

They were to him mainly works of his 'recreation,' when he valued the art of poetry more than his maturer years endorsed. They were of small consideration compared with his great philosophical schemes,—they were 'dreames'; and if they could be of any use as 'living pictures' to help on the ethical side of his grand ideas for the common good they might stand; but he cared so little about this that he left the arranging of such matters to his 'brother Constable,' and added in a draft of his will, which came into Tenison's hands,—

'And herein I desire him [*i.e.*, Constable] to take the advice of Mr. Selden, and Mr. Herbert, of the Inner Temple, and to publish or suppress what shall be thought fit.'

Now, such men as Selden and Herbert, distinguished as they were above their fellows in so many ways, were, like Sir Thomas Bodley, of far too serious a mind to bow the knee before stage plays or any 'toys' of that kind. Sir Thomas, as we know, kept them out of the Bodleian as far as he was able, and, generally speaking, such plays as 'Hamlet' and 'Lear' caused little enthusiasm in any class of society in Elizabethan days, high or low.*

* About the only reference is a manuscript note of Gabriel Harvey in Speght's Chaucer, to the effect that "Lucrece" and "Hamlet" please the wiser sort.'

So Francis Bacon did *not* make such a great and marvellous renunciation, after all. And when we consider what Bacon's admission of authorship might have led up to among curious and envious tongues, it seems almost most likely that Bacon should die with sealed lips on this especial matter;—at least, it seems so to me, in spite of the high respect I have for my friend's great ability and intuition in matters literary.

It is well known how very much matter of the Shakespeare plays comes direct from Holinshed or North's Plutarch, but it is by no means so well known that Bacon in the preface to his 'History of the Reign of Henry VII.' highly commended this way of elaborating literary work as being so much less laborious and so much more speedy in execution. It saved the trouble of constructing a plot, and I do not think that plotting was very congenial to Bacon's literary tastes.

Anthony Munday, as Meres tells us, was 'our best plotter,' and, as he was also the 'poet' for Sir Oliver Owlet's company, Bacon may have been relieved of this part of his dramatic work by Munday and Shakspeare.

Bacon was first and above all 'a glorified orator,' and particularly good at 'counsels and speeches.' Now, many of the most splendid

passages in Shakespeare are of this character, and since Bacon pointedly commends this kind of building upon other's labours in the matter of chronicles and history, it certainly suggests Bacon's handiwork in some of the wonderful speeches, counsels, soliloquies, and 'notable particularities,' of the Shakespeare plays. What Bacon says is that an author's labour is much easier if he can only have to his hand 'a simple narration of the actions themselves'—*i.e.*, a plain historical narrative—'which should only have needed . . . to be enriched with the counsels and speeches and notable particularities.' This is undoubtedly the method of most of the historical plays of the First Folio.

Towards the end of his life Bacon seems to have had less praise for the wondrous effects of 'poesie.' But in early and middle life his views were very different. In the 'Advancement of Learning' (1605) we read that 'for the expressing of affections, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholden to poets more than to philosophers' works.'

It is well known that Carlyle concurred in the observation that Shakespeare showed such an understanding in his plays that he might have 'indited a "Novum Organum."' The exact words are,

‘Shakespeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown an understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed States or indited a “*Novum Organum*”’ (‘*Critical Essays*,’ third edition, 1847, i. 277).

The Baconian element in the tragedies did not escape Carlyle’s critical insight.

APPENDIX

SHAKSPERE IN PERIL THROUGH HIS OWN DEFENDERS

MR. J. CHURTON COLLINS, in his article 'Had Shakespeare read the Greek Tragedians?' which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1903, gives considerable help to the contention that Bacon was the true author of 'Lucrece.' He does not intend to help such a proposition, for he is a rigid and resolute Shakespearian, and therefore his facts are all the more telling.

The story of Lucrece had been given in English by four writers—Chaucer, Lydgate, Gower, and Painter—*before* the famous Shakespeare poem was written.

Now, what Mr. Collins shows so clearly is this, that the author of 'The Rape of Lucrece' went direct to Ovid's Latin ('Fasti,' ii. 721-852) again and again, and in addition brought in details from the original Ovidian Latin which all

the other English translators had omitted. The following example is given. The Ovidian line was :

‘Hunc primum externâ pectora tacta manu.’

None of the four translators or paraphrasers dealt with this incident—it was curiously neglected by all ; but Shakespeare seized it and reproduced it by a wondrous verbal alchemy thus :—

‘Her breasts . . .

A pair of maiden worlds unconquered,

Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew.’

Hence the inference that the man of Stratford had his Latin Ovid before him, and was able to dispense with all translations, and to expand and improve one of the finest poets Rome ever had.

Again, Mr. Collins shows us that Shakespeare went to the Latin direct for his ‘Venus and Adonis’ and his ‘Comedy of Errors.’ He also thinks that Sir John Falstaff is a reminiscence of Pyrgopolinices in the ‘Miles Gloriosus’ of Plautus (a suggestion I have not heard before), and that Shakespeare knew both Plautus and Seneca very well, and possibly Horace and Lucretius, and that certainly he knew his Plato, as Mr. Collins shows by an admirable illustration too long to quote here ; but I may say that it is from ‘Troilus and

Cressida,' Act III., Scene iii., when Ulysses is discovered reading a 'strange fellow.' This turns out to be Plato, but Mr. Churton Collins thinks the Stratford man read Plato in a Latin translation; indeed, to suppose that Shakspeare occasionally conned his Plato, when he had a little spare time in Burbage's stable-yard, is rather too much for Mr. Collins or anyone else. However, we are further shown, for the first time, I believe, that Shakspeare absolutely knew some *obscure fragments* of the Greek tragic and comic poets as well as such more famous tragedians as Sophocles, Euripides, etc.

These fragments hardly ever enter into the curriculum of the highest forms of our public schools, and are not much looked into until high honours in the Classical Tripos are in prospective. Surely we have a *reductio ad absurdum* here. The Stratford man at home in the rugged fragments of unknown and known Greek poets! Why, not even the learned John Milton would be quite easy there.

How can the orthodox Shakespearians explain this? Well, much better than one would at first suppose. It is John Stobæus who is the *deus ex machinâ* here, and appears just in time to untie the Gordian difficulty; for we are told that this

learned scholar of the sixteenth century published his 'Loci Communes' in 1581, when Shakspeare was a young man, and *there* were to be found all these rugged fragments of difficult Greek, with the Latin translation facing them.

I can endorse this evidence as true, for I have seen the book; but that does not convert me to the orthodox Shakespearian faith—nay, it rather strengthens me in my damnable and irrational heresy. I quite accept this excellent suggestion of Stobæus, but I don't for a moment suppose that Shakspeare, either at home with his father, or in the stables with Burbage, or in his private dressing-room (if the great actor-manager had one), or at his lodgings near Blackfriars, ever had a Stobæus in his possession or turned over a leaf of it. But I believe Bacon would know it, for he was especially fond of apophthegms, gnomic sentences, similes, and such-like, and here was the very book for *him*.

Very likely Ben Jonson had the book in his large private library, but even then I doubt whether the Stratford man would ever ask for the loan of it. Nor do I believe he would try to tackle Plato even if he had the chance of a Latin translation; but Bacon was a deep student of Plato, as were, indeed, most of the learned courtly

men in those Elizabethan days. It was fashionable. They studied Plato in Italy, and Italian fashions ruled Court society in more ways than one.

In fine, Mr. Collins' new and interesting evidence for Shakspeare is to me strong evidence for the Baconian authorship.

In a second article a month later he deals with Shakespeare and Greek writers, and makes the orthodox case almost indefensible.

In a third article (July, 1903) he pursues the subject still farther in the same direction, and concludes by asserting that his accumulation of Greek parallels and identities 'differentiates the dramas of Shakespeare from those of his contemporaries, and allies them with the Greek.'

Shakspeare of Stratford alone among his contemporaries saturated with the Greek drama! Surely Mr. Collins is blind to the absurdity of that which he thinks he has demonstrated.

How many University pens of the present day, I wonder, could explain off-hand the line,—

'Let me lodge Lichas on the horns of the moon,'

Ant. Cl. IV. x. 45.

and many another recondite allusion of the 'classic' William? Saturated with Greek indeed! Well, there was a man in those days

who had a mother saturated with Greek, and accustomed to put scraps of it in her familiar letters, and that man spent some time in France, where Greek scholarship was valued, but his name was not Shakspeare. In fact, Dr. Garnett has put the case against Mr. Churton Collins very briefly and decisively in his recent great work :—

‘Mr. Churton Collins has endeavoured with much ingenuity to establish Shakspeare’s acquaintance with Greek literature, but when it is considered that he could only have acquired Greek in mature life by solitary study or private instruction, and that Latin translations would be difficult and uninviting, the initial improbability must be held to outweigh the precarious evidence of apparent coincidences which may be otherwise accounted for.’*

Just so. Mr. Churton Collins must climb down. ‘Coincidences which may be otherwise accounted for’ is distinctly good, in my opinion, as I have a private interpretation of my own, as my readers well know.

Mr. Collins, indeed, has been damaging his reputation very considerably of late. The examples of literary discourtesy, and something

* ‘English Literature, an Illustrated Record,’ by R. Garnett and E. Gosse, ii. 193.

worse, which he has given us in his attacks on Judge Webb and Dr. R. M. Theobald are atrocious, and his recent attempt* to deprive Milton of the authorship of the recently discovered romance of 'Nova Solyma' is full of misstatements.

While dealing with Mr. Churton Collins and his views of the wide range of the Stratford man's reading, I cannot refrain from quoting some rather similar, and even more amusing, remarks on Shakespeare's acquirements by a famous French critic. Oh, those critics! What imaginations some of them have, and how well are they able to 'give to airy nothings a local habitation and a name.' This is what Philarète Chasles gives us as a contribution to our knowledge of William Shakspeare of Stratford:—

'Armed with indefatigable curiosity, he was an incessant reader, and made himself acquainted with all the literature of the day: Harington's Ariosto, Amyot and North's Plutarch, Fairfax's Tasso, and Florio's Montaigne, were in his hands as soon as published. . . . All was devoured by him, and his plays form a complete encyclopædia of his time. Rabelais, too, he knew,' etc.!

* *National Review*, July, 1904.

I am very much afraid that it is this kind of irresponsible literary talk, without any firm foundation to rest upon, that has partly produced that strong conviction among the great majority of the English speaking people that Shakspeare's genius and industry combined were of themselves quite sufficient to produce either a 'Hamlet,' or a 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' or any other miracle of literature that might have his name on the title page.

Look, too, at the extraordinary blindness that our best English critics seem to have with regard to any arguments or inferences which tell against their traditional belief, and which also run counter to all the lectures and literary Shakespearian work of their whole past life. I have been told that it is much harder to induce an octogenarian clergyman to give up the early parts of Genesis than it is to induce a freshman at one of our Universities to give up the whole Bible, and I am inclined to believe it, especially since the completion of the 'Encyclopædia Biblica.'

What I may call traditional belief is the hardest of all in resisting the perpetual dropping of reasonable argument. You may talk and reason and argue with some people about Shakspeare, and his approaching exit from the

'Sonnets' and the poems, for hours together, if you are foolish enough to waste so much time, and the result with the ordinary 'man in the street,'—Aye! and often enough with the ordinary 'man in the club,' too,—hardly ever amounts to much more than this:—'Well, you may say what you like, but Shakspeare has been good enough for my people for many generations, and he is good enough for me. He has stood his ground for 300 years or more with people who knew much more about him than we do, for they were nearer to his times, and he is not likely to be sent packing off by a few cranks here and there.' And this is the way that the foremost critics of the day back such people up.

Edmund Gosse, the great critic, says:—

'To doubt that what are called the works of Shakespeare were in the main written by William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon, and that they were not in any degree written by Francis Bacon, is possible only if we neglect probability, the analogies of literary history, all internal evidence, and all external tradition' ('Arena,' vol. viii., p. 369).

Professor Dowden says:—

'Bacon and Shakespeare stand far apart. In moral character and in gifts of intellect and soul

we should find little resemblance between them' ('Shakespeare: His Mind and Art,' p. 18).

Andrew Lang says (*Longman's Magazine*, April, 1903):—

'I am passing weary of that absurd system [the Baconian theory]. After giving the works of its adherents a fair trial, I have not found among them one who seemed to possess more than the merest smattering of knowledge of Elizabethan times and literature.'

Must not such a trinity of imposing names carry all before it? It would seem so at first sight, certainly. But we should remember that the world has before now been frequently imposed upon by great names, and that it was the best men of the age in learning, in literature, and in reputation, that helped to impose the Witch Delusion on the general public everywhere.

I could bring forward a list of names of the highest ability and reputation who were on the side of the traditional belief and the Satanic theory, and against everyone who dared to utter anything in favour of the poor witches. And after all this imposing list of names—this united intellectual army—who were the deluded, who were in the right?

For a heretic like myself to call the orthodox Shakespearians victims of a delusion, fostered by a united intellectual army of imposing names, is more than I dare do ; but I must say this much, which is the expression of my sincere conviction. It seems to me that our great literary critics who have from time to time surveyed the different periods of English literary history, including the Elizabethan, have shown a great lack of literary insight in dealing with the most distinguished ornament of the Elizabethan period. As a rule they profess no difficulty whatever in accepting William Shakspeare of Stratford, whose daughter Judith could not write her own name, as the author of 'Hamlet,' 'Venus and Adonis,' the 'Sonnets,' and all the rest of the immortal 'works of Shakespeare.' They are able to marry such a man to such 'works' without a momentary doubt. These great critics must naturally have acquired a special knowledge of the Elizabethan period, or they would not have maintained their present reputation as critics ; but this is the remark I would make of the great trinity just quoted, and of others who uphold the same orthodox views :—They have, apparently, no *appreciation* of the difficulties of their orthodox theory. They seem to be either blind to them,

or to shut their eyes, or else to pass over them unconsciously.

I have a theory that their subliminal consciousness has, in the process of hereditary evolution, received such a marked impress from the traditional asseverance of so many generations, that it successfully repels any stimulus from the present generation which might try to make it do justice to 'Bacon.'

But I have also another theory which has been only just suggested to me by a pertinent remark of Maître Labori, the great French advocate, when defending the Humberts in August (1903). He was referring to the suicide of the banker Girard, and said:—

'When Girard died the bank was liquidated, and the indebtedness of the Humberts was put at 7,000,000 francs, whereas it was afterwards proved that the Humberts only owed 700,000 francs.'

The Advocate-General demurred at this, saying he had officially acted in the affair, and knew it well.

Maître Labori ironically replied:

'Perhaps on that account you are less qualified to give an opinion, for you have long made up your mind.'

Now, this is exactly what I think can fairly be said of some eminent and of many more commonplace Shakespearians :—*They are less qualified to give an opinion because they have long made up their minds.*

‘What a sophism!’ I seem to hear one of these cocksure critics reply to me. ‘Why, any fool can see that Maître Labori’s reply was the very reverse of the real truth; for if the Advocate-General had officially acted in the affair, and knew it well, he was *more* qualified, and not *less* qualified, to pronounce the right judgment on the case off hand. And just so it is with the eminent Shakespearians who have officially acted as acknowledged critics on the Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare in particular, and know the whole matter well: they are assuredly *more* qualified to give the right opinion, and the man who deems them *less* qualified must be a fool or a crank. And if they do happen to have made up their minds on the question long ago, what does that matter? How can that make them less qualified?’

This looks like a knock out blow, but it is nothing of the kind. Maître Labori is neither a fool nor a crank, or he would not have reached his present position; and I hold he was quite right, and that his remark tells admirably against

the cocksure Shakespearians who have made up their minds long ago. For the Advocate-General, although he had some time previously given his best attention to the matter in controversy, 'knew it well,' had 'made up his mind' about it, and in consequence had not troubled his mind further. Still, all this only helped to make him *less* qualified to pronounce the best up-to-date opinion on the subject, because he had not thought it worth while to trouble himself about any *further evidence* that might turn up. Now, Maître Labori had looked after further evidence, and found that a mistake of one cipher had been made, and so the Advocate-General's demurrer was of considerably less value than he supposed.

Now, I hold this is very like the case of the old opinionated official Shakespearians, who have long made up their minds. Many, if not most of them, do not think it worth while to trouble their made up minds about further evidence. They are as sure about Shakspere as mortal man can be. Why have they not given lectures on Shakspere? Have they not written magazine articles about him, and even big books about him and all the events of his varied (?) life? What they don't know on the subject is not worth knowing. Up-to-date indeed! Why, such a term cannot apply

to a question settled once and for all long ago. So they may like to say, but such obscurantist principles won't serve nowadays.

If the Advocate-General had kept an 'open mind' instead of shutting it up 'long' before, he might have heard something about what 'was afterwards proved' in the matter of the one cipher—700,000 instead of 7,000,000. And here I make bold to say or repeat that, if Shakespearians will only try to keep an open and up-to-date mind, they will not contemptuously look away from the three or four pieces of remarkable Baconian evidence which have been recently given to the public by a Cambridge graduate in a thick octavo published by the careful and old established firm of John Murray.*

There will be found new facts of a kind that cannot easily be shirked or ignored. Contemporaries who knew the secret of the Baconian authorship are pointed out, and the passages showing this knowledge are quoted. The difference between Shake-speare of Gray's Inn and Shakspere of Stratford is pointed out and accounted for; and, stranger still, Bacon is shown to have put his secret signature to cer-

* 'Is it Shakespeare?' (John Murray, 1903).

tain of his poetical productions in a very prominent manner. And since the book was published three more signatures have been discovered.

But these signatures are by no means the fresh evidence I particularly allude to. These signatures may go the way of Donnelly and of Mrs. Gallup, and the new evidence will be in no way affected.

Since the principal orthodox Shakespearian champions 'made up their minds' some ten or twenty or more years have passed, and the problem as presented *now* to a mind with all its faculties open has been much altered in appearance; but the old orthodox parties, with their settled convictions, seem blind to the new features. If asked to notice and recognise this great alteration, their reply is virtually the old 'non possumus' of orthodox belief. But the new features are very striking. Here are just two of them only:—

1. Till very recently the great Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon was considered 'impossible' as a poet. Spedding, the highest authority, had declared that no five lines of Bacon's voluminous works could be mistaken for Shakespeare by any man who knew Bacon's style. This absolutely

confirmed the old Shakespearians in their error, and many cannot shake off Spedding's great authority yet. But *we know now*—Spedding knew it—that Bacon in early life was devoted to literature of the dramatic and imaginative kind,—that it was the one thing that his *genius* was fitted for, and that he was never quite at home or happy in his legal studies, though through them his advancement in life must needs come. In spite of Bacon's determination to conceal it, he was essentially a poet of the highest order, as far as the alchemy of words and similes was concerned. His special genius this way has been well described as that of a 'glorified orator,' and though the orthodox party seem consistently to ignore it, Bacon has been praised as a great, and in some instances a supreme, poet by a *catena* of contemporaries and friends who are above suspicion of undue flattery to a dead man. He was made Chancellor of Parnassus in 1644 (George Wither), and in the 'Manes Verulamiani,' published in 1640, he has a host of writers attesting his intimate relation with the Muses.

That Bacon translated a few Psalms very badly (as they said), when he was an old man, was considered quite sufficient to reject at once all Bacon's claims as a possible candidate for the

But it was
then that
he was sup-
posed to
have made
the altera-
tions in
the First
Book of the
Psalms.

poems and plays of William Shakespeare. So that settled the controversy as against Bacon.

2. The orthodox party held that the controversy was most convincingly and definitely settled as in favour of Shakspeare, by the acknowledged fact that all his contemporaries accepted him as the author without demur or hesitation. This 'fact' has to go. Its foundations have been sapped, and its assertions cannot maintain their ground.

Many of his contemporaries *did* know Bacon's secret, and half lifted the veil that concealed it, by their published satires and epigrams and plays. None of them, it is true, spoke out clearly and distinctly, for there would be the Star Chamber and libels and scandals to be faced, and none of the old school of Shakespearians seemed to have even an inkling of what was alluded to.

Hall, Marston, and Ben Jonson, in 'The Poetaster,' were among the few that *did* know and *did* speak, but there were far more of Bacon's contemporaries who knew but *did not speak*. I cannot account for the extraordinary reticence and complete absence of allusion with regard to Shakespeare in many quarters where one would expect quite the reverse, except by the hypothesis

that they were *in the secret*, and therefore intentionally kept silence.

Consider the remarkable case of Henslowe's 'Diary'; nearly all the playwrights are mentioned again and again, but not a word about the greatest of them all, and not a single play connected with his name. Then there was Gabriel Harvey, and his friend and correspondent Spenser, and his enemy and correspondent Nash—but nothing about the Stratford genius.

In fact, there seems to have been an 'etiquette of silence' concerning that mysterious man whose name was on so many title pages, and whose singular portrait must have met many eyes in Jacobean times.

Many distinguished writers never mention him anywhere in their works, and others, such as Heylin in his 'Microcosmos,' and Bolton in his 'Hypercritica,' although both treating of the poets of the age, leave out all mention of Shakespeare's poems, popular as they undoubtedly were. But more striking still is what the anonymous author of 'Wit's Recreations' (1640) says in an epigram 'To Mr. William Shake-speare':—

'Shake-speare, we must be silent in thy praise,
'Cause our encomiums will but blast thy bayes
Which envy could not.'

Why was silence so necessary? What could blast the credit of the immortal 'bayer' unless it should be some hidden scandal or *mendacium famæ* which must be suppressed and forgotten,* or some charge of Atheism?

The one cause which, more than all others, has made even the most acute and experienced critics of Shakespeare so absolutely confident about the actor author is this. They held it to be a certainty that all contemporary evidence was in favour of Shakspeare's authorship, and that there was not a single writer of that age who, if he made any references to the subject at all, did not always express himself in a way to utterly exclude Bacon from having any possible part in the matter. We know now that there was good evidence before their eyes in more than one author, but they were perfectly blind to it.

Gerald Massey must have devoted years to his huge books on the 'Sonnets.' One quarto lies before me now of 500 pages, small print, on this part of Shakespeare alone, and this is his opinion at p. 379, ed. 1888.

He holds firmly that Ben Jonson and every-

* For this conspiracy of silence see further in 'Is it Shakespeare?' pp. 234, 235.

body else of that time 'did everything to prove that Bacon did not write the plays, but you've only got to stand on your head, or go off it altogether, to reverse all that and see that Bacon *was* the real author.' And thus even the best authorities used to scoff and jeer, and abuse would follow in most cases; but my recent experience of many remarkable correspondents has led me to believe that such conduct is almost a sure sign that they feel they are getting the worst of the argument, and so fall back on jeers and abuse as their last resource. This is a favourite method with the low-class pressman when at a loss for further matter.

But if the only faults or defects that could be charged against the orthodox critics were their blindness and inattention to new evidence, they would not be altogether without excuse or defence. But they are such 'absolute knaves,' and so abominably abusive as well. To vary a well-known couplet, I would say of them:—

'Abusive words admit of no defence,
For mere abuse is always want of sense.'

I am ready enough to admit that the increasing body of Baconian heretics has some 'cranks' among its members, and I dare say one or two

'frauds' as well (whether conscious or unconscious of their fraud I know not), but what I urge is that the moderate or average Baconian does not deserve to be called the advocate of an 'irrational' theory, neither does he deserve downright abuse and scorn.

As one of the best ways of dealing with bad half-crowns is to nail them down to the counter, where the public can notice them, so, I think, it will be profitable to exhibit some of these abusive *mauvais sujets* of literature in the pages of the present volume.

I will begin with a very mild specimen. Mr. Grant White says:—

'The notion that Bacon wrote "Titus Andronicus," "Hamlet," "King Lear," and "Othello," is not worth five minutes' consideration by any reasonable creature.'

Now for something stronger.

In 1895 a certain Mr. J. J. Foard wrote a lecture called 'The Bacon-Shakespeare Craze,' which was inserted in the 'Papers of the Manchester Literary Club' (p. 290, etc.). He asks:—

'Why do a number of men and women—grossly ignorant, it is true—devote themselves to the fraud and cheat of pretending to dethrone

Shakspeare? Why do they frame false history, forge documents, assert to be truth what they know to be untruth, for the poor and pitiful, the beggarly reward of dishonourable notoriety? . . . Save and except those who are crazy, they are mean and contemptible cheats all.'

Is this Manchester Literary Club a well-known institution? Do its members often use such language? or is this an exceptionally impulsive member, whose zeal for the moment outran his discretion? I hope the last is the correct view.

But really such people deserve some kind of castigation; a harmless and humorous, but expressive, epithet might do them good. Will someone supply it?

But enough of such low class abuse. I will dismiss this unpleasant subject with the admission that there are great faults among the anti-Shakespeareans as well—faults of over-assertion, faults of pure ignorance, faults of obsession by a predominant idea, which, alas! have more than once led to madness or pronounced crankiness.

There have been cranks who have attributed to Bacon nearly all the best Elizabethan literature. There have been others who have *worked up* (unconsciously, I hope) ciphers and revelations of Bacon's history and Bacon's translation of

Homer which have even, as I know by personal letters to myself, made prominent Baconians give up all interest in the question.

Then the Rosicrucians and Freemasons are brought into the argument, and it is the endeavour of many prominent upholders of the Baconian theory to connect Francis Bacon with them. There is not so much harm in this last attempt *per se*, but the mistake made is in the way the subject is handled. The rise of the Rosicrucian literature (*circa* 1614) is not an easy theme even for an adept in occultism, and yet the occasional articles in *Baconiana* and elsewhere show such utter ignorance of the true historical aspects of the matter that they disgust even that omnivorous receiver, the general reader.

I do not, of course, write thus in angry condemnation; on the contrary, I am only too sorry that the truth should have these hindrances, preventing for the present its ultimately prevailing power. But it was so in the very beginning, as the following extract will show. It is taken from,—

The | Romance of Yachting; | Voyage the
First | By Joseph C. Hart | Author of *Miriam*
Coffin &c. | New York | Harper and Brothers,
Publishers | 82 Cliff Street | 1848. |

As the book is not to be found in the British Museum, it may be worth while to make a few abstracts from it, just to show the kind of critic it was that first broached the anti-Shakespearian tap. Here is *his* account of Shakspere of Stratford :—

‘He grew up in ignorance and viciousness, and became a common poacher—and the latter title in literary matters he carried to his grave. He was not the mate of the literary characters of the day, and no one knew it better than himself. It is a fraud upon the world to thrust his surreptitious fame upon us. He had none that was worthy of being transmitted. . . . Whoever has looked into the original editions of his dramas will be disgusted with the obscenity of his allusions. They absolutely teem with the grossest impurities—more gross by far than can be found in any contemporary dramatist. . . .

‘This was the secret of his success with the playgoers. . . . It brought *money* to the house. . . . Whalley speaks of Shakespeare’s *remarkable modesty*, but Gifford, the best critic England ever had, observes, “*We shall be at a loss to discover it.*” “His offensive metaphors and allusions,” says Steevens, “are undoubtedly more frequent than those of all his predecessors or contemporaries.” His profanity is thus noticed by Gifford: “He is in truth the Coryphæus of

profanation." "All his sonnets are licentious," says another.'

And so Mr. Joseph C. Hart rambles on for many pages of his book (pp. 209-243). I should never have had the chance of hearing the first Shakespearian heretic unless another American, of most remarkable qualifications, had in 1888 published a small work entitled, 'Was THE Shakespeare, after all, a Myth?' And here we are favoured with long extracts from Hart's very rare work, and with some extra remarks by that extra-qualified American, I. Watts de Peyster, LL.D., etc.*

Another writes thus :—

'The idea of Lord Bacon's having written Shakspeare's plays can be entertained only by folk who know nothing of either writer, or are crackt, or who enjoy the paradox or joke. If

* These are his qualifications:— Master of Arts, Columbia College of New York, 1872; Hon. Member Clarendon Hist. Soc., Edinburgh, Scotland; of the New Brunswick Hist. Soc., St. John, Canada; of the Hist. Soc. of Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, etc.; Life Member Royal Hist. Soc. of Great Britain, London, England; Member Maatschappij Nederlandsche Letterkunde, Leyden, Holland, etc.; Colonel, N.Y.S.I., 1846, assigned for *meritorious conduct* to command of 22nd Regimental District, etc.

Judge Holmes's book is not meant as a practical joke, like Archbishop Whately's *Historic Doubts*, or proof that Napoleon never lived, then he must be set down as characteristic-blind, like some men are colour blind. I doubt whether any so idiotic suggestion, etc., etc. The tomfoolery of it is infinite.' Furnivall.

A letter to an American friend by a literary critic of eminence in England runs as follows :—

'Not a single adherent of any weight has joined the Baconian party here. A few persons that believe we are the Ten Tribes, and that Arthur Orton was Sir Roger Tichborne, and that Tennyson's sister was the author of "In Memoriam"—people for whom evidence does not exist, and who love paradox for its own sake—form the whole Baconian schism over here' (E. Gosse).

An anti-Baconian (Mr. Rolfe) says the plays show from internal evidence that 'they must have been written by Shakspeare, or by some man whose education or experience were like his.' The author clearly shows us in the plays and 'Sonnets' that he is no scholar. 'His life is a key to much that would otherwise be perplexing in his works.'

Lastly, in the *Academy*, April 2, 1898, Mr. Sidney Lee says :—

‘During the past eight months I have been the recipient of numerous communications directing my attention to the crazy theory that Bacon was the author of Shakspeare’s plays. . . . I therefore desire to put on record the fact, as one admitting to my mind of no rational ground for dispute, that there exists every manner of contemporary evidence to prove that Shakspeare, the householder of Stratford-on-Avon, wrote with his own hand, and exclusively by the light of his own genius, . . . those dramatic works which form the supreme achievement in English literature.

‘The defective knowledge and casuistical argumentation, which alone render another conclusion possible, seem to me to find their closest parallel in the ever popular delusion that Arthur Orton was Sir Roger Tichborne.’

A year later, April 24, 1899, we have the same ‘cocksure’ gentleman bearing witness at a dinner of the Birmingham Dramatic Club. Here, it being after dinner, he assumes the rôle of the facetious witness, and gets roars of laughter in court, as well as applause. Among much else, he said with reference to our subject:—

‘There is no law of evidence which, when applied to Shakspeare’s biography, justifies in the brain of any man of ordinary capacity the smallest doubt that the inhabitant of Stratford-on-Avon,

William Shakspere, whose tomb in Stratford Church bears the contemporary attestation, and no other, was the greatest man of letters of his day. (Applause.) There was no reasonable room for doubt that Shakspere of Stratford wrote the plays which were published under his full name, and were commended to the reading public just after his death by his friend Ben Jonson, as the outpourings of the voice of his "beloved" Shakespeare, "sweet Swan of Avon." (Applause.) The noxious Baconian bacillus was very much alive in the brains of men in all parts of the world. (Laughter.) It was a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Bacon was no poet. He tried to write verse, and failed miserably. He (Mr. Lee) undertook to prove to any impartial jury who were pledged to abide by the spurious logic of the Baconians, that every poem usually assigned to Lord Tennyson was really the exercise of Mr. Gladstone's recreation (laughter), or that the volumes that had come forth under the present Poet Laureate's name were the ejaculations of the muse of their distinguished fellow townsman—Mr. Chamberlain.' (Renewed laughter.)

This is really quite mild and pleasantly jocose for Mr. Sidney Lee. He can be, and has been, positively nasty to a degree in his utterances against the Baconians, and I think some one ought

to remind him that as Prince Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses, 'durst not bring against him a railing accusation,' so also Mr. Solomon Lazarus Levi, as one of God's ancient people, should take example by that 'great prince which standeth up for' the children of Israel (Dan. xi. 1); and if in these latter times there happens to be a contention about the 'body' of Shakspeare, or, in other words, about the *corpus dramaticum* of the First Folio of 1623 and its author, he should not bring a *railing accusation* against the Baconian heretics, even if he thinks them past praying for.

The determined and abusive opposition of the chief literary luminaries of our country to the Baconian theory has been called a 'psychological puzzle,' but I think it can be explained in a simpler way. The last paragraph of a review on Galileo's life (just published) suggested it to me:—

'Truly the one unpardonable sin, the heresy for which there is no absolution, was to think with and sympathize with Galileo. For he had made the great men of his day ridiculous, and that they could never forgive.'*

For Galileo's heresy substitute the Baconian

* *Daily Chronicle*, October 19, 1903.

heresy, and a simple explanation, quite consonant with human frailty, follows.

But there are methods of treating an opponent even worse than using the unbridled license of jeers and abuse. The treatment which Judge Webb and Dr. R. M. Theobald received from Mr. J. Churton Collins is one of the worst phases of that shifty expert criticism which has yet been revealed. However, the full correspondence concerning this has been published by the injured party, Dr. Theobald,* and there is therefore no need to refer to it further here.

But enough of jeers and abuse. Let us now turn to the imaginative powers of the devout Shakespearians.

I will begin with the following gentleman, chiefly on account of his turning the tables on the Baconians and trying to make out Shakspeare the author of Bacon. He is described as a Major in the 4th Lancashire Artillery Volunteers, and he tells us that he sat on one of the miserere stalls in Stratford chancel with Ralph Waldo Emerson one Sabbath morning, so he ought to be worth listening to.

He says :—

* 'The Ethics of Criticism, illustrated by Mr. Churton Collins,' by R. M. Theobald, M.A. Watts and Co., 1904.

‘ In this our age, when doubt of anything has lost novelty, even the existence of him in whom the literary expression of English thought had as yet found its culmination is impudently drawn within the province of scepticism, and a daring endeavour is made to instal a contemporary unprincipled lawyer on the pinnacle of him acknowledged by the universal world as the one of all others whose name can never die, his experience being co-extensive with every field of human knowledge. . . .

‘ The delight that some men take in trying to upset history and tradition is but the envy of miserably small and discontented minds yearning for notoriety rather than desire for true knowledge.

‘ Of such is the wretched attempt to dethrone Shakspeare. . . . Because Francis Bacon was the most omniscient of men, they presume him to have written the plays attributed to Shakspeare. No true student of Shakspear promulgates such nonsense. . . .

‘ This eminent lawyer and philosopher, Bacon, who is pretended to have produced such pure and exalted ideas, is handed down to us in history as of a very base character. In obsequiousness, subserviency, jealousy, meanness, and ingratitude, he distanced all mankind. As a judge, a friend, and an advocate his conduct was equally contemptible. . . . He confessed his guilt, and

suffered penalty and degradation. Would it not be nearer the truth to say that it is an impossibility that such a man could have written what are called "Bacon's works," and that Shakspeare was the real author of the philosophy in question? There is far more reason in this theory. . . . It is within the bounds of reason to inquire whether Shakspeare be not really the author of Bacon's "Essays," and, indeed, all that scheme which the world is pleased to call Baconian, forasmuch as all the world knows that Shakspeare was contemporary with Francis Bacon and was a brilliant wit. . . . It is highly probable that Shakspeare was too timid and reserved to offer his work in his own name, especially seeing he was a popular writer of plays, and hence he assumed that of a friendly lawyer, preferring to appear by attorney. How improbable, then, that this lawyer, who falsely bears the palm, could have produced such pure and exalted ideas, seeing his base and degraded character!

A little further on this author tells us how he had the good fortune

'to accompany Ralph Waldo Emerson on a visit to the shrine at Stratford. . . . It was on a Sabbath morning we attended together the service in Holy Trinity Church. We occupied two of the remarkable miserere stalls in the chancel.'

His book is entitled 'Shakespeare's True Life,'

and it runs to 400 imperial octavo pages. Naturally, much of this must be the record of events outside of Shakspeare's life, for the player's life could not afford material enough of itself—*e.g.*, the year 1592 is partly filled in by an account of how that 'Shakspeare and Bacon had been jointly engaged in getting up one or more of his plays at Gray's Inn,' and it begins with the saying 'they should be frequently together in the eminently charming retreat just acquired by Bacon at the munificent hand of Elizabeth's favourite.'

He then refers to the statement that Shakspeare and Bacon had a special fondness for the two old cedars at Twickenham, and spent much time in reading and converse 'under the shade of these wide-spreading venerable trees.'

'At this time when these two mightiest of intellects were communing together in the garden, Bacon's consummate taste was perfecting, and Shakspeare's dramas had evinced their vast superiority over all others. . . . Tears and laughter, the inseparable attendants of surpassing genius, burst forth,' etc.

Ohe! jam satis. How can such books find readers? I suppose it is partly the fine writing and the beautiful (?) sentiments.

He has a chapter on 'Shottery: Sweet Anne

Hathaway.' His earliest muse thus addressed her :—

‘ If my soul check thee, that I come so near,
Swear to my blind soul that I was thy Will,
And Will, thy soul knows, is admitted there ;
Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.’

Then follows an account of the village, the cottage, and the well :—

‘ In the front of the cottage, near the doorway, is the well, deep and moss-grown, where by aid of the accustomed bucket, deliciously cool and refreshing draughts are ever ready on the hottest summer day. How many thousands have here slaked thirst, and how increasingly great will the army of devotees yearly become as time rolls onwards, and his words of wisdom and profound knowledge of human life and action shall be more known and appreciated ! What a privilege to drink at the same fountain at which he drank from the hand of sweet Anne !’ and so on.

This is what ‘ fetches ’ the readers of the lower middle class, and, I fear, some, too, who are considerably higher. This gentleman was a friend of Sir Theodore Martin, and dedicates his book to him.

Some of the American writers who deal with this subject give themselves a freer rein still. On the other side of the Atlantic there seems more

interest in Ann Hathaway than we can manage to 'work up' in the mother country. 'Cannot we bring Anne Hathaway into the "Sonnets" or plays?' This seems often in their thoughts.

One critic, Parke Godwin (Boston, 1900), takes Sonnet CXXX. to refer to Ann Hathaway, for the reason that no true poet or gallant sonneteer would ever apply such language as there is in that sonnet to a real lady. He seems to think it must be some coarse damsel of the Blowsibella type who is addressed. Therefore we have here, he thinks, 'a glimpse of the rustic country wench who inveigled Shakspeare into a premature marriage,' etc.

Again, he fancies that 'sweet Anne Page' might represent Ann Hathaway. She had spirit enough to run away without getting her parents' consent; she was older than her husband, etc.

But, anyhow, our American cousin feels sure that the beautiful Sonnet XVIII. was written to Ann Hathaway. He lets his imagination carry him forward thus:—

'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate,'

Etc., *ad finem*.

'As the lad repeated these lines to the girl, either at Shottery, her home, or in his father's

house, she, if she was the woman I take her to have been, threw her arms about him, and gave him some hearty kisses, exclaiming: "Oh, Willie boy, if ever there was a poet, you are one, but, alas! you make too much of my good looks: for remember that I am older than you are, and beauty is a thing that soon decays."

' "Does it?" he reflected, as he went away thoughtfully. And the next time they were alone he gave her *his* version of that question in Sonnet CIV.'

Some greater writers, too, give loose rein to their imagination on this important subject.

Dr. George Brandes, whose ability to discuss deep Shakspeare problems none can dispute, thus 'fills up' the large canvas he has taken to work upon (two thick volumes, large 8vo.) out of his inner consciousness. He has to tell us that Shakspeare about the year 1613 left London altogether to live permanently at Stratford. This is how he does it:—

'That must have been a momentous day in Shakspeare's life on which, after giving up his house in London, he mounted his horse and rode back to Stratford-on-Avon to take up his abode there for good. . . . The journey took three days. He would put up at the inns at which he was accustomed to stay on his yearly journeys to

and fro, and where he was always greeted as a welcome guest, and given a bed with snow white sheets, for which travellers on foot were charged an extra penny, but which he, as rider, enjoyed gratis. The hostess at Oxford, pretty Mistress Davenant, would give him a specially cordial greeting. The two were old and good friends. Little William, born in 1606, and now seven years old, possessed a certain, perhaps accidental, resemblance of feature to the guest.

‘As Shakspeare rode on, Stratford would, as Hamlet says, rise “before his mind’s eye.” A life of daily companionship with his wife was to begin afresh after a break of twenty-eight years. She was now fifty-seven. . . . There could be no intellectual bond between them after so long a separation, and their married life was but an empty form.’

The learned doctor spares us Mrs. William Shakspeare’s remarks over their first cup of tea together; he has the merit of literary reserve so far, but such biographical details are not very convincing.

‘It is to be regretted, and it is indeed somewhat extraordinary, that not a fragment of the bard’s poetry addressed to his Warwickshire beauty [Anne Hathaway] has been rescued from oblivion; for that the muse of Shakspeare did not lie dor-

mant on an occasion so propitious to her inspiration we must believe, both from the custom of the times and from his own amatory disposition. He himself has told us that

“ Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs.”

‘ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 342.’

Some of the popular biographies of our great national poet have been padded out with the veriest sentimental and imaginative trash that ever has been written on the life of any genuine historical character. I shall not dwell upon it now, although I believe it has a great deal to do with the persistent disinclination of the man in the street and the man on the press to listen to anything that might depreciate the great national idol of literature or tend to remove him from his pedestal. I therefore give but one instance out of many, the offender being a Mr. Fullom, who wrote a biography in 1862 which had a large circulation, and was issued by one of the first publishers of the day.

He is dealing with young William as a butcher's boy. His evidence is correct enough, and fairly quoted. The parish clerk of Stratford-on-Avon told Dowdall in 1693 that Shakspeare was bound apprentice to a butcher. Possibly he was, for in

1578, when he was fourteen, his father had fallen into bad circumstances, and had to raise money. The gossip Aubrey confirms the record, and adds that he would kill a calf 'in a high style and make a speech.'

'Ah!' says Fullom (p. 81), 'could we but recover one of those orations! Crude it would be, no doubt, but we should see mind sparkling through it—the precious metal veining the quartz. We may imagine there was a flavour of Touchstone and a spice of Autolycus in the harangue, something of Jacques in the forest, and something of Hamlet in the churchyard.'

What rubbish! Yet this is the kind of writing that some people are accustomed to call 'fine,' 'beautiful!' etc. All I can say is that I have been thoroughly sickened with it, for the quantity one has to wade through when comparing notes for the *facts* of Shakspeare's life is simply enormous. Some Lives of Shakspeare seem almost made up of this kind of sentimental rant, or at least in Falstaff's proportion of an intolerable quantity of sack to a pennyworth of sustaining bread.

Shakspeare was a butcher's boy, sure enough. Says Mr. Fullom:—

'We hear the squeak of the pig in this passage:—

‘“ Weke, weke ! so cries a pig prepar’d to the spit.”
Titus Andronicus, IV. ii. 146.

Even the lesser operations are touched upon :—

‘“ And this way I take upon me to wash your liver as a sound sheep’s heart.”—*As You Like It*, III. ii. 386.

Falstaff knows how the little Aceldama is cleaned out :—

‘“ Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher’s offal ?”—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. v. 4.

And he catches a glimpse of the shop itself when the poet speaks of “ butchers killing flies.”
 “ *Coriolanus*,” IV. vi. 95.’

Ohe ! jam satis. If any readers want any more of this gentleman’s fine sentiment and convincing evidence, I would refer them to p. 119 and p. 123, where he deals with Ann Hathaway and the power of love. But for a change of air let us cross the Channel.

One of the strangest pieces of Shakespearian criticism is, of course, Voltaire’s judgment. I cannot pretend to explain how so masterly a critic and so fine a satirist and dramatist could make such a portentous error, but his view was that Shakspeare was ‘a writer of monstrous Farces, called by him Tragedies’; and he pro-

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nounced 'Hamlet' to be 'the work of a drunken savage.'

This criticism has one merit, certainly; that is, it is expressed with perfect freedom from all conventional ideas. We get such gems of merit even now-a-days. Here is one I jotted down from a weekly review some time ago, by a critic who thinks Shakspear 'overrated':—

'The lines put into the actor's mouth to indicate the fact that Hamlet is a philosopher are for the most part mere harmonious platitudes which, with a little debasement of the word music, would be properer to Pecksniff.'

The nonsense that capable critics write about Shakspeare is really surprising. Take this as one example among many:—

'Shakspeare never killed a man as Jonson did; his voice was never heard, like Marlowe's, in tavern brawls; nor was he ever, like Marston or Chapman, threatened with the penalty of having his ears lopped off and his nose slit; but his life was so gentle and so clear in the sight of man and of Heaven that no record of it has come down to us; for which failure I am fervently grateful, and as fervently hope that no future year will ever reveal even the faintest peep through the divinity which doth hedge this king.' (H. Furness, Preface

to 'Much Ado About Nothing' in the Variorum Edition.)

This rubbish finds hearty acceptance with thousands of orthodox worshippers!

When Mr. Tyler's book, about the 'Sonnets' of Shakspeare and Mary Fitton, first came out, there was some fluttering in the dovecotes of the Shakespeare Society of New York. They felt that though Mr. Tyler might be severely orthodox, yet this new discovery of his—that Mary Fitton, the Queen's Maid of Honour, had been attracted by William Shakspeare, and ultimately became his mistress—was rather against the usual orthodox view of William.

As a reviewer in the New York Shakespeare Society journal said (vol. vii., p. 257):—

'For a raw country lad who lived in a mid-English sixteenth-century village until he was eighteen, Shakspeare seems to have speedily had London at his feet; lording it ineffably over his elders and fellows in the profession; he struts arm-in-arm with Southampton and Pembroke, steals their mistresses from them, and intrigues with the ladies of the Court.'

Yes, I agree that this Shakspeare-Fitton mésalliance does seem a trifle 'high.' But I'm a heretic,

and don't believe it. The way in which Shakspeare's admirers have bestowed upon him well nigh every accomplishment under the sun is sometimes very amusing. Mr. William Blades has written a book (Triibner, 1872) showing the great technical knowledge of printing that is to be found in the plays, and suggests that Shakespeare may have worked in Field's shop. But two can play at this game of suggestions, and Mrs. Stopes has hinted that the 'dark lady' of the 'Sonnets' might be Jacqueline Vautrollier, a female relation of Field's by marriage; and since Bacon is the author of the 'Sonnets,' we have a fancy view of Bacon pressing Jacqueline's lovely fingers amidst the lifeless presses and types of Field's back premises. Whether the 'dark lady' could use the composing stick with effect we are not told, but we learn from the 'Sonnets' that she was pretty quick with the 'Jacks.'

I cannot understand why there should be such a strong general feeling of dislike shown to any attempt to put Bacon in Shakspeare's place. If Bacon were the better man, and had better claims as well, why should he not be accepted? Why this frantic and furious refusal to give up Shakspeare? The fact is, one has been idealized and idolized into a being almost perfect, and the other

has been depreciated into the 'meanest of mankind.' The words, the sentiments, the philosophy, of the immortal plays have all been held to show what a wonderful and sublime genius Shakspeare was;—the few facts of his life, which are of a most commonplace order, are passed over without notice, and the eyes of the devout Shakespearians remain fixed on the ideal man, the glorious poet, the sublime philosopher. While as for Bacon, the very thought of *such* a man being put forward as the genius of the wonderful plays is positively repulsive and painful to every man or woman who has a scrap of interest in the glories of English literature. But why so? If Bacon and Shakspeare were standing prisoners at the bar on any charge where previous character was an important element in the trial, which would have the best record of the two, and which could bring forward the strongest and most unexceptionable witnesses in his favour? Bacon, undoubtedly. There is little on record to Shakspeare's credit except his 'honesty' in theatrical dealings, which included brokerage and the collection of a long-scraped stock of old manuscript plays. He was very imprudent as a young man in several respects, and other failings are on record; but his admirers view their idol through glasses which effectually obscure

everything but the halo which sentiment, imagination, tradition, and conventional opinion, have placed above his noble and intellectual brow. And just as Shakspeare has been generally unjustifiably glorified, so has Bacon been generally abominably libelled and unfairly represented.

The great charge against Bacon, through which he fell from his high estate, is nearly always thought to be worse than it really was. He had filled the office of Lord Chancellor for a space of four years when the accusation was brought against him, and he had done as good a four years' work as ever man performed in that same high and arduous position. Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, his predecessor, was an old and dilatory man, who had occupied the Woolsack for twelve years when almost past work, and in consequence there was left an enormous arrear of causes for hearing. Bacon set to work admirably, and with conspicuous ability made a clearance of no less than 8,000 orders and decrees in his first four terms, and in his four years he had decided over 10,000 cases.

'Never any decree made by him,' says Rushworth, 'was reversed as unjust.' And his best biographers allow that there was no single case of proved injustice. Out of all these 10,000 cases

and more, his enemies only raked up against him twenty-two cases of alleged corruption; and though some of these cases were acknowledged by all parties, they did not amount to more than taking presents and money from one or both parties, or, rather, allowing his servants and attendants to do so—a wrong practice, undoubtedly, but one so often in vogue in high places that no stigma of moral corruption was attached to it. Nor do I think Bacon ever looked at the matter as one that blasted his character in any way, or thought that he was in any way morally guilty. He was technically guilty, but he had been the best Lord Chancellor for many a long year. He wrote again and again that he was innocent 'in his heart'; he had 'a clean heart' in the matter.

I do not think it is generally known that there is such a thing as a 'Shakspeare - mania,' and that some very illustrious people have fallen victims to it. One of the most striking cases is that of the famous Ludwig Tieck.

A carefully compiled monograph has just been published as a contribution to the history of the Shakspeare mania in Germany, with especial reference to Tieck.*

* Dominik Zelak, 'Tieck und Shakespeare.' Tarnopol, 1902.

Tieck's mania began when he was a schoolboy, and his first reading of 'Hamlet' under very trying atmospheric and cerebral disturbances is recorded at length in Zelak's interesting work. Tieck, like Delia Bacon, came to England, and made for Stratford as the one place where he could find some satisfaction and fulfilment for the aspirations and yearnings of his past life.

'Er, der Dichter,' says his biographer, 'stand in frommer Verehrung an der Wiege des Dichters, an dessen Geiste im fernen Lande und nach Jahrhunderten sich der seine entzündet, dessen Namen er im Herzen getragen hatte, seit er seiner selbst bewusst geworden.'

More fortunate than poor Delia, he kept quite clear of lunatic asylums, and there stands to his name a mass of literature, chiefly Shakespearian, filling several pages of the catalogue of the British Museum. When in England he sought out Coleridge, who promised readily to hear Tieck's exposition of his Shakspeare theory if he would come one evening and deliver it without break or interruption. Tieck came at ten, and began at once, and midnight had struck before he ended. Coleridge sat silent all the time, and, except the 'Good-night' at the door, said not a word at parting.

By arrangement they met again the next evening.

'I have thought over what you said,' began Coleridge, 'and I find you are right on many points. But, still,' continued Coleridge, 'I cannot accept them.'

'Why not?' said Tieck, very much surprised.

'Well, the truth is,' replied Coleridge, 'because they contradict all that our people have thought and written about Shakspeare here in England from the beginning until now.'

Tieck saw, says his German biographer, that such an argument was irresistible 'Gegen einen so nationalen Gesichtspunkt,' he made no opposition, and he and Coleridge were always firm friends.

My remark on the above anecdote is that the 'national point of view' seems still in possession of the field, and is still frequently backed up by a logic similar to that used by Coleridge, and equally powerful.

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