

of womens fair vertues, written in French by a Lord of great reckoning, given by him to a very honourable Dutchesse, since translated by a fellow and friend of myne now absent, who gave me trust to see it should not wander in the world unregarded, or deprived of that beatitude which makes bookes respected, whereto animated beside by divers my good friends : I have (noble Lady) the rather thus presumed. If either then for the subject, myselfe, or my friendes sake, it may seeme any way pleasing to you ; the Frenche Lord never thought his labour halfe so graced, as I will continually confesse our fortunes honoured.

‘ Yours Honours ever obliged

‘ ANTHONY GIBSON.’

‘ *To the Right Honorable the Countesse of* South-hampton.

‘ The love (most honor’d Lady) that I owe  
To your high vertues cannot be confined  
In words or phrases : nor can paper showe  
The object-lesse endeavours of my minde.

*Marlovian* (How then shall any (though the purest spirit  
That sucks the seaven-fold flower of art) expresse  
The genuine glories of your Angell-merit,  
Which shine the more in that you make them lesse?  
Now could I wish I had a plenteous braine,  
That thence (as from Invention’s clearest floud)  
Those formes might flow, compos’d in a rich vaine :  
That crowne your noblesse,\* and enrich your bloud.

Then woulde my zeale breake forth like mornings fier  
That now lies spent in sparkes of my desier.’

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\* Early use of this word, which is also in Shakespeare.

‘ *To the worthy Ladyes, and vertuous Maydes of Honor, to her royal Majesty; Mistresse Anne Russell, Mistress Margaret Ratcliffe, Mistress Mary Fitten and the rest, &c.*

‘ Vertuous Ladies and Right Honorable Maides, attending on the only vertuous Ladye and Maide in the world: the duteous affection I beare yee, and the unvaluable respected graces received from you severally, is the onlie advocate must pleade for my present boldnesse. . . . A friend and fellow servant with me to her Majesty having left in trust with me this little treatise, being a Paradoxe Apologicall of womans vertues, written in French by an honorable person, and dedicated by him to a worthy Dutchesse: knowing my friendes intent to sute with mine, that on you (rather than any other) the same should be bestowed as only true Ideas of vertue, and glories of your Sexe: In his absence (though yet in his harts meaning I know), I offer both his good will and mine thus joyntly together.

‘ If you give it but good lookes it is all I desire. . . . In which hope I humbly commit this translation to your favorable perusing, and my very uttermost travailes to be at your commaunding.

‘ Your ever most devoted,

‘ ANTHONY GIBSON.’

As to this editor, Anthony Gibson, I find that

he contributed a prefatory and customary laudation to a book by Anthony Munday in 1602, so I assume that he was a friend of Munday, and connected in some minor official way with the Court, as Munday himself was. I have in my library one of Munday's books, unique, I believe, as it is not mentioned in the long list in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' and in my book there seems an allusion to the above letter of Gibson's, and also to the book, 'A Woman's Woorth,' which we are now dealing with. It should be noticed that Gibson, as above, calls the treatise 'A Paradoxe Apologicall of womans vertues.'

Now, my book,—'The True Knowledge of a Man's Owne Selfe. London: Printed by I. R. for William Leake, 1602,'—has a dedication to 'Maister John Swynneston, Esquire,' signed 'An: Mundy,' and in it occurs this passage,—

'Now my humble sute unto your worship is, that in regard of some breach of promise, concerning my *Paradox Apologie*, which long since you should have had, but that the troubles of the time, and the misinterpretation of the worke by some in authoritie, was the only cause why it went not forward: that you would please to accept of this excellent labour, not as in discharge of that former debt, because it being again

restored me, shall shortly come to answer for itself.'

This leads us to the inference that Munday's book, 'A Woman's Woorth,' was 'stayed' from publication in 1599 by some persons in authority, who objected to some things in it, and that only in 1602 was the right of publication 'restored' to Munday. Now, what could be objectionable in 'A Woman's Woorth'? Well, I think the sonnets to *Mistresse Anne Russell* and to *Mistresse Mary Fitton* might easily be a reason. For the former is the young lady who was married with such grand festivities at Blackfriars on June 16, 1600, when *William Herbert* and *Lord Cobham* conducted the bride to church, and the Queen was there under the 'Canopy,' as we have already heard of several times. Now, the sonnet to *Mistresse Russell* in this anonymous work calls her 'dearest of dearest'—rather familiar, certainly—and the noble lord who was going to marry her in a little more than a year's time may not have liked it. If he had an inkling that it was *Francis Bacon*, her cousin, who called her 'dearest of dearest,' he may have liked it still less, and have imagined that he was being 'cozened' to some bad effect. A man who can write so elegantly about 'the Aulter of a faithfull heart,' and 'the

flames of zeal and love' burning on it, is no mean rival. And the latter lady was the graceful leader of masques, Mary Fitton, who had no doubt danced her way into the affections of more and older Court gallants than the youthful William Herbert. Such people had 'authoritie' and influence in press matters then, and we can well understand they would exert it from personal reasons.

But we will now produce the sonnets, which were all unsigned.

*' To the Honourable Mistresse Anne Russell.*

' Lady to whom my true devoted love  
 Hath been engadged in more than wit can pay,  
 Which to discharge, the more I still have strove,  
 The more in deepe arrearedge every day.  
 So much from me unto yourselfe is due,  
 That all my thoughts unto the debt must runne,  
 Yet is there more remaining unto you,  
 And as these cros'd, so others are begun.  
 Dearest of dearest :\* take in thankefull part,  
 This sacrifice which may my will approve :  
 Upon the Aulter of a faithfull heart.†  
 Consumed in the flames of zeale and love,  
 True honourable Virgin ever live,  
 In all that art, that time, that flame can give.'

\* Cf. Sonnet XLVIII. 7, 'Thou, best of dearest.'

† Cf. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. ii. 73, for a very similar idea.

' *To the Honourable Mistresse Margaret Ratcliffe.*

' To you (dear Nymph) whose wit and forme enflames  
 A world of spirits, with wonder of your graces,  
 That (in their strength) pursew no higher ames  
 Than how to give your bounties soveraigne places.  
 I heere am bold to make extent of will,  
 Though not of power. Pardon my first *essay* :  
 I go by night now to the *Muses* hill\*  
 But I may live, to drinke there, at Mid-day.  
 O then : my soule shall flow through my cleare vaines,  
 And (taking light from your bright vertues spheare)  
 Pay richer duties in farre-sweeter straines,  
 Tun'd to your worth, and set to every eare.  
 Had I a *Spencers* spirit, a *Daniel's* powers :  
 Th' extracted quintessence were only yours.'

' *To the Honourable Mistresse Fitten.*

' This testimonie of my true hearts zeale,  
 Faire,† and (for ever honord) vertuous maide :  
 To your kinde favour humbly dooth appeale,  
 That in construction nothing be mis-saide.  
 Those fierie spirits of high temperd wit,  
 That drinke the dewe of heaven continually :  
 They could have graced you with termes more fit,  
 Then can my lowlie, poore, weake ingenie.

\* This and the next line are applicable to a 'concealed poet,' such as Bacon was.

† 'For I have sworne thee faire : more perjured I  
 To swear against the truth so foul a lie.'

*Sonnets*, CLII. 13, 14.

Let not my love (yet) slightly passe respect,  
 Devoted onely to your excellence :  
 Winke woorthy Virgin at my lines defect,  
 Let Will extenuate whatere offence.

It is no bountie that is given from store,  
 Who gives his hart, what gift can he give more ?

There are several words in this sonnet to the notorious Mary Fitton which point rather in the direction of Shakespeare-Bacon. *Extenuate* is a word used eight times in the plays, and once more in 'Venus and Adonis.' The very phrase 'extenuate his offence' occurs in 'Measure for Measure' (II. i. 27), and the critic Hallam noticed the word as typical of the high Latinized culture of Shakespeare. It certainly was not a popular word, and though a learned University preacher here and there might use it for decorative purposes once or twice in his volume of sermons, the plays of Shakespeare were the first in the field to accentuate and spread abroad this learned word. Again, *ingenie* strikes me as Baconian, and so do 'those fierie spirits of high temperd wit.' (Cf. 'King John' V. ii. 114.) Note, too, that word *Will* in the twelfth line. Do we not recognise the *Will* that meets us so often in the sonnets ?

‘ *To all the Honorable Ladies and Gentlewomen  
of England.*

‘ Ladies (and most perfect Ideas of all vertues,) I have so many times admired your rare perfections, brought from the Theater of the very best assemblies thorow Europe; that having combated with my own naturall affections, which till then had no matter of marvaile offered them; of necessitie now must needes (by right confesse) that you are the only wonders of time and eternity. And that I am not misse-led heerein, *Mercurius Trismegistus* stands forth in your cause, and thus defends yee against all your enemies.

‘ *A soule enclosed within a body purely celestiall, where the notes of whatsoever disannulling are not to be discerned, because their period can alter no part of a true nature: For no way are her ordinary functions weakened, but onely in strengthening the vertue of the minde. So that shee is no way to be dissolved, but may well chaunge into a forme more convenable, and agreeing with the quality of her Demon.*

‘ Ladies, you are such as *Sappho* describes ye to be;—

‘ With-child of Honor, rich in all good grace,  
Splendant in vertue, which them both surpasse,  
A piercing eye, and carried with such state,  
As the worlds Torch may light itselſe thereat.  
Even as *Apollo* from *Auroraes* lookes  
Gildes all this goodly rounde, and darkest nookes.



‘ And to give you certaine assurance that such is my opinion, I have roughly hewen out this discourse, extracted from the vertues of your sexe. . . . I might call it a Paradoxe : Notwithstanding I holde it for a truth and will defend it against all sortes of men.

‘ Receive then this gadage of mine humble duty and I shall binde all my hability to a further employment, eyther of enlarging this or anything else wherein I may do you service.

‘ Yours in all duety,

‘ ANONIMOUS.’

It is this peculiar dedication which seems more like the work of Bacon than any other part of the book except the sonnets. The Hermes Trismegistus quotation, the possible jesting allusions, and other marks felt rather than seen, all point away from Munday, and in the direction of the gallant jesting philosopher, who was so very much at home as the presiding ‘ conjurer ’ at masques and revels, whether for Gray’s Inn or the Queen and Court.

From various allusions in the philosophical and literary works of Francis Bacon, we gather that he ‘ who took all knowledge for his province ’ did not omit to survey those Oriental departments of Persian and hermetic occultism which were seldom

visited by his contemporaries. He says (Works, iv. 366):—

‘I must here stipulate that magic, which has long been used in a bad sense, be again restored to its ancient and honourable meaning. For among the Persians magic was taken for a sublime wisdom, and the knowledge of the universal consents of things.’

Bacon refers to Hermes Trismegistus several times, and appears to have held very exalted ideas concerning him. No doubt these high opinions were partly derived from the Italian Platonizers of the early Renaissance, whose great object was to dethrone Aristotle from his supremacy in philosophy and the casuistry of theology, and to set up Plato on his throne.

When Francis Bacon was thinking out his ‘*Novum Organum*,’ there was no more likely book from Italy to attract his attention than the ‘*Nova De Universis Philosophia*’ of Francisco Patrizi, a fine folio published at Venice in 1593, and dealing specially with Hermes Trismegistus and his fragments, which Patrizi (Patricius) arranged in philosophical order. And earlier in his life, before Bacon had yet been called back from his sojourn in France by his father’s death, there was published at Bordeaux (1579) another fine folio, ‘*Le Pimandre*

de Mercure Trismegiste,' with copious commentaries which would appeal strongly to that ardent young searcher after knowledge.

But perhaps the following rhyming letter from some 'Dark Lady,' or some scandal connected with her, 'stayed' the book, or at least helped to do so.'

'But tell me, will not you judge the woman to be moste fayre, that writte to her lover in this manner :—

'My Love I am a little blacke,  
 But say that I were much more blacke,  
 Mine eyes browne my face like browne,  
 Admit my necke and brests more browne  
 My hair and skin all black to be,  
 Saving my teeth of ivory :  
 Invironed with a curroll fence,  
 Which breaths more sweet then frankinsence  
 That might delight both Gods and men,  
 Much more thyselpe, what saidst thou then ?  
 Must I for this my lovely browne  
 Have my Love on me to frowne ?  
 Are not mine eyes as piercing still,  
 And able marble hearts to kill ?  
 Or can my Love be ere the lesse  
 My minde being made of gentlenesse ?  
 Why night is duskie, sable-blacke,  
 Yet no beauteous starres do lacke :  
 When the moone with silver light  
 Gallops through the thick-faced night.

Venus doth love nights brownest howers,  
 The darkest nookes are her safe bowers,  
 Thickets and forests most obscure,  
 Yea, where no haunt hath been in ure,  
 Thither doeth she most repayre,  
 Sooner then to a garden faire :  
 There may be seen the lively sparke,  
 That's best discerned in the darke :  
 The ball that in a bright black eye,  
 Shines like a meteor in the skye.  
 There brown and faire are both as one,  
 When two sweet soules are so alone :  
 Tell me then (Love) in such a night  
 Wouldst thou not think the brownest white ?

There is much more that is interesting in this literary rarity, but my extracts must end with this one of a Dark Lady. At this distance of time we are not likely to unveil these secrets.

However, I will add a few quotations from the plays of Shakespeare which, I think, point to Mary Fitton, and corroborate the Baconian authorship of this rare book.

It should be first stated that there are one or two instances where the name Sir John Falstaff is used as a synonym for Francis Bacon, by those who were in the secret. Thus, Sir Tobie Matthew in one of his letters speaks of that 'excellent author Sir John Falstaff,' where he is evidently alluding to the plays of Shakespeare, and makes

Sir John Falstaff the author of his quotation so as to avoid mentioning the real author, who was secretly known to him to be Bacon.

Another instance is to be found in a curious letter on p. 148 of the appendix to the Third Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. It has no date except that of Chartley, July 8, but seems to have been written about 1601. It was written by Lady Southampton while staying with her cousin, Lady Rich, to the Earl of Southampton. The postscript of the letter contains this interesting addition,—

‘All the news I can send you that I think will make you merry is that I read in a letter from London that Sir John Falstaff is by his Mrs. Dame Pintpot made father of a godly Miller’s Thumb, a boy that is all head and very little body. But this is a secret.’

Now, it is pretty plain to us, who are also in the secret of the Shakespeare plays, that the Countess here alludes to Francis Bacon. She certainly would not call William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, by the nickname of Sir John Falstaff, for it would be in no ways appropriate. We consequently infer that there was a London rumour that Mary Fitton, who had about this time been ‘delivered of a *boy* who is dead,’ had

owed her misfortune to the facetious and insinuating author of the Shakespeare plays. And there was the current joke in addition that the little boy was 'all head' like his father, and if we look at the bust of Bacon when nine years old, still preserved at Gorhambury, and frequently reproduced in illustrated Bacon books, we shall notice that young Francis had a most enormous occiput, and might well be described as nearly all head like a 'miller's thumb,' which was a kind of fish, otherwise called the bull-head, and remarkable for this same peculiarity.

Now let us take the play 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' and see what Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford say when discussing Sir John Falstaff. It seems Sir John had written a love-letter of the same nature to both these ladies, and when they compared the two epistles they were much upset, and says Mrs. Page,—

'He will print them out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press when he would put us two.'

Surely this suits Bacon better than anyone else, for 'Love's Labour's Lost' was a favourite play at Court and elsewhere, and is full of love letters and love verses; two of the sonnets had been printed, and other plays had characters

which certainly referred to Court ladies, attendants on the Queen, as we shall see presently. And then there was this love letter in verse, 'My Love I am a little blacke,' which I have just quoted. That was put in print, and apparently 'stayed' for a time by the censors of the press. So it certainly looked as if Bacon did not care much what was put into the press, so long as it went by some one else's name. And I believe that to be the truth. For Rosaline and Beatrice surely stand for Court ladies, whose personality was only thinly hidden. In 'Love's Labour's Lost' (IV. iii. 225), Biron, who stands admittedly for the author of the play, is giving extravagant praises to 'the heavenly Rosaline,' and the King says,—

'What zeal, what fury hath inspired thee now?  
My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon;  
She an attending star, scarce seen a light.'

Here the 'mistress,' the 'gracious moon,' stands for Elizabeth, who was constantly alluded to as Cynthia, and was the 'terrene moon' of one of the sonnets, and the 'attending star, scarce seen a light,' would be Mary Fitton, not long come to Court.

The lively Beatrice of 'Much Ado About Nothing' is also a Court lady, and seems another

presentation of Mary Fitton, for when Don Pedro says to her, 'You were born in a merry hour.' Beatrice answers,—'No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born.' Anyhow, she was the best dancer at Court.

But the way Biron concludes the third act of 'Love's Labour's Lost' seems to point more than any other passage to the three Maids of Honour celebrated by sonnets in 'A Woman's Woorth,' which we have just considered.

Biron (*i.e.*, Bacon) says,—

'And among three to love the worst of all:  
 A whitely wanton with a velvet brow  
 With two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes;  
 Ay, and, by heaven, one that will do the deed,  
 Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard:  
 And I to sigh for her! to watch for her!  
 To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague  
 That Cupid will impose for my neglect  
 Of his almighty dreadful little might.  
 Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan:  
 Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.'

All I can say is that, if Mary Fitton was present at the 'first night' of this (revised) play, she must have felt lines 4 and 5 to be rather strong, and if, a year or two later (1599), Bacon printed her own verses to him, or, as I would



rather suggest, composed (*more Baconico*) them himself as coming from her, the 'little blacke,' to him the lover, then assuredly we can well understand why Francis Bacon was a 'concealed poet,' and took such trouble to hide himself, or put others in his place, in the vestibules of the various works he 'put into the press.' He had a very clever head, and people have been a long time finding him out. I am proud to claim a share in the discovery, and although I shall not be surprised if some of my shots have missed the target altogether, still, if I score a bull's eye now and then I am content.

'When the Moone with silver light  
Gallops through the thick-faced night,'

seems much more like Bacon than Mary Fitton. She could dance divinely, she could play the virginals, she might be quick at repartee (*Beatrice*), she could be a wild and fascinating tom-boy, but I doubt whether this volatile charmer could be equal to forging the fine double epithet given to Night in the above distich. 'Thick-faced Night' bears the private mark of *Labeo-Bacon*. Hear what Hall says in Book VI., *Satire i.*,—

'For *Labeo* reaches right (who can deny?)  
The true strains of heroic poesy.

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He knows the grace of that new elegance,  
Which sweet Philisides\* fetch'd of late from France,  
That well beseem'd his high styled Arcady,  
Tho' others mar it with much liberty,  
In epithets to join two words in one,  
Forsooth, for adjectives can't stand alone.'

The book claims to be a translation from the French, and Anthony Munday was a very likely man for such a work, but I believe the work to be original, from internal evidence and other reasons. In order to secure a larger sale, authors often falsely stated that their books were translated from the Italian or French.

No French original has been found, for although that experienced cataloguer and bibliophile, Mr. Hazlitt, says that 'Woman's Woorth' is a translation of the Chevalier de l'Escale's 'Le Champion des Femmes,' he cannot have verified his statement; for the books are entirely different, and the French defence of women was first published nearly twenty years later (1617), being a rejoinder to Olivier's well-known work or alphabet against the fair sex, which first came out in the same year, 1617.

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\* Sir Philip Sidney.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SCANDAL AGAINST BACON

IN my former book I referred to the scandal and to what Old John Aubrey had said about it. I made use of it chiefly in connection with the 'Sonnets,' as a kind of collateral evidence. Since then I have found, to my great surprise, more evidence of which I had then no knowledge, although the evidence had been in print a good many years. I have since then considered the whole subject, pro and con, at much greater length, but I shall not include it in this present work, as it is not connected directly with the Baconian theory.

When my first book, 'Is it Shakespeare?' had been out about a month or so, I rather wondered that my critics and reviewers did not try to deny my inferences in this matter of Aubrey; but now I know the reason. It was because they knew of the Bacon scandal well enough, while I had not

heard of it. The fact is, I never sought for it, and therefore was not likely to find it. I took it for granted that Spedding, who devoted the best and greater part of his life to producing the most complete and exhaustive account of Bacon's life, letters, and works that has ever been written, would not conceal or withhold any matter or fact concerning Bacon which happened to be extant, and I felt quite satisfied then with his *bona fides*.

But from what I have since discovered I have not the slightest doubt that Spedding thought his *bona fides* were quite consistent with purposely concealing and withholding from the public certain reiterated statements against Bacon made by men of known literary standing. I dare say some Jesuitical casuists can defend such procedure, and I dare say some who are not Jesuits will say that Spedding was only doing that which was *expedient* in reference to so great an Englishman, and that he was quite right to withhold and conceal everything he could against the fair fame of a dead Englishman, acting on the famous principle, 'De mortuis nil nisi bonum.'

All I can say is that personally I disagree with such conclusions. Spedding deceived and misled me when I had every confidence that he was giving me 'the truth, the whole truth, and

nothing but the truth' about the great man whose life and character I wished to investigate. If he misled me, he may also have misled others, and it is not, surely, the historian's office to mislead, but rather to guide and illuminate. Spedding withheld 'Baconian matter' wilfully, that is the worst part, for he mentions D'Ewes' diary, and shows that he knew its contents, and yet wilfully omits all that D'Ewes said against Bacon. I dare say he knew Arthur Wilson's book on King James's Court equally well, but not a word do we hear of it in connection with Bacon. If historical research is to maintain its high position as a trustworthy branch of human inquiry, it will not work after this fashion.

If a great man be calumniated, at least let it be stated, and refuted if possible; let it not be concealed or hidden by a conspiracy of silence, for silence is supposed to give consent. For my own part, I do *not* give consent to Bacon's scandal; I will therefore *not* be silent.

The two great witnesses *against* Bacon which Spedding withheld from my researches are (1) Arthur Wilson, the historian and dramatist (1595-1652), who wrote among other works 'The History of Great Britain, being the Life and Reign of King James I.'; and (2) Sir Symonds

D'Ewes (1602-1650), the famous antiquarian and copier of ancient records, who left a valuable diary and autobiography behind him in manuscript, which is now in the British Museum, having been brought there some time ago with the Harleian manuscripts.

The evidence of both these witnesses is plain and strong; in fact, the language is far worse than Aubrey's, for his way of putting the case rendered it capable of a favourable construction, or at least a modification, as I myself contended when I stated it. But there can be no modification of the direct statements of Wilson and D'Ewes.

I have copied out the statements, but they need not be fully printed. This present age is, so some publishers say, a very squeamish one, and if readers are to be presented with scandal now it must be well served up with an enticing French sauce or Ibsenite relish. If it be roughly laid on the dish without any garnishing whatever—and that would be the case with what I have extracted from Wilson and D'Ewes—it would nauseate the whole company, even if they had 'the morals of the poultry yard' and the assumed briskness of the 'smart set.' This is what I am told, so the details will not appear in this book. However, it is already in print elsewhere, and has been for

many years; so thorough inquirers have their remedy, and it will not matter much, for my present object, as a true and devoted Baconian, is to admit the existence of the evidence against Bacon, not to suppress or conceal it as Spedding did. And then, in defence of him whom all true Baconians must needs hold to be the greatest genius that ever spoke the English tongue, I will proceed to show that these witnesses, respectable as they appear to be, are not in this case worthy of credit.

It will not take long to do this. Indeed, to read the lives of these two witnesses as given in the best and latest form in the 'Dictionary of National Biography' should be almost sufficient of itself.

Of Wilson we find it said there,—'As an historian Wilson is *very strongly prejudiced* against the rule of the Stuarts.' Again, his history has been described as 'truth and falsehood finely put together,' and also 'a partial presbyterian vein constantly goes through the whole work.' Again, Heylyn calls (in 1659) Wilson's book 'a most infamous pasquil' and a libel. And Wood concludes his remarks on the book by classing the author with those presbyterian and puritanical people whose genius it was 'to pry more than they should into the courts and comportments of

princes, to take occasion thereupon to traduce and bespatter them.'

So much for the first witness. No one can say he leaves the box with an unblemished reputation for perfect or consistent truthfulness.

Next let us take the second witness, D'Ewes. I have somewhat to say against his evidence elsewhere, and will now confine myself to the 'Dictionary of National Biography.' We there read that as a young man at Cambridge University he had 'sombre and ascetic habits,' was also an extreme and exclusive Puritan, and one who probably exaggerated 'the follies and irregularities of those with whom he did not think fit to associate.' This is exactly what I think D'Ewes did when he referred in his autobiography to the great Lord Chancellor in so shameful a way. Again, we read further on in the 'Dictionary of National Biography' article that D'Ewes, 'with the captiousness which is the vice of narrow minds, was not above disparaging the work of others. He sneered at Selden, and found much fault with Camden's work.'

May I not draw the inference that, if D'Ewes treats his *friends* in such an envious and disparaging manner, we may expect him to treat his opponents still worse, especially such a *bête*



*noire* as Bacon was to him in many ways. So I cannot accept such evidence as of sufficient weight to counterbalance the much weightier evidence of Bacon's friends and contemporaries as to his magnanimous, generous, and, generally speaking, *high* character, free from malice, envy, and spite, while his works bespeak the character of a philosopher aiming at the good of his fellows and their progress towards better things, and looking with an eye of pity on their errors and failings.

In considering the vulgar scandal which gathered round Bacon, it must not be forgotten that he was a great advocate for making experiments in order to discover the hidden secrets and forces of Nature. Among other things to which he devoted considerable attention was the prolongation of man's natural life. He held the very remarkable opinion (considering the age when it was expressed) that spirits are in all tangible bodies, whether inert matter or the living human body. He also thought that there were operations that were salutary in renewing the vigour of men's spirits when decay was advancing. There are some modern discoveries that Bacon seems to have just missed. Bacon would have greeted our *x*-rays, our *n*-rays, and our radium, with pleasure

and acceptance rather than with incredulity, or even surprise. He says in his 'History of Life and Death,'—

'Warm and cherishing applications from living bodies are not to be neglected. Ficinus says, and that not in joke, that the laying of the young maid in David's bosom would have done him good, but that it came too late.

'He ought, however, to have added that the maid, like the Persian virgins, should have been anointed with myrrh and the like, not for the pleasure of it, but to increase the cherishing virtue from the living body.

'Barbarossa in his last days, by the advice of a Jewish physician, continually applied young boys to his stomach, to warm and cherish it. Some old men likewise apply puppies, which are animals of the hottest kind, to their stomachs at night.'

Even if the malicious Puritans told the truth about Bacon, when over sixty, sleeping with young Goderich, his faithful valet and retainer, still, when we consider Bacon's views of animal heat, was Goderich any worse than Abishag, or Bacon than David?

In the manuscript autobiography of Sir Symonds D'Ewes, at folio 59, we get a most severe denun-

ciation of Francis Bacon's moral character. It is introduced on the occasion of Bacon's great fall in 1621, which is noticed by D'Ewes incidentally when he had arrived at that date and year in his autobiography. D'Ewes says,—

'It was agreed on by all men that hee owed at this present [year] at least £20,000 pounds moore then hee was worth. Had hee followed the just and vertuous stepps of Sir Nicholas Bacon, knight, his father, that continued Lorde Keeper of the great seale some 18 yeares under Queene Elizabeth of ever blessed memorie, his life might have been as glorious, as by his manye vices it proved infamous. For though hee weere an eminent scholler, and a reasonable good lawer: both which hee much adorned with his elegant expression of himselfe and his gracefull deliverie, yet his vices weere so stupendious and great, as they utterlie obscured and outpoized his vertues. For he was immoderatelie ambitious and excessivelie proud, to maintaine which hee was necessitated to injustice and briberie, taking sometimes most basely of both sides.

'To this later [latter] wickednes the favour hee had with the beloved Marquesse of Buckingham emboldened him, as I learned in discourse from a gentleman of his bedchamber, whoe told mee hee was sure his Lorde should never falle as long as the saied Marquesse continued in favour.

His most abominable and darling sinne I should rather burie in silence then mencion it, weere it not a most admirable instance how men are enflamed by wickednes and held captive by the devill. For wheereas presentlie upon his censure at this time his ambition was moderated, his pride humbled, and the meanes of his former injustice and corruption removed; yet would he not relinquish the practice of his most horrible and secret sinne of Sodomie.

‘ But hee never came to anye publike triall for this crime; nor did ever that I could heare forbear his old custome of making his servants his bedfellowes, soe to avoid the scandall was raised of him: though he lived many yeares after this his fall in his lodgings in Grayes Inne in Holburne, in great want and penurie.’

This manuscript is written in Sir Symonds D’Ewes’ own hand, a very clear upright script, bearing a more modern character than one would suspect, and free from all contractions or flourishes.

Lord Harley bought all D’Ewes’ manuscripts and papers, and thus the above has come to be the property of the nation.

It seems that the autobiography was written

out as it is in 1636, earlier memoranda being doubtless used.

Mr. J. O. Halliwell, who published the manuscript in 1845, leaves out much of the above. He adds that D'Ewes is the only authority for the imputation.

## CHAPTER IX

### NEW EVIDENCE AGAINST THE SCANDAL

IN addition to the new evidence of authorship which I have discovered since I wrote 'Is it Shakespeare?' there have also been brought to my notice, in the course of research, some very striking statements bearing on the 'Scandal of the "Sonnets"' and upon the great Francis Bacon's personal character. Am I to conceal and withhold them, and try to keep all such unpleasant contemporary evidence strictly in the dark? Surely not; this would be literary obscurantism, and nothing else. No; the days for obscurantism either in theology or history are past and gone with all people who seek for truth. If an author is expected to conceal, repress or pervert all evidence that may tend to cast a slur upon the great historical personage he may happen to be dealing with, then, in that case, all biography and personal history would become a mere farce, and to a great extent

devoid of all real interest. For how can our pleasure and attention be sustained if we are constantly suspicious that we are not told all, or are by some literary convenience hoodwinked in certain directions. I know that I belong to a small minority when I express these views, for the great majority of people, both high and low, have their minds so influenced by conventional opinion that they cannot endure that their literary idols should be stained or besmirched by the vulgar foibles of human error, weakness or folly.

What an object lesson in this matter we have had in the acrid and unsavoury discussions about Carlyle and his wife! It is not so much truth *per se* that is fought for; it is rather the conventional literary ideal which we personally, from our earliest days, have connected with this man or that—a Shakespeare, a Milton, or a Carlyle. According to a man's tastes and opinions, such great names are, so to speak, enshrined in his heart as ideals, each in their own line. Any new discoveries which may seem to derogate from their established greatness are resented with strong personal feeling, and any theory would be accepted to save the reputation of their idol, rather than admit damning facts.

It is the same in all cases of hero worship, whether it be Shakespeare, or Bacon, or Sir Philip Sidney, or Carlyle. In the last case of Carlyle, it came out pretty clearly that there were defenders of his 'heroic' greatness who, having to deal with the 'fact' of the 'blue marks on the wrist' in Mrs. Carlyle's diary, would rather attribute them to the B flats, of whom Mrs. C. had such a mortal horror, than to the gripping fingers of the 'hero' husband.

It is somewhat the same with Shakspeare and his 'dethronement.' I have had many letters on this matter, so I speak from experience. All my correspondents, whether they accept my arguments or not, agree in this, that they feel the greatest repugnance in accepting such a man as Bacon in the place of their adorable and beloved Shakspeare. Ladies with charming but illogical sincerity have, almost without exception, declared (by letter) that 'nothing will induce me to give up Shakspeare for such a despicable creature as Bacon.' And thorough going Baconians, on the other hand, have written to me deprecating my bringing forward the scandal of the 'Sonnets,' and saying that they would rather give up adherence to the Bacon theory altogether than defend it by such arguments. What chance,



alas! has naked truth and bare facts with such people?

For the life of me, I cannot understand why we should refuse to hear evidence for or against any man, woman or child that ever lived, especially if it is tendered with the view of establishing their *true* character without any vindictive motives. But no, it seems that neither Shaksperians nor Baconians will hear evidence which they dislike. For instance, Mr. Thomas Seccombe, one of the joint authors of 'The Age of Shakespeare' (1903), a severely orthodox work says of the Baconians,— 'We utterly decline to do them the compliment of recognising that they have a *primâ-facie* case by abandoning ourselves to argue with them' (*Bookman*, August, 1903). On the other hand, Baconians and their great organ, *Baconiana*, will have nothing to do with any scandal against Bacon;—he is their ideal or idol, I suppose.

I confess that my mental constitution is different, and I am glad it is so, for it occasionally saves me a severe pang in these days, when there are so many iconoclasts in the daily press and elsewhere. For instance, I am an admirer, though not an idolizer, of Disraeli's diplomatic exertions for the good of old England, and I have read in *Blackwood's Magazine* (October, 1903) a piece of

good contemporary evidence to the effect that 'Dizzy was the biggest liar in the world when he was at school.' The evidence came from a school-fellow who ought to know, and I accepted it without a pang; why should I not? I dare say it is true that Dizzy showed at an early age his inborn 'Oriental proclivity for romancing,'—that was all. A little charitable explanation of this kind goes a long way in smoothing matters. And the same holds good with the Bacon scandal.

Moreover, it seems nearly always forgotten that a man's *genius* is to be judged apart from his private errors, whether they be social, political or moral mistakes. The products of true genius stand displayed on an immortal pedestal, while the 'body of humiliation,' from whence they took their being, has been long reduced to dust or ashes. Burns, Byron, Shelley, and many another erring child of man, will each have his unshaken pedestal in the eternal Temple of Fame, in spite of drink, or sportive blood, or free love, or any other peculiarities of the individual man. So, too, will Francis Bacon, *a fortiori*, have an eternal pedestal of his own, because the case against him is 'not proved,' as it was against Burns and Byron, or, to name a much smaller luminary, poor 'bright broken Maginn,' who had no sin but

'drink and the girls.' Still less if the 'infection' be a purely natural one, an 'error of the blood,' or a physical defect—still less, I say, should such faults obscure the supreme genius which shone forth *in spite* of these things. Are we to look askance at George Borrow, that gifted writer, and condemn his style because he was probably a natural eunuch? Surely not, nor yet Filelfi because he was *triorches* and had two dozen legitimate children, and nobody knows how many natural ones besides; nor yet Byron, although he had a club foot as well as a mistress or two.

Why, even the idol and ideal of the orthodox, 'the divine William,' is by no means immaculate, and for these people to say that they would rather give up the Baconian theory altogether than accept *such* a Bacon seems most inconsistent. For the charges against Bacon are unproved and seem *primâ facie* a vile calumny of Puritans, as I shall show, whereas there is a charge against Shakespeare of Stratford which is proved up to the hilt, and is a 'most shocking' one, too, in the eyes of all Shakesperians who Bowdlerize their immortal poet and spin his idealized 'Life' out of their own imagination. And the charge is even a multiple one! First, he fell in love with a woman seven years his senior; and then he pro-

ceeded to 'crop his own sweet rose before the hour.' Then he left his wife and twins at Stratford and came up to town with 'Venus and Adonis' in his pocket, and began soon afterwards to write amorous sonnets to a nobleman, keeping up at the same time an intrigue with a 'dark lady,' while his poor wife did not see him from one year's end to another, and never got from him a sonnet 'sugred' or 'unsugred' all her life long. And though he did come back to Stratford after he had made a fair amount of money out of the play-houses, yet we never hear anything of an affectionate nature about his wife till he unbends in his last will and testament, and leaves her the second best bedstead and *bars her dower!* This last item concerning the Swan of Avon has only just been found out by some legal luminaries of Bacon's own Inn of Court, so I have heard, and they say there is no doubt about this interpretation of the will. Do ladies who protest that they will never give up their adorable Shakspeare for such a cur as Bacon really know these facts?

The truth is, of course, that both men had their own faults, as we all have, and both had their own friends who seemed to esteem them highly. But I cannot help thinking that, if Bacon does

take Shakspeare's place—the highest, perhaps, in all literature,—the nobler genius will be in possession.

Before I proceed to give my new evidence for and against the scandal of the 'Sonnets' and Bacon's life, I would state the following historical consideration by way of caution and prelude to the whole distasteful subject.

Male passion for another male, accompanied with affectionate verses and letters, was no very uncommon or strange incident in the early days of Francis Bacon and his predecessors. We meet instances both on the Continent and in England during this period. One of the most striking connected with our own country was the intense male friendship or love which existed between Sir Philip Sidney and Languet; and as young Francis Bacon looked upon Sidney with great respect and admiration, such a well known episode in Sidney's life may have had some influence in turning Bacon's thoughts in this same direction. These intense friendships or loves between men were due to a great extent to the rehabilitation of Platonic theories in the early Renaissance period, and we may take them as almost copies or parallels in regard to such love as Socrates had for the young and beautiful Alcibiades.

It was frequently the case that a senior of philosophic mind would place affections upon a beautiful and noble youth, and have them returned by the lofty passion of male friendship. This was the case with Languet and Sidney, and it was also the case, as far as we can judge, with Francis Bacon and the young aristocrats Southampton and Herbert. But how would the vulgar view such connections? Why, plainly, they would judge, or rather prejudge, them from the lowest point of view, especially as the high Platonic platform had never been reached by the many-headed mob. How would the Puritans and fanatics look upon such close friendships? They, too, would regard this Platonic love with the greatest suspicion. It was doubtless, in their opinion, mostly a vain and fictitious screen to hide the 'depths of Satan.' They were pessimists to a man, and held that by nature every man was full of evil both in thought and deed.

If we fairly weigh these matters, we shall better understand how easily Francis Bacon could be the undeserving victim of vulgar lying reports,—*mendacia famæ*. We are now in a position to hear the evidence with less apprehension.

It is not an enticing task to have to re-open the question of this scandal of the 'Sonnets,' which was

originally forced upon me in my previous work by the exigencies of my argument. But the fact is, more evidence has come in since I finished my chapters on the scandal—evidence both pro and con. There is a considerable amount of new fact and inference *favourable* to Bacon's character, which has come chiefly from German sources, and to which I have added somewhat from my own scrip. And there are also two important and particular pieces of evidence *unfavourable* to Bacon's reputation, of which, strange to say, I had never heard or read, although one has been in print more than a century, and the other nearly 250 years. It is remarkable how historical evidence of this particular kind is kept out of the most thorough-going histories and biographies, where one at least expects an allusion to such things, even if carefully veiled. I will only say at present that it is *primâ facie* a strong corroboration of what old Aubrey hinted at far less plainly in his Greek word, but I think the value of it as evidence can be very much reduced, for reasons that shall be given. Meanwhile let us begin with the new *favourable* evidence, which tends, I think, strongly to show that the great Francis Bacon was by no means so worthy of condemnation as Aubrey wanted to make out,

and still less guilty of what the new evidence points at.

Some of the more recent German commentators on the 'Sonnets' have held them to be of a pure and Platonic character, and particularly free from taint of sensual love or gross admiration of mere physical beauties. Eberhard Freiherr von Danczelman expresses this view very well. He says :

' Was also Shakespeare in dem Jüngling, den er in den Sonetten besingt, liebt, ist nicht die körperliche, sondern die seelische Schönheit, und eine derartige Liebe ist erhaben über alle Verleumdungen' (*i.e.*, the 'Sonnets' refer to spiritual beauty, etc.).

I must say that this view has often commended itself to me, in spite of the strong scandal which contemporaries seem to have believed. Some of the finest love similes of the 'Sonnets' are singularly free from gross admiration of physical beauty. The beauties of the naked body are hardly ever dwelt upon, and the chief strictly physical charm which seems to hold the author of the 'Sonnets' spell bound is the beauty of the eyes, and that chiefly in looking eye to eye with the beloved one, so that both, as it were, could see themselves 'in each other's eyes.'

And yet more recently (1902) another German,



this time a learned Doctor of Philosophy, has taken the two poems 'Venus and Adonis' and 'The Rape of Lucrece,' and written a long comment on them, almost stanza by stanza, where he endeavours to establish the apparent paradox that both these poems are composed philosophically in the interests of true and absolute morality.\*

This remarkable exposition and interpretation of the two famous poems dedicated to Southampton by William Shakespeare is by no means so absurd and irrational as at first sight most people would be inclined to pronounce it. Dr. Eichhoff holds that, so far from being works of a lascivious character or of immoral and obscene tendency, they are, on the contrary, written, one to exalt and commend youthful chastity, and the other married fidelity, and that in both there is a laudable endeavour to show the nature of true love as distinguished from animal lust and the baser passions of flesh and blood.

Adonis represents the control of sensuality, Venus the uncontrolled license of lust. Both

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\* 'Shakespeare's Forderung einer absoluten Moral. Eine Erläuterung seine Gedichte "Venus und Adonis" und "Die Schändung der Lukretia."' Von Th. Eichhoff, Dr. Phil. Halle, 1902. 8vo.

have their natural passions, but one controls them, and the other does not.

The lesson of Venus and Adonis is not asceticism, but rather a true and faithful control of ourselves in love and passion. We have the ability and right to use our innate and physical functions of sense and pleasure, but only in due submission to the spiritual behests of our complex nature. Unless we do thus submit ourselves, true love is not to be found—is not, in fact, possible. If the grosser Venus or the venal Venus should tempt, the lesson of the poet is, Be chaste, as was Adonis; yield not to wanton wiles.

This view is expanded by Dr. Eichhoff in many pages of typically German exposition, and is, as it seems to me, fairly and reasonably upheld. Assuredly, true love was never more finely differentiated from the baser passion than in this stanza of the poem,—

‘ Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,  
 But Lust’s effect is tempest after sun :  
 Love’s gentle spring doth always fresh remain,  
 Lust’s winter comes ere summer half be done.  
 Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies ;  
 Love is all truth, Lust full of forged lies.’

*Venus and Adonis, 799.*

But these beautiful edifying words and all this

assumed fine moral teaching are addressed by an ordinary play actor and manager to a young aristocrat of the noblest birth. That is the orthodox Shakespearian tenet, and that is also what Dr. Eichhoff holds firmly; but he does not notice or attempt to explain the incongruity of supposing that Will Shakspeare, late of Stratford, should take upon himself to instruct the aristocrat Southampton on points of morals; for it virtually comes to that, if we accept, with the learned Doctor, the moral tone, tendency, and teaching of both these immortal poems.

If it were a fact that young Southampton showed pretty evident signs of turning out a roué, or if, like a fed horse in the morning, he neighed after his neighbour's wife, was Shakspeare the proper or a likely man to hold such a mirror up to him, or draw up poetical lectures on love and lust, and then send them to Southampton with sundry accompanying sonnets, calling him a lovely boy, etc.? Would not this be esteemed rather presumptuous and too familiar altogether? Why should Shakespeare take charge of the lovely young aristocrat's morals? Even if he had the character of a 'factotum,' and acted up to it, certainly the care of Southampton's chastity was not part of his 'totum.'

So this reasonable view of the moral and edifying tendencies of these two great poems brings orthodox Shakespearians into a position of some difficulty.

But on the Bacon hypothesis the difficulty vanishes entirely, and the particular fact that Dr. Eichhoff and others make so much of becomes a help rather than a hindrance. For Bacon loved Southampton even as David loved Jonathan, with a love passing the love of women; and the more one reads some of the sonnets, such as Sonnet XVIII., the more does one feel that Francis Bacon, if an Urning at all, was certainly an Urning of the very highest stamp, and the most gifted man that was ever enrolled by irresistible Dame Nature into that maligned band who are the scorn and abomination of the normal man (the Dioning).

Personally I believe firmly that the love of Bacon for Southampton was homosexual love of the purest and most spiritualized kind. He loved as ardently as did ever any of that united band of heroes who fell at Chæronea, but he loved in a different and a higher way.

We hear not a breath in the 'Sonnets' of the contour of the loved one's limbs, or of the human form divine, or of its statuesque beauty—all these

are material, comprehensible, tangible—but what Bacon loved and expressed so well in his imperishable lines was something that did *not* seem tangible—something ethereal, spiritual, immortal, and ever young—something beyond all comparison in Nature's wide domain :—

‘ Shall I compare thee to a summer's day ?  
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate.  
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

. . . . .

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st ;  
 Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.’

Here, indeed, there is little or nothing that is tangible or fleshly sensual, and very much that is highly spiritual, etherealized, and eternal. And, again, who was it that wrote that very similar and spiritually beautiful description of the charms of ‘ Helen of Troy ’ ?

‘ Was this the face that launcht a thousand shippes,  
 And burnt the topless Towres of Ilium ?

. . . . .

O thou art fairer than the evening aire  
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand starres.\*

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\* It is well known that the Plato of the Greek anthology had a beloved youth whom he called ‘ my Star ’ just as

Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter  
 When he appeared to haplesse Semele;  
 More lovely than the monarke of the skie  
 In wanton Arethusaes azurde armes.'

Who indeed wrote this! It has been held by many generations of wondering scholars that the loose living atheist Kit Marlowe was responsible for the pouring forth of these lofty and ethereal lines.

I would rather take it that they may have come from the same wondrous alchemist who poured from his crucible that eighteenth sonnet partly given above. In both there is the same marvel-

Bacon called Southampton 'my Rose.' And as the beauty of Helen was brought into connection with the 'thousand starres' and more of the firmament on high, so was the beauty of Plato's Star,—

*'Αστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς Ἀστήρ ἐμός· εἴθε γενοίμην  
 Οὐρανός, ὡς πολλοῖς ὄμμασιν εἰς σέ βλέπω.*

(Thou gazest on the stars, my Star; would I might be Heaven's expanse full of starlight eyes, to gaze on thee.)

This is an equivalent thought to

'Love's eyes in looking never have their fill,'

which appears both in 'England's Parnassus' and in 'Belvedere,' in both cases without any author's name. I cannot trace the line, although Marston quotes it in a slightly different form in 'Pygmalion,' 40. It sounds Baconian.

lous evaporation of all that is fleshly and sensual—an evaporation in the one case into the mighty profundities of the interstellar spaces, and in the other into the lovely intangible beauty of budding Nature's glorious spring.\*

Look, too, at the description of Helen's kiss.

'Sweete Helen, make me immortall with a kisse,'  
says Faustus, and kisses her, and then he says:—

'Her lips sucke forth my soule, see where it flies:  
Come, Helen, come give mee my soule againe.  
Here wil I dwel, for heaven be in these lips,  
And all is drosse that is not Helena.'†

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\* I can remember only one passage of the same kind that pleases me equally well, and that is from George Peele's 'David and Bethsabe,' printed in 1599, but date of composition uncertain. It is in David's description of Bethsabe,—

'Sweeter than flames of fine perfumèd myrrh,  
And comelier than the silver clouds that dance  
On Zephyr's wings before the King of Heaven.'

The last two lines are surely an exquisite word-painting of the etherealized grace and lightness of an elegant and beautiful woman, and are usually independent of the worship of fleshly charms. The epithet for myrrh is 'fire perfumed' in 'England's Parnassus,' published the year after; which seems rather like a Baconian improvement.

† 'Dr. Faustus' (1604).

I come, then, to this conclusion, favouring the recent theories of several Germans, and adding somewhat of my own, that the immortal poems of Francis Bacon need not necessarily be taken to represent base lascivious sentiment, but that they rather re-echo and reproduce the highest Grecian ideal of true male love, and are also mingled (though this is more especially in the plays) with the true love of the eternal feminine. That is to say, Bacon was personally such a man, with regard to Southampton at least, as we hear of in the refined dialogues of Plato's 'Symposium,' but withal he had the rare additional gift of being able to understand, analyze, and inimitably represent the true love of women, whether in the virgin or the married state, whether as Juliet and Miranda, or as 'Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste,' in such a way as no poet has reached before or since.

Francis Bacon, it seems to me, might well have taken his place on a lounge near to Pausanias when this Grecian authority on love was discoursing before the assembled guests. He would have well understood the subject under discussion, and would have assented again and again to the expressions used and to the theories advocated. And if he had heard Critobulus, in the 'Symposium'



of Xenophon, giving his full account of his feelings for his beautiful and beloved Cleinias, it would surely have recalled his own feelings for his 'lovely boy' as depicted in the 'Sonnets.'

This was what Critobulus told the guests :—

'I would choose to be blind to everybody else if I could only see Cleinias, and I hate the night because it robs me of his sight. I would rather be the slave of Cleinias than live without him ; I would rather toil and suffer danger for his sake than live alone at ease and in safety. . . . In my soul I carry an image of him better made than any sculptor could fashion' (cap. iv. 10 *et seq.*, abridged).

Bacon put it thus :

'For nothing this wide universe I call,  
Save thou, my rose ; in it thou art my all.'

*Sonnets, CIX. 13, 14.*

And here is part of what Pausanias said :

'Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, and who is inconstant because he is a lover of the inconstant, and therefore when the bloom of youth, which he was desiring, is over, takes wings and flies away, in spite of all his words and promises : whereas the love of the noble mind, which is one with the unchanging, is lifelong.'

And here is what Francis Bacon said on this subject of true and noble love :

‘ Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds.

\* \* \* \* \*

Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle’s compass come ;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.’

*Sonnets, CXVI.*

And what Pausanias says about Uranian love a little earlier in his address is very applicable to Bacon and Southampton :—

‘ The offspring of the heavenly Aphrodite is derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part. She is from the male only ; this is the love which is of youths, and the goddess being older, has nothing of wantonness. They who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the most valiant and intelligent nature ; anyone may recognise the pure enthusiasts in the very character of their attachments ; for they love not boys but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow.

And in choosing them as their companions, they mean to be faithful to them, and pass their whole life in company with them, not to take them in their inexperience and deceive them, and play the fool with them, or run away from one to another of them.'\*

And possibly we may be fully justified in taking even a more favourable view than this. Perhaps we have no need to go so far back as ancient Hellas, after all.

What if neo-pagan Italy, with its Renaissance culture and its renewed study of the treasures of Greek thought and philosophy, was the true and proximate origin of these curious sonnets of man to man? I think there is much in favour of this supposition. It runs somewhat parallel to the one we have just considered, for Plato has his share in each; but we should here deal with a purely literary solution, which would take us quite away from the *gymnasia* of Greece. Let us state it.

The transcendent lyrical way in which the author of Shake-speare's 'Sonnets' expresses his

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\* My attention was drawn to these extracts by reading that excellent book, 'A Problem in Greek Ethics,' by John Addington Symonds, to whom I acknowledge my great indebtedness here and elsewhere in this chapter.

male love for a young nobleman or aristocrat points to the harmless intellectual treatment of the subject which was then current, and had for some time been so, among the best Platonizing spirits of the Renaissance.

Especially was this love of man for man—this absolute unity of soul between two male friends—esteemed and dwelt upon by the new humanists of Italy, where first the scholarly exodus from fallen Constantinople had provided teachers to explain the priceless treasures of the Greek language. There were many in those early Renaissance days who held that this supreme Platonic love of man for man was higher and better than the love of man for woman. They were chiefly men of culture, who, either on the Continent or in England, were well acquainted with the poets of Italy and France, and had imbibed the new spirit of the age.

It is part of my argument that the author of the Shake-speare 'Sonnets' was such a man as this. I have alluded to this often before, but I hope not more often than its importance demands, and it has been a great pleasure to me to notice that Mr. Courthope, in the fourth volume of his 'English Literature,' recently published, holds this view also.

What he says is that, when we read that sonnet beginning,

‘Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments,’

and such others of the series as must be taken as written to a male from a male, we are to remember that the writer was

‘speaking the language both of Plato and of many of the greatest of the humanists in all countries of Europe. Moved by a kindred impulse, Montaigne poured forth his feelings of enthusiastic friendship for Estienne de la Boetie, and Languet his affection for Philip Sidney. Sir Thomas Browne, a late disciple of the same school, says: “I never yet cast a true affection on a woman, but I have loved my friend as I do virtue, my soul, my God. . . . There are three most mystical unions, two natures in one person, three persons in one nature, one soul in two bodies. For though indeed they be really divided, yet they are so united as they seem but one, and make rather a duality than two distinct souls”’ (Courthope, iv., 38).

Such a lover was the author of the ‘Sonnets,’ written to the ‘man right fair,’ and I hardly think any student of this peculiar phase of Renaissance literature will be found able to

deny the assertion by any valid proofs. I agree with Mr. Courthope thoroughly as to the characteristics of the writer, but I hold him to be Francis Bacon, not the man from Stratford—whom Mr. Courthope accepts without any hesitation. What had the Warwickshire youth to do with Platonic or Renaissance cultured subtleties of the master passion? Anne Hathaway and her twins would effectually devitalize any germs of that fashionable phantasy early in life.

This, then, is a strong argument against the scandal of the 'Sonnets,' and in favour of their ethical purity—at least, where a man is addressed—and I am pleased to hold it in such good company as the Oxford Professor, and to agree thoroughly also with his following remarks a few pages further on,—

'So strongly antipathetic to the temper of modern times are many of the topics treated in them [*i.e.*, the 'Sonnets'] that it is possible that Hallam may be giving utterance to a widespread sentiment in wishing that they had never been written. Those who express such a desire perhaps hardly realize that, had it been fulfilled, we should not only have lost some of the most exquisite of the world's poetry, but also the clue to the profoundest motives of Shakespeare's dramatic invention.'

May I add we should also have lost that marvellous alchemy of words whereby Francis Bacon gave a personal exposition of that part of the power of love which he in his 'Essays' thought was its perfection,—'Nuptial Love maketh mankind; *Friendly Love perfecteth it*; but Wanton Love corrupteth and imbaseth it' (Thus he concludes his essay on Love?).

In dealing with these wonderful poems 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece,' we must beware of the extremes of criticism. There is a school of Shakespeare critics who esteem these poems to be *passionately hot*; there is another school which esteems them to be *glitteringly cold*. I cannot accept either estimation, but incline to the second view rather than to the first. I take them to be influenced by Italian thought along lines of Platonic idealism, and that the author's mental vision dwelt much on famous pictures and tapestries that he had seen, and that these in many instances formed the groundwork of his episodes. As for the warmth displayed therein, it seems to belong to the author's words rather than to his passions.

As far as the 'Sonnets' are concerned, I do not think I can do better than quote the following remarks, written in 1579. Though the 'Sonnets'

were not written till some years after this date, one could almost imagine that the passage which I am about to quote was written by Bacon in his own defence, and I am not prepared to swear that it was not.

It is a criticism on a certain passage of English poetry (*circa* 1579), where one shepherd lad rejects with scorn the presents offered to him by another of his companions, and I would ask my readers to bear the Shake-speare 'Sonnets' in mind while reading the passage, although it was written more than ten years earlier.

'In thys place seemeth to be some savour of disorderly love, which the learned call pæderastice: but it is gathered beside his meaning. For who that hath red Plato his dialogue called Alcybiades, Xenophon and Maximus Tyrius of Socrates opinions, may easily perceive that such love is muche to be allowed and liked of, specially so meant as Socrates used it: who sayth, that indeede he loved Alcybiades extremely, yet not Alcybiades person, but hys soule, which is Alcybiades owne selfe.

'And so is pæderasticie much to be preferred to gynerastice, that is the love whiche enflameth men with lust toward womankind. But yet let no man think that herein I stand with Lucian or his develish disciple Unico Aretmo, in defence of execrable and horrible sinnes of forbidden and un-



lawful fleshliness. Whose abominable error is fully confuted by Perionius and others.'

Who can this be who talks about such subjects in such a way, in 1579? Well, he is rather a mystery; he calls himself, or rather signs himself, 'E. K.,' and professes to be a great friend of the illustrious poet Edmund Spenser. He also professes to explain the hard passages and words of Spenser's verse, and what has been just quoted is a specimen of his exegesis. He has until recent times been written down as Ed. Kirke, a fellow-student with Spenser at college, but I shall deal with him elsewhere; this is not the place for it.

According to Nash (iii. 135), Harvey had been taken for the 'usher of a dancing schoole.' He also followed the fashion of male love (Platonic), and expressed himself more warmly than the Shake-speare 'Sonnets,' and much more grossly. Nash tells us this in the following words:

'I have perused veares of his, written under his owne hand to Sir Philip Sidney, wherein he courted him as he were another Cyparissus or Ganimede; the last Gordian true loves knot, or knitting up of them is this,—

' Sum jecur ex quo te primùm Sydnee vidi;  
Os oculosque regit, cogit amare jecur.'

(All liver am I, Sidney, since I saw thee;  
My mouth eyes rules it, and to love doth draw mee.)

But Nash, anxious as he was to say all that was bad about Harvey, does not here or elsewhere suggest any odious charge. Harvey followed the Italian *fashion* of male love writing, but not the *practice*. Why not Bacon, too?

perhaps in  
act. of  
Sidney's  
name

'Venus and Adonis,' 'Lucrece,' and 'Hero and Leander,' are all nudities in literary art; but although this be generally conceded, it does not follow that they are prurient or objectionable nudities. Both sexes, it is to be hoped, can now-a-days walk unashamed among the marble statues of ancient art to be seen by the general public at the British Museum and elsewhere in our municipal galleries. The nudities that meet their eyes are works of art, and are solely so considered except by the prurient-minded and the scum of the populace. So with the wonderfully artistic poems dedicated to Southampton. They bear the impress of the artist and the gentleman, and, in the sense that the word 'decorum' was taken in that literary age, I should call them both essentially 'decorous.' So also with 'Hero and Leander,' which poem reminds us rather of the nudity of one of the masterpieces of Pheidias amid the surroundings of a pagan temple, while 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece' suggest pictures or tapestry rather than the stone ideals of Greece—

nay, some parts of 'Venus and Adonis' seem almost to be such nudities as are passed hurriedly by the British matron at the Paris Salon of present days. No ethical disquisitions of deep German metaphysicians can cover up the nudities, and no condemnation of Christian Puritanism or of a vulgar Mrs. Grundy can prove them to be indecent, or even indecorous, *in the Elizabethan sense*. They deal with the hidden mysteries of our complex nature in a way so utterly alien from abnormal sensuality that they seem to me to give the direct lie to the scandals current against their author, Bacon.

To sum up, then, the favourable evidence which a closer examination of the 'Sonnets,' 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Lucrece,' is able to render: it would seem to amount to this, that the love relations between Bacon and Southampton, as far as traces of them can be rightly discerned in the poems enumerated above, were of a highly honourable, spiritual, and Platonic character, recalling the very best traditions of Greek male love, and in no way worthy of the condemnation which is often so unguardedly and ignorantly bestowed on the virile affection of one man for another. It must be allowed that Bacon in the domain of the master passion of our race did

not occupy exactly the average or normal position among his fellows. He was, as I have hinted before, possibly subject in a very modified way to sexual inversion or homosexual love. This was his misfortune rather than his fault, as all admit who are acquainted with the works of Numa Numantius, Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing, Tarnowsky, Mantegazza, and, above all, that capital inquiry and résumé of John Addington Symonds.

It is time that the odium usually attached to inquiries of this nature should be abolished. There seems no reason why this subject should not be discussed scientifically as well as other sexual subjects of a so-called abnormal character, and I think the name and reputation of J. A. Symonds will do much to help in this thorny matter.

Bacon had much to endure from the *mendacia famæ* wherewith he was attacked so often at different times of his life, but towards the end of his career he seems to have risen to the spirit of a quiet and dignified nonchalance in regard to such attacks. Thus he makes Wolsey say, when accused of malversation :—

‘ If I am

Traded by ignorant tongues—which neither know  
My faculties nor person, yet will be  
The chronicles of my doing—let me say  
’Tis but the fate of place ; and the rough brake  
That virtue must go through.’

Does not Bacon here transfer his own special experience and reflections to the person of Wolsey in the play—to Wolsey, who in his magnificence and in his fall was in so many respects the counterpart of Bacon? I think he does, and that we may infer that in his later days Bacon rose superior to the assaults of envy and infamy, or at least put them aside as coming from those who were ignorant of his faculties and person, and were always ready to shoot out the tongue of malice against those who were more fortunate or more highly placed than themselves. If my inference is correct, he takes the fact of his being 'traded by ignorant tongues' as the 'fate of place,' and implicitly denies the current allegations. He did so early as well as late. The reports, as he told more than one friend in his extant letters, were *mendacia famæ*—i.e., they came from the lying lips of the gossiping vulgar, and we should bear this denial, and also his dignified way of meeting such accusations, well in our mind when we have to consider the evidence *against* Bacon.

## CHAPTER X.

### 'A LOVER'S COMPLAINT.'

THIS rather neglected poem bears every mark of Bacon's handiwork, and in addition he 'shows' part of 'his head,' FRA, in the usual place in the first two lines, Shakespearians generally admit it as genuine, but hardly know how to date it.

Gregor Sarrazin has lately contributed an admirable criticism on this poem, and has brought out several points hitherto unnoticed, all very favourable to the Baconian authorship, but not so intended by the ingenious German. He says in 'Beiträge zur romantischund u. englisch Philologie,' Breslau, 1902, p. 177, that this poem belongs to the style of 'Lucrece,' but was written later (1598-1601), and, like it, seems to have been put forth almost in emulation of the 'Complaint of Rosamund,' by the contemporary poet, or rival, Daniel.

'A Lover's Complaint' has several striking

instances of parallels in thought and word, chiefly drawn from plays of the middle period, 1598-1602, and on these Sarrazin makes these very sensible remarks,—

‘ Nun sind Auto-Reminiszenzen bei Shakespeare bekanntlich nichts Seltenes, aber gewöhnlich nur, wenn die betreffender Dichtungen zeitlich nicht weit auseinanderliegen, was ja auch psychologisch leicht begreiflich ist.’

In other words, if an author repeats himself, especially in some striking phrase or thought, in two different works of imagination, then it is much more likely that these works were written nearly at the same time, than that there was a considerable length of time between their composition. Moreover, auto-remembrance is more probable than plagiarism where a genius is the author.

The author of ‘ A Lover’s Complaint ’ represents himself thus in Stanza ix.,—

‘ A reverend man that grazed his cattle nigh—  
Sometime a blusterer, that the ruffle knew  
Of Court, of City, and had let go by  
The swiftest hours observèd as they flew.’

In this description Sarrazin sees William Shakspeare of Stratford settled down in his native place, and the owner of a good house and

land there, glad to leave the ruffle of Court and City and to betake himself again to country quiet (in ‘*ländliche Einsamkeit zurückgezogen*’). I think Francis Bacon suits the stanza infinitely better, but I leave it to my readers.

The whole piece connects the lovers with the society of the Court, and the ‘Nun or Sister sanctified’ of Stanza xxxiv. was no doubt a Maid of Honour much sought after by the young nobility, the ‘spirits of richest coat.’ But the girl herself who so long resisted (contrary to the practice of her ‘equals,’ Stanza xxii.) seems a country maiden of lower degree, such as Willoughby’s ‘Avisa’ was, and, for all I know, this poem may be a supplementary one to that strange production of 1594. In both poems the male lover could suitably be Southampton, but the betrayed maiden could hardly be Elizabeth Vernon, as Sarrazin supposes.

But in any case it can be clearly shown that the ‘gay deceiver’ in ‘A Lover’s Complaint’ is none other than Southampton. Take Stanza xv.,—

‘ His qualities were beauteous as his form,  
For maiden-tongued he was and thereof free ;  
Yet, if men moved him, was he such a storm  
As oft ’twixt May and April is to see.’



Southampton's impetuous temper is frequently noticed by contemporaries.

Again, take next Stanza (xvi.),—

‘ Well could he ride, and often men would say,  
“ That horse his mettle from his rider takes.” ’

The young Earl was specially distinguished for his bold horsemanship.

Again, Stanza xx.,—

‘ Many there were that did his picture get,  
To serve their eyes, and in it put their mind.’

Now, no young nobleman of the period was so frequently the object of the limner's art as was Southampton, and there is also a side glance at this in one of the sonnets. The more this poem is examined, the more does it show itself to be written as a eulogy of the same young man who is the central figure of the earlier sonnets. In fact, Southampton is so evidently praised and glorified throughout the poem that we cannot escape making the inference that this ‘ Lover's Complaint ’ was written *with a view* to please Southampton, and *for* him, and was probably sent to him, as were the early sonnets. Finally, whoever the lady might be, whether a girl of the country or *Elizabeth Vernon* of the Court, there is such a marked aristocratic atmosphere throughout that Shakspeare of Stratford seems clearly out of the reckoning.

## CHAPTER XI

### CIRCUMSTANCES OF PUBLICATION

ONE of the many mysteries connected with the Shakespeare authorship is that Henslowe in his diary never once mentions William Shakespeare, although his earlier plays were all put before the public at the Rose Theatre, which was building as Henslowe's speculation in 1592.

Now, the Bacon theory is the only one that can give a probable explanation of this. The tradition runs that Southampton gave Shakspeare £1,000 to go through with a purchase that he had a mind to. This report as it stands is very unlikely. My suggestion is that Southampton was induced by Bacon to find funds to help Henslowe to build the Rose Theatre, and thus find a stage where the 'immortal plays' could be presented properly, and where they would be somewhat controlled by the 'grand possessors' whom we hear mentioned in connection with the plays afterwards. Bacon, as

we know, required secrecy, and did not wish to be identified with his dramatic work ; therefore Henslowe, bound by pecuniary ties, would omit mention of any names or circumstances which might reveal Bacon. Hence Shakespeare is never once alluded to in the business diary.\*

Although the author of 'Venus and Adonis' calls this poem 'the first heire of my invention,' we can hardly suppose it to be the first poem, or even one of the earliest of his compositions. He calls it his 'first heire,' certainly ; but had he not disinherited the others, or at least kept them from public criticism ? 'Venus and Adonis' is too perfect to be any man's first born in poetry. Indeed, the author would seem to be a poet of much experience and considerable practice in the many literary devices and poetical figures which George Puttenham's 'Arte of English Poesie' had put within reach of students of poetry. I would go farther and say that these two early poems of Shakespeare seem to be the work of one who knew

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\* After making this suggestion I found out from Alleyn's memoirs that a man named Richard Cholmley helped Henslowe in building the Rose by advances of money. What if this Cholmley was merely the instrument of Southampton put forward to keep the young aristocrat's name from public comment ?

as much about poetical figures as Puttenham himself, *and perhaps was Puttenham*. But that, again, is another story already told.

In 'Lucrece' the debt to Daniel's 'Complaint of Rosamund' seems very great. Some verses of Daniel's are like Shakespeare's in all the details. Hence comes the inference Bacon plagiarizes, or at least imitates.

In 'Lucrece,' and also in 'Venus and Adonis,' there are several striking resemblances to similar passages in Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.' They are too long to give here, but can be found in the literary essays of Isaac and Krauss in the *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, Band 19, and in Wilhelm Ewig's 'Essay on Lucrece' in *Anglia*, vol. xxii., p. 451.

The German supposition is that Marlowe's manuscript of 'Hero and Leander' got into Shakspeare's hands, or was seen by him soon after Marlowe's death, and that Marlowe had the privilege of seeing Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis,' which came out a few months before he was slain. Conjectures of this kind are sometimes illuminating, but do not often give the solid basis we want so much.

I do not suppose many readers know how usual it was for people to write shorthand in Queen

Elizabeth's time. Even ladies became able stenographers, so that they might take down the sermon on Sundays.

It was Timothy Bright who was the father of shorthand in England, and printed his 'Characterie' in the year of the Armada. He had written 'A Treatise of Melancholie, contayning the causes thereof, and the reasons of the strange effects it worketh in our minds and bodies,' etc. This was in 1586, two years earlier. Both these books had influence on the Shakespeare plays, but in very different fashion. Bright's 'Melancholie' is shown by Professor Loening to have been known and read by Shakespeare; for the symptoms in 'Hamlet' and other parts of Shakespeare correspond with Bright's observations too closely to be merely coincidences. Bright's 'Characterie' had a curious but very different influence. It caused many of the mistakes in the early quartos and elsewhere in the printed copies; for Bright's system had one and the same sign for many similar meanings. Consequently, when the plays were taken down in shorthand and brought to the pirate printers to be read off by the compositors, naturally many mistakes arose. This specially is noticeable in the early quartos of 'Hamlet'—*e.g.*, we get *wonder* in the oldest quarto,

and then afterwards another has *marvell* in the same place. Bright's sign for both words is the same. In another case *haste* is changed to *pace*; both have the same symbol in Bright. And there are many other examples.

Herr Dewischeit endeavours to connect Timothy Bright with William Shakspeare, through Field's printing shop and its former possessor, Vautrollier; for here was the printing done for Bright's 'Melancholie' and Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece,' and Field was a native of Stratford - on - Avon, and married Jacquinetta Vautrollier.\*

Herr Dewischeit may be right in his suppositions. But I think it is likely that Bright influenced Bacon more than Shakspeare. Indeed, I fancy Bacon would go to the shop to see after 'Venus and Adonis,' 'Lucrece,' and the gay French dame Jacquinetta (Jaklin), more often than Bright would.

I am surprised at the frequency of the question, Why should Bacon 'conceal' his poetical talents? It has been so often answered, and the answers are so various, that one would think that some of them must be known to all who take even a moderate interest in the question. However, I will give

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\* *Jahrb. d. deutsch. Shak-Gesellschaft*, p. 170, etc.

one of the answers again, because I can add something new to it.

Bacon kept his name from the title pages of his poems and plays because, for one thing, he had learnt a lesson from what befell his father, Sir Nicholas. The greatest and almost the only mistake that very able man made was to give his adversaries an advantage over him, by assisting Hales in his treatise on the title of the Scottish Queen. If he had only 'concealed' his share in the book, and made Hales his instrument or mask, he would have saved himself, I may say, years of worry and vexation.

Sir Nicholas Bacon's known connection with that book was the means of excluding him from the Privy Council, after he had been several years in the possession of the Great Seal, and owing to the animosity of the Earl of Leicester he did not for some time re-establish himself in the Queen's favour. Here was indeed a lesson to young Francis, and he took it in numerous instances during his life. He considered it best policy to keep his name out of the adversaries' grasp if possible; for he knew well the power of envy, and had some wise sayings about the evil eyes that follow the rising or conspicuous man.

An English company of players visited Hel-

singör in 1586, and again in the autumn of 1587, so there was excellent opportunity for the playwright Kyd to compose the 'Ur-Hamlet,' and also to put in the strikingly accurate account of the pictures in the palace of the King of Denmark, and other touches of accurate historic truth, which would seem to betoken the work of some author who had really visited the places personally. But any one in London at all connected with the play houses or companies of actors in 1586-1588 would have had about as good opportunities as Kyd had, and consequently there is no objection to be drawn from these circumstances of the visits of English players to Helsingör against either Bacon or Shakspeare as being the true authors of the 'Ur-Hamlet.' But if we had to choose which one was the more likely author of the two—*i.e.*, Bacon or Shakspeare — it would certainly be Bacon; for Shakspeare in 1586-1589 had not long been up in London, and if the 'Ur-Hamlet' was anything like the final 'Hamlet,' it could hardly be Shakspeare's handiwork so early as that. But, as a matter of fact, the 'Ur-Hamlet' seems to have been a poor play without much success, a play only mentioned for purposes of derision, and a play that only earned eight shillings on one occasion in 1594.



One argument especially against Shakspeare's authorship of the 'Ur-Hamlet' has been this — that the Latin of 'Saxo Grammaticus,' whence the Hamlet story comes, is so uncommonly crabbed and difficult that Shakspeare would have been hardly able to make it out. This was a crux for the orthodox party, who above all claimed 'Hamlet' as the masterpiece of their 'divine William,' and therefore it was quite a godsend to them when Kyd was proposed as the author of an earlier 'Hamlet' of about 1587. 'Why, yes,' said they, 'our Shakspeare worked upon Kyd's early version, and so there was no need for him to read that crabbed old "Saxo Grammaticus." That crux of these lunatic Baconians is gone, thank goodness.'

M.B.  
 Ah! but there was another fellow alive then who *could* read 'Saxo Grammaticus,' and, what is more, he knew about him, and refers to him by name in the new French Baconian documents to which I have drawn attention. But that is another story. According to the German authorities, Northern folk lore says that Hamlet, in conjunction with Tamerlane, stormed Constantinople. This would much interest Bacon if he had read it.

Since I expressed these opinions about Bacon and the original Hamlet, I find that Mr. Court-

hope has also given it as his opinion that the original 'Hamlet' and the original Chronicle Plays—on which Shakespeare was thought to have built his marvellous dramatic structures—were all written by Shakespeare himself, and bear his marks, which are so hard for other writers to imitate. This aids my contention considerably, for thus Shakespeare's early work is carried back to an almost impossible period, when he had been but little time in London, and had no chances of being either a student or a philosopher. But Bacon's work could easily be carried back to the Armada year or earlier, for he was a secluded student sitting in his cell in Gray's Inn years before Shakspeare left Stratford.

In fact, Baconians are on the winning side at present, without a doubt; for whatever new discovery or pregnant suggestion comes forth from the luminaries of the orthodox party, it is always sure to help our case more than theirs. I have given two examples in Mr. Courthope above, and Mr. Churton Collins with his Greek discoveries in the plays, and I can now add another,—a luminary whom no one will gainsay—I mean Dr. Garnett, in the sumptuous 'History of English Literature' which he and Mr. Gosse have just finished. The discovery, new to me, is connected with 'The

'Tempest,' a play to which Dr. Garnett has given particular attention, and this is what he tells us in 'English Literature, an Illustrated Record' (ii. 252);—

'The source of the plot of "The Tempest" has until lately been a mystery, and even the most recent writers seem unacquainted with the important discovery by Edmund Dorer of a Spanish novelette, from which it is evidently derived, unless Shakspeare and the Spaniard resorted to a common source. The story, a most dull and pedantic production, occurs in a collection entitled "Noches de Invierno" (Winter Nights), by Antonio de Esclava, Madrid, 1609.'

Dr. Garnett then gives a summary of the plot, and adds,—

'This is undoubtedly the groundwork of the plot of "The Tempest." It is some argument for Shakespeare having obtained it directly from Esclava, and not from a common source, that the title of Esclava's book, "Noches de Invierno," may have suggested to him the title of "A Winter's Tale," which he began to write in 1610, the year following the publication of the Spanish stories.'

Really, this is almost a better find than the Greek tragedies of Mr. Collins. Can we not picture to our mind's eye the great actor manager

from Stratford ordering the latest Spanish novels from his bookseller, and then reading them at home in his arm chair with the consummate facility of a travelled diplomat or of a thoroughly educated aristocrat? He had no foreign tutors in his Stratford boyhood; we know that very well, for one was as likely to see a black swan proudly breasting the Avon as a foreign tutor presenting his card and terms to the honest burgesses of Stratford. I should say a Frenchman could barely earn his dinner, and if an Italian or Spanish 'devil' came to prospect the town, he would soon be sent off with short parley, either to the Pope or the shades below. No! I fear Shakspeare got little help towards enjoying a future Spanish novel in his London lodgings;—but what of that? He was a born genius, and all things come with perfect ease to such favoured ones! Shakspeare would have had no more difficulty with a Hebrew Bible than with a Spanish novel! It's all nonsense to impose limitations on such a genius as he was. There is not even a *prima facie* case when people try to make out that Shakspeare was not qualified to write the plays. Not qualified! Why, such genius as he had would qualify a man for anything, and that is why he was such a wonderful lawyer, such a

wonderful philosopher, and had such a wonderful universal knowledge as no other man of that age seemed to possess. I have heard my friends repeat these arguments so often that they almost come from my pen as my own:—but they have not quite convinced me yet.

## CHAPTER XII

### ORTHODOX DEFENCES

A PROFESSOR of English Literature in the University of Nebraska has written a book of over 400 pages, entitled 'What is Shakespeare?' and thinks it enough to devote about two pages and a half to the Bacon-Shakespeare question. One page is taken up with the statement that it will not do to say that Shakspeare could not have written the plays. He backs up his statement in this way,—

'Shakspeare's task in making the English drama was not greater than Giotto's in making the art of Southern Europe, and his discipline was not less ample. Sophocles produced the best dramas of classic time without other preparation than reading the plays that Æschylus wrote. Shakspeare had only the works of Greene and Peele and Lyly as exemplars, but he saw how their weakness could be made strength. This

seeing this vision is all that distinguishes genius from plodding minds. . . .

‘With this power of seeing, Mozart composes minuets and performs them at sight when he is but four years old. The present writer once knew of an ignorant Irish woman, unable to read or write who solved abstruse mathematical problems intuitively.’

He concludes,—

‘It is by no means clear that Shakspeare’s achievements really surpass these accepted marvels.’

These remarks of the Professor, though they read well, are of no force whatever against those Baconians who set themselves, as I do, to show that Bacon wrote ‘Lucrece’ and the ‘Sonnets.’ It does not matter to me in the least whether Shakspeare could or could not write ‘Lucrece’ and the ‘Sonnets’; for if I show that Bacon did write them, then Shakspeare must make his exit, and we must admit that the William Shakespeare signature in ‘Lucrece’ must refer to someone else. So this first line of the Professor’s argument does not affect me, whether it is correct or not. But it is not quite correct;—that is to say, it does not correctly prove what he intended it to prove, which was this, that Shakspeare’s vision com-

bined with his natural genius was sufficient to enable him to write what he did. It was *not* sufficient, strictly speaking, and could not be; for there are some matters and some portions of the Shakespeare works which no amount of genius *per se* would be sufficient to supply,—such matters, such references, such allusions, I mean, as could only be the result of deep and long study. There is any amount of matter in the great poems and plays which could not have been inserted there without considerable and prolonged study, combined with the easy access to books and the other accessories of culture. Now, Shakspeare of Stratford had not the chance of this, as far as we know of his early life, habits, and connections.

But this page and this argument of the Professor can be dismissed as beside our contention, which is that Bacon wrote 'Lucrece' and the 'Sonnets'; and, of course, the inference follows that he certainly wrote part of the plays, on account of the unquestionable similarities of thought and style.

Now, next, how does the Professor meet the contention (which is mine) that Bacon wrote the works in question?

Well, in the following singularly weak manner,—



‘If Bacon, or some other man of learning, wrote the poems and plays called Shakespeare’s, we should expect to find many things not present, and not to find many things that are present.’

To this we may reply,—Granted,—but the same general expectations might be raised concerning nearly any work, ancient or modern.

It depends altogether as to *what kind* of things are absent or present. Now, these are the things chosen to settle the point by the Professor:—

1. In ‘Cymbeline’ Posthumus is accented on the second syllable. A man of learning, as was Bacon, would never have committed such a gross fault. *Ergo . . .*

2. If the author had known classic instances and parallels, would he not have used them? But he did not. Therefore he was not a learned man in the classics. But Bacon was. *Ergo . . .*

3. ‘The man who wrote the works called Shakespeare’s was plainly shut off from the world of books, except Holinshed, Plutarch and Montaigne, and what the pupil of Stratford Free School might be expected to have made acquaintance with.’ But Bacon had access to the best of all literature. *Ergo . . .*

4. The only classical learning exhibited in the plays of Shakespeare is embodied in quotations

from the 'Accidence,' 'Sententia Pueriles,' etc., used in the schools of the day. And there are many anachronisms quite inconsistent with good scholarship, such as Bacon possessed. *Ergo . . .*

Every one of these four attempted proofs, which are made to pose as logical, can be easily shown to be absolutely worthless.

1. False quantities in classical words were by no means infrequent among learned men in the Elizabethan period, and there was a certain amount of freedom both given and taken with proper names, which nowadays would receive severe castigation. Bacon especially was careless in such minute details of every kind, and King James facetiously remarked it when he said of Bacon, 'De minimis non curat lex.' Good classical scholars and graduates of the Universities spoke of Euphrātes; we have also Sōcrates on the Stratford monument, and Bacon spoke of Roměo and Stephāno and Desdēmona, all wrong, and good scholars used horizon instead of horizon more than once. In fact, the careless slip in Posthumus is more in favour of Bacon's carelessness than Shakspeare's ignorance.

2. This pseudo logical statement is totally contrary to facts. The plays, early and late, are full of classic instances and parallels, and show the learned man from beginning to end.

3. Again a statement quite contrary to the truth. The author of the plays plainly shows his wide and extensive reading; Bruno, Plato, Aristotle, Rabelais, the Greek tragedians, the Italian novelists, and many others, all show their influence with no uncertain sound.

4. This is answered as in No. 2, and some of the worst anachronisms are borrowed from other authors, while none are seriously inconsistent with good scholarship.

And there is this to be said in addition, that extremely talented University men, who were well up in the classics, in Ovid and Seneca and Plautus, yet might be lamentably deficient in modern geography. I will give a curious case in point. It is well known that one of the greatest and most unaccountable blunders in the Shakespeare plays is that where the author gives a sea coast to Bohemia. This alone, say the Shakespearians, is almost enough to put Bacon out of court and to establish the authorship of Shakspeare. Is it possible, say they, that he who made universal knowledge his province could ever make such a gross mistake as this? What! Francis Bacon give Bohemia a sea-coast? Why, his travelled brother Anthony would have had a lasting joke against him!

I answer, We are not to be too sure of this. The geography of Bohemia and of many places much nearer home was not at the fingers' ends of every educated Englishman in those Elizabethan days. Take the case of Thomas Kyd, a fairly parallel one. This fine and popular dramatist was well educated at Merchant Taylors' School under that excellent Headmaster Richard Mulcaster, was a good Latin scholar, and knew Seneca's dramas almost by heart, and yet he made most gross blunders in geography, both ancient and modern. Speaking of Thrasymene, the locale of the famous battle where Hannibal defeated the Romans, he has no idea that it is a lake; again, he translates 'Marius, l'honneur d'Arpin,' as 'Marius, Arpin's friend,' knowing nothing of Arpinum; and last, and worst of all, he speaks of the journey from Lisbon to Madrid as being made by sea!

After this, surely, we may let Bacon off. Moreover, there is evidence adduced by the Baconians that Bohemia really had a sea-coast not so very long before the plays were written.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MISCELLANEA

A MR. CHARLES ALLEN published a work on Bacon and Shakespeare at Boston, U.S.A., in 1900, and, as a fellow countryman of his calls him Judge Allen, he will make the fourth Judge who has entered the lists—viz., Judge Holmes, who was an early champion of Bacon, and, like Judge Allen, an American, and Judges Webb and Willis, who hail from the British Isles, not to speak of Lord Penzance, who had higher official position than any ordinary Judges.

Judge Allen argues very strongly and with great confidence against Bacon. He says that Bacon showed no interest in poetry or poets; that all Shakspeare's contemporaries held him to be the author of the plays and poems; and finishes by this, to his mind, conclusive paragraph,—

‘The most diligent search has been made for indications that Bacon claimed to be the author,

or was supposed to be so by persons in the secret. This search has been in vain.'

Such assertions as these, coming from a supposed expert, cast a spell upon the reading public, and seem unanswerable.

I have somewhat to add to my former arguments in 'Is it Shakespeare?' against the undue depreciation of Bacon's undoubted poetical attempts on the Psalms in his latest days.

First, by way of comparison, I think it will not be uninteresting to quote two of the chief psalmists in English Israel, and catch one of them in the act of revising the other.

*Dr. Watts* had the honour of being able to claim the following verse as his 'very own,'—

'The God that rules on high,  
And thunders when He please,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And manages the seas.'

Then comes *Wesley*, who thinks he can revise and improve thus,—

'The God that rules on high,  
And all the earth surveys,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And calms the roaring seas.'

To which of these two are we to award the palm of merit? Who can judge? *Arcades ambo!*

But, surely, to exclude Bacon from the authorship of the Shakespeare poems and dramas on account of his poor attempt to versify certain psalms is quite unwarrantable. Look at Milton, for instance; that is a common rejoinder. But look at Sidney's case; that is far less known, and the parallel is closer than Milton's. Here is a stanza, an average specimen, from Psalm xxxi. Is it possible that the man who wrote the following could at any period of his life write 'Astrophel and Stella'?

'O Lord, of thee lett me still mercy wyne;  
 For troubles of all sides have hemm'd me in:  
 My eyes, my guts, yea my soule, grief doth wast,  
 My life with heaviness, my yeares with moane,  
 Doe pine: my strength with paine is wholly gone;  
 And ev'n my bones consume where they be plast.'

This is from 'The Psalmes of David, begun by the noble and learned gent. Sir Philip Sidney, Knt., and finished by the Right Honorable the Countess of Pembroke his sister.' Printed for R. Triphook from a manuscript, 1823.

Philip did the translation of the first forty-three, and his sister finished the whole 150. Critics say she did her work better than her brother.

I hold, therefore, that the Shakespearian argu-

ment drawn by the orthodox critics from Bacon's version of certain psalms may be dismissed as of no validity.

A literary man of great eminence once said that his greatest stumbling block in the way of accepting my newly adduced proofs, was the feeling he had that Bacon could never have died renouncing all claim to 'Hamlet' or 'Lear.' I had already met that common feeling by some counter remarks in 'Is it Shakespeare?' and had given Bacon's own rather peculiar opinion that a man's fame should rather follow him than accompany him in life; but these remarks could not overcome the intuitive feelings which prevented the acceptance of the Baconian theory.

Possibly no amount of new proofs or facts would quite succeed in expelling such feelings, for we know that there are people who, according to Matthew Arnold, are inclined by their nature to resist what they feel to be the tyrannous despotism of facts, and for them, alas! my new proofs are in vain. But I must throw out a hint or two concerning this intuitive objection to my contention. First of all, Bacon at no period of his life,—least of all when he was nearing his death,—seemed to value his plays at anything like the high estimate succeeding generations have placed upon them.