; but it strikes me as more likely to be one of Bacon's 'sugred' compliments to a friend at Court, whether Southampton or another. Notice, too, how the last line favours the theory that *a man* is addressed. It contains the Neo-Platonic Renaissance idea that a man and his lover were but one person; for though we are clearly told that one of the two personages concerned loved Music, and the other loved Poetry, yet the last line says that they each love both,—

'One knight loves both, and both in thee remain.'

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\* Nash's 'Dido.'



What sense is there in this line except on the Platonic theory that two lovers (male) are virtually one? The Shakespeare 'Sonnets' are full of illustrations of this curious thought, as everyone knows who knows them at all.

At this point some of my readers will possibly be anxious to know if I have found out anything to throw further light on the curious personality of the 'Dark Lady' of the 'Sonnets.' I am sorry to say that I have not. But I am able to give a hint as to the sources from which we may possibly discover something before very long, in spite of Professor Dowden's disheartening *pronunciamento* of more than twenty years ago. He said then,—

'We shall never discover the name of that woman who for a season 'could sound, as no one else, the instrument in Shakspeare'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.'

I am afraid 'the instrument in Shakspeare's heart' sounded more in unison with the chink of coins gained by loans and 'commodities' than the learned Professor ever suspected. But let that pass. It is not this that I want to refer to, but to the strong assertion that 'no diver among

the wrecks of time' will ever be blessed with the 'talismanic gleam of this unknown name.'

Let not Professor Dowden be too confident; has he not forgotten what his orthodox ally Grant White used to say,—'The German critics dive deeper, stay down longer, and come up muddier, than any other critics in the world'?

May not they, I say, one day bring up this black pearl in its original true setting? The German critics have for many years given a closer and more thorough examination of our Elizabethan poets than the ordinary English reader is aware of. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that it is somewhat risky for an English critic to pronounce final judgment on any of the Elizabethan cruces without having read and considered what the Germans have said on the matter in hand.

Many of the absurd assumptions about the Baconian theory would never have been put in print if their authors had been able to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, the various German theses and pamphlets, which are for the most part untranslated at present. Few explorers can help stumbling sometimes, when passing over the treacherous ground of concealed Elizabethan authorship, full of pitfalls as it is;

but I can candidly say this, that the ability to read German has saved me from more than one stumble, and I here thank Sarrazin and his German compeers heartily.

In the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for April, 1901, there is an excellent article on the Shakespeare 'Sonnets,' by M. Augustin Filon, delightful to read on account of the light touches and Gallic grace in which it abounds.

M. Filon begins at the beginning, when the 'Sonnets' were all supposed to be addressed to a woman, and gives a rapid summary of the different views as to their purport and meaning. After a time, we are told, some people began to see that they were most of them addressed to a man. It was felt that was shocking. But I will quote him in his own language,—

'On continua à hocher la tête à propos des sonnets. "Quel dommage qu'un si grand genie! . . ." Hallam déplorait les sonnets tout en les admirant; Guizot les traduisit la rougeur au front. Enfin M. Gerald Massey . . . soulagea d'un grand poids la conscience Anglaise en *désinfectant*, c'est lui-même qui s'en vante, les sonnets de Shakespeare. Le procédé de désinfection consistant, tout simplement à diviser arbitrairement les sonnets en *personnels* et en *dramatiques*.

Étaient personnels tous ceux qui, d'après le code moral de M. Massey, étaient compatibles avec la dignité et la vertu de Shakspeare. Tous les autres étaient *dramatiques*. . . . Ainsi s'expliquait l'énigme, ainsi tombait le scandale. Shakespeare était rendu blanc comme neige à la pieuse admiration des Anglais.'

Next we are treated at considerable length with the history of the 'Dark Lady' in its different aspects, suppositions, and objections. Many authorities thought Mary Fitton was the 'Dark Lady,' but, as the French critic tells us,—

'Une objection se dressait. Mary Fitton était une des filles d'honneur de la Reine. Comment concilier cette situation avec certain sonnet où le poète dit à sa maîtresse qu'elle est deux fois infidèle, puisqu'elle a violé sa foi envers lui, comme elle a violé sa foi conjugale? Et voici qu'un clergyman (le singulier clergyman qui fouille l'état civil des drôlesses d'il y a trois siècles! mais nous devons le remercier quand-même), le reverend Harrison, a decouvert que Marie Fitton avait été mariée une première fois, on quasi mariée, à un certain Lougher.'

After further discussion, M. Filon gives it as his fixed opinion that,—

‘Shakspere était un homme de plaisir ; rien de plus certain.’

And summarizes the ‘Sonnets’ thus,—

‘Voilà ce que nous racontent les “Sonnets.” Commencés en pleine jeunesse, sous l’influence de Pétrarque et de Sidney, . . . ils nous conduisent de Biron et de Roméo à Hamlet ; ils nous font pressentir Prospero. Ils éclairent la vie mentale encore plus que la vie réelle du poète. Si on les lit de cette manière, si on les comprends ainsi, oui, les “Sonnets” sont une confession.’

As with the Shakespeare ‘Sonnets’ so also with Sidney’s famous ones, ‘Astrophel and Stella,’ there has been much disputing among critics about the order and real history as they are presented to us. In Sidney’s case the prevailing view nowadays is that the order of the Sidney sonnets is right as it stands, and that these sonnets contain something above and beyond real history, in that they are ‘the history of a great soul touched with passion’; they are greater than mere facts, just as tragedy is greater, because more universal, than history.\*

These results of latter day illuminating criticism on Sidney’s famous sonnets can be applied

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\* Cf. E. S. Shuckburgh’s Introduction to Sidney’s ‘Apologie for Poetrie,’ 1896, p. xxiii.

most suitably and exactly, as I believe, to Bacon's 'Sonnets.'

They contain some facts of a real history, but they are immeasurably greater than the recital of mere facts, for they are the history of a great soul touched with the passion of a love greater than the love of women,—the passion of a manly love and close friendship where all was 'fair, kind, and true.' In fact, Bacon's 'Sonnets' were the presentment, in almost perfect poetic form, of the best traditions of the Neo-Platonists of the Renaissance, without the least taint, as far at least as the Southampton 'Sonnets' were concerned, of the culinary fires of physical love or lust.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ADDITIONAL INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR BACON

THE very large vocabulary of the Shakespeare works is well known, and has been already noticed in 'Is it Shakespeare?' but the *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα*, or words used once, and only once, by Shakespeare are so numerous as to amount, it is supposed, to more than 6,500. Hence we get the extraordinary result 'that Shakespeare discarded, after once trying them, more different words than fill and enrich the whole English Bible.' So says Mr. J. D. Butler, who read a paper on this subject before the New York Shakespeare Society on April 22, 1886. To a matter of fact Englishman delighting in statistics, this certainly seems 'very tall talk,' but I must admit that the American lecturer tells us very candidly how he arrived at the conclusion, and, as I have never heard it contradicted by an opponent, I suppose it is approximately correct. He arrived at his

figures by going through 146 pages of Schmidt's well known Lexicon to Shakespeare. In these pages he found 674 ἄπαξ λεγόμενα, and, as there are 1,409 pages in the entire Lexicon, we have by similar calculation 6,504 words used only once in Shakespeare.

The very first line that Shakespeare ever wrote, or at least published, namely,

‘ Even as the sun with *purple-coloured* face,’

contains a compound never used by him elsewhere. Comment on the above statements is unnecessary. I only ask, Who is the more likely man for such exuberance of singular diction,—Bacon or Shakespeare ?

I have shown in my previous book that Bacon took considerable interest in the natives of New England when they happened to be brought over here by ship captains returning from their expeditions ; but I did not mention the fact that an Indian helps very curiously in fixing the date of the play of ‘ Henry VIII.’ In Act V., Scene iii., the porter is much annoyed by the noise and tumult in the palace yard, so he cries out to the surging crowd,—‘ Is this Moorfields to muster in ? Or have we some strange Indian with the great tool come to court, the women so besiege us ?’



Now, in 1611 Harley and Nicolas, the commanders of two vessels in an expedition to New England, returned to this country, bringing with them five savages. One of these, who was named Epenow, remained in England until 1614, was distinguished for his stature, and publicly exhibited in various parts of London.\*

This clearly fixes 'Henry VIII.' as not written till 1611 or later, and one would have thought that would close the matter; but no, this was not enough for a certain Mr. Boyle, who would have it that 'tool' in the text was meant for a proper name, and identified it with the Indian O'Toole, of Middleton's 'Fair Quarrel,' IV. iv., so in that case the date for the play would be 1617 at earliest. But I leave this delicate question to others.

It is generally allowed that the author of the Shakespeare plays had little sympathy with the lower classes of society, and especially disliked or despised the unwashed mob. But I must confess that the two following passages from American Shakesperians of recognised authority much surprised me,—

'In all Shakespeare's works there is not one direct word for liberty of speech, thought, religion,

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\* J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, 'Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare,' sixth edition, ii. 294.

—those rights which in his age were the very seeds of time, into which his eyes of all men's could best look to see which grain would grow and which would not.' \*

'Had Shakespeare cared for the people, their liberties, their rights and interests, surely he might have put into the mouth of one of his eight or nine hundred characters a statement, hint, or suggestion to that effect.' †

I have not examined the vast field of literature which we owe to Shakespeare with such careful scrutiny as to be able to endorse such sweeping statements from my own knowledge, but Mr. Appleton Morgan is no mean authority, and I think that no one can shut his eyes (except through extreme prejudice) to the evident marks in plays, poems, and 'Sonnets' alike, that their author was an aristocrat acquainted with courtly society and with ladies of birth and breeding, and that intimately; that he was also a 'politique,' and touched with the Machiavellian heresy; that he was the very reverse of a democrat or socialist, and was a scholar, a man of great reading and culture, a methodical man of note books, memoranda, and literary aids, and, in fact, the very kind

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\* Davis, 'The Law in Shakespeare,' p. 34.

† A. Morgan's 'Shakespeare,' p. 243.

of man we have reason to suppose that Bacon would be from his antecedents, and that Shakespeare of Stratford could not possibly be from his.

Nor must we forget in this connection what that marvel of learning and historical judgment, Lord Acton, has to say on the subject. He says,—  
'Shakespeare fails ignobly with the Roman Plebs.'  
And lately an American, a Mr. Crosby, has gone specially into this subject, and extracted pretty well all that bears upon it out of the works themselves.

It does not take long to read the thirty pages of 'Shakespeare's Attitude towards the Working Classes,' by Ernest Crosby, and every orthodox believer should test his faith by reading it through. He will then see, I think, how very wide of the mark Browning was when he cried (in his 'Lost Leader'), 'Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us, Burns, Shelley were with us,—they watch from their graves.' Milton, Burns, and Shelley were democrats, but to say that Shakespeare was with them or of their party is a ridiculous assertion. He hated democracy and the 'mutable, rank-scented many' who mainly represented it in his day. He disliked especially the smell of the great unwashed, their 'sweaty nightcaps,' their 'stinking breath,' and he does not fail to say so

again and again in the thirty pages of Mr. Crosby's book, which are crowded with references from the immortal plays to that effect. But why should Shakespeare be so delicate about smells and greasy caps? He was used to them at Stratford from his earliest childhood—the paternal *stercorarium* is historical—and he would only be fouling his own nest by harping perpetually on the vile smells that came from the men of the lower classes, the 'mechanic slaves with greasy aprons,' as he calls them, and elsewhere makes Coriolanus say,—

'Bid them wash their faces and keep their teeth clean.'  
*Coriolanus*, II. iii. 66.

No. Do not such remarks and such an attitude towards the working classes bespeak a proud aristocrat rather than the man of Stratford to whom they have always been attributed?

Was not Francis Bacon known to be most particular about smells? He could not stand the smell of leather in its unprepared state, and he would not allow his servants to come betwixt the wind and his nobility if they were wearing the common untanned boots of the peasant. He wore perfumed gloves himself of the latest fashion, and gave the Queen a pair, too, sometimes, I should

say, and if we may believe contemporary satirists he was distinguished by a 'late perfumed fist.' In fact, Bacon's life, letters, and character, as far as we know them, exactly fit in with the extracts Mr. Crosby has so laboriously piled together from Shakespeare's works. But the extracts do not fit in with any feature in the character of the man from Stratford.

This characteristic in Shakespeare has been abundantly noticed, not only by Baconians, but by the most orthodox Shakespearians. Professor Dowden says of Shakespeare, that he had within him 'some of the elements of English Conservatism'—echoing Hartley Coleridge's remark that the Shakespearian poet was 'a Tory and a gentleman.' On this point I may quote Dr. Theobald, who has given many illustrations of this aspect of Shakespeare. He says in reference to the *dramatis personæ*,—

'Men and women of all classes are introduced, but the leading characters, the scenes, situations, events, interests, and actions, belong to the life of princes, nobles, statesmen, men of the upper classes. If the life is rural, it is not that of peasants; the Court moves into the country, and the point of view is that of an aristocrat looking on at peasant life (as in "As You Like It"), not of a provincial tradesman

or peasant reporting his own experiences. The virtuous peasant is represented by two servants—Adam in “As You Like It,” and Flavius, the steward of Timon. And these are humble retainers of aristocratic masters, rustic parasites sucking virtue out of an aristocratic organism. . . . The plays are exactly what might be expected from a courtier and a scholar with a liberal education and familiarity with the upper ten thousand. If a rustic wrote them, his emancipation from rustic ideas is one miracle, and his knowledge of upper class life another.’\*

When people scout the idea of Bacon being a dramatic author, or being at all the kind of man to write Shakespeare plays, I am afraid they forget that young Francis for many years,—almost the most important years there are in anyone’s life, *i.e.*, from twenty to thirty-five,—lived and moved and had his home, so to speak, in the very best school of ‘masque, play, interlude, and revel,’ that there was in the whole of England. I refer to Gray’s Inn and the enterprising gentlemen who frequented it in Elizabethan days. I doubt whether the theatrical activity of Gray’s Inn has been sufficiently commented upon. In 1566 the members acted a prose comedy, translated by

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\* ‘Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light,’ pp. 21, 23.

Gascoigne from the Italian, and with it they performed a tragedy by the same author, called 'Jocasta.' Like 'Gorboduc,' it was written in blank-verse, and introduced choruses and explanatory opening scenes of dumb-show. This was, of course, some years before Bacon came to join the Honourable Society; but plays were constantly being produced on the usual occasions, and, though we do not possess any record of all of them, we have frequent notices giving evidence of the custom which prevailed.

In 1587, when Bacon had been several years at the Inn, a rather important dramatic effect is recorded. The gentlemen of Gray's Inn produced at Greenwich, before the Queen, a play in the Senecan style, entitled 'The Misfortunes of Arthur.' The body of the play is from the hand of Thomas Hughes, but various members of the Inn contributed. Mr. Boas, whose research and knowledge of Elizabethan drama is unquestionable, is my authority for these matters, and he states in addition what I thoroughly agree with. He speaks of 'Gray's Inn, whose theatrical activity is worth noting.' Indeed it is; and we should not err very much if we called it 'the school of Bacon.' Here it was that he gained the practical knowledge of plot and scene which Sir Henry

Irving says that the author of the Shakespeare plays possessed in a very remarkable degree. Not that I think Bacon was single handed in his mighty work ; actors and playwrights helped and contributed, even as printers and scholars (Ling and Meres) helped Bodenham.

But the chief point I wish to bring into view is that Bacon was, by his early life and surroundings at Gray's Inn, *peculiarly qualified* for the practice and theory of the dramatic art, whereas the ordinary Shakespearian seems generally possessed by the idea that Bacon was the most unlikely man to write a play that could be found in the whole of England. 'Why,' say they, 'he was a lawyer, without poetry and without humour,' and they laugh Baconians to scorn.

It is generally acknowledged that the author of the immortal dramas has to some extent put on the boards his own views and experience of life in certain of the character types of the plays. Among these Biron, Mercutio and Benedict are the most marked. The historical Biron fell at the siege of Rouen, in 1592, and Bacon would be interested in him through Essex, who was connected with that siege. Brantôme gives us hints of Biron's character and habits which are in many instances allied to what we know of Bacon's



own personality. Biron was a great teller of anecdotes, a keenwitted, courtly man with great liberality in money and gifts. He was fond of a free jest, even as young Francis Bacon was, the very friend whom Harvey called 'Eutrapelus' in his marginal manuscript notes, as I imagine, and also the very Benedict of whom Don Pedro says, 'The man doth fear God, however it seems not in him by some large jests he will make' ('Much Ado about Nothing,' Act II., Scene iii. 204). This subject could be easily expanded, but space forbids.

The relation of Shakespeare to Montaigne has been discussed by several Shakespearians. I would only mention here Jacob Feis, J. M. Robertson, and the latest writer I know of, viz., Elizabeth Robbins Hooker, an American, who devoted more than fifty pages recently (1902) to this subject.\* Early English literature is much studied now in the numerous colleges and Universities of the United States, and I must allow with pleasure that their research into the harder questions of Shakespearian criticism is most thorough going, and almost Teutonic, or shall I say Titanic? in its elaboration. I will give a brief résumé of this lady's work.

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\* 'Publications of the Modern Language Association of America,' vol. xvii., pp. 312-366.

From a very large selection of parallel passages it is established that Shakespeare had read attentively the essays of Montaigne, and had used them frequently, especially at that period of his life when he wrote 'Hamlet' and 'Measure for Measure,' but he continued to draw on Montaigne for his material to the end of his writings. E. R. Hooker holds that Shakespeare used these essays merely as a storehouse to draw from, and that Shakespeare had not such opinions as to make him a disciple of Montaigne personally. Indeed, Montaigne was a Pyrrhonist, and Shakespeare was 'resigned to necessary ignorance.'

The article shows clearly that Florio's English translation was used by Shakespeare, and that it was used in several instances before the book of Florio was in print. Shakespeare therefore studied it in manuscript!

Now, no one can deny that this well established result is in favour of the Baconian authorship, and it is all the more forcible seeing that the authoress intended nothing of the kind. Fancy Will Shakspeare, the busy play broker, immersed in the study of Florio's *manuscript* of Montaigne the essayist! We can well imagine him reading with the greatest interest a manuscript play on some popular theme duly revised up to date, and

offered to him as an addition to his 'long-scraped' store. That would be sure to interest him, for it meant business and share profits; but there was not much stage business for *him* out of Montaigne's essays, whereas the Bacons, both Anthony and Francis, had the greatest interest in the person and works of the unique French essayist. And Bacon and Florio were most closely connected through Essex and Southampton, and Bacon had written laudatory verse for Florio's books. In fact, all writers who tackle the relationship of Shakespeare to Montaigne do at the same time, but quite involuntarily, add arrows to the Baconian quiver. This has been the case with Feis and Robertson, and all others I have read, and I must thank the last named gentleman for suggesting an application of Comte's law to the orthodox Shakespearians, which I have recast as follows:—

Comte's law of the three stages, the *theological*, the *metaphysical*, and the *positive*, seems to hold good in Shakespearian criticism. Many old-fashioned people are still in the first, the theological stage, and these study and revere Shakespeare almost as they do their Bibles. They do not expect to find salvation there, it is true, but nevertheless they feel there is a divinity in the

immortal William and his unmatched periods which is to be found in no other book—no, not even in Milton. This habit of reverence is a true sign of the theological stage, and it is as a rule quite able to withstand any critical objections or influences that may be brought against it. To depreciate the divine William is almost blasphemy; to attempt to dethrone him is worse than blasphemy. The very obstinacy and virulence of the *odium theologicum* appear in their full force among many Shakespearians who have not yet advanced beyond this initial theological stage.

The next stage of Shakespearian enthusiasts is the 'metaphysical' one. It is of later origin than the other, as a matter of course, and it does not seem to have really begun until Coleridge and his school started certain 'Lectures on Shakespeare,' and then Schlegel began the stage for the Germans, and a vast number of their philosophical heads may be counted in that stage still.

With these people, everything that Shakespeare does or says is right and true and full of profound purpose; and if it does not appear to be so *primâ facie*, or on the mere common-sense view, then these metaphysical heads have no difficulty whatever in showing by their singular and wide-embracing methods that it *must* be so.

If there be any apparent discrepancies, they may be fearlessly admitted, for such are but signs of a lofty genius untrammelled by the obvious or the usual. This is a difficult school to deal with in the matter of evidence and facts, whether Baconian or otherwise, but especially is this school hard to impress by the heterodox arguments; for the metaphysicians can carry their disputings and denials even beyond Cloud-cuckoo-town, and ordinary reasoners find it difficult to breathe in so rarified an air.

The third stage of Shakespearian criticism is the 'positive stage,' and I hope for my own sake that more people are rising to this stage every day; for assuredly it is from people in this stage of thought that the best progress is made and the most numerous fictions exploded.

The positive school deals with subjects, whether religious, political, or literary, without fear, favour, or prejudice. It wishes to take *all* facts relative to a matter in question, without concealing or obscuring or rhetorically inflating; and, if truth be concerned, this school is by its traditions on the side of truth, *irrespective of the issue*.

There are two very strong Baconian proofs, which I will only touch upon briefly here, because the evidence is far too complicated for the general

reader, and too technical to excite sustained interest. I refer to the treatment of heraldry and fairyland which meets us so often in the uncultured 'Shakespeare,' where we certainly should not expect such courtly and knightly knowledge.

First as to heraldry. The author of 'Lucrece' and the immortal plays had a knowledge of the science of heraldry of the most intimate kind, such as was in those days only to be found in the aristocrats whose attention had been drawn to their quarterings from their earliest years, and in the professional experts belonging to the College of Heralds, whose daily practice in considering the validity of this or that genealogical claim had made them conversant with the minutiae of their profession. Let any unprejudiced inquirer only read the long passage in 'Lucrece' (lines 54-72), and also the notes written thereon by the orthodox and most cultured commentator that the poems of Shakespeare have ever had—I mean George Wyndham. He will see what, strange to say, Wyndham did not see, that such perfect and well nigh professional acquaintance with the conventional difficulties of heraldry could not possibly belong, in 1594, to the provincial who had not so very long left the kitchen middens of Stratford,

his illiterate parents, and those hostages to fortune, his callow twins.

Mr. Wyndham does not deny Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of the courtly science—he even *exaggerates* it—and yet the scales fall not from his eyes. His general assertion is this,—

N.B. { ‘Whenever Shakespeare in an age of technical conceits indulges in one ostentatiously, it will always be found that his apparent obscurity arises from our not crediting him with a technical knowledge which he undoubtedly possessed, be it of heraldry, of law, or of philosophic disputation.’

This is most true, and the technical knowledge of heraldry displayed in the plays and poems of Shakespeare is most astounding and well nigh impossible if we attribute it to Shakspere the actor. If we give it to Bacon, it becomes both reasonable and what we should expect. I will not, as I have said, go into details, but there is a German book, published not long since (1903), of more than 350 pages, where the heraldry of Shakespeare is dealt with by one of those laborious Teutons, Alfred von Mauntz, in that exhaustive manner which is the wonder of the ordinary Englishman, who seldom knows any Continental language *thoroughly* enough to perform such a feat. In spite of occasional misapprehensions

of obscure English phrases, he has, though an orthodox Shakespearian, shown such an extraordinary body of heraldic allusion in the Shakespeare works that one would think that this erudite German's belief in the Swan of Avon must necessarily have vanished into thin air as his exposition proceeded.\*

I am aware that some of the Shakespearians have recently asserted that there is an heraldic error concerning quartering a wife's arms made by Slender at the very beginning of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' which no aristocrat could possibly have made. On the ground of this one example they wish to upset the vast body of existing heraldic evidence in favour of an aristocratic author. Herr von Mauntz has fully explained this, and I may add that the orthodox objection is a slender one in every way.

As to the wonderful and delicate fairy lore of Shakespeare, as shown in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'The Tempest,' etc., in his

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\* Cf. 'Heraldik in Diensten der Shakespeare-Forschung, Selbststudien von Alfred von Mauntz.' Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1903.

Cf. 'The Poems of Shakespeare,' edited, with an introduction and notes, by George Wyndham (pp. 225-228, 231, etc.). London: Methuen and Co., 1898.



Oberon and Titania, his elves and his Ariel, the more all this is carefully examined, the more do we begin to understand that we are not dealing so much with Stratford or English provincial fairy lore, as with the French romantic stories of Huon of Bordeaux, with the 'Chansons des Gestes,' and other courtly and aristocratic literature which would *not* be learnt by Shakspeare at his mother's knee at Stratford, and would not be the ordinary or even extraordinary reading either of Burbage's stable lads or his company of 'taffeta fooles.'

The immortal plays of Shakespeare belong to the Romantic School, and some of them are the finest specimens of that school ever written. That great critic Ben Jonson disliked them and depreciated them, but he belonged essentially to the opposite camp, and it is not in human nature to commend those who set themselves up against the very principles we cherish most in our heart. Ben Jonson was the head, so to speak, of the Classical School of Drama of that period. He did not like the monsters, hobgoblins, and long historical Chronicle Plays of York and Lancaster, which Ben thought set at defiance all the unities and regulations of the classic drama. He was a Greek, and so was his friend and ally, the Homeric

Chapman, and they neither of them felt amicably disposed to the new and redoubtable Trojan who went to the 'Roman de Troie' and such like medieval 'fooleries' for his romantic dramas, which seemed to them more like some man's phantastic dreams than any man's realistic humours or fancies. But they both well knew,—at least so I think,—that Will Shakspeare, the comparatively illiterate money making actor manager, was no deep brained student of Benoit de Saint-Maur, or even of Lord Berner's translation of Huon of Bordeaux, or of Machiavelli, or of Bruno, or of Plato, or, above all, of the Greek tragedians. No, they could distinguish the men and their productions, the fleece and the stray locks of wool, well enough, but it was not advisable, nor perhaps possible, to put into print real names and which they and others knew. This unnamed romantic alchemist of eloquence was connected with the aristocracy and the Star Chamber far too closely for them to run the risk of losing their ears for a *scandalum magnatum* or an offensive libel. But they, and Hall and Marston and others as well, knew certainly, and so ought we to know, that Will Shakspeare had neither the birth, nor the culture, nor the courtly experience and travel, requisite to evolve the most deep brained son-

neteer, the finest *artifex verborum*, and the most brilliant expositor of the romantic drama this world has ever seen. We of this present age ought to reject the Stratford man with more confidence than even some of his contemporaries possessed, for they did not then esteem the poems or plays anything like so highly as the universal Republic of Letters does now. Consequently William Shake-speare or Shakespeare on the title-page of a quarto struck no one as anything very wonderful or out of the common.

There were plenty of brokers of other people's wits in those Elizabethan days, and the words 'revised by William Shakespeare,' or even 'written' by him, would not call for much remark. If anyone should be so candid as to 'tell' Shakspere or tax him with being a taker up of other men's work, he had only to shrug his shoulder and 'slight it,' and the matter would go no farther.

But my present point is that the unimpeachably correct heraldry, the romantic fairy lore, and the other phantastic romancings of Shakespeare's works inevitably exclude the honest, money loving, and good natured actor, and can let in no one in his place but Francis Bacon. 'Lucrece' belongs to Bacon entirely. The actor had nothing to do with this; of that I feel sure. And starting

with this assurance, there arises no insuperable difficulty in proceeding to say that, if Shakspeare had anything to do with the plays, it was only in their less important parts. The immortal passages belong to him who wrote 'Lucrece' and the 'Sonnets':—can we not audibly discern the same voice and manner?

It was he, and not Shakspeare, who was so fond of Chaucer's 'Troilus and Creseyde,' both for its metre and its romance, and *he* knew well enough that this great work grew out of the French Romantic School of those earlier days. He could learn this at the Court of France in the train of Sir Amyas Paulet, but Shakspeare could not learn it either in France or Stratford.

The real Shake-speare could write about the 'dreadful sagittary,' and could very likely trace it to the *saietaire* of Benoit de Saint-Maur, or at least knew well enough the fashionable French medieval romances in their English dress. But such books, whether French or English, were hardly within the reach of men of Shakspeare's position and means. They would be much more likely to be on the shelves of Southampton's book case in his town house in Holborn, a stone's throw from Francis Bacon of Gray's Inn, who would be also a far more probable borrower and reader

than Shakspere. No, there is no need to quote a long string of illustrations or parallels; the heraldry and fairy lore are Baconian, and *not* Stratfordian. Nay, more, I would venture to say that when Shakspere was a boy there was not a single individual in his native town who had so much as seen the books, whether English or French, whence Shakespeare's fairyland was evolved. Even if they could read the books,—and by no means all the natives were equal to this,—still, they could not afford to buy them, and were not likely to have strong yearnings for books at all. Even their illustrious townsman himself has neither a book nor a pen in the famous 'Stratford Monument.' Apparently he is grasping a woolsack, or at least holding it down pretty tight. Surely a characteristic attitude. Where will you find more eager graspers and tighter holders to their own, whether it be wool or any other commodity, than among the burghers and tradesmen of country towns, both then and now? It was not the man who 'grasped' the woolsack, but the man who shortly afterwards sat on it in official state, who wrote 'Lucrece' and 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'

If it be well considered, it will be found that the great knowledge of hawking and hunting as

shown in the plays and poems is much against the authorship by Shakspere.

The testimony of Master Stephen in Ben Jonson's 'Every Man in his Humour' is much to the point here. He says,—

'Why an you know if a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting language now-a-day, I'll not give a rush for him. . . . He is for no gallants company without them.'

In fact, such knowledge showed either frequent association with aristocratic society or else showed the born aristocrat himself. But Shakspere could claim neither of these privileges. Nor is there any evidence that he was an associate or on familiar terms with any aristocrat or nobleman. It has always been supposed that he was, because of the Shakespeare dedication to Lord Southampton; but that argument must be dropped now, and Shakspere drops from his supposed elevation at the same time. Gorhambury and Turber-vile supplant Stratford-on-Avon and its early memories.

#### SHAKESPEARE AND HUNTING, AND COUNTRY LIFE.

There are 400 passages connected with hunting in Shakespeare's works, and they are so thoroughly distributed throughout that neither the great

poems nor the 'Sonnets' are without a few, and not a single drama that has not one or more allusions to hunting or country life. All kinds of hunting are brought into the plays, and falconry is so well depicted that in the last special work on the subject in the Badminton Library it is said, with reference to certain descriptions in 'Taming of the Shrew,'—

'Had Petruchio been a falconer, describing exactly the management of a real falcon of unruly temper, he could not have done it in more accurate language.'

The Shakespearians claim these facts to be in their favour, and ridicule the idea of the studious Bacon, moped up in town chambers near Holborn, knowing so much about hunting and falconry as the plays suggest. They say Shakespeare, the reputed deer stealer, would have much more practical knowledge of woodcraft and falconry than ever young Francis Bacon had the chance of obtaining. They are mistaken, for they do not remember that the expert knowledge shown in the plays and poems was primarily aristocratic knowledge, and best obtained from the expensive treatises on 'The Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting,' 1575, and Turbervile's 'Booke of Faulconrie,' 1575, both published by C. Barker,

and generally found bound together in old country houses. Will Shakspeare could not then afford to buy them, but 'my young Lord Keeper' had every chance of seeing them and studying them both at Gorhambury and in London.

A very common question in this controversy is, 'What does it matter who was the writer, so long as we have the plays?' It sounds rather a fool's question, but perhaps it is best to answer, for it is not likely that a fool will change his view if he only meets with that silence which he may possibly construe as 'giving consent.' Well, the answer is 'Much, every way'; for these wondrous oracles entrusted to us and to the Republic of Letters come from the finest genius who ever adorned our common tongue, and it is essentially helpful to know what kind of man he was, and how he attained to this height of attainment. Besides this, if Shakspeare of Stratford did *not* perform these wonders of rhetoric and verse, we have not in our possession the whole truth, and are trusting to a delusion. Surely truth is priceless, and as desirable in literary questions as it is elsewhere. It must matter whether we have the right or the wrong account when considering the greatest glory of our country's literature.

Yet more it matters in this way. With the



'divine William' as author, there accompanied that supposed fact the inference that Shakspeare's wonderful receptive genius accounted for everything. He never studied much, nor had he the chances to make himself a learned man, but what obstacle is that to the born genius? Why should he study? True genius is above work and independent of it. These inferences from Shakspeare's career have often proved very great discouragements to effort.

If Bacon wrote the plays and poems, what an encouragement is given to hard work and the incessant harvesting of fresh knowledge! But how depressing to feel that, if Shakspeare wrote them, then his divine genius burst forth into full perfection almost at his first essay.

But since I wrote my first attempt at the Bacon-Shakespeare question, no book that I have read has so convinced me that Shakspeare of Stratford did *not* write the 'Sonnets' and poems as a work published by the Columbia University Press (U.S.A.), entitled 'The Italian Renaissance in England.' There is no reference whatever to the Baconian theory, and I should infer, from the way in which Shakespeare is mentioned, that the author (Lewis Einstein) accepts the orthodox view unreservedly. But the admirable way in

which the influence of Italy on English poetry is put before the reader, and the many facts showing the almost universal knowledge of the Italian language and literature among all the aristocrats connected with the Court, combined with the total absence of such a knowledge and such literary atmosphere at a place like Stratford-on-Avon,—all this, and much else in this carefully compiled work, effectually give Mr. William Shakspeare his congé.

He must take his leave of 'Venus and Adonis,' of his 'darling boy' of the 'Sonnets,' and of chaste Lucrece, with his best stage bow, and the wonder is that he has managed to live so long in such courtly and aristocratic surroundings without having his mask plucked from his countenance years and years ago.

What were Petrarch, Celiano, Plato, or Italian lovers of Plato, to Shakspeare, or he to them? 'Oh,' reply the orthodox, 'Shakspeare read all these authors in translations, and caught the atmosphere as easily as we catch cold in foggy England. His wonderful receptive genius was equal to this, and much more if called upon.'

To this I say, *Credat Judæus*, and to my readers, 'Ask Macmillan and Company for the book.'

I will now conclude this chapter with one more piece of contemporary evidence.

Shortly after Bacon died there was a thin, and now very rare, quarto published by his faithful Chaplain Rawley, containing a selection of the very numerous laudatory poems which had been written on the death and to the memory of Viscount St. Alban,—the title therein given to the late Lord Chancellor. The contents bear strong testimony from many contemporary writers that Bacon was a great poet in their estimation and to their knowledge. But my object is not to allude to that now; it is rather to call attention to Rawley's short address to the reader, which seems to give a hint that there was something not yet fully revealed, and that Rawley knew the secret. He says,—

‘ Neither have our poets thrown together their contributions to the adornment of my Lord's funeral pile with stinting hand or in small numbers, for all the contributions are not printed here, a good many verses (*plurimi versus*), and indeed some of the best of them all, I keep back and retain in my own possession (*apud me*). Let it be sufficient to have laid these foundations of his fame in the name of the present century. My own opinion is that each century as it comes will further adorn and enlarge this building whose

foundations are laid in this book ; but what particular future century shall have the privilege of putting the crowning stone to the whole edifice, that, indeed, is known only to God, and rests with His decrees.\*

It remains to be seen whether this twentieth century is to be the one to place the rejected stone, a stone of stumbling and offence to orthodox Shakespearians, in its lofty and proper place or not. With Judge Webb, Lord Penzance, Mr. Theobald, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Bompas, we have made a fair start for the first quinquennial period, and I am not without hope that those delicately chiselled stones, 'Venus and Adonis,' 'Lucrece,' and the 'Sonnets,' will be in their proper position before the first decade has run out, or perhaps earlier ; but when the last great corner-stone, that immense *corpus dramaticum et poeticum* which the latest critics (*e.g.*, Mr. Courthope and several Germans) are making larger and larger every year—when *that* final headstone shall be satisfactorily placed in permanent position, who shall dare to prophesy ?

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\* The original Latin, which I have paraphrastically, but I hope not incorrectly, given above, is this : 'Cuinam autem sæculo ultimam manum imponere datum sit, id Deo tantum et fatis manifestum.'

I have spoken of Rawley as an intimate friend and contemporary who knew the great secret or 'concealment' of Bacon's life. I have always felt that Bacon confided the secret to him as his literary executor alone, with some others mentioned in his will. Now, it was Rawley who published the 'Sylva Sylvarum' in 1627, 1628, 1631, 1635, 1639, etc., and appended to it the unfinished 'New Atlantis,' with a title-page of its own. I would call the attention of the Baconian cipherers and decipherers to the devices or emblems on the several title pages of the editions above. To me they have the appearance of printers' marks, and the two letter to be observed on one device lend countenance to this, for printers very often put their initials or monogram on their woodcut mark or design. But I must say the mottoes and the figures of Time and Truth and the Dark Cave on the 1627, 1628, and 1635 editions are so indicative of a mystery to be revealed by Time that I think the Baconian decipherers may risk the jeers of the orthodox elect and have a try at the puzzle. I think they are merely printers' marks, but Rawley or some one may have *purposely* selected them.

But just a final word on the little thin quarto which contained so many contemporary praises of

Bacon the year after his death. The gist of the whole collection seemed to be mainly the glorification of Bacon *as a poet*, strange to say, and his great philosophical writings seem almost neglected by most of the contributors to his praise.

Of course, the orthodox Shakespearians have done their very best to minimize the evidence it brings against their assertions. It was an awkward thrust to parry, for the Shakespearians always put forward in the forefront of their arguments that Bacon was a most miserable poet, that his Psalms bore witness to this, and that *such a poet* could not possibly write the immortal verse of Shakespeare. How did they meet this thrust? In their usual confident way, of course. 'Oh, it was not as a poet they were praising Bacon, but as a Mæcenas, and a favourer of all those who cultivated the Muses.' But what nonsense this is! For both Spedding and Kuno Fischer agree in disclaiming any Mæcenas like propensities for Francis Bacon. This attempt to parry being a failure, some other bright genius explained the difficulty thus;—'Oh, these poems are only the customary and exaggerated praise which are conventionally awarded to worthies when they leave the world; they are not to be taken literally.'

But this argument will never do in the present case, for Bacon receives strong poetical praise (exaggerated praise, if one will insist upon it that all praises of dead men were such), not for what we and our forefathers have considered he most deserved to be praised, but for being an illustrious poet and lover of the Muses. Surely it cannot be called customary or conventional to sing pæans or praises to a man for things he had never done! So the attempt to make these poems in Bacon's honour conventional, and therefore well-nigh negligible, also resulted in a thorough failure.

In fact, this Baconian thrust has not been parried yet, nor is it likely to be avoided by any other future tricks of fence. Bacon was *known to be a poet* when he died, and a great one too. This is an ascertained fact.

There is another piece of evidence, partly internal and partly external, which deserves far more notice than has been given to it. I mean the evidence that connects the William Shakespeare or Shake-speare of the poems and plays, with Francis Bacon, through that goddess Pallas, with her helmet and shaking spear, who seemed to fill up such a considerable part in the early devices, the 'Gesta Grayorum,' and other literary and aristocratic amusements of Bacon's early career.

He was a Knight many years before King James bid him rise from his knees as Sir Francis Bacon ; and this knighthood was all derived from Pallas, who certainly gave him his Knight's Helmet, and possibly was the cause of his calling himself Shake-speare when addressing his patron and friend Southampton.

It will be remembered how constantly Ben Jonson in all his satirical impersonations of Bacon on the stage, as Valentine, Puntarvolo, Amorphus, Ovid junior, and Sir John Daw, always brought in his knighthood,\* while, as a matter of fact, he was plain Mr. Francis Bacon all the time—at least, till the date of 'The Poetaster,' and later. But the critical part of the audience would recognise the allusion to the Knight well enough, for the Knights of the Helmet were not made so in secret, but there were out door processions and considerable public notoriety. Indeed, this application of the term Knight to Ovid junior in 'The Poetaster' went so near to 'naming' Bacon that it was most likely for this reason that the term Knight was expunged in the succeeding editions of 'The Poetaster,' and a less distinctive term used, for the play

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\* See previous chapters, especially pp. 81, 157-160, 201-203.



came under the notice of the authorities. But there is more evidence yet. The Helmet which was proper to the Knights in the 'Gesta Grayorum' of 1594, where Bacon took such a prominent part, is thus described as 'the helmet of the great goddess Pallas,' which guards those who wear it 'from the violence of darts, bullets and bolts of *Saturn*, *Momus*, and the *Idiot*'—*i.e.*, 'from reprehensions of male-contents, carpers, and fools.' There is also another virtue of the Helmet of Pallas which should not be forgotten in this connection; it is mythologically supposed to render its wearer *invisible*. If the immortal Shake-speare plays and 'Sonnets' have really been written by a Knight of the Order of the Helmet of Pallas, then indeed the goddess has effectually rendered her Knight invisible for a very long period of years. Indeed, millions cannot see the Knight yet.

The next day after Shakespeare's 'Comedy of Errors' had been acted in the 'Gesta Grayorum' of 1594 proved to be a very eventful day for Francis Bacon. There had been a fiasco after exaggerated expectations;—the Templarians who were invited, but could not find room to sit down, had retired in disgust;—the numerous company of lords and ladies from the Court, who had been specially

invited (as it seems) by the 'conjurer or sorcerer,' had been much disappointed;—and the whole affair had turned out 'to the utter discredit of the State and policy' of the 'Grayarians.' So the next evening an official inquiry was ordered to be made, and it was especially directed,—

'against a sorcerer or conjurer that was supposed to be the cause of that confused inconvenience. Therein was contained, how he had caused the stage to be built and scaffolds to be reared to the top of the house to increase expectation. Also how he had caused divers ladies and gentlemen and others of good condition to be invited to our sports . . . and lastly, that he had foisted a company of base and common fellows to make up our disorders with a play of "Errors and Confusions."'

There is a long account in Nichols' 'Progresses of Queen Elizabeth' (iii. 280) of these 'law-sports' that followed the Night of Errors, which is worth reading if we believe that the prisoner for sorcery and conjuring was Bacon. There is only room to say here that the prisoner appealed and put in a written statement, which was read by the Master of the Requests, and eventually the prisoner 'was freed and pardoned,' and some of his accusers were 'commanded to the Tower.'

This was, of course, a mock trial, such as was a customary part of the programme. We hear of such mock trials happening before this at Gray's Inn at the Christmas revels.

Not very long after this the Prince of Purpoole and his company, after visiting Tower Hill and other places in the East of London, rode back past St. Paul's School, and there one of the scholars entertained His Highness with an oration in Latin, which finished thus;—

‘Interim vero Musæ nostræ et præteritis tuis applaudent victoriis, et *Palladem* suam exorabunt antiquam *Grayorum*, ut te alterum jam *Agamemnonem*, qui multos habes *Achilles et Ulysses* Comites tuos, galea sua induat, clypeo protegat, et hasta . . . in perpetuum conservat.’

Such a function must have brought Bacon and ‘his Pallas’ and his knighthood into public notice. But I will say no more here, for the matter was brought forward in my last book at some length for the first time, and I believe the Pallas-Bacon-Shakespeare theory is not without value—at least, it has not been blown to pieces yet.

I commend to Mr. Sidney Lee, and to all such vituperative Shakespearians as he has shown himself to be, the following extract from the *Athenæum* of December 12, 1903, where the critic is dealing

with Dr. Courthope's new volumes of 'The History of English Poetry';—

'No literary judgment, however seemingly well established, by whatever great names it is supported and made venerable, can enjoy immunity from criticism. . . . In literature the fresh minded person who will take nothing for granted, but asks the most respectable and orthodox tenet for its passport, serves a very useful purpose. The grounds of accepted beliefs ought perpetually to be re-examined.'

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PECULIAR COMPOSITION OF MOST OF THE IMMORTAL PLAYS QUITE EXCLUDES SHAKSPERE

THIS is a subject which has not been much handled, but the more we examine the evidence it affords, the stronger does that evidence appear to be.

The immortal plays were not written for vulgar applause to be obtained from the low class of habitués at the Bankside or elsewhere. Many of them were plays especially prepared for the Court, or for aristocratic marriage entertainments, and many of the plays were certainly never performed on the contemporary stage in the way that we have them. Now, this differentiates them altogether from such plays as Heywood's (who wrote 220) and the ordinary dramatists of those days. There is a magnificent literary character about these immortal plays which Heywood and the

others do not possess. In fact, many of them seem written rather for the closet than the stage. Moreover, consider how frequently they were printed and revised. This is a peculiarity of theirs not common to the rest.

Now, who was it that was constantly revising his works? Bacon, of course, as all who know his history will at once admit. It seems, then, that the author of these plays adapted them, after they had been played on the stage, for the reading of cultured people.

Now, was the money making Shakspeare likely to do this? Nay, would he have the chance to do it? For the plays belonged to the company, and when done with were carefully kept from the press, so that other companies should not use them.

But take an example of what I mean,—and I think 'Hamlet' will be found as good as any.

'Hamlet' reaches a total of over 3,900 lines, and is some 900 lines longer than 'Antony and Cleopatra,' a play that takes second place for length. Hamlet's speeches take up a considerable portion of the play, and are much more suited for reading and thoughtful, scholarly consideration in the study or library than for enjoyment at the Curtain, Globe, or other popular play-house. I hold we have here in this master-

piece of all the dramas of the world a carefully polished and repolished literary work of Francis Bacon, for which he took the *corpus ultimum* as in the Chronicle Plays, from other sources, infused it with his own great ideas, and finally, in 1604, gave it to the press 'newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy,' which words on the title page seem intended to avert inquiry or suspicion concerning the much shorter and differently worded First Quarto of 1602, which was a rough and imperfect version, possibly taken from a stage or prompter's copy, while the 'Hamlet' of the 1623 Folio was the living author's last revision.

What we know of some other specimens of Bacon's elaborate literary work bears out to a great extent my suggestion. For instance, there is the 'Discourse in Praise of the Queen,' uttered, it is supposed, *circa* 1592. This is Bacon's work without a doubt, and, as Spedding truly says, 'for spirit, eloquence and substantial worth it may bear a comparison with the greatest panegyrical orations of ancient or modern times.' But I cannot think that we have here exactly what was delivered at the Court entertainment. Like 'Hamlet,' it is much too long for that purpose,

and it has the appearance of having been worked up and enlarged for the printer and for posterity. In fact, it is the after elaboration, I should say, of the pretty full but rough notes that Bacon had prepared for this important extempore address.

I am glad to say that I can call that eminent Shakespearian critic Mr. Algernon Swinburne as a good witness on my behalf in the matter of this chapter generally, and especially in regard to the play of 'Hamlet.' He says 'every change in the text of "Hamlet" has impaired its fitness for the stage, and increased its value for the closet, in exact and perfect proportion.' And, again,—

'Scene by scene, line by line, stroke by stroke, and touch after touch, he [Shakespeare] went over all the old laboured ground again; and not to insure success in his own day, and to fill his pockets with contemporary pence, but merely and wholly with a purpose to make it worthy of himself and his future students.' ('Study of Shakespeare,' p. 163.)

Swinburne is right in his criticism, but wrong in his man, and one is surprised that such good critics should hold on to Shakespeare, for no man was less likely to give up money profits for literary excellence than the successful business man, who finally settled down at New Place.



Moreover, Mr. Swinburne adds that there was not one of Shakespeare's contemporaries,—

‘capable of the patience and self respect which induced Shakespeare to rewrite the triumphantly popular parts of Romeo, Falstaff, and of Hamlet, with an eye to the literary perfection and performance of work which, in its first outlines, had won the crowning suffrage of immediate and spectacular applause.’

How could Mr. Swinburne possibly forget Shakespeare's greatest contemporary, Francis Bacon? Why, here was the very man who said of himself,—‘I ever alter as I add.’ And none other than Francis Bacon was the man who wrote his philosophical masterpiece over and over again quite a dozen times, year by year, polishing, correcting, and adding, till he thought it ready for the press. Surely none other than Francis Bacon revised, altered, and perfected these marvellous plays.

How unlikely it is that Shakspeare of Stratford, the busy, shrewd man of business, should set to work to prepare for *English* public theatrical performances, such wonderful mosaics of fine and accurate *Italian* workmanship as were the plays of ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ ‘The Merchant of Venice,’ and ‘Othello’! Look at the time, ability, and knowledge of Italy and its language,

that were required before the various parts of these accurately coloured mosaics could be put together to form the complete picture they now present. How still more unlikely that the same young Stratford man should almost begin his work with plays such as 'Love's Labour's Lost,' dealing most accurately with French affairs and French courtiers, and primarily suited and intended for playing before the aristocrats of the English Court! What qualifications could such a young man as William Shakspeare, with the home surroundings we know of, possibly have for such specialized subjects of high life and courtly love? Look, too, at 'Henry V.' and the other plays where French is brought in both largely and effectively. Surely this of itself is enough to make the orthodox pause and think, for there were not two men in England *more* qualified to deal accurately with such themes than were Francis Bacon and his brother Anthony, and hardly a single playwright *less* qualified to deal with such subjects at first hand than the man from Stratford.

As for the ordinary stage plays being committed to the press, it was the exception rather than the rule. Heywood is credited with no less than 220 plays, and only twenty-five remain. In

Henslowe's diary about two-thirds of the plays referred to there are totally unknown. In fact, plays of all kinds were only occasionally printed. The reason was that, when the manuscript of the play had served its purpose, it was consigned to the manager's waste paper basket or destroyed, so as not to get into the possession of another theatre.

The Shakespeare plays, fortunately for posterity, seem to have had a better fate, and it is not probable that we have lost many of *them*. They belonged, I suppose, to the 'grand possessors' we hear of, in the curious preface to one of them, and they were carefully got together, revised, and printed, seven years after the death of their supposed author, and just when Bacon was devoting his whole time (after his fall) to the elaboration of his literary endeavours.

Thirteen of Shakespeare's plays are taken from the old Italian novelists, and some of them are clearly taken direct from the Italian without the intervention of translations. 'The Merchant of Venice' is a good instance of this, for the 'pound of flesh' incident is part of one of the tales of 'Il Pecorone,' by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, who borrowed it from the 'Gesta Romanorum,' where, however, he found no Jew.

Now, the 'Gesta Romanorum' were turned into English about 1440, and in 1593 Anthony Munday published his book 'The Defence of Contraries,' which three years later he expanded into 'The Orator, Handling a hundred several Discourses in the Forme of Declamations,' and the subject of the '95th Declamation' was 'of a Jew, who for his debt would have a pound of the flesh of a Christian.' Here we find no lady, but in the Italian romance of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino we have both Jew and lady, and the Lady of Belmont, too. So Shakespeare clearly took the story of the bond in 'The Merchant of Venice' from the Italian novel. I leave the inference to my readers.

One reason, I believe, why the man of average reading scouts, as a rule, the very idea of the Baconian authorship is because he does not fully grasp the vastly different public esteem in which literature was held then and now. High and low, rich and poor, are ready enough to rush into print *now*;—not so *then*. What I wish to drive home is this, that so many well educated people will persist in denying that Bacon wrote the wonderful dramas and poems because they think he never would have renounced the undying fame with which they would have invested him.

These persistent arguers have overlooked, or failed to notice, the peculiar literary atmosphere in which the Elizabethan gentleman writers lived and moved and had their being. It was an atmosphere where the rewards of public fame were ignored, despised, and often rejected. Look at Sir Philip Sidney, a man of the same class as Bacon socially. What cared he for the public fame of his writings? Not a jot! None of his literary attempts sought public suffrage through the press in his lifetime. His writings were widely read in manuscript copies; but he and his friends were reluctant to authorize their publication to the world in print, and in that way some have been irrecoverably lost. For instance, John Florio, when dedicating his second edition of Montaigne (1603) to Sidney's daughter, notes that he had seen Sidney's rendering of the first *septmaine* of that arch poet Du Bartas, and entreats the ladies to give it to the world. The world has not yet received it, and I verily believe there are also some of Francis Bacon's excellent early works that the world has not yet had, and perhaps never will have, and some glossatorial work that has been quite unsuspected even by the elect critics.

Sidney goes much farther than Francis Bacon in this literary effacement of himself; for while

Bacon says that a man's works should not make him famous till after his death, Sidney gave a 'dying command that his "Arcadia" should be burnt.' And this was 'in full accordance with his life long abstinence from publication, and the small value he ever set on his own compositions.'\*

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\* 'Astrophel and Stella,' edited by A. Pollard, p. vii.

## CHAPTER XVI

### WHAT WAS SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION ?

THERE is one question connected with our subject which has always possessed great interest for all classes of readers, which has been much debated, never satisfactorily settled, nor yet, according to all appearances, ever likely to be settled. That question is, 'What was Shakespeare's religion?' What I wish to state now is that, if my contention and arguments are allowed to stand, we are in a much better position for answering this very interesting question. Really to know the religious opinions of the most myriad minded man that ever lived cannot fail to be of supreme interest to every serious thinker.

What have we known of his religious opinions so far ?

Well, the religion of Shakespeare, as far as we can reproduce it from the plays and poems, seems to be somewhat of the following nature. With

him theology was certainly not the Queen of the Sciences, and the space taken up in his immortal works by theological matters is small indeed compared with the ethical, political and philosophical reflections which abound everywhere in plays and poems.

We cannot even say that the author believed in the immortality of the soul and in a future state. There is so much about eternity in the sonnets that T. T., their publisher, calls the poet an 'ever-living' poet; but when we look closer into the matter, it is only the eternity of fame that is referred to. Our little life seemed 'rounded with a sleep,' and he has no solutions for the ever-recurring questions of humanity,—Whence are we? Whither go we?

Yet a reverential feeling is always kept up, and the power of conscience, the presence of God, and the moral effect of prayer, constantly appeal forcibly and eloquently to all readers, both of the prose and poetry.

But when all that is possible has been said on this question, 'What was Shakespeare's religion?' it amounts to very little, because we know so little of the author's religious life, whereby we might corroborate or supplement the religious references in the plays.



But how different it is if we are enabled to place Bacon on Shakespeare's vacant pedestal and ask the question *then!* We shall indeed have a vast amount of material to help us, for if Spedding's 'Life and Letters of Bacon' and the editorial criticisms and expositions of his works do not give us a fair idea of the author's personal religion, we are not likely to get that question solved for any author.

Yes, Baconians *can* answer the question of the author's religion, while Shakesperians have not enough facts to build upon, and cannot answer. So it does matter a little in this way whether Bacon wrote the plays, though some people will maintain that it does not matter in any way *who* wrote them.

What, then, was Bacon's religion?

Bacon's confession of faith was written *before* the summer of 1603, for it is described in the Harleian manuscript containing it as by *Mr.* Bacon. Bacon's religious opinions have been the subject of much literary controversy, but the outcome seems to be that he completely separated theology and science. One of his most important remarks on the subject is in the last book of the 'De Augmentis,' where he comes to the subject, 'Theologia Sacra sive Inspirata,' and says: 'But

if we are to discuss this we must disembark from the Ship of Human Reason and enter the Ship of the Church.' It seems also that Bacon's interest, and perhaps even faith, in theological dogma lessened as he grew older, for certain passages on the nature and attributes of God, and certain statements on the Trinity, which were in the 'Advancement of Learning,' are altogether left out in the 'De Augmentis.' If such a change of feeling did really occur (which is much doubted by many), it was not till after the Bodenham series had been completed, for there is much religious matter collected here for the bases of this *scala intellectus*. But I must make this reservation, that dogmatic theology connected with the Christian mysteries, the Incarnation, the Sacraments, etc., is singularly absent throughout the series.

I think we shall not be far wrong if we say that Bacon was almost entirely indifferent to the fierce disputes about Christian doctrine which raged at full pressure in his lifetime. He was a power in the land when the Synod of Dort was sitting, and yet there is not a passage anywhere in his numerous works from which we could infer that he was either a Calvinist or an Arminian.

Let us not forget that the same obscurity

remains with regard to Shakespeare's religion, in spite of all the books written about it.

Bacon retained an unwavering faith in the existence of the Supreme God, the Creator and Fashioner of the Universe. His essay on Atheism, corrected in 1625 under his own supervision, points in this direction, as being the sincere conviction of his heart, but of course no critic can pierce the secret veil that is over the inner man.

He seems to have believed in the immortality of the soul,\* but perhaps only by revelation, not as the result of any conclusions from human reason.

I believe he sowed his wild oats in religion as well as in some other things, but that he found out, to the comfort of his latter days, that a little knowledge leads a man to atheism, while a larger and more sufficient knowledge brings him to God again. Indeed, this great maxim comes to us through him.

For Francis Bacon's religion in February, 1592, we have the best of evidence in his mother's letter to his brother Anthony, who had just arrived in England after nearly thirteen years of absence on the Continent. She begs Anthony to testify the

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\* 'De Aug.,' IV., i. ii.; Works, I. 585, 605, 606, and IV. 375, 396.

faith of the true religion fast settled in his heart, and to carry himself religiously at his first coming to England, and especially to hear those 'religious exercises of the sincere sort, be they French or English.' She adds: 'In hoc noli adhibere fratrem tuum ad consilium aut exemplum,' and says that Francis was too negligent therein.

We can therefore gather this much, that Francis did not care for the Puritan party and the painful preachers who enforced its doctrines from the pulpit. His mother delighted in them; but the letter does not show more than this.

As to Bacon's 'Confession of Religion,' it is most carefully worded and thoroughly orthodox Church of England, such as we might expect from a friend of both Archbishop Whitgift and Lancelot Andrewes, and a helper of the Bishops, as I believe, in the Martin Marprelate Controversy. But too much importance must not be given to this document, for it seems to be the product of his earlier life while simply Mr. Francis Bacon, and may have been given to the world to correct a bad impression of atheism or heresy which he had incurred in those days by his friends and companions or by his supposed writings. I think he was indifferent in religious matters, or rather in *theological* matters, in his early days, and,

indeed, throughout his life kept *theology* in the background. But he was a religious man in the best sense, and withal a true lover of his country, his countrymen, and of the human race. He was not like Anacharsis Clootz, 'the orator of the human race,' and little else that was worth anything. Bacon had the best interests of mankind at heart; he, as it were, 'pitied' men, like the Tirsan of his own 'New Atlantis,' and all his life long his brain was full of projects for supplying 'deficiencies' in one subject or another, and full, too, of schemes for inducing Nature to help in the great work.

As a general result of my researches into Bacon's life, abilities, and works, I may be permitted to express my opinion at present as concisely as I can. I believe him to be the most intellectually gifted man the world has ever seen—indeed, what else could an amalgam of Bacon *and* Shakespeare, in the crucible or brain pan of one head, possibly be?

I agree with Dr. Garnett that he was essentially a 'magnanimous' man, and with Gabriel Harvey, that, whatever his yonkerly fancies might be, he was a true megalander. I agree with Arber in his introduction to his 'Harmony of the Essays,' that,—

'It is contrary to human nature, that one in whose mind such thoughts as these coursed [and he was only thinking of the Essays] year after year, only becoming more excellent as he grew older, could have been a bad man. Do men gather grapes of thorns?'

I agree also with this same writer when he says that 'a deep religious feeling is a necessity to the very highest order of mind,' and with his opinion that Bacon had this. He quotes Bacon's own words in reference to it, viz. ;—

'Man when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine Protection and Favour, gathereth a Force and Faith, which Human Nature in itself could not obtain.'

I believe he passed through a period of sceptical doubt and loose living and thinking in his earlier career, and was also at that time inclined to somewhat Machiavellian principles; but all these 'spots on the sun' were superficial rather than deep seated, and the many great and good men whose friendships he obtained and kept showed that these were but passing shadows on the effulgent sphere of his intellectual glory, and could not efface the deep seated natural goodness of the man, his philanthropic love and pity for our mortal race, and the devotion of his great natural powers

W.B. to the general good. I am inclined to think he belonged to some society of the elect natures and intellects of the period, some *order* who had chosen the Pythagorean principle of silence about themselves and their work and their fellow members. Perhaps it was only the English Areopagus.

W.B. Of course it may have been more comprehensive than that, but I am led from the analogy of the Italian societies of *litterati*, where the members, too, had fancy names by which they were known, to think that B. Fra and Immerito, Benevolo and Philisides, Pallas and Shake-speare, and suchlike additional and allusive names, pointed in the Italian literary direction rather than to the German Rosicrucians and the *Fama Fraternitatis* which some Baconians make so much of.

But I believe there came a change over the spirit of his youthful dreams, his sportive blood, and his 'yonkerly' feminism. This last, even if it could be positively proved against him, which is certainly not the case,—for *mendacia famæ* are not proofs,—would at worst be but a birth mark, disfiguring sadly in the eyes of the world, as birth marks are, especially if stamped on the brow; but, after all, only a psychological accident, which a man has to fight against as best he can. In reference to all those veiled and ambiguous

*mendacia* it must be remembered that we do not possess any definite information. We may, however, believe that so much light could not proceed from an orb darkened by sin ; for light itself, as Milton declares, is 'Holy ; Offspring of heaven first born.' To me the 'Sonnets' show that he did fight against it, and if that other book by William Wrednot, who entered for the fourth volume of the Bodenham series at Stationers' Hall in 1604, be his (I mean 'The Sorrowful Soul's Solace'), it looks as if he felt he must print his repentance and ground of comfort, though he put not his true name to it.\*

Nor is it unlikely that Bacon wrote his 'Confession of Faith' about the same time, or, at least, at some early period of his life, when his religious principles were impeached by the *mendacia famæ* of Puritans and others, who would raise a charge of atheism on the most frivolous pretexts in those days. 'Ah,' says a modern precisian, 'he wrote that "sensual poem" "Venus and Adonis." You cannot excuse that, the first heire of his invention.' I am not so sure that it is a 'merely a sensual poem.' There are some people quite sane who detect a moral purpose in it.

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\* For this book see previous volume, pp. 122-156.



But in any case I am in total agreement with a hoary Shakespearian veteran who said long ago,—

‘He who put Venus near the beginning of his career ended with Miranda, Perdita, Imogen, Hermione, Queen Katherine. Let *them* make atonement for *her*!’

And Bacon, as I believe, has told us in his own ‘Essays’ one of the cures he used for such infirmities,—

‘But the most excellent remedy, in every temptation, is that of Orpheus, who, by loudly chanting and resounding the praises of the gods, confounded the voices, and kept himself from hearing the music of the Sirens; for divine contemplations exceed the pleasures of sense, not only in power but also in sweetness’ (‘Wisdom of Ancients :—The Syrens’).

But I think the best evidence of Bacon’s true personal character is that which we derive from the great honour and esteem in which he was held unanimously by all who had the privilege of knowing him intimately. If we accept *Noscitur a sociis* as a veritable axiom, then Bacon comes before the searching court of public criticism adorned with glowing testimonials and bedecked with golden opinions from the most accredited ‘witnesses to character’ that his age and country could produce.

They include his lifelong friends, such as Toby Matthew and others; his faithful servant and chaplain, such as Sir Thomas Meautys and Rawley; and, last but not least, the surly and rugged Ben Jonson, who had once for some years depreciated and vilified him, but eventually, when Bacon, like his own Phaeton, fell from the unstable height of his great endeavours, then it was that Jonson saw revealed to him the true character of that unsurpassable genius whom he had once satirized as 'Cheveril the lawyer.' There can be no doubt that Jonson had opportunities, during many years, of knowing Bacon *intus et in cute* far more accurately than could possibly be the case with the most far seeing of modern critics, be they apologists or detractors.

Everyone knows Ben's final testimony, and I shall not quote it; it is enough to say that it stamped Bacon with the character of true 'virtue' and real 'greatness,' and placed him at the very 'summit' of literary endeavour. By the word 'virtue' that Jonson used, I do not at all contend that he meant chastity; he used it in the Roman sense, and most likely Bacon's life, from youth to age, was one, if not of rigorous chastity, yet of noble morality, not unlike that of St. Augustine, and many other lesser saints.

Although I admire Bacon on this side of idolatry as much as any, I could never think of him as a Sir Galahad, or as one who wore on his breast, through a tempestuous youth, the spotless lily of a stainless life. On the contrary, it seems that even as this marvellous genius went through the whole alphabet of tragedy and comedy (for both are of one alphabet) in his immortal Shakespeare plays and poems, just so in his own personal experience did he run through the gamut of human desires and passions, from those fervent ones of hot blooded youth and the powerful pulsations of the 'liver vein,' to the more sober philosophical aspirations of later life, which included the good of his country and the general advance of humanity in that perennial contest with the stubborn obstacles of Nature, wherein Bacon worked so willingly and so hopefully.

But though our greatest Elizabethan was no Sir Galahad—indeed, what man of sound mettle was such in those days, the incomparable Astrophel always excepted?—still, Bacon was a man of so magnanimous and magnificent a personality, and with such a natural and noble conception of the power of love, both in man and woman, that for my own part I cannot conceive him to have been at any time of his life such a *degenerate* as

the testimony of two or three witnesses (by no means above suspicion) would have us believe.

As a young man just arrived (1579) from *Les Gaules Amoureuses* and *La France Galante* and the lively society of Gallic wits, whose distinctive character even down to our own times is so well defined as 'lucidity combined with lubricity,' I think it is far more likely that he, and not the 'divinest moral Spenser,' was the young man who had a dear little Rosalind of his own at Westminster — a lively letter-writing *corculum* who fully entered into his literary hobbies and dubbed him her Signior Pegaso. Whether she was a 'dark lady' or a fair one does not appear from the Harvey correspondence, but she was clearly well educated and witty, and the circumstance that young Francis was privileged to associate with her and with the lively Maids of Honour of Cynthia's Court,—his cousins the Russells, Mary Fitton, and their predecessors,—and from the wit combats that must have taken place in such company, enabled him to depict for us a Beatrice, a Rosalind, a Juliet, and the rest of that galaxy of cultured, high bred, and enchanting women which have so long been supposed to owe their existence to the stable boy or ostler from Stratford. These eternal feminines are almost sufficient of themselves to give the

direct lie to the Puritan odium and to the Grundys of the age who believed it.

Bacon has been bitterly misjudged early and late, and no one has better expressed and explained this than Professor John Nichol, whose concise book on Bacon's life and philosophy I commend as the happy medium which so many biographers strive for in vain.\* His sound remarks on the erroneous views current concerning Bacon are in many respects also applicable to the erroneous views of the orthodox Shakesperian, and are therefore doubly worthy of consideration here. They occur in his prefatory note;—

‘Prevalent opinion has always weight; but it loses authority when we can explain it by reference to collateral causes. If we can account for the formation of erroneous views, the tendency to stereotype them accounts for their continuance. [Shakesperians, mark this!] It was natural that the courtiers of the Restoration should stigmatize Cromwell with the hypocrisy that clung to his name up to the date of Carlyle's vindication. Similarly, the fact that Bacon during his life took the unpopular side of several questions, that he was disgraced for an offence now severely judged,

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\* ‘Francis Bacon: his Life and Philosophy,’ by John Nichol; Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1888.

and died when there was no one adequate or willing to defend him, is enough to explain the character condensed in Pope's memorable line, expanded in Macaulay's essay, reiterated in Lord Campbell's summary, and assumed by Kuno Fischer.'

Professor Nichol, like myself, prefers to judge of Bacon's character by the testimony of his personal friends, especially those who knew him intimately for so many years; and all these as he truly says,—

'combine in giving us a picture of the man utterly incompatible with the anomalous monster of Lord Macaulay, or with the mixture of Iscariot and Titus Oates set before us by Dr. Abbott.'

I wish we had the opinion of so fine a Baconian expert as the Professor on the scandal raised by the Puritans, but, like unto all the chief biographers of Bacon, he either does not know about it, or wilfully ignores it. He says that Bacon's 'moral faults, though common to the age, should be palliated rather than excused;' but from the context he means, evidently, bribery and corruption and the consequent disgrace. Had he given an opinion on the *mendacia famæ*, I should certainly have considered it of the highest value.

For though he is not such a giant as Spedding, he is able to sit on his shoulders and see farther than the giant could, and I fully agree with his final view and final words,—

‘In mass, in variety, in scope, his [Bacon’s] genius is the greatest among men who have played a part at once in widening the bounds of the kingdom of thought, and in fencing the bulwarks of their country.’

But there requires somewhat else to be added to the estimate now, for since 1887 many people have climbed upon Professor Nichol’s shoulders, and some think they can see many things that never entered into his field of vision. I humbly profess to be one of these, and would add that Bacon not only fenced his country’s bulwarks, but contemplated, as clearly as any man of those early days, the planting of a New and Greater Britain beyond the Atlantic sea.

I would add, too, that Bacon’s knowledge and interest in maps and globes and the Indies and the North-West Passage, was greater than, perhaps, that of any non-seafaring man in the kingdom ;— that this comes out, too, strongest of all in the plays of Shakespeare, along with many other pieces of deep knowledge and classic lore, which the Strat-

ford actor could not possibly have obtained from his educational surroundings.

I would add, too, that which not one of Bacon's best biographers ever attributed to him—that wondrous gift of literary alchemy, whereby the words, the phrases, and the thoughts, of historian, scholar, warrior, and lover,—ay, of men and women of all grades and conditions,—were transmuted, as by an enchanter's wand, into the purest gold of divine poesy that the world has ever treasured.

I would add, also, that this pure gold was stamped with the maker's mint mark, whereby some of it at least might be recognised in after-times. To me it looks like his own quondam signature to Aunt and Uncle Burghley; to others, alas! it looks more like Colney Hatch or Bedlam. From my position of 'vantage' I also dimly see a phantasma at Cambridge pointing dramatically to other misty objects as ill-defined as himself. But these last are all too trying for unpractised eyes, and I end by looking back on my early loves, whom I see more clearly day by day,—to 'Lucrece,' 'Venus and Adonis,' and to the William Shakespeare who dedicated them;—to 'Romeo and Juliet,' and Ben Jonson's parody of it, and to his Ovid junior;—to Sir John Daw, to Sir Valentine and his fellow



knights and fellow travellers;—to Puttenham and Bodenham and Sir Oliver Owlet;—and, last though not least, to Labeo, who did so ‘wondrous well’ in all kinds of poesy and drama, whose motto was *Mediocria firma*, and who first of all was the cause of my trying to lift the dominoes of some of the many Elizabethan masqueraders who helped to fill those spacious times and to mystify our own.

When my Elizabethan masqueraders have withdrawn their dominoes and retired from the stage, meseems their place is occupied by a grave and thoughtful figure, whose effigy, as he used to sit in his arm chair, I once saw in St. Michael’s Church by St. Albans. It was not so very many years ago, and I well remember that no thought of ‘Lucrece,’ or ‘Hamlet,’ or Shakespeare, passed through my brain as I stood there. I suppose I must have heard of the Baconians and their heresy, but it found no resting place with me, and was dismissed, as is so often the case still, without any attempt at serious inquiry. Then Milton’s ‘Nova Solyma’ came in my way, and effectually closed the entrance to other literary enigmas. Then came, by the merest chance, Labeo, and the question, Who is *he*? It was through attempting to settle that appar-

ently most unimportant question that I became the heretic that I am, and have burdened the shelves of the few who take interest in this engrossing question with two great evils—that is to say, two big books.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TRUE SHAKSPERE OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON

WITH regard to the 'shocking and ridiculous title'\* of my present work, 'Exit Shakspere,' it may be asked whether I intend to send him off the stage 'without a rag on his back,' as people say. My answer is,—Certainly not. He will depart from the scenes he has haunted and shaken for so long (if he should have to depart) with many rags and tatters clinging to him, and will take with him, I dare say, many shreds of excellent fine wool; but he will not be able to take that beautiful 'whole fleece' which has so long adorned him. He will leave the stage as a man 'honest' in his profession, a man of 'good shape' and 'good parts,' a man whose heart was in his busy work of actor manager and

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\* These were the words used to me by an educated bookseller in a county town, who did not know he was speaking to the author.

provider for his company of players, a man who was neither a 'railer' nor a quarrelsome, contentious person, but a man who made money on good business principles, and kept it and his own counsel as well. Whether he was Catholic or Anglican I cannot attempt to decide amid the conflicting evidence, but the rest of my assertions above about the real Shakespeare I hold to be 'proven' on good evidence, and I will produce some of the evidence now. And, be it noted, I accept no evidence except it refer without shadow of doubt to the *actor*—Will Shakspere.

Of the very few contemporaries who make distinct and indubitable allusions to William Shakspere the actor, we shall find that John Davies of Hereford is the clearest and the most important. He seems to have been on terms of personal friendship with Shakspere, and also to have appreciated his character and abilities. Now, when we consider how few persons of any consequence seemed to know anything of the Stratford man, either personally or otherwise, whether in London or Warwickshire, it must be admitted that the witness of John Davies, a well-known man in his day, is of the highest interest. It is not a single and ambiguous allusion of the kind which chiefly fill up the so called Shake-

speare 'allusion-books' of Dr. Ingleby and his successor, Dr. Furnivall. No; John Davies addresses Shakspear as an actor, directly by a special poem or epigram in one case, and in other cases references are made to two actors, which by their initials, W. S. and R. B., placed in the margin by Davies himself, point decisively to William Shakspeare and Richard Burbage, who then, in Davies' opinion, were a credit to the English stage. What is said of these two, W. S. and R. B., is that Fortune did not favour them to the degree they deserved,—

' She guerdon'd not to their desarts.'

And, again, of these *same two*, as the margin shows, he says,—

' And some I love for painting, poesie,  
 And say fell Fortune cannot be excused  
 That hath for better uses you refused:  
 Wit, courage, good shape, good parts and all good,  
 As long as all these goods are no worse used,  
 And though the stage doth stain pure gentle blood,  
 Yet generous ye are in minde and moode.'

*Civil Wars of Death, etc.* (1605).

Here we have Shakspeare and Burbage undoubtedly, and it is pleasant to feel assured that they were both fine looking, courageous and witty fellows. The universal explanation (and

that *must* be right!) of the first line has always been that Davies was here praising Shakspere for his 'poesie,' and Burbage for his 'painting.' It may be so, but, according to the *order* of the initials in the margin, W. S. is the painter, and R. B. is the poet.

This seems absurd, and one naturally thinks that Davies must have meant Shakspere's 'poesie' and Burbage's painting. It may be so, as I said before, but it seems strange that Davies should never refer elsewhere to Shakspere's poetry, but, on the contrary, appears to give 'Venus and Adonis' at least to some other author.

It is a very unthankful office to suggest any thing contrary to universal opinion, but I hope a *mere suggestion* on my part will not bring down abuse on me. There seems something wrong in the explanation of this first line, and I would suggest that Davies was dwelling on the subject of *acting* throughout the whole passage, and that therefore Shakspear's 'poesie' disappears. I would suggest, also, that a printer's comma has been the cause of the mistake, and what the margin quotes from Simonides rather bears out my suggestion. What Davies seems to mean is that he loves W. S. and R. B. for their personal