(c) What is the meaning of " So shalt thou feed on Death " ? The soul is to feed on (or at the expense of) the body, but how can it be said that " body " = " Death " ?

This sonnet has been greatly praised by a great many of the best judges ; MASEFIELD, for instance (than whom no one living is better qualified to give an opinion in such a matter), calls it the noblest of Shakespeare's sonnets. I have tried very hard to see it in this light, but with complete want of success. No one can deny that it possesses a majestic music of its own, or that its author had a fine ear for metrical cadence and a fine instinct for literary expression ; but still I cannot bring myself to believe that it was written by Shakespeare. This I regard as a most unfortunate circumstance ; I have not the slightest claim to pose as an authority in such matters, and it is only because I feel that everybody who undertakes the office of a commentator is bound, however ill-qualified he may be, to say what he really thinks about his author's work, that I have ventured to express so heterodox an opinion. I note briefly for what they are worth the reasons on which it is based :

1. The sonnet suffers throughout from *confusion of thought*. To me it seems an impossible task to determine at what points the poet passes from his ' clothes ' theme to his ' spiritual ' theme, and vice versa. This ambiguity, in the case of an author so well endowed with the gift of literary expression, is explainable only on the supposition that he has lost his grip on his logical thread—seduced perhaps by the music of his own verse—and is not very clear in the matter himself. Could one suppose such a thing of Shakespeare ?
2. The sentiment of the sonnet (as in sonnets 67 and 68) is typically puritanical in its appreciation of the sinfulness of little sins. Can one imagine Shakespeare solemnly sitting down to indite a sonnet to himself, condemning his extravagant expenditure on his wardrobe ?
3. The sonnet breathes a religious spirit throughout, and its author seems to have been a sincere Christian, profoundly conscious of the insignificance of this world as compared with the next. Can this be said of Shakespeare—I do not say the Shakespeare of the Serial sonnets, because their notably unchristian character may be accounted for on the hypothesis that the poets deferred to the Patron's tastes and wishes in such matters—but [1] the Shakespeare of the Plays ? It is no doubt true that Shakespeare never " unlock'd his heart," but still, is it too presumptuous to fancy that from the way in which he makes his great ' intellectual ' characters envisage the mystery of existence in the supreme emotional crises of their lives, one may gather some little inkling of his own mental attitude towards the radical problems of religion and philosophy ? One cannot help thinking that if Shakespeare had possessed a tithe of the faith which animated the author of

[1] I have spoken above (p. 181) of " the frank paganism of the Serial sonnets." But this is a libel on pagan religions and philosophies. The true ' Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets ' is an utterly soulless materialism. A great many of them deal with the greatest themes of all—Love, Time, Death—but anything less spiritual than the way these themes are handled it would be difficult to conceive. Love is nearly always one of two things : either a degrading passion for an unworthy mistress, or else such an emotional bond as may be supposed to exist between a vain and munificent patron on the one side and an obsequious sonnetteer on the other. Time is merely the arch-annihilator, and the only chance one has of defeating him is either to beget a son in one's own image, or else to get oneself written about by a fashionable poet. Death is the end of all things ; the dead poet dwells with worms for a space, and is then compounded with clay, while his spirit, "the better part of him," survives—in his verses! Of the ideas of Divine love, life as a preparation for eternity, the Resurrection and the Judgment, as of all the other great Christian tenets, there is no trace whatever. Such words as heaven, hell, angel, cherub, saint, devil, bless, religious, hallowed, cross, worship, etc., are common enough, but they are always used either metaphorically or else with a deliberately irreverent intention. We get " god " and " goddess," but the God of the Christians does not appear even once in the whole collection.

this sonnet, we should have had something a good deal less unchristian in sentiment than Hamlet's famous soliloquy on 'The Great Perhaps,' and Prospero's homily to the newly-plighted lovers on the theme:

> . . . We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

III.—AMATORY AND EROTIC SONNETS. (Nos. 128, 138, 145, 151, 153-154.)

Six trifling pieces of little interest—literary or otherwise.

128.

POOLER notes, "Un-Shakespearean in sound and rhythm." I cordially agree.

138.

Almost certainly by Shakespeare; it is written in his manner, and is much superior to the *Passionate Pilgrim* version.

145.

Puerile in conception and amateurish in execution. Shakespeare *couldn't* have written it.

151.

Not, I think, by Shakespeare—this sort of thing is not characteristic of his *verse*.

153-154.

POOLER notes, "Prof. Dowden gives what seems to be the ultimate origin of this and the following sonnet, as discovered by Hertzberg in the Greek Anthology *Epigrammata* (Jacob) ix. 65 and i. 57; by Marianus and Zenodotus respectively." Zenodotus' epigram is not much to the point, but Marianus' is. It is thus translated by POOLER: "Here under the plane trees, overcome with soft slumber, slept Eros, after giving his torch in charge of the nymphs. Then, said the nymphs, to one another, 'Why hesitate? Would that with this we had extinguished at the same time the fire in the heart of men.' But when the torch kindled the very waters, the water is hot that the amorous (?) nymphs pour thence into the bath."

POOLER notes against each sonnet, "Probably not by Shakespeare." Certainly the stiff-jointed versification and frigid conceits of 153 are not in the least like his work, while as for 154, though the two first quatrains are written gracefully enough, the last six lines are distinctly unShakespearean in style and rhythm. Note, too, in the lines—

> *And so* the general of hot desire
> *Was sleeping by a* virgin *hand dis*arm'd,

an obvious echo from the Ghost's speech in *Hamlet*—

> *Thus was I, sleeping, by a* brother's *hand*
> Of life, of crown, of queen, at once *dis*patch'd.

My own views, to which, as I have previously observed, I attach no special importance, are as follows:—

1. Shakespeare did not write either of these two sonnets.
2. They are the work of two different hands. No. 154 is so much the better version

of the two, that if the same author had written both, he would have been compelled by his sense of the fitness of things to destroy No. 153.

3. Both sonnets give one the impression of having been written 'with the eye on the object,' *i.e.*, on a picture or engraving, not on a mere passage in a book. If there happened to be such a concrete representation of Marianus' pen-picture hanging up in the seventeenth-century prototype of the King's Pump-Room at Bath, it might very well have inspired two 'distinguished strangers' to inscribe these two little poems in the seventeenth-century prototype of the Visitors' Album.

• • • • •

All the hundred and fifty-four sonnets have now been accounted for in five 'expository' chapters, of which this is the last. It is by these five chapters that The Theory must stand or fall. In other words, kind reader, the convention which has governed the writing of these chapters throughout, *i.e.*, the convention that "the first nine Propositions of The Theory have been proved and accepted as correct," now ceases to operate, and is delivered up to you for judgment. *Fiat justitia.*

The four chapters still remaining to be written are designed to be merely an appendix, in which the more important implications and corollaries of The Theory will be discussed from a rather different point of view, and in a rather less uncompromising spirit.

CHAPTER VII.—THE ORDER OF THE SONNETS.

As a recent editor (Mr. C. M. Walsh) well remarks :—

"The condition in which this edition [the 1609 Quarto] presents us Shakespeare's hundred and fifty odd sonnets is most unsatisfactory. Imagine even if the eighteen sonnets of Milton had been handed down without any superscriptions indicative of the persons addressed, or of the occasions on which they were composed ; how difficult it would be to make out their meaning ! Had Wordsworth's three or four hundred come to us in such naked shape, their case would have been hopeless. The slightest title imposed by the poet himself, with an occasional authoritative date, have a value which we hardly appreciate until we deal with such wastrels as Shakespeare's sonnets, that offer no such aids. Consequently, these sonnets present a mystery and set a problem."

The problem of their order has been attacked from many sides and by a great variety of writers. The extremists of one school see in the Quarto order nothing but an entirely arbitrary arrangement—sonnets sprinkled out of a pepper-box, so to speak—while the extremists on the other side find no difficulty in reading the whole collection as one continuous poem. Walsh's *Shakespeare's Complete Sonnets* is a good example of the 'pepper-box' school, while in Dowden's *Shakespeare's Sonnets* we have what is certainly the most thoughtful and reasonable presentment of the case from the 'continuous poem' point of view. Let us hear these two authorities speak for themselves.

Walsh says :—

> Thorpe's arrangement of the sonnets is as poor as could be expected of a purloiner who published stolen goods without a title, without a preface, and without a note, but with innumerable misprints and with two misstatements in the little information he did vouchsafe to give. We need not hesitate to pronounce it worthless. It is neither chronological nor according to subjects. It opens with the longest possible groups of sonnets, and so at the start conveys the impression of orderliness—a clever trick, which has deceived most of the subsequent editors. For the bell-wether was chosen one of the most striking of the sonnets, so that the series at once plunges *in medias res*. But after this group there is breaking up and a scattering. Occasionally two or three sonnets which obviously treat of the same subject, and of which one is a direct continuation of another, are brought into juxtaposition ; but these can be matched by others that plainly belong together and are placed apart. Almost all editors have complained of the inappropriate position of some particular sonnets. It is strange they do not admit unauthoritativeness in the entire sequence. Yet nothing can be plainer than that Thorpe's arrangement of the sonnets is of no more help to our understanding of their development than is the Folio-editors' arrangement of the plays.

Dowden says :—

> Various attempts have been made by English, French, and German students to place the sonnets in a new and better order, of which attempts no two agree between themselves. That the sonnets are not printed in the Quarto, 1609, at haphazard, is evident from the fact that the Envoy, cxxvi., is rightly placed ; that poems addressed to a mistress follow those addressed to a friend ; and that the two Cupid and Diana sonnets stand together at the close. A nearer view makes it apparent that in the first series, I.—CXXVI., a continuous story is conducted through various stages to its termination ; a more minute inspection discovers points of contact or connexion between sonnet and sonnet, and a natural sequence of thought, passion and imagery. We are in the end convinced that no arrangement which has been proposed is as good as that of the Quarto. But the force of this remark seems to me to apply with certainty only to sonnets I.—CXXVI. The second series, CXXVII.-CLIV., although some of its pieces are evidently connected with those which stand near them, does not exhibit a like intelligible sequence ; a better arrangement may perhaps be found ; or, it may be, no

possible arrangement can educe order out of the struggles between will and judgment, between blood and reason ; tumult and chaos are perhaps a portion of their life and being. . . . The sonnets may be divided at pleasure into many smaller groups, but I find it possible to go on without interruption from I. to XXXII., from XXXIII. to XLII. ; from XLIII. to LXXIV. ; from LXXV. to XCVI. ; from XCVII. to XCIX. ; from C. to CXXVI. I do not here attempt to trace a continuous sequence in the sonnets addressed to the dark-haired woman, CXXVII.-CLIV. ; I doubt whether such continuous sequence is to be found in them.

Now, when the case is viewed from the new standpoint provided by The Theory, the truth is seen to lie between these two extremes. The evidence (wholly internal) gives us the following solution of the problem.

The Solution.

The editor (in all probability T.T. himself), having before him a MS. of the sonnets arranged in their original thirteen series and one ' Occasional ' group precisely as they have been arranged in this book, decided to break up the series and rearrange the sonnets in such a way as to conceal their *competitive* character, and give them the appearance of having been written by a single author. He accordingly set to work as follows :—

(a) First he selected as the framework of his rearrangement the four longest series in the collection, *viz.*, M.A. (19), A. (21), P.E. (16), P.R. (17), plus a group made up of the three distinctively feminine series, *viz.*, I. (6), D.L. (12), and W. (4), added to the 14 non-serial or ' Occasional,' sonnets (36 altogether). This group may be called the " Mistress and Miscellaneous " group—M.M. for short.

(b) Then taking these four ' major ' series, he rearranged the sonnets in each series so as to substitute a ' natural sequence ' order for the original competitive order.

(c) Then taking the M.M. group, he removed all the sonnets (9) addressed to or referring to a *man*.

(d) Then, again, taking the four ' major ' series in the order M.A., A., P.E., and P.R., he proceeded to fill in the framework by ' working into ' them, singly or in batches, the sonnets of the six remaining ' minor ' series (E.D., B.I., D.D., P.P., M.P., E.A.) plus the ' rejections ' from the M.M. group—54 in all—on a system of ' catchwords ' designed to give the reader an impression of continuity. It is difficult to explain this catchword system without giving actual examples, but it will be sufficient to note here that the resemblances which attracted T.T.'s attention and led him to insert a ' minor ' sonnet (or sequence of sonnets) between two sonnets of a ' major ' series are very often—in fact nearly always—merely verbal, and of an entirely superficial character.

While doing this he also in a few cases shifted on the same catchword system a sonnet from one ' major ' series to another. (This shifting was practically confined to the A. series which has 8 out of 21 thus displaced, the rest having only 5 between them.)

(e) Then taking up the emasculated M.M. group he thoroughly broke it up, with the object of disguising the competitive character of its longest series, D.L. (12 sonnets), using his catchword system whenever he had a chance.

(f) Finally, he made a careful revision of the whole collection, and in several cases where he found that the juxtaposition of two sonnets had made the artificiality of his catchword system too glaringly obvious, he slightly altered their order.

" But," the reader will say, " this so-called ' solution ' is wide enough and vague enough to cover *any* arrangement of the sonnets ! " This, on the face of it, is very nearly true. But the case is really not so black as it looks, and he is respectfully requested to suspend final judgment until he has read to the end of this chapter and checked for himself the detailed analysis of the order which is now to be set before him.

Here then is a scheme of the *Sonnets* in their Quarto order, divided into five sections

on the principle noted above. *First,* M.A. section (42 sonnets); *Second,* A. section (33 sonnets); *Third,* P.E. section (33 sonnets); *Fourth,* P.R. section (18 sonnets); *Fifth,* M.M. group (28 sonnets).

1ST SECTION. (M.A.) NOS. 1-42.

M.A.
(1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17)

B.I. **M.A.** *B.I.* *M.P.* *E.D.* *A.* *P.R* *E.D.* *A.*
— *[18 + 19]* × **(20)** — *[21]* × *[22]* — *[23]* — *[24]* — *[25]* — *[26]* — *[27 + 28]* — *[29 +*

D.D. *M.P.* *P.P.* *P.R.* *D.D.* *E.D.* *M.P.* *I.*
30 + 31] — *[32]* × *[33 + 34 + 35]* — *[36]* — *[37]* — *[38]* — *[39]* — *[40 + 41 + 42]* ×

2ND SECTION. (A.) NOS. 43-75.

A. *E.A.* **A.** *B.I.* *P.R.*
(43 + 44 + 45 + 46 + 47 + 48) — *[49]* × **(50 + 51 + 52)** — *[53 + 54 + 55]* — *[56]* —

A. *P.E.* *B.I.* **A.** *B.I.* *O.* *P.P.*
(57 + 58) × *[59]* — *[60]* × **(61)** — *[62 + 63 + 64 + 65]* × *[66 + 67 + 68]* × *[69 + 70]* ×

M.P. **A.**
[71 + 72 + 73 + 74] × **(75)** ×

3RD SECTION. (P.E.) NOS. 76-108.

M.P. *O.* **P.E.** *B.I.* **P.E.**
[76] — *[77]* — **(78 + 79 + 80)** — *[81]* × **(82 + 83 + 84 + 85 + 86)** — *[87 + 88 + 89*

E.A. *P.P.* *A.* **P.E.**
+ 90 + 91 + 92 + 93] — *[94 + 95 + 96]* × *[97 + 98 + 99]* × **(100 + 101 + 102 +**

E.D. **P.E.** *O.* **P.E.**
103 + 104) × *[105]* × **(106)** — *[107]* × **(108)** ×

4TH SECTION. (P.R.) NOS. 109-126.

P.R. *A.* **P.R.**
(109 + 110 + 111 + 112) — *[113 + 114]* × **(115 + 116 + 117 + 118 + 119 + 120**

O. **P.R.** *M.A.*
+ 121) × *[122]* — **(123 + 124 + 125)** — *[126]* ×

5TH SECTION. (M.M. GROUP). NOS. 127-154.

D.L. **O.** **D.L.** **I.** **W.** **D.L.** **O.**
(127) . (128 . 129) . (130 + 131 + 132) — (133 + 134) — (135 + 136). (137) — (138) —

D.L. **W.** **I.** **O.** **D.L.** *E.A.* **D.L.**
(139 + 140 + 141) — (142 + 143) . (144) — (145 . 146) — (147 + 148) — *[149]* — **(150)**

O. **D.L.** **O.**
— **(151)** . **(152)** . **(153 + 154)**.

Five simple symbols are used :

(1). ( ) encloses a sonnet or sequence of sonnets belonging to a 'major' series in its own section, *e.g.*, **(78 + 79 + 80)**.

(2). [ ] encloses a sonnet or sequence of sonnets belonging to either (a) a 'major' series *outside* its own section, or (b) a 'minor' series, initials and numbers being italicised, *e.g.*, (a) *[113 + 114]*, (b) *[94 + 95 + 96]*.

(3). + before a sonnet indicates that it belongs to the same series as its predecessor.

(4). — before a sonnet indicates that it belongs to a different series from its predecessor, but is connected with it (the predecessor) either by natural sequence of thought or on the T.T. catchword system.

(5). × before a sonnet indicates that it belongs to a different series from its predecessor, and is not connected with it (the predecessor) either by natural sequence of thought or on the T.T. catchword system.

I shall now attempt to 'reconstitute the crime' section by section, first drawing the kind reader's attention to two points which he is requested to bear in mind when perusing my explanations.

Point No. 1. I shall not attempt to trace the connection between two sonnets joined by the symbol +, *i.e.*, sonnets of the same series changed by T.T. from their *competitive* order to their *natural sequence* order (*v.* para. (b) of the solution above). The connection is in all cases apparent ; and indeed the fact that two sonnets belong to the same series is alone enough to ensure a greater or less degree of connection between them, either in thought, or language, or both.

Point No. 2. DOWDEN (*v.* the extract from his edition quoted on p. 187 above) recognises only seven solutions of continuity in the first 126 sonnets, *viz.*, after Nos. 32, 42, 58, 74, 96, 99, and 126 itself. I accept all these seven, but I find that there are, in addition, no less then fifteen other points at which I am unable to trace any connection —either by natural sequence of thought, or by a T.T. catchword between a sonnet and the one which immediately follows it, *viz.*, after Nos. 19, 21, 49, 60, 65, 68, 70, 75, 81, 104, 105, 107, 108, 114 and 121. I have, therefore, marked all these points with the hiatus mark ×, making with the seven admitted by Prof. Dowden altogether twenty-two hiatuses which my 'Catchword' theory will have to explain away.

1ST SECTION. (M.A.) NOS. 1-42.

M.A.
(1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17)—

B.I. **M.A.** *B.I.* *M.P.* *E.D.* *A.* *P.R.* *E.D.* *A.*
[18 + 19] × **(20)** — *[21]* × *[22]* — *[23]* — *[24]* — *[25]* — *[26]* — *[27 + 28]* — *[29 +*

D.D. *M.P.* *P.P.* *P.R.* *D.D.* *E.D.* *M.P.* *I.*
30 + 31] — [*32*] × [*33 + 34 + 35*] — [*36*] — [*37*] — [*38*] — [39] — [40 + 41 + 42] ×

The reader is requested to observe that in this section the main or 'framework' series is not broken up by the insertion of 'foreign' sonnets as in the three other sections, but stands practically solid at the beginning, the foreign sonnets following it one after another on the catchword system like beads on a string. Now T.T.'s reason for adopting this procedure may have been, as WALSH says, to "convey the impression of orderliness"; but I am inclined to think, there was a still stronger reason, *viz.*, that he could not have done otherwise without exposing the artificiality of his catchword system. As I have noted above[1] ". . . in this series the central thought 'Marry and beget a son' swamps all the others. It predominates in all four of Shakespeare's sonnets, and appears more or less prominently in all except three (Nos. 15, 20, and 126) of the rest." The reader will observe that of the three sonnets mentioned in this extract, No. 15 is so obviously a continuation of 14 that it could not have been displaced without creating a suspicion of a deliberate rupture; No. 20 *is* separated from the solid block of the series by the only break in its continuity; and the twelve-lined No. 126 has been taken far away to the end of the fourth section to mark the division between the 'man' and 'woman' sequences of sonnets.

17.)-*18*[+. The 'live' in the last line of 17 and 18 might be regarded as the catchword connecting them, but it seems pretty clear that the original connection was between 17 and 19, and that we have here an example of a transposition effected on revision to conceal the too obvious catchwording.

17. Who will believe *my verse* in time to come,
And stretched metre of an *antique* song.
You should *live* twice, in it and *in my rhyme*.
19. Nor draw no lines there with thine *antique* pen;
My love shall *in my verse* ever *live* young.

+*19*]+(**20**). A 'natural' hiatus. The main series is continued after the insertion of *18+19*.

DOWDEN explains the connection as follows: "Shakespere, confident of the immortality of his friend in verse, defies Time."

(**20**)-[*21*]. Catchword, 'painted' in the first line of 20 and second line of 21.

[*21*] × [*22*]. Hiatus caused by transpositions made to conceal catchwording, the original connection having been between 19 and 22.

19. Yet do thy worst *old* Time; despite thy wrong
My love shall in my verse *ever live young*.
22. My glass shall not persuade me I am *old*
So long as *youth and thou are of one date*.

DOWDEN explains the connection as follows: "The praise of his friend's beauty suggests by contrast Shakspere's own face marred by time. He comforts himself by claiming his friend's beauty as his own."

[*22*]-[*23*]-[*24*]. These three sonnets are all connected by the catchwords 'heart' and 'breast.'

22. Is but the seemly raiment of my *heart*,
Which in thy *breast* doth live as thine in me:
Bearing thy *heart* which I will keep so chary

[1] p 26

23. Whose strength's abundance weaken his own *heart*,
And dumb presagers of my speaking *breast*.
24. Thy beauty's form in table of my *heart* ;
Are windows to my *breast*, . . .

There is a supplementary connection between 23 and 24, *viz.*, the peculiar performances of the human eye, described in the last line of 23 and the first and following lines of 24.

[*24*]-[*25*]. Catchword, ' The sun's eye.'

24. Are windows to my breast, where-through *the sun*
Delights to *peep*.
25. But as the marigold at *the sun's* eye,

[*25*]-[*26*]. Catchwords, ' move ' and ' love.'

25. Then happy I, that love and am *beloved*
Where I may not remove or be *removed*.
26. Till whatsoever star that guides my *moving*
And puts apparel on my tattered *loving*,

[*26*]-[*27*+]. Catchword, the ' moving ' of 26.9 suggests the ' journey ' of 27.3.

+*28*]-[*29*+]. Catchword, the ' sorrow ' and ' grief ' of the last line of 28 are echoed by the ' beweep ' of the second line of 29. Moreover, there is a close resemblance in tone and sentiment.

+*31*]-[*32*]. Catchwords, ' grave ' and ' love.'

31. Thou art the *grave* where *buried* love doth live,
Hung with the trophies of *my lovers gone*.
32. When that churl death *my bones with dust shall cover*,
These poor rude lines of *thy deceased lover*.

[*32*] × [*33*+*34*+*35*]. This batch of three P.P. sonnets has been displaced for much the same reasons as are responsible for the hiatus between 21 and 22, *i.e.*, sonnets have been transposed to conceal too-obvious catchwording. It would seem that T.T.'s original arrangement was as follows: 31 . 33 . 34 . 35 . 40 . 41 . 42 ., the catchwording being as follows—between 31—33, ' eye,' ' sovereign,' ' flattery.'

31. And there *reigns* love and all love's loving parts,
How many a holy and *obsequious* tear
Hath dear religious love stol'n from mine *eye*,
33. *Flatter* the mountain tops with *sovereign eye*.

and between 35—40, ' thief,' ' rob.'

35. To that *sweet thief* which sourly *robs* from me.
40. I do forgive thy *robbery, gentle thief*,

He subsequently inserted 32 between 31 and 33 (on the catchwords ' grave ' and ' love ' as noted above), and between 35 and 40 a string of four single sonnets, each connected with its predecessor by catchwords, as will be explained below.

DOWDEN admits the hiatus between 32 and 33.

+*35*]-[*36*]. A number of catchwords turning on the thought common to both sonnets, *viz.*, the poet's admission of his own sinfulness. Compare the ' faults,' ' trespass,' ' thyself corrupting,' and ' sins ' of 35 with the ' confess,' ' blots,' and ' bewailed guilt ' of 36.

[*36*]-[*37*]. Here also the connection is in the *sense*. The whole of 37 fits in very well as an expansion of the final couplet of 36.

. . . I love thee in such sort
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

[*37*]-[*38*]. Catchword, 'ten times.'

37. This wish I have; then *ten times* happy me!
38. Be thou the tenth Muse, *ten times* more in worth.

[*38*]-[*39*]. (a) Catchword, 'worth,' (b) very close similarity in form; 'how,' 'when' (rhetorical questions).

38. *How* can my Muse want subject to invent,
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in *worth*
39. O *how* thy *worth* with manners may I sing,
When thou art all the better part of me?

[*39*]-[*40*+]. (a) Catchwords, 'love' and 'deceive' (b) similarity in form; 'what'? (rhetorical question).

39. *What* can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
To entertain the time with thoughts of *love*,
Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth *deceive*.
40. *What* hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
I cannot blame thee for my *love* thou usest;
But yet be blamed, if thou thyself *deceivest*

+*42*] × Natural hiatus—the end of the section. DOWDEN admits hiatus.

2ND SECTION. (A.) NOS. 43-75.

A. *E.A.* **A.** *B.I.* *P.R.*
(**43** + **44** + **45** + **46** + **47** + **48**) — [*49*] × (**50** + **51** + **52**) — [*53* + *54* + *55*] — [*56*]

A. *P.E.* *B.I.* **A.** *B.I.* *O.*
— (**57** + **58**) × [*59*] — [*60*] × (**61**) — [*62* + *63* + *64* + *65*] × [*66* + *67* + *68*] ×

P.P. *M.P.* **A.**
[*69* + *70*] × [*71* + *72* + *73* + *74*] × (**75**) ×

This is the most difficult of all the sections. No less than eight of the sonnets of the main series are missing, and it may very well be that their transference to other sections is accountable for a good deal of the confusion in the catchword order which we shall find from Nos. 65 to 75.

+**48**)-[*49*]. Connected by the *sense*. The first line of 49 is a very natural-looking continuation of the final couplet of 48, and the whole sonnet fits in very well as an expansion of the thought of the loss of the beloved, contained in that couplet.

[*49*] × (**50**+. A natural hiatus—the main series is continued after the insertion of 49.

DOWDEN does not admit the hiatus, but merely says:—"50. This sonnet and the next are a pair. . . . The journey 1.1 is that spoken of in 48.1.1."

+ **52**)-[*53*+. Catchwords, 'blessed' and 'robe.'

52. *Blessed* are *you* whose worthiness gives scope,
Or as the wardrobe which the *robe* doth hide,
53. And *you* in every *blessed* shape we know.
And you in Grecian *tires* are painted new.

+*55*]-[*56*]. Catchwords, 'love' and 'dwelling in eyes.'

55. You live in this, and *dwell in lovers' eyes*.
56. So *love* be thou ; although to-day thou *fill*
Thy hungry eyes. . . .

[*56*]-(**57**+. Catchword, ' sad interim ' (56), echoed by ' bitterness of absence ' (57).

58) ×[*59*]. Hiatus due to a series of displacements which I shall attempt to explain when dealing below with 65×66. DOWDEN admits hiatus.

[*59*]-[*60*]. Catchwords, ' parturition ' and ' infancy.'

59. Which, *labouring* for invention, *bear amiss*
The second burden of a former *child !*
60. *Nativity*, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity . . .

[*60*] ×(**61**). Natural hiatus; the main series is continued after insertion of 59 and 60. DOWDEN does not admit the hiatus, but merely says : " The jealous feeling of 57 reappears in this sonnet."

(**61**)-[*62*+. Catchword, ' mine eye.'

61. It is my love that keeps *mine eye* awake ;
62. Sin of self-love possesseth all *mine eye*.

65] ×[*66*+*67*+*68*] ×[*69*+*70*] ×[*71*+*72*+*73*+*74*]. Here we have three hiatuses which constitute the most difficult problem in the whole of T.T.'s arrangement. The difficulty may, as I have suggested above, be caused to some extent by the transference to other sections of an unusually large number of main series sonnets. I will, however, now deal with these three hiatuses together, and consider at the same time the hiatus 58×59 left over for future examination. I regret that I shall only be able to suggest clues ; I cannot pretend to give a complete explanation.

In the first place, then, it would seem that T.T. had collected a number of sonnets on the catchword, ' sea-shore.'

56. Let this sad interim like the *ocean* be
Which parts the *shore*, where two contracted new
Come daily to the *banks* . . .
60. Like as the *waves* make towards the pebbled *shore*,
Nativity, once in the *main* of light,
64. When I have seen the hungry *ocean* gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the *shore*,
And the firm soil win of the *watery main*,
65. Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor *boundless sea*,

—and then a number on the catchword, ' death.'

64. This thought is as a *death*, which cannot choose
66. Tired with all these, for restful *death I* cry,
Tired with these, from these would *I* be *gone*,
71. No longer mourn for me when *I* am *dead*
And mock you with me after *I* am *gone*,

and had then connected the two sets together through 64, the only sonnet which contains *both* catchwords. While trying to work the two sets into a natural-looking sequence, he noticed other catchwords which suggested other sonnets and an altered arrangement. Five of these catchwords are traceable—three previously noted and two new. The three already noted are ' bitterness of absence,' connecting 56 and 57 ; ' parturition and infancy,' connecting 59 and 60, and ' mine eye,' connecting 61 and 62. The two new ones are :—

(1) ' thy will,' connecting 57 and 61.

57. So true a fool is love that in *your will*,
61. Is it *thy will* thy image should keep open

(2) 'beauty' and 'ornament,' connecting 68 and 70.

68. Ere *beauty's* dead fleece made another gay :
Without all *ornament*, itself and true.
70. The *ornament* of *beauty* is suspect.

Why T.T. inserted this mass of interconnected foreign sonnets at this particular point in the collection is a question which it is difficult to answer. Its only possible catchword connections with the main series appear to be (a) between 50 and 66—"*tired* with my woe" (5), and '*Tired* with all these (*bis*)' (66), and (b) between 61 and 62, through the 'mine eye' catchword noted above. A possible explanation is that T.T. in playing out his long game of Patience with his pack of 154 sonnet-cards, used this section as his 'rubbish- heap'; possibly, too, there was a connection (through the 'beauty' and 'ornament' catchwords) between 54 on the one side and 68 and 70 on the other.

54. O how much more doth *beauty* beauteous seem
By that sweet *ornament* which truth doth give !

As I have already said, I can make no attempt to retrace T.T.'s manipulations of the catchwording, and I must content myself with suggesting that at one stage of his arrangement (a) 64.66. 71, and (b) 68.70, were in sequence.

DOWDEN does not admit any of these three hiatuses. He explains the connection between 65 and 66 as follows: "From the thought of his friend's death, Shakspere turns to think of his own, and of the ills of life from which death would deliver him": the connection between 68 and 69 as follows: "From the thought of his friend's external beauty, Shakspere turns to think of the beauty of his mind, and the popular report against it": the connection between 70 and 71 as follows: "Shakspere goes back to the thought of his own death, from which he was led away by 66.14 'to die, I leave my love alone.' The world in this sonnet is the 'vile world' described in 66."

+*74*](**75**). Natural hiatus; the main series is continued after the insertion of the thirteen foreign sonnets, 62-74.

DOWDEN admits the hiatus.

(**75**)× Natural hiatus—the end of the section.

DOWDEN does not admit the hiatus, but merely says:—"Is this an apology for Shakspere's own sonnets—of which his friend begins to weary—in contrast with the verses of the rival poet, spoken of in 78-80?"

3RD SECTION (P.E.) Nos. 76-108.

M.P. *O.* **P.E.** *B.E.* **P.E.** *E.A.*
[*76*] —[*77*]— (**78** + **79** + **80**) — [*81*] × (**82** + **83** + **84** + **85** + **86**) — [*87* + *88* + *89* +

E.A. *P.P.* *A.* **P.E.**
90 + *91* + *92* + *93*] — [*94* + *95* + *96*] × [*97* + *98* + *99*] × (**100** + **101** + **102** + **103** +

E.D. **P.E.** *O.* **P.E.**
104) × [*105*] × (**106**) — [*107*] × (**108**) ×

It will be seen that only one sonnet (59) belonging to the framework series is missing from this section. There are eighteen foreign sonnets, including a solid block of seven sonnets of the E.A. series.

[*76*]-[*77*]-(**78**+. The two sonnets 76 and 77 are prefixed to the first block of the

framework series on the catchword system. Originally, 76 immediately preceded 79, but a transposition was made on revision because the catchwording was altogether too obvious, *i.e.* :

76. Why is *my verse* so barren of new pride,
And keep *invention* in a noted weed,
Shewing their *birth* and whence they did proceed ?
And you and *love* are still my *argument.*
79. *My verse* alone had all thy gentle grace ;
I grant, sweet *love,* thy lovely *argument*
Deserves the *travail* of a worthier pen ;
Yet what of thee thy poet doth *invent*

But even in the present order the catchwording is apparent, *i.e.* :

76. Shewing their *birth* and whence they did *proceed* ?
77. These *children* nursed, *delivered from* thy brain,
78. Whose influence is thine, and *born of thee.*

+**80**)-[*81*]. Catchword, ' decay '—the last word of 80 echoed by ' rotten ' in the second line of 81.

[*81*]× (**82**+. Natural hiatus ; the main series continued after the insertion of 81. DOWDEN explains the connection as follows : " His friend had, perhaps, alleged in playful self-justification that he had not married Shakspere's Muse, vowing to forsake all other and keep him only unto her."

+86)-[*87*+. Catchword, ' too precious you.'

86. Bound for the prize of all *too precious you,*
87. Farewell ! *thou* art *too dear* for my possessing.

+*93*]-[*94*+. Catchwords, ' face,' ' sweet,' ' show,'

93. That in thy *face sweet* love should ever dwell ;
If thy *sweet* virtue answer not thy *show* !
94. They are the lords and owners of their *faces,*
For *sweetest* things turn sourest by their deeds ;
That do not do the thing they must do *show,*

+*96*]× [*97*+*98*+*99*]× (**100**+**101**+ **102** +'**103** + **104**) × [*105*] × (**106**). These four hiatuses are the result of two very striking and interesting instances of slight transpositions made on final revision in order to conceal the artificiality of the catchword system. The kind reader is respectfully requested to read first, *as a whole,* the block of three foreign sonnets, 97+98+99, and then again as a whole, the block of five framework sonnets, 100+101+102+103+104, and note, first, the extraordinary similarity between 97+98 on the one hand and 102+104 on the other, and, secondly, the catchword arrangement between 99 on the one hand and 101 on the other. I will quote at length.

97+98 and 102+104. Catchwords, ' summer and winter,' and ' lays of birds.'

97+98. For *summer* and his pleasures wait on thee,
And thou away, the very *birds are mute* ;
Or, if they *sing,* 'tis with so dull a cheer
That leaves look pale, dreading the *winter's* near.
From you have I been absent in the *spring,*
When *proud*-pied *April* dressed in all his trim,
Yet nor the *lays of birds* nor the *sweet smell*
Could make me any *summer's* story tell,
Yet seem'd it *winter* still . . .

102+104 Our love was new, and then but in the *spring*
As *Philomel* in Summer's front doth sing,
And *stops her pipe* in growth of riper days :
. . . Three *winters* cold
Have from the forests shook three *summers pride,*
Three beauteous *springs* to yellow autumn turned
Three *April perfumes* in three hot Junes burned.

99 and 101. Catchwords, ' dye ' and ' colour.'

99. In my love's veins thou hast too grossly *dyed*.
But sweet or *colour* it had stol'n from thee.
101. For thy neglect of truth in beauty *dyed* ?
Truth needs no *colour*, with his *colour* fixed.

And then let him compare the framework sonnet No. 103, with the foreign sonnet 105, and note the really extraordinary similarities based on a string of catchwords, ' scope,' ' argument,' ' invention,' ' seat.'

103. That having such a *scope* to shew her pride,
The *argument*, all bare, is of more worth
That over-goes my blunt *invention* quite,
And more, much more, than in my verse *can sit*
105. Three themes in one, which wondrous *scope* affords.
Fair, kind, and true, is all my *argument*.
And this in change in my *invention* spent,
Which three till now never *kept seat* in one.

One can give a shrewd guess as to what has happened in this case. It would seem that T.T. was left with a string of seven framework sonnets arranged in the following ' natural sequence ' order, 102, 104, 100, 101, 103, 106, 108.[1] Attracted by the extraordinary similarities in each case, he brought down (a) 97 and 98 (plus, of course, 98's obvious continuation 99), from the A. series, and prefixed the block to 102, and (b) 105 from the E.D. series and inserted it after 103. While doing this, he noticed a feasible catchwording arrangement between 99 and 101 (' dye ' and ' colour '), and accordingly put 101 next to 99, the order then reading 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 100, 103, 105, 106, 108. On a final revision, made (as I have explained more than once) with the object of eliminating instances of too glaringly artificial catchwording—he (very reasonably) judged 99-101 and 103-105 to belong to that category, and accordingly inserted the only non-catchword sonnet (100) between 99 and 101, and then transposed 103 and 104. Thus 96 X 97 is a natural hiatus due to the insertion on the catchword system of the block of three A. sonnets before a resumption of the framework series ; 99 X 100 is a hiatus due to a ' revisional ' insertion of a masking sonnet, 100 ; 104 X 105 is a hiatus due to a ' revisional ' transposition of 103 and 104 ; and 105 X 106 is a natural hiatus due to the resumption of the framework series after the insertion of 105.

DOWDEN admits the hiatuses between 96 and 97, and 99 and 100. He does not admit the two others. He explains the connection between 104 and 105 as follows : " To the beauty praised in 100, and the truth and beauty in 101, Shakspere now adds a third perfection, kindness ; and these three sum up the perfections of his friend " ; and the connection between 105 and 106 as follows : " The last line of Sonnet 55 declares that his friend's perfections were never before possessed by one person. This leads the poet to gaze backward on the famous persons of former ages, men and women, his friend being possessor of the united perfections of both man and woman (as in Sonnets 20 and 53)."

(**106**)-[*107*]. Catchwords (a) ' time ' rhyming with ' rhyme ' ; (b) ' prophecy ' and ' divining ' corresponding to ' augur ' and ' presage.'

(a) 106. When in the chronicles of wasted *time*
And beauty making beautiful old *rhyme*
107. Now with the drops of this most balmy *time*
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor *rhyme*.
(b) 106. So all their praises were but *prophecies*
Of this our time, all you *prefiguring* ;
And, for they look'd but with *divining* eyes,
107. Not mine own fears, nor the *prophetic* soul
And the sad *augurs* mock their own *presage*.

[1] That this is the most natural ' natural sequence ' is a fact which the reader is respectfully requested to verify for himself.

[*107*]×(**108**). A natural hiatus ; the framework series is resumed after the insertion of 107.

DOWDEN explains the connection as follows :—" How can ' this poor rhyme,' which is to give us both unending life (107.10-14), be carried on ? Only by saying over again the same old things. But eternal love, in ' love's fresh case ' (an echo of ' my love looks fresh,' 107.10), knows no age, and finds what is old still fresh and young."

(**108**)× A natural hiatus—the end of the section.

DOWDEN explains the connection as follows :—" The first ardour of love is now renewed as in the days of early friendship (107.13-14). But what of the interval of absence and estrangement ? Shakspere confesses his wanderings, yet declares that he was never wholly false."

4TH SECTION (P.R.) NOS. 109-126.

P.R. *A.* **P.R.**
(**109 + 110 + 111 + 112**) — [*113 + 114*]×(**115 + 116 + 117+118 + 119 + 120 + 121**)

O. **P.R.** *M.A.*
×[*122*] — (**123 + 124 + 125**) — [*126*]×

This is the easiest of all the sections. Of the 17 sonnets of the framework series (taking as part of the series Southampton's No. 122, to which the 16 P.R. sonnets are a reply), only three, *viz.*, 15, 36, and 56 are missing. There are only four foreign sonnets, *viz.*, 113-114, from the A. series, and the single sonnets, 122 and 126.

+**112**)-[*113*+. Sense-connection. I accept DOWDEN'S explanation, which is as follows : " In connexion with 112, the writer's mind and senses are filled with his friend ; in 112 he tells how his ear is stopped to all other voices but one beloved voice ; here he tells how his eye sees things only as related to his friend."

+*114*]×(**115**+. A natural hiatus ; the framework series is resumed after the insertion of the block, 113-114.

DOWDEN explains the connection as follows : " Shakspere now desires to show that love has grown through error and seeming estrangement."

+**121**)×[*122*]. Natural hiatus due to the insertion on the catchword system of 122 before 123. Also T.T. may have had the happy thought of putting Southampton's only two sonnets side by side.

DOWDEN does not admit the hiatus, but merely says :—" An apology for having parted with tables (memorandum-book), the gift of his friend."

[*122*]-(**123**+. Catchwords, ' date ' and ' records.'

122. Beyond all *date*, even to eternity ;
Of thee, *thy record* never can be missed.
123. Our *dates* are brief, and therefore we admire
For *thy records* and what we see doth lie.

+**125**)-[*126*]. Catchwords, ' render ' and ' control.'

125. But mutual *render*, only me for *thee*:
When most impeach'd stands least *in thy control*.
126. O thou, my lovely boy, *who in thy power*
And her quietus is to *render thee*.

[*126*]x. Natural hiatus—the end of the section.
DOWDEN admits hiatus.

5TH SECTION (M.M. Group) Nos. 127-154.

D.L. O. D.L. I. W. D.L. O.
(127) . (128 . 129) . (130 + 131 + 132) — (133 + 134) — (135 + 136) . (137) — (138)

D.L. W. I. O. D.L. *E.A.* **D.L.**
— (139 + 140 + 141) — (142 + 143) . (144) — (145 . 146) — (147 + 148) — [*149*] **— (150)**

O. D.L. O.
— (151) . (152) . (153 . 154).

This is the one and only *feminine* section. In sonnets Nos. 1-126, of which the first four sections are composed, when a person is directly or indirectly addressed, that person either plainly is, or conceivably might be, a *man* ; in sonnets Nos. 127-154, which make up this section, the addressee (if there is one) is plainly in every case a *woman*.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, this section originally consisted of an artificial group made up of the 22 sonnets of the three distinctively feminine series, D.L. (12), I. (6), and W. (4), *plus* the 14 non-serial or Occasional sonnets—36 in all. T.T.'s first step in dealing with this group was (as has been noted above) to take out of it all the sonnets addressed to or concerned with a *man*. His idea was apparently this, "I find I cannot do as I have done in the other sections, that is to say, take the longest series (D.L.) as the framework, and work in the rest on the catchword system.[1] I must get my single-author effect some other way. The best way will be to arrange the sonnets to look like a sort of appendix made up of a number of more or less disconnected sonnets addressed to the poet's mistress on the lines of Daniel's *Delia* or Constable's *Diana*. Nos. 129 and 146 can remain because it was the custom for an amorist poet to put in a 'moral' sonnet or two, but every sonnet even remotely suggesting that the poet is addressing a man must go, and find accommodation elsewhere."[2]

So he eliminated the 10 'man' sonnets, *viz.*, 3 from the I. series (40.41 and 42), and 6 from the Occasional Group, *viz.*, the sequence, 66, 67 and 68 ; 77 and its reply, 122 ; and the single sonnet, 107. *No other sonnet is missing*.

This elimination reduced the number in the section to 27, and left the longest series, D.L. (12 sonnets), in a very dominating position. Now, this series happens to be, perhaps, the most obviously 'competitive' of the whole thirteen,[3] and it was imperatively necessary, therefore, to disguise its real character as thoroughly as possible. So T.T. broke it up small—into no less than seven separate pieces—and distributed the pieces more or less evenly throughout the section, at the same time making the most ingenious use of the very scanty opportunities for working his 'catchword' system afforded him by his material. He introduced only one sonnet from outside, *viz.*, No. 149 of the E.A. series, which simply *had* to be put in between 148 and 150.[4]

The net result of all this manœuvring is a dislocated order which has no parallel in any of the other four sections. This exceptional feature has been admitted by critics

[1] A glance at the Non-serial Sonnets given on p. 174 above will convince the reader of the impracticability of such an arrangement.
[2] The reader is requested to read these sonnets and judge for himself the sex of the person addressed.
[3] v. *supra*, p. 162.
[4] v. *infra*, p. 201.

of every school; even a 'whole-hogger' like MACKAIL, who accepts sonnets 1-126 as "a continuous, ordered, and authentic collection," characterises 127-154 as "a miscellaneous and disordered appendix in which 153 and 154 are pretty certainly not by S., 128 and 145 are very doubtful, and a plausible case can be made against 135, 136 and 143." But this is rather too strong; although the order is generally so dislocated that I have thought it useless to mark the *hiatuses*, I have continued to mark connections (some certain, some probable), between sonnets or batches of sonnets on the familiar catchword system in no less than ten cases, which I now present for the reader's kind consideration.

+132)-(133+. Catchword, 'Heart the torturer.'

132. Knowing *thy heart torments* me with disdain
133. Beshrew that *heart* that *makes my heart to groan.*

+134)-(135+. Catchword, 'thy will.'

134. And I myself am mortgag'd to *thy will*
135. Whoever hath her wish, thou hast *thy will.*

137)-(138). Catchwords, 'false' and 'true.'

137. Why of eyes *false*hood hast thou forged hooks
To put fair *truth* upon so foul a face
In things right *true* my heart and eyes have erred
And to this *false* plague are they now transferred.
138. When my love swears that she is made of *truth*
Unlearned in the world's *false* subtleties.
Simply I credit her *false*-speaking tongue;
On both sides thus is simple *truth* suppress'd

(138)-(139+. Catchword, 'tongue' (probably).

138. Simply I credit her false-speaking *tongue*
139. Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy *tongue.*

+141)-(142+. Catchword, 'sin.'

141. That she that makes *me sin* awards me pain
142. Love is *my sin.* . . .

(144)-(145. Catchwords, 'fiend' and 'hell.'

144. And whether that my angel be turned *fiend*
I guess one angel in another's *hell*
145. Did follow night, who, like a *fiend*
From heaven to *hell* is flown away.

146)-(147+. Catchwords (a) 'feed on,' (b) 'death.'

146. So shalt thou *feed on Death,* that *feeds on* men
147. *Feeding on* that which doth preserve the ill,
Desire is *death.* . . .

+148)-[*149*]. Catchwords, 'love,' 'eyes,' 'faults,' 'blind.'

148. Oh, cunning *Love!* with tears thou keep'st me *blind*
Lest *eyes* well-seeing thy foul *faults* should find
149. When all my best doth worship thy *defect,*
Commanded by the motion of thine *eyes?*
But, *love,* hate on, for now I know thy mind;
Those that can *see* thou lov'st, and I am *blind.*

[*149*]-(150). Catchwords, 'defect,' 'all best.'

149. When *all my best* doth worship *thy defect,*
150. That, in my mind, *thy* worst *all best* exceeds?
With *insufficiency* my heart to sway?

The reader is invited to recognise in the dovetailing of 149 into 148 and 150 quite one of the neatest things in the whole of T.T.'s performance. The sonnet fully deserves its distinction as the only 'foreigner' admitted to the section.

(150)-(151). Catchword, 'rising of love' (probably).

150. If *thy* unworthiness *rais'd love* in me,
151. Triumph in *love*; . . .
But *rising* at *thy* name. . . .

. . . . . .

In setting before the kind reader this analysis of the Order I have not knowingly concealed or slurred over any difficulty. And though I am not so foolish as to imagine that I have managed to hit the mark *every* time, I do claim that the general accuracy of my 'Catchword' theory has been established. Professor Dowden was the most devoted and loyal of Shakespeareans, and it is to his sturdy faith in his great author that one must ascribe the singular aberration of his fine literary *flair*, which prevented him from realizing that he was not, so to speak, puzzling out the line of a real live fox, but merely following a drag laid by a very wily customer indeed, who had 'lifted' whenever he thought the scent was getting a bit too good to be true.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE RIVAL POETS.

As the reader is aware, Proposition VIII. of The Theory runs as follows :

> *The Minor Poet* may be identified with Barnabe Barnes (with absolute certainty) ; *The Lawyer* with William Warner (with practical certainty) ; *The Humorist* with John Donne (with great probability) ; and *The Newcomer* with Samuel Daniel (probably).

The purpose of this chapter is to give a short summary of the evidence *in favour of* each of these identifications. The ' Characteristics ' of the four competitors will be taken as proved, and no attempt will be made to discuss the claims of possible rival candidates.

When one examines in detail the great mass of work left by the Elizabethan sonnetteers the point that strikes one, first and last, is its extraordinarily unoriginal and imitative character.[1] The list of ' themes ' admissible to the *pléiadiste* sonnetteer was a very limited one, and when the late sixteenth-century ' University wit ' sat down to indite his sonnet-sequence all he could do (or indeed was expected to do) was to compose variations on the treatment of one or more of these themes by one or more of his many predecessors. And so it happens that when we find, as we often do, two sonnets by different authors resembling each other so closely that any hypothesis but that of deliberate ' copying ' is out of the question, it is impossible to decide which of the two occupants of the " cage of parrots " [2] is the copy-setter unless the dates of composition of both sonnets are known. Take Drayton for instance—the strongest, and perhaps the most consistently successful, of them all. His collection of *Idea* sonnets was published in so many different forms, and at such widely-separated intervals of time, that the dates of many of even the best known of them have not yet been agreed upon by the experts. And consequently the interesting question whether Drayton ' copied ' Shakespeare's sonnets, or Shakespeare Drayton's, takes rank as in one of those Shakespearean problems concerning which critical opinion is most sharply divided. Canon Beeching, in a " Note on Drayton's Sonnets " included in his edition of Shakespeare's sonnets, writes as follows :—

> The reader of Drayton's sonnets in the order of their publication is struck by two very remarkable changes of style. Drayton began to write sonnets in the manner of Daniel ; then he passed from this style to that of Sidney ; finally he adopted, as far as he could, the style of Shakespeare. . . . Neglecting, however, all questions of word borrowing, which can seldom he conclusively settled, I prefer to rest my case on the broader ground of style. I would ask anyone to whom the Shakespearean rhythm is distinct and familiar to read Drayton's last sonnets, especially " You best discerned of my interior eyes." " Like an adventurous seafarer am I," " To nothing better can I thee compare," " Some misbelieving and profane in love," above all, " Why should your fair eyes with such sovereign grace," and " Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part," and, if he detects, as he must, some fellowship, I would put to him this question, If a poet at one time could write so like Daniel that his "Clear Ankor, on whose silver-sanded shore" is as good and as characteristic of Daniel as any sonnet that charming writer ever produced, and at another time so not unlike Sidney that his " My heart was slain, and none but you and I," suggests at once the *Astrophel and Stella*, is it reasonable, when in turn we find him writing in the school of Shakespeare, that he should be accounted Shakespeare's master and not his pupil ?

[1] *v.* extracts from Sir Sidney Lee and Mr. J. M. Robertson, *supra* p. 21.
[2] Mr. Robertson's phrase (*v. supra*, p. 21.

In the present problem the conditions are different. There is no dispute about *dates*—these are fixed (within narrow limits) by The Theory ; what has to be done is to convict the author of *authorship* on the evidence of his style alone. It is needless to dilate on the peculiar difficulties of such a task.

As the work of the Elizabethan sonnetteers is not very easily accessible, I have thought it convenient to give here a selection from some of the best known of them. But the twenty-four sonnets printed below are not to be regarded as an attempt at an anthology ; they have been selected, partly in order to exhibit (as far as possible) the range of Elizabethan sonnetteering, and partly to illustrate what has been said above about its ' imitative ' character. At the same time it is believed that no sonnet has been selected which is not a good and characteristic example of its author's style. The two principal practitioners, Daniel and Drayton, are represented by six sonnets apiece ; Sidney and Constable by three apiece ; Spenser and Barnes by two apiece ; and Griffin and Peele by one apiece.

Twenty-Four Elizabethan Sonnets.

1 (*Sidney*).

In martial sports I had my cunning tried,
And yet to break more staves did me address :
While with the people's shouts, I must confess,
Youth, luck and praise even filled my veins with pride.
When Cupid having me, his slave, descried
In Mars' livery, prancing in the press,
" What now, Sir Fool ! " said he (I would no less),
" Look here, I say ! " I looked, and Stella spied :
Who, hard by, made a window send forth light :
My heart then quaked, then dazzled were mine eyes,
One hand forgot to rule, th' other to fight.
Nor trumpets' sound I heard, nor friendly cries ;
My foe came on, and beat the air for me,
Till that her blush taught me my shame to see.

2 (*Drayton*).

In pride of wit, when high desire of fame
Gave life and courage to my lab'ring pen,
And first the sound and virtue of my name
Won grace and credit in the ears of men :
With those the thronged theatres that press,
I in the Circuit for the laurel strove,
Where the full praise, I freely must confess,
In heat of blood, a modest mind might move.
With shouts and claps at every little pause,
When the proud Round on every side hath rung,
Sadly I sit, unmoved with the applause,
As though to me it nothing did belong.
No public glory vainly I pursue ;
All that I seek is to eternize you !

3 (*Daniel*).

These plaintive verse, the posts of my desire,
Which haste for succour to her slow regard,
Bear not report of any slender fire,
Forging a grief, to win a fame's reward.
Nor are my passions limned for outward hue,
For that no colours can depaint my sorrows ;
Delia herself and all the world may view
Best in my face, where cares hath tilled deep furrows
No bays I seek to deck my mourning brow
O clear-eyed Rector of the holy Hill !
My humble accents bear the olive bough,
Of intercession to a tyrant's will.
These lines I use t'unburden mine own heart ;
My love affects no fame, nor 'steems of art.

4 (*Drayton*).

Taking my pen with words to cast my woe,
Duly to count the sum of all my cares,
I find my griefs innumerable grow,
The reckonings rise to millions of despairs.
And thus dividing of my fatal hours.
The payments of my Love I read and cross ;
Subtracting, set my sweets unto my sours ;
My joys' arrearage leads me to my loss.
And thus mine eyes a debtor to thine eye,
Which by extortion gaineth all their looks ;
My heart hath paid such grievous usury,
That all their wealth lies in thy beauty's books,
And all is thine which hath been due to me,
And I a bankrupt, quite undone by thee !

5 (*Daniel*).

Let others sing of Knights and Palladins,
In agéd accents, and untimely words,
Paint shadows in imaginary lines,
Which well the reach of their high wit records ;
But I must sing of thee, and those fair eyes.
Authentic shall my verse, in time to come,
When yet the unborn shall say, " Lo, where she lies !
Whose beauty made him speak, that else was dumb '
These are the arks, the trophies I erect,
That fortify thy name against old age ;
And these thy sacred virtues must protect
Against the dark, and Time's consuming rage.
Though th' error of my youth they shall discover,
Suffice they shew I lived, and was thy lover.

6 (*Drayton*).

Whilst thus my pen strives to eternize thee,
Age rules my lines with wrinkles in my face ;
Where, in the map of all my misery,
Is modelled out the World of my disgrace :
Whilst in despite of tyrannizing Times,
Medea-like, I make thee young again,
Proudly thou scorn'st my world-outwearing rhymes
And murder'st virtue with thy coy disdain.
And though in youth my youth untimely perish,
To keep thee from oblivion and the grave,
Ensuing ages yet my rhymes shall cherish,
Where I entombed my better part shall save ;
And though this earthly body fade and die,
My name shall mount upon eternity !

7 (*Daniel*).

Read in my face, a volume of despairs,
The wailing Iliads of my tragic woe ;
Drawn with my blood, and printed with my cares,
Wrought by her hand that I have honoured so.
Who, whilst I burn, she sings at my soul's wrack,
Looking aloft from turret of her pride :
There my soul's tyrant 'joys her in the sack
Of her own seat, whereof I made her guide.
There do these smokes, that from affliction rise,
Serve as an incense to a cruel dame ;
A sacrifice thrice-grateful to her eyes,
Because their power serves to exact the same.
Thus ruins she, to satisfy her will,
The Temple where her name was honoured still.

8 (*Drayton*).

Yet read at last the story of my woe,
The dreary abstracts of my endless cares,
With my life's sorrow interlinéd so,
Smoked with my sighs, and blotted with my tears.
The sad memorials of my miseries,
Penned in the grief of mine afflicted ghost.
My life's complaint in doleful elegies,
With so pure love as Time could never boast.
Receive the incense which I offer here,
By my strong faith ascending to thy fame ;
My zeal, my hope, my vows, my praise, my prayer,
My soul's oblations to thy sacred Name !
Which Name my Muse to highest heavens shall raise,
By chaste desire, true love, and virtuous praise.

9 (*Daniel*).

If this be love, to draw a weary breath,
To paint on floods till the shore cry to the air ;
With prone aspect still treading on the earth.
Sad horrors : pale grief : prostrate despair !
If this be love, to war against my soul,
Rise up to wail, lie down to sigh, to grieve me,
With ceaseless toil Care's restless stones to roll,
Still to complain and moan, whilst none relieve me.
If this be love, to languish in such care
Loathing the light, the world, myself and all,
With interrupted sleeps, fresh griefs repair,
And breathe out horror in perplexed thrall.
If this be love, to live a living death,
Lo, then love I, and draw this weary breath.

10 (*Constable*).

To live in hell, and heaven to behold ;
To welcome life, and die a living death ;
To sweat with heat, and yet be freezing cold ;
To grasp at stars, and lie the earth beneath ;
To tread the maze that never shall have end ;
To burn in sighs, and starve in daily tears ;
To climb a hill, and never to descend ;
Giants to kill, and quake at childish fears ;
To pine for food, and watch th' Hesperian tree ;
To thirst for drink, and nectar still to draw ;
To live accurs'd, whom men hold blest to be ;
And weep those wrongs which never creature saw ;
If this be love, if love in these bounded,
My heart is love, for these in it are grounded.

11 (*Daniel*).

Fair is my love, and cruel as she's fair :
Her brow shades frowns, although her eyes are sunny ;
Her smiles are lightning, though her pride despair ;
And her disdains are gall, her favours honey.
A modest maid, decked with a blush of honour,
Whose feet do tread green paths of youth and love ;
The wonder of all eyes that look upon her ;
Sacred on earth, designed a saint above.
Chastity and Beauty, which were deadly foes,
Live reconciléd friends within her brow ;
And had she Pity, to conjoin with those,
Then who had heard the plaints I utter now ?
O, had she not been fair, and thus unkind,
My Muse had slept, and none had known my mind !

12 (*Constable*).

When tedious much, and over weary long,
Cruel disdain, reflecting from her brow,
Hath been the cause that I endured such wrong,
And rest thus discontent and weary now.
Yet when posterity, in time to come,
Shall find th' uncancelled tenour of her vow ;
And her disdain be then confest of some,
How much unkind and long, I find it now.
O, yet even then (though then, will be too late
To comfort me—dead, many a day, ere then)—
They shall confess—I did not force her heart,
And time shall make it known to other men—
That ne'er had her disdain made me despair,
Had she not been so excellently fair.

13 (*Daniel*).

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born,
Relieve my anguish, and restore the light
With dark forgetting of my cares, return !
And let the day be time enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth ;
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
Without the torment of the night's untruth.
Cease, Dreams, th' imag'ry of our day desires,
To model forth the passions of the morrow,
Never let rising sun approve you liars,
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

14 (*Griffin*).

Care-charmer Sleep, sweet ease in restless misery,
The captive's liberty, and his freedom's song,
Balm of the bruised heart, Man's chief felicity,
Brother of quiet Death, when life is too two long.
A Comedy it is, and now an History.
What is not sleep unto the feeble mind ?
It easeth him that toils, and him that's sorry,
It makes the deaf to hear, to see, the blind,
Ungentle Sleep ! thou helpest all but me,
For when I sleep, my soul is vexéd most.
It is Fidessa that doth master thee,
If she approach, alas, thy power is lost.
But here she is ! See, how he runs amain !
I fear, at night, he will not come again.

15 (*Constable*).

My Heart mine Eye accuseth of his death,
Saying his wanton sight bred his unrest :
Mine Eye affirms my Heart's unconstant faith
Hath been his bane, and all his joys represt.
My Heart avows, mine Eye let in the fire,
Which burns him with an everliving light ;
Mine Eye replies my greedy Heart's desire
Let in those floods, which drown him day and night.
Thus wars my Heart, which Reason doth maintain,
And calls my Eye to combat if he dare ;
The whilst my Soul, impatient of disdain,
Wrings from his bondage unto death more near ;
Save that my love still holdeth him in hand,
'A kingdom thus divided, cannot stand !"

16 (*Drayton*).

Whilst yet mine Eyes do surfeit with delight,
My woful Heart imprisoned in my breast
Wisheth to be transforméd to my sight,
That it, like those, by looking, might be blest.
But whilst mine Eyes thus greedily do gaze,
Finding their objects over-soon depart ;
These now the other's happiness do praise,
Wishing themselves that they had been my Heart.
That Eyes were Heart, or that the Heart were Eyes,
As covetous the other's use to have.
But finding Nature their request denies,
This to each other mutually they crave,
That since the one cannot the other be,
That Eyes could think of that my Heart could see.

17 (*Sidney*).

Come Sleep ! O Sleep ! the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
Th' indifferent judge between the high and low,
With shield of proof, shield me from out the press
Of those fierce darts, Despair at me doth throw ;
O, make in me those civil wars to cease ;
I will good tribute pay if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland, and a weary head :
And if these things as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

18 (*Sidney*).

Leave me, O love, which reachest but to dust,
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things,
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust ;
Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be ;
Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light
That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
O take fast hold ! Let that light be thy guide,
In this small course which birth draws out to death :
And think how evil becometh him to slide,
Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath ;
Then farewell, world ! Thy uttermost I see !
Eternal Love, maintain Thy love in me !

19 (*Spenser*).

Daily when I do seek and sue for peace,
And hostages do offer for my truth ;
She, cruel warrior, doth herself address
To battle, and the weary war renew'th ;
He will be moved with reason, or with ruth,
To grant small respite to my restless toil ;
But greedily her fell intent pursu'th,
Of my poor life to make unpitied spoil.
Yet my poor life, all sorrows to assoil,
I would her yield, her wrath to pacify :
But when she seeks with torment and tormoil
To force me live, and will not let me die.
All pain hath end, and every war hath peace ;
But mine no price nor prayer may surcease.

20 (*Spenser*).

One day I wrote her name upon the strand ;
But came the waves, and washed it away :
Again, I wrote it with a second hand ;
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
Vain man, said she, that dost in vain assay
A mortal thing so to immortalize :
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke my name be wiped out likewise.
Not so, quoth I, let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame ;
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name.
Where, when as death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

21 (*Barnes*).

What can these wrinkles and vain tears portend,
But thine hard favour and indurate heart ?
What shew these sighs, which from my soul I send,
But endless smoke, raised from a fiery smart ?
Canst thou not pity my deep-wounded breast ?
Canst thou not frame those eyes to cast a smile ?
Wilt thou with no sweet sentence make me blest ?
To make amends wilt thou not sport a while ?
Shall we not once with our opposed eyne
In interchange send golden darts rebated
With short reflexion 'twixt thy brows and mine,
Whilst love with thee of my griefs hath debated ?
Those eyes of love were made for love to see,
And cast regards on others, not on me !

22 (*Barnes*).

Ah, Sweet Content ! where is thy mild abode ?
Is it with shepherds, and light-hearted swains,
Which sing upon the downs, and pipe abroad,
Tending their flocks and cattle on the plains ?
Ah, Sweet Content ! where dost thou safely rest ?
In heaven, with angels ? which the praises sing
Of Him that made, and rules at His behest,
The minds and hearts of every living thing.
Ah, sweet Content ! where doth thine harbour hold?
Is it in churches, with religious men,
Which please the gods with prayers manifold,
And in their studies meditate it then ?
Whether thou dost in heaven or earth appear,
Be where thou wilt ! Thou wilt not harbour here !

23 (*Peele*). [1]

His golden locks time hath to silver turned ;
O, time too swift, O swiftness never ceasing !
His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever spurned,
But spurned in vain ; youth waneth by increasing :
Beauty, strength, youth, are flowers but fading seen;
Duty, faith, love, are roots, and ever green.
His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,
And lovers' songs be turned to holy psalms ;
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,
And feed on prayers, which are old age's alms :
But though from court to cottage he depart,
His saint is sure of his unspotted heart.
Goddess, allow this aged man his right
To be your beadsman now that was your knight.

24 (*Drayton*).

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part !
Nay, I have done ; you get no more of me,
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart
That thus so cleanly I my self can free.
Shake hands for ever ! Cancel all our vows !
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows,
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes :
Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover !

[1] Four lines have been omitted from this piece to reduce it to the regular fourteen line sonnet form.

Another peculiar difficulty is that, except in the cases of two of the competitors (Barnes and Donne), one can expect very little assistance from the *biographical* line of approach. In Shakespeare's day a poet, *qua* poet, was a very insignificant member of the commonwealth, and the public was not interested in his private life. Even in the case of Donne, the comparatively large mass of biographical detail available is due to the fact that he rose to eminence in the Church; we know a great deal more about Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, and *the* fashionable preacher of the day, than we do about "Jack Donne," author of *The Flea* and *The Indifferent*.

However, though the lives and private characters of three out of the five rival poets are more or less obscure, the life and private character of their noble patron are fully exhibited in contemporary records. Southampton's worldly career up to the end of 1598 (the latest date allowed by The Theory) might be summarized as that of a young man who, starting life with every conceivable circumstance in his favour, had done his best to alienate the sympathies of a host of friends and well-wishers from the Sovereign downwards by a series of displays of more than usually offensive youthful ὕβρις, and had finally wrecked his prospects as an Elizabethan courtier and statesman by seducing a Maid of Honour and then marrying her secretly and without the Queen's consent. But there was another side to his character. From his earliest days he took a lively and genuine interest in literature and literary men; and the generosity he showed to writers of every class was not the mere 'official' bounty of a great noble, but patronage of the more discriminating and intimate type, of which Sir Philip Sidney was the chief contemporary exemplar. In fact, Sidney's famous 'Areopagus' would seem to have suggested to Southampton the idea of forming a select literary coterie, with himself as the central figure, and that notorious literary character, "Resolute John Florio," as a kind of literary major-domo. Of our five poets, two—Shakespeare and Barnes—had already publicly acknowledged him as their patron; as regards each of the three others, the probability or otherwise of his having stood in a similar relation to that "sweete flower of matchless poetry" (as Nashe called Southampton), is a point which will have to be considered when his case comes up for examination.

The Minor Poet.=Barnabe Barnes (1569 ?-1609).

Proposition VI. defines The Minor Poet's 'Characteristics' as follows:—

> Though his work is full of glaring faults, The Minor Poet *is* a poet. He has imagination and a feeling for natural beauty, and his versification is smooth and melodious. But he thinks confusedly; he often writes in a very slovenly fashion, and as long as he gets his musical effect (usually by alliteration, of which he is inordinately fond), or his rhyme, he does not bother much about the sense. He is lacking in judgment, and his many *gaffes* argue a defective sense of humour. He is given to exaggeration and 'forcing the note,' and his compliments to The Patron are often unnecessarily servile.

Those of my readers who have studied the 'Barnabe Barnes' note at the end of Chapter III. will not need to be told of the strong case that can be made out for this identification on *biographical* grounds. The many allusions to his dedicatory sonnet to Southampton in *Parthenophil*, his fondness for the word 'worth' and its derivatives, and his reputation for cowardice, present a mass of circumstantial evidence the cumulative effect of which is so great as to be practically conclusive. Further, the unresisting butt of the Contest exactly fits Barnes' personality as described by Nashe and others, as *The Flunkey* characteristic does the author of the fulsome sonnets addressed to various notables at the end of *Parthenophil*. A minor point is Florio's connection with the

Barnes family; he was tutor to Barnabe's brother Emanuel at Cambridge, and would seem to have been for some time a member of Bishop Barnes' household at Durham.

Passing now to the *literary* side of the identification, one finds a good many of M.P.'s 'characteristics' exemplified in the *Parthenophil* collection. Take, for instance, No. 66 (printed as No. 22 in the list given above). As an M.P. sonnet it might be annotated as follows :—

No. 22

This very harmonious sonnet exhibits M.P.'s *Smooth Versification* characteristic at its best. *Slovenly Phrasing* (7-8). *Confused Thinking* (11). *Sound not Sense* (7.12).

7-8. Rhyme-hunting; 'behest' is not the word required.
8. Faulty grammar: 'mind' and 'heart' should be in the singular.
11. Christian and pagan theologies hopelessly mixed—*v.* 7-8 above.
12. Rhyme-hunting: 'then' is meaningless.

Barnes is a 'discovery' of the latter part of the nineteenth century. His works were practically unknown to the modern reader until Dr. Grosart published *Parthenophil* in 1875. Modern critics have apparently not yet made up their minds about him. Sir Sidney Lee writes as follows :—

> Barnabe Barnes, who made his reputation as a sonnetteer in the same year as Lodge (1593), was more voluminous than any of his English contemporaries. The utmost differences of opinion have been expressed by modern critics as to the value of his work. One denounces him as 'a fool'; another eulogises him as 'a born singer.' He clearly had a native love of literature, and gave promise of lyric power which was never quite fulfilled. His Sonnet LXVI on 'Content' reaches a very high level of artistic beauty, and many single stanzas and lines ring with true harmony. But as a whole his work is crude, and lacks restraint. He frequently sinks to meaningless doggerel, and many of his grotesque conceits are offensive.

The most detailed (and perhaps the most appreciative) estimate of Barnes's poetry is to be found in Professor Dowden's review of Dr. Grosart's edition in the *Academy* of September 2nd, 1875. I will quote an extract :—

> Among these singers [sc. Elizabethan lyrists] it is strange that one of the most exquisite should have passed out of sight. The unique copy at Chatsworth of Barnabe Barnes's *Parthenophil* and *Parthenophe* has now for the first time been reprinted by Mr. Grosart on behalf of thirty subscribers. . . . But it is not only the Renaissance with its rehabilitation of the senses which we find in this poem; there is in them also the Renaissance with its ingenuity, its fantasticality, its passion for conceits, and wit, and clever caprice, and playing upon words. . . . The volume being still almost unknown and quite unprocurable, it may be permitted to give some specimens of what is beautiful and characteristic in the poetry of Barnes. The following Madrigal embodies no strong passion, but possesses much of the elegance and graceful animation of Ronsard :

> Once in an arbour was my Mistress sleeping,
> With rose and woodbine woven,
> Whose person thousand graces had in keeping,
> Where for mine heart her heart's hard flint was cloven
> To keep him safe. Behind stood, pertly peeping,
> Poor Cupid, softly creeping.
> And drove small birds out of the myrtle bushes,
> Scared with his arrows, who sate cheeping
> On every sprig; whom Cupid calls and hushes
> From branch to branch: whiles I, poor soul, sate weeping
> To see her breathe (not knowing)
> Incense into the clouds, and bless with breath
> The winds and air; whiles Cupid, underneath,
> With birds, with songs, nor any posies throwing.
> Could her awake.
> Each noise sweet lullaby was for her sake.
> Phœbus, rich father of eternal light!
> And in his hand a wreath of Heliochrise
> He brought, to beautify those tresses,
> Whose train, whose softness, and whose gloss more bright
> Apollo's locks did overprize.
> Thus, with this garland whiles her brows he blesses,
> The golden shadow, with his tincture,
> Coloured her locks I gilded with the cincture.

Parthenophe composed of flowers.

> Blest is that shepherd, nine times nine,
> Which shall, in bosom, these flowers keep
> Bound in one posy; whose sweet smell
> In Paradise may make him dwell,
> And sleep a ten times happy sleep.

Unjust exchanges.

Thine eyes, mine heaven, which harbour lovely rest,
And with their beams all creatures cheer,
Stole from mine eyes their clear ;
And made mine eyes dim mirrors of unrest.

And from her lily forehead, smooth and plain,
My front his withered furrows took ;
And through her grace his grace forsook.
From soft cheeks, rosy red,
My cheeks their leanness, and this pallid stain.

The editor may be congratulated on having brought into notice a volume of Renaissance poetry far more a work of genius than the Ἑκατομπαθία of Watson, or Constable's sonnets. In the series of occasional issues for subscribers, which includes the poems of Barnes, have appeared also Humphrey Gifford's *Posie of Gilloflowers*, and Griffin's *Fidessa*. But Barnes has made the companion volumes look pale.

After such a panegyric, to read through the *Parthenophil* collection itself is a most disappointing experience. The " meaningless doggerel " and " grotesque conceits " mentioned by Sir Sidney Lee are there in abundance, but the beauties discerned by Professor Dowden seem to be very few and far between. There is no getting away from the fact that, defective as many of The Minor Poet's sonnets are, their general standard is far higher than that of *Parthenophil*. One can only suppose two things, first, that Barnes was one of those people who do much better with a ' copy ' in front of them, and secondly, that he received a great deal of ' outside ' assistance, especially in the direction of " pruning and lopping away " crudities and extravagances. And I would lay much more stress on the second supposition than on the first. In the Personal series one finds a good deal of evidence that ' outside ' assistance was a more or less recognised factor in the Contest. Shakespeare takes the very earliest opportunity (in his first sonnet in the P.E. series) of hinting that M.P. was being helped by Southampton himself [1]; and M.P. in his turn (in the first three sonnets in the same series) takes the earliest opportunity of asserting in the plainest language that Shakespeare himself was being " taught " and " aided " by certain mysterious collaborators.[2] Later on we find The Lawyer boasting that though his poetry may not be as fine as that of S. and M.P., it is at any rate *his own*, and owes nothing to " seconds."[3] That Barnes should have been assisted and advised by a capable literary friend—or a syndicate of literary friends—*at least* to the extent to which his chief fellow-competitor was assisted and advised by his " compeers " in general, and one " affable familiar ghost," in particular, seems to be very likely indeed. In a competitive affair like this popular sympathy is usually on the side of ' the under-dog,' and Barnes, ' on previous form,' was undoubtedly the weakest member of the quartet. And, certainly, every thing we know about him justifies one in supposing that he would have accepted any such advice and assistance with perfect complaisance.

The Lawyer=William Warner (1558 ?-1609).

Proposition VI. defines The Lawyer's ' Characteristics ' as follows :—

The Lawyer's literary qualities are more those of a prose-writer than a poet. He thinks logically, and as a rule expresses himself clearly. But though the technique of his versification is good, he has little imagination, and displays a constant tendency to drop into prose. His most prominent characteristic is a pronounced fondness for dragging in on every possible occasion words, phrases and metaphors drawn from the special vocabularies of the Law and Accountancy. He has humour of a rough and primitive sort, and is given to making bad puns. He cultivates two poses, (1) That of The Patron's candid friend, who will not stoop to flattery, and tells him the exact truth about himself, and (2) The veteran poet of the old school, contemptuous of the new-fangled fashions of the younger generation—the old dog who cannot be taught new tricks.

Although Warner's enormously long poem, *Albion's England*, was exceedingly popular in its day, of its author, as Professor Saintsbury remarks, " the now stereotyped phrase has to be repeated, that next to nothing is known of him. He was an Oxfordshire

[1] *v.* p. 64 *supra.* [2] *v.* p. 65 *supra.* [3] *v.* p. 106 *supra.*

man by birth, and an Oxford man by education ; he had something to do with Carey, Lord Hunsdon, became an attorney of the Common Pleas, and died at Amwell suddenly in his bed in 1609, being, as it is guessed rather than known, fifty years old or thereabouts. Besides his *magnum opus*, he published a collection of seven prose tales in 1585, and in 1595 a translation of the *Menaechmi*. However, even these few details, scanty material for a biography as they are, are in complete harmony with the biographical and semi-biographical 'characteristics' of The Lawyer. They account satisfactorily for his own and his fellow-competitors' references to his age, his profession, and his learning ; and they explain his peculiarly intimate acquaintance with law and accountancy. I have not been able to find any direct evidence of his having been a poetical client of Southampton ; but there is no reason why he should not have been—his connection with Lord Hunsdon does not appear to have been so close as to preclude him from seeking patronage elsewhere.

On the literary side, too, the evidence, as far as it goes, is equally favourable. *The Dictionary of English Literature* speaks of "the plain-spoken, jolly humour, homely, lively, direct tales, vigorous patriotic feeling, and rough-and-tumble metre of Warner's muse." Professor Saintsbury says, "Meres calls him [Warner] 'a refiner of the English tongue,' and attributes to him 'rare ornaments and resplendent habiliments of the pen' ; the truth being that he is (as Philips so far correctly says) a singularly plain, straightforward, and homely writer," and again, "The main interest of Warner is his insensibility to the new influences which Spenser and Sidney directed, and which are found producing their full effect on Daniel and Drayton." And Dr. Craik says :—

> For fluency, combined with precision and economy of diction, Warner is probably unrivalled among the writers of English verse. We do not know whether his professional studies and habits may have contributed to give this character to his style ; but if the poetry of attorneys be apt to take this curt, direct, lucid, and at the same time flowing shape, it is a pity that we have not a little more of it. His command of the vulgar tongue, in particular, is wonderful. . . . With all its force and vivacity and even no want of fancy, at times, and graphic descriptive power, it is poetry with as little of high imagination in it as any that was ever written. Warner's is only at the most a capital poetical business style.

In his own day he was highly esteemed. Meres' rather surprising encomium has already been quoted. Drayton wrote of him as follows :—

> Then Warner, tho' his lines were not so trim,
> Nor yet his poem so exactly limned
> And neatly jointed, but the critic may
> Easily reprove him, yet thus let me say :
> For my old friend, some passages there be
> In him, which I protest have taken me
> With almost wonder, so fine, clear, and new,
> As yet they have been equalléd by few.

Antony à Wood says that in his youth his "name was cried up among the minor poets" ; but unfortunately none of his lyrics or occasional pieces have survived. All his extant work is written in the old-fashioned, lumbering 'fourteeners' of *Albion's England*, of which the following lines from the story of Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund may serve as a specimen :—

> Fair Rosamund, surprised thus, ere thus she did expect,
> Fell on her humble knees, and did her fearful hands erect,
> She blushed out beauty, whilst the tears did wash her pleasing face
> And beggéd pardon, meriting no less of common grace.
> "So far forth as it lay in me, I did," quoth she, "withstand,
> But what may not so great a king by means or force command ?"
> "And darest thou, minion," quoth the Queen, "thus article to me' ?
> That then wert non-plus when the King commenced lust to thee ?"
> . . . . . .

With that she dashed her on the lips, so dyed double-red,
Hard was the heart that gave the blow, soft were the lips that bled.

But he *must* have tried his hand at sonnet-writing—every Englishman with any pretension to 'culture' did so in the last decade of the sixteenth century. And if the objection is made that some of the fine sonnets assigned to The Lawyer are beyond the compass of the author of *Albion's England*, I would ask the objector to consider whether Browning would have been thought capable of writing *Evelyn Hope*, let us say, or *Caliban on Setebos*, if he had elected (horrid thought!) to give his message to the world *entirely* in the metre of—

Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

The Humorist=John Donne (1573-1631).

Proposition VI. defines The Humorist's 'Characteristics' as follows :—

The outstanding feature of The Humorist's contributions is a subtle and sardonic humour, manifesting itself in parody, irony, and personal allusion. He writes in a spirit of mockery throughout. His thought is vigorous and logical, but very often appears obscure owing to excessive compression. He is fond of 'conceits' —especially the Neoplatonic kind—and pushes them as far as they will go, and farther. He goes out of his way to write unrhythmically, several of his lines being as harsh and cacophonous as any in the language. He preserves his self-respect as successfully as Shakespeare, and in particular displays very great ingenuity in shirking his duty of praising The Patron in the fulsome fashion demanded by sonnetteering etiquette.

The history of Donne's life is so well known, and his poetry has been the subject of so much discussion and speculation—especially in the last fifty years or so—that it would be mere impertinence on my part to attempt to collate and pronounce judgment on the evidence in favour of this 'identification,' either on the biographical or the literary side. I shall venture to direct the kind reader's attention to two points, and two points only.

The first point is a biographical one. I would ask him to note how well all we know of Donne's early life as a famous 'University wit'; and rich young-man-about-town, harmonizes with The Humorist's general attitude towards the Contest, his fellow-competitors, and The Patron himself. This general attitude may, perhaps, be best described as one of half-contemptuous superiority—the attitude of a brilliant young amateur condescending to compete with three professionals at their own game, which he treats as a game, and not as a means of livelihood.

The second point is a literary one. I would ask him to note again how very well The Humorist's 'keynote' Burlesque and his 'Characteristics' of Personal Allusion and The Polite Shirker harmonize with the peculiar quality of Donne's humour as displayed in his poems. The many interesting aesthetical, prosodical, and historical questions arising from Donne's poetry would seem to have led to his claims as a humorist being rather neglected by the critics. Every student of English literature is familiar with Ben Jonson's curt dictum, "that Donne for not keeping of accent deserved hanging," and with Dryden's just criticism, that "he affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with the speculations of philosophy, where he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love," and has learnt to recognize Donne as the man who finally broke up the Petrarchan tradition, and as the real founder of the 'metaphysical' school of seventeenth-century poetry. But few of his editors before Mr. Grierson have drawn attention to the importance of Donne's peculiar sense of

humour as an ingredient in his poetical 'make-up,' or have attempted to analyse it. Mr. Grierson remarks, "But if fanciful, and at times even boyish, Donne's wit is still amusing, the quickest and most fertile wit of the century till we come to the author of *Hudibras*. . . . The verses upon *Coryat's Crudities* are in their way a masterpiece of insult veiled as a compliment, but it is in a rather boyish and barbarous way." An extract from these 'commendatory' verses may be quoted :—

Infinite work! which doth so far extend,
That none can study it to any end.
'Tis no one thing; it is not fruit nor root,
Nor poorly limited with head or foot.
If man be therefore man, because he can
Reason and laugh, thy book doth half make man.
One-half being made, thy modesty was such,
That thou on th' other half wouldst never touch.

Go, bashful man, lest here thou blush to look
Upon the progress of thy glorious book,
To which both Indies sacrifices send,
The West sent gold, which thou didst freely spend,
Meaning to see't no more, upon the press.
The East sends hither her deliciousness,
And thy leaves must embrace what comes from thence,
The myrrh, the pepper, and the frankincense.
This magnifies thy leaves; but if they stoop
To neighbour wares, when merchants do unhoop
Voluminous barrels; if thy leaves do then
Convey these wares in parcels unto men.

If omni-pregnant there upon warm stalls
They hatch all wares for which the buyer calls;
Then thus thy leaves we justly may commend,
That they all kind of matter comprehend.
Thus thou, by means which th' ancients never took,
A Pandect makest, and universal book.

Thou shalt not ease the critics of next age
So much, as once their hunger to assuage;
Nor shall wit-pirates hope to find thee lie
All in one bottom, in one library.
Some leaves may paste strings there in other books,
And so one may, which on another looks,
Pilfer, alas, a little wit from you;
But hardly much; and yet I think this true;
As Sibyl's was, your book is mystical,
For every piece is as much worth as all.

This, of course, is the frankest burlesque—Coryat was everybody's butt. But the same spirit of 'ragging' and burlesque, more discreetly concealed, is to be recognised in a good many of Donne's most 'serious' pieces. Consider, for instance, the following extracts from what is generally regarded as his finest poem, *The Second Anniversarie*. In reading them one must bear in mind that the subject of these hyperbolical rhapsodies was a girl of fifteen whom Donne had never even *seen* :—

Immortal maid, who though thou wouldst refuse
The name of mother, be unto my Muse
A father, since her chaste ambition is
Yearly to bring forth such a child as this.
These hymns may work on future wits, and so
May great-grandchildren of thy praises grow;
And so, though not revive, embalm and spice
The world, which else would putrify with vice.

She, to whom all this world was but a stage,
Where all sat hearkening how her youthful age
Should be employ'd, because in all she did
Some figure of the golden times was hid.
Who could not lack, whate'er this world could give,
Because she was the form that made it live;
Nor could complain that this world was unfit
To be stay'd in, then when she was in it;
She, that first tried indifferent desires
By virtue, and virtue by religious fires;
She, to whose person paradise adhered,
As courts to princes; she, whose eyes ensphered
Star-light enough to have made the South control
—Had she been there—the star-full Northern Pole;
She, she is gone; she's gone; when thou know'st this,
What fragmentary rubbish this world is
Thou know'st, and that it is not worth a thought;
He honours it too much that thinks it nought.

She, in whose body—if we dare prefer
This low world to so high a mark as she—
The western treasure, eastern spicery,
Europe, and Afric, and the unknown rest
Were easily found, or what in them was best;
And when we have made this large discovery
Of all, in her some one part then will be
Twenty such parts, whose plenty and riches is
Enough to make twenty such worlds as this—

She, who all libraries had thoroughly read
At home in her own thoughts, and practiséd
So much good as would make as many more;
She, whose example they must all implore,
Who would, or do, or think well, and confess
That all the virtuous actions they express
Are but a new and worse edition
Of her some one thought or one action;
She, who in th' art of knowing heaven, was grown
Here upon earth to such perfection,
That she hath, ever since to heaven she came
—In a far fairer print—but read the same;
She, she not satisfied with all this weight—
For so much knowledge as would over-freight
Another, did but ballast her—is gone,
As well to enjoy, as get perfection;
And calls us after her, in that she took
(Taking herself) our best and worthiest book.

Here, I submit, Donne is burlesquing the methods of the professional elegists, and pulling Sir Robert Drury's leg, very much in the same way as The Humorist burlesques the methods of the professional sonnetteers, and pulls Southampton's leg in the eight Personal Series. In my humble judgment, Donne stands out as one of the best and subtlest of our English poetical humorists—a *pince-sans-rire* of the very first order.

The Newcomer=Samuel Daniel (1562-1619).

Proposition VI. defines The Newcomer's 'Characteristics' as follows:—

> In the matter of sheer technique, The Newcomer is the best of Shakespeare's fellow-competitors. His versification is smooth, and his thoughts are clear and clearly expressed. But his verse lacks character, and gives one an impression of shallowness.

Daniel was, after Sidney, the earliest of the Elizabethan sonnetteers, and his *Delia* sonnets were much admired and extensively imitated by his successors. He "attached himself to the Court as a kind of voluntary laureate, and in the reign of James I was appointed 'Inspector of the Queen's Revels' and a groom of the Queen's chamber."[1] His literary relations with Southampton are not very clear, but that they did exist is proved by the poem he addressed to him congratulating him on his release from the Tower in 1603. He was on terms of intimacy with John Florio, who refers to him as his "brother." This has led to the (apparently erroneous) belief that that long-suffering wife, Rose Florio, was Daniel's sister.

On the literary side, the evidence of style and manner is quite favourable—as a comparison of The Newcomer's ten sonnets in the Dramatic Series with the six sonnets of Daniel printed above will show. Of the numerous literary criticisms of Daniel's poetry by modern authorities I will quote only two, the first from Professor Saintsbury on its general characteristics, the second from the latest editor of the *Sonnets* (Mr. Pooler) on the *Delia* sonnets.

Professor Saintsbury writes:—

> Whatever unfavourable things have been said of him, [Daniel] from time to time have been chiefly based on the fact that his chaste and correct style lacks the fiery quaintness, the irregular and audacious attraction of his contemporaries. Nor was he less a master of versification than of vocabulary. His *Defence of Rhyme* shows that he possessed the theory: all his poetical works show that he was a master of the practice. He rarely attempted, and probably would not have excelled in the lighter lyrical measures. But in the grave music of the various elaborate stanzas in which the Elizabethan poets delighted, and of which the Spenserian, though the crown and flower, is only the most perfect, he was a great proficient, and his couplets and blank verse are not inferior. Some of his single lines have already been quoted, and many more might be excerpted from his work of the best Elizabethan brand in the quieter kind. Quiet, indeed, is the overmastering characteristic of Daniel.

Mr. Pooler writes:—

> But though Shakespeare may have borrowed subjects and imagery or conceits from Constable and others, as he did from Sidney, the chief influence of his work would seem to have been Daniel's.
>
> We know that Shakespeare drew part of the materials of his earlier sonnets from *The Arcadia*, and the unauthorised quarto of this romance, published in 1591, contained in an appendix twenty-eight of Daniel's sonnets (afterwards reprinted by himself in 1592 and 1594). Moreover, there is in Daniel a similar beauty of occasional lines, though, of course, in a much lower degree, and somewhat of the same ease and grace of movement. But his poems have not the unity of rhythm without which there can be no completeness or perfection, nor is the rhythm so instantly responsive to the thought. Above all, they have no background; the great things of the Universe which are the common inheritance of mankind, the sky and the stars, earth and the flowers of April, forebodings and memories, and love and beauty and decay and death do not seem to have impressed him as the conditions and surroundings of human life, and therefore as compared with Shakespeare's, his sonnets are empty and bare.

. . . . . .

I can imagine a hostile critic remarking on this chapter, "This series of so-called 'identifications' is merely special pleading of a flagrant type. The plain fact remains

[1] Biographical Dictionary of English Literature.

that many of the sonnets assigned to the second-rate writers who are supposed to have been Shakespeare's fellow-competitors are much too good to have been written by them —too good, in fact, to have been written by anyone but Shakespeare himself." Now, whether or not a particular Elizabethan sonnet bears Shakespeare's hall-mark so plainly stamped as to preclude the possibility of its being the work of any other practitioner is a particular question which every one must answer in accordance with, what Bentley calls his own particular "Nicety of Tast." I can only suggest to the kind reader, in all humility, that he should examine the 'challenged' sonnets in the light of the annotations thereon which he will find in this book, and should then compare them with half-a-dozen of the best specimens in the list of twenty-four sonnets given above, bearing in mind the fact that three at least of Shakespeare's four fellow-competitors—namely, Warner, Daniel, and Donne—were, in the estimation of their contemporaries (and possibly in modern estimation also) the poetical equals of any of the poets represented in that list—Spenser excepted.

But as regards the *general* question of the disparity between the Shakespearean and the non-Shakespearean portions of "*Shake-speare's Sonnets*," The Theory stands on firmer ground. It will be conceded, I take it, that in the case of a collection of a hundred-and-fifty-odd more or less disconnected sonnets by an Elizabethan author, a slice of (say) two dozen *consecutive* sonnets cut out of the middle, should give one a very fair sample of their average quality. Well, now, it happens, by a rather curious chance, that in the *Sonnets* there is a block of no less than twenty-three consecutive sonnets, namely, Nos. 41 to 63 inclusive, none of which, according to The Theory, were written by Shakespeare. I would propose to the reader, therefore, that he should, for his own satisfaction, perform the following experiment:—First, let him read these twenty-three sonnets *critically*, *i.e.*, divesting them of their "Shakespearean" glamour, and noting merits and defects as dispassionately as though he were dealing with the work of Drayton or Constable. Then let him *immediately* treat in the same way the twenty-four examples from the Elizabethan sonnetteers given in the list above. And then let him ask himself the question whether in respect of all the 'points' of a sixteenth-century sonnet—'life,' clearness of thought, felicity of phrase, justness of metaphor, rhythm, balance, restraint, and epigrammatic effect—the average standard of the second lot is not a good deal higher than the average standard of the first lot. And then let him proceed to treat in the same way the twenty-one 'Personal' sonnets assigned to Shakespeare by The Theory, taking them in their chronological order—first a batch of nine in which the author is addressing a more or less conventional compliment to a young patron, Nos. 1, 2, 11, 3, 64, 19, 18, 29, 26,[1]; next a batch of four written (after an interval) in response to a complaint by The Patron that the author is neglecting him, and expressing the author's half-serious resentment at his first batch having been treated as a 'copy' for three other sonnetteers to imitate, Nos. 78, 79, 102, 106[2]; next a batch of two (written after another interval) in which the author mildly reproaches The Patron for neglecting him in favour of unworthy associates, Nos. 33, 34[3]; next The Patron's indignant repudiation of these charges, No. 121;[4] and finally a batch of six in which the author, after tactfully pleading guilty to The Patron's counter-charges of neglect, uses the conventional sonnetteering fiction of the sonnetteer's own imminent death to indicate the conclusion of his sonnetteering effort, and his conviction that it will be appreciated by posterity, Nos. 109, 110, 120, 116, 73, 74.[5] And then let him ask himself the question whether in respect of all the aforesaid 'points,' the average standard of the third lot is not, in its turn, not *a good deal*, but a *great deal* higher than the average standard of the second.

[1] *v.* p. 24, 38, 48, 52 *supra.* [2] *v.* p. 58 *supra.* [3] *v.* p. 86 *supra.* [4] *v.* p. 92 *supra.* [5] *v.* p. 96, 114 *supra.*

CHAPTER IX.—THE NEW THEORY AND TWO OLD PROBLEMS.

The Theory throws sidelights on a good many Shakespearean problems unconnected with the *Sonnets*, and when I started sketching out the plan of this chapter, a series of controversial little monographs suggested itself to my imagination. For instance, I very nearly committed myself to the rash enterprise of attacking the literary historians on their own ground by using the evidence of the 'Shakespearizing' sonnets to impugn the accepted chronology of the early plays. Again, I was sorely tempted to rush in where K.C.'s might fear to tread by shewing how the case for the popular theory that Shakespeare worked in an attorney's office in his youth had been affected by the discovery of *The Lawyer*. But in the end wiser counsels prevailed; I decided to take no risks, and to confine myself strictly to the business of supplying answers to the two questions which no expositor of a new theory about the *Sonnets* can hope to evade, namely, Who were the people in the *Sonnets*? Who was "Mr. W. H."?

I.—The People of the Sonnets.

The current view about the 'drama of the *Sonnets*' is, I take it, something like this: "*Shake-speares Sonnets* is a more or less idealized record of Shakespeare's *vie intime* during a period in his London career when he enjoyed the friendship and patronage of a young man of rank, and was engaged in an amour with a disreputable brunette. The sonnets were written at various times, and express widely varying moods—exaltation alternates with despair, ecstatic admiration with bitter disillusionment, fervent love with cool contempt—but, taken as a whole, they show clearly enough that Shakespeare's friend robbed him of his mistress and neglected him for a literary rival, and was magnanimously forgiven for both offences." Who the other three personages of the drama really were is a question on which modern critical opinion is hopelessly divided. There are two main 'schools.' One, the 'Early' school, identifies The False Friend with the Earl of Southampton (*before* his marriage), and The Dark Lady with Anne Davenant or Penelope Rich. The other, the 'Late' school (which finds in the *Sonnets* a series of allusions to the Essex Rebellion), identifies them with the Earl of Pembroke and Mary Fitton. For the post of The Rival Poet there are numerous claimants, the most favoured being Spenser, Marlowe, and Chapman.

With these or any other *autobiographical* interpretation of the *Sonnets* my theory has practically nothing in common. It asserts that Shakespeare wrote rather less than a quarter of them, and divides the collection into three separate and distinct sections as follows: *First Section—Personal.* Eighty-eight 'adulatory' sonnets addressed to a youthful patron, and composed by Shakespeare and three other poets writing in competition with each other, Shakespeare contributing twenty-one sonnets, and each of the three others twenty-two apiece. *No* sonnet in this section deals with sexual love. *Second Section—Dramatic.* Fifty-two 'amatory' sonnets addressed to a woman

or complaining about her conduct with another man, and composed by the same four poets plus one new one competing with each other as in the first section, but with this great difference, that they write not in their own persons, but in that of their employer (or employers). Shakespeare is responsible for ten—or possibly only six—of these fifty-two sonnets, the rest being contributed by the four other poets in varying proportions. *Every* sonnet in this section deals with sexual love. *Third Section—Non-Serial.* Fourteen 'occasional' unrelated sonnets by various unidentifiable authors, two or three of them probably being the work of Shakespeare.

Thus instead of a single tragedy of disappointed love and literary ambition with four characters—The Poet, The Patron-cum-False-Friend, The Mistress, and The Rival Poet—playing their parts right through, The Theory presents two entirely separate comedy 'shows,' in the first of which there is no 'love-interest' at all, and in the second an overwhelming love-interest which has nothing to do with Shakespeare.

The first piece is a plain straightforward slice of 'real life,' and exhibits a lively picture of Shakespeare and three other poets (two professional and one amateur) competing more or less obsequiously for the favour of a vain, wilful, and capricious young patron. This young man can be identified positively with Lord Southampton, and the three other poets more or less certainly with Barnabe Barnes, William Warner, and John Donne. One pleasing result of this demonstration that there is not one rival poet but three rival poets, is the discovery that *the* Rival Poet—the great artist "by spirits taught to write, Above a mortal pitch," the "full proud sail" of whose "great verse" is the theme of the three famous 'Rival Poet' sonnets, Nos. 80, 85, and 86—is the only contemporary poet (save Spenser) to whom such compliments could be paid with any show of justice, namely, The Swan of Avon himself!

The second piece is a confusing *mélange* of 'real life' and convention about which The Theory can tell us little except that the fifth poet is probably Samuel Daniel. The identification of the other characters is a conjectural business, depending mainly on one's interpretation of the various themes 'set' to the five competing poets by the person responsible for arranging the competition. Although these themes cannot be considered as of vital importance, it may be as well, for the sake of completeness, to set down here the four main inferences which can be drawn from the various 'treatments' they receive in the five series which make up the Dramatic Section.

(1). In two at least of the series The Employer is a wealthy young aristocrat.

(2). In these two series the addressee is a white-handed blonde—a more or less virtuous person whose social position is at least equal to The Employer's.

(3). In one of the other series the addressee is a brunette—a married woman of bad character whose social position is distinctly below The Employer's.

(4). In the two remaining series the addressee *may* be the addressee of (3), and *cannot* be the addressee of (2).

Southampton may be The Employer (or one of them), or he may be The False Friend who cut him out, or again possibly he may be neither. But if one takes the simplest course and casts him for The Lover throughout the piece (as he undoubtedly *is* The Patron throughout the first piece), one may, if one pleases, identify The Fair Lady with Queen Elizabeth [1] (who was vain of her pretty hands and feet, and wore an auburn wig), and The Dark Lady with that fascinating barmaid Avisa [2]—"conjux cauponis, filia

[1] At one time in his early career, Southampton was a much-fancied candidate for the unambiguous position of Chief Favourite. Rowland White, writing in October, 1595, notes, "My Lord of Essex kept his bed all yesterday; his Favour continues quam diu se bene gesserit. Yet my Lord of Southampton is a careful waiter here, and *sede vacante* doth receive favours at her Majesty's hands; all this without breach of amity between them" (*Sydney Memoirs*).

[2] The heroine of that puzzling little poem, *Willobie his Avisa* (pub. 1594).

pandochei." But, in any case, it would be unsafe to assume for these stories of love, jealousy, and intrigue a more substantial substratum of fact than would be sufficient to give a flavour of actuality to a highly-conventionalized poetical contest arranged by (or for) a wealthy amateur who took an interest in literature.

"Mr. W. H."

[For a full discussion of the subject the reader is referred to the two Chapters entitled, "*The True History of Thomas Thorpe and Mr. W. H.*" and "*Mr. William Herbert*" in SIR SIDNEY LEE'S *Life* (pp. 672-90).]

The dedication prefixed to the original edition of the Sonnets (1609)—the most famous dedication in the world—reads as follows.

TO . THE . ONLY . BEGETTER . OF .
THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .
Mr W. H. ALL . HAPPINESSE .
AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
PROMISED
BY
OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .
WISHETH
THE . WELL-WISHING
ADVENTVRER . IN .
SETTING .
FORTH . T.T.

The writer of this dedication, Thomas Thorpe, was a humble member of the Stationers' Company, "a kind of literary jackal, who, in the absence of any regular copyright protection for authors, hung about scriveners' shops, and from time to time, collusively 'picked up' a manuscript in which he could 'deal.'" [1] Apparently anybody who 'picked up' a manuscript in this way could 'deal' with it as he thought fit; "the modern conception of copyright had not yet been evolved. Whoever in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century was in actual possession of a manuscript was for practical purposes its full and responsible owner." [2] How Thorpe obtained possession of a manuscript of the *Sonnets* is a point on which opinions differ, but that he did not get it from Shakespeare is quite certain from the dedication itself, a dedication signed by *the publisher* being, as LEE points out, "an accepted sign that the author had no part in the publication." Thorpe's first appearance as a snapper-up of unconsidered literary trifles was in 1600 when, having got hold of a manuscript of Marlowe's translation of the First Book of Lucan, he had it printed by the well-known printer, P. Short, through the good offices of one Edward Blount (a stationer's assistant like himself), who two years previously had 'picked up' and published the same poet's *Hero and Leander*. The success of this first adventure apparently led Thorpe to take up pirate-publishing as a regular 'side-line' to his stationery business, and in the course of the next twenty years he had made himself responsible for the issue of some two dozen volumes—mostly plays or poems. A few of these were legitimate enterprises, *i.e.*, publications sanctioned by the author, but the rest were shady jobs like the *Sonnets*. When he died in 1635 he held the record (according to LEE) of having "pursued . . . the well-defined profession of procurer of manuscript for a longer period than any other known member of the Stationers Company." He never attained to the dignity of a press of his own, and most of his publications were (like the *Sonnets*) printed for him by George Eld.

[1] Lee. [2] Lee.

There are three preliminary points about the dedication which deserve the reader's attention.

The first point—the most important of the three for The Theory—is that it does not, directly or by implication, assert Shakespeare's sole responsibility for "these insuing sonnets." In line 7, for instance, one finds "*Our* everliving poet" instead of "*The* (or *their*) everliving author," as one would expect. Again, a *publisher's* dedication which omits to mention the author either by name or by reference to his previous writings must, one imagines, have been a rare phenomenon.

The second point is that in form it imitates a dedication prefixed by Ben Jonson to a play which Thorpe had published for him two years before. To quote LEE again: "Thorpe's dedicatory formula and the type in which it was set were clearly influenced by Ben Jonson's form of dedication before the first edition of his *Volpone* (1607), which, like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, was published by Thorpe and printed for him by George Eld. The preliminary leaf in *Volpone* was in short lines, and in the same fount of capitals as was employed in Thorpe's dedication to Mr. W. H. On the opening leaf of *Volpone* stands a greeting of 'The Two Famous Universities,' to which 'Ben Jonson (The Grateful Acknowledger) dedicates both it (the play) and Himselfe.'" One may note in passing that "The Grateful Acknowledger" is obviously responsible for "The Well-wishing Adventurer."

The third point is that it is written in the same vein as the two specimens of Thorpe's 'familiar' dedications—*i.e.*, dedications addressed to his personal friends—which have come down to us, namely, the 1603 dedication of Marlowe's above-mentioned translation of Lucan to his fellow-tradesman, Edward Blount, and the 1610 dedication of Headley's translation of Epictetus to John Florio. The dedications are too long to quote entire, but a few lines from each will give the reader an idea of the clumsy punning and the contorted and pseudo-epigrammatic phraseology which are their two principal characteristics.

(1) Blount: I propose to be blunt with you, and out of my dulness to encounter you with a Dedication in the memory of that pure element all wit, Chr. Marlow: whose ghost or Genius is to be seen walk the Churchyard in (at least) three or four sheets. . . . These things if you can mould yourself to them, Ned, I make no question but they will not become you. . . . Farewell, I affect not the world should measure my thoughts to thee by a scale of this nature; leave to think good of me when I fall from thee. Thine in all rights of perfect friendship, Thom. Thorpe.

(2) [Of Epictetus' work]. In all languages, ages, by all persons high prized, imbraced, yea, inbosomed. It filles not the hand with leaues, but fills ye head with lessons: nor would be held in hand but had by harte to boote. He is more senceless than a stocke that hath no good sence of this stoick."

The tone and language are those of a half-educated vulgarian posing as a wit and fashionable phrase-monger.

To come now to the vexed question which has been responsible for the shedding of an enormous amount of ink—the meaning of "the onlie begetter." Does "begetter" mean "inspirer"? Or "author"? Or "procurer of the M.S."? There is good contemporary authority for each of these three interpretations, and each is supported by a number of qualified critics.

(a) *Inspirer.*

This interpretation is supported by (amongst others) BOADEN, BRIGHT, CHASLES, FURNIVALL, GERVINUS, HALLAM, VICTOR HUGO, NEIL, and TYRWHITT.[1] They identify

[1] These names, as well as the names (given below) of the supporters of the other two interpretations, are cited on the authority of Messrs. Pooler and Lee. I cannot claim a first-hand acquaintance with more than four or five of them.

"Mr. W. H." variously with (1) Henry Wriothesely Earl of Southampton (initials transposed to make it more difficult !), (2) Sir William Harvey (afterwards Lord Harvey) Southampton's step-father, (3) William Herbert third Earl of Pembroke, and (4) Mr. William Hughes.

There are two obvious objections to this interpretation. The first is that it fails to explain "onlie." Speaking roughly, a third of the *Sonnets* are plainly addressed to a man, and a third plainly addressed to a woman, the sex in the remainder being doubtful. The second is that none of the identifications bear the stamp of probability. As regards the three first names, it is quite certain that not one of these illustrious personages could have been addressed as *Mr.* W. H. even by his intimates, and it seems equally certain that if a tradesman like Thorpe had presumed to do so, especially in print, he would have received a sound cudgelling forthwith, and probably have been prosecuted by the Star Chamber into the bargain. Again, why Thorpe should have *wanted* to address a nobleman in this extraordinary fashion—what he could have possibly hoped to gain by it—nobody has been able to explain. As for the fourth claimant, William Hughes—that lovely youth evolved by Tyrwhitt out of his own inner consciousness in order to account for the *Wills* and *Hews* of sonnets Nos. 20, 104, 135, 136, and 143, it appears that though contemporary records have been thoroughly ransacked, no gentleman of that name who comes within measurable distance of filling the bill has been discovered; "there never was no sech a person."

The only 'Inspirer' identification which (in my humble judgment) deserves the reader's consideration is the Pembroke one. And this, not because of its intrinsic value—it is at least as improbable as any of the other three—but because it is the main, or indeed one may truly say the only, foundation for what is known as the 'Herbertist' theory of the *Sonnets*. This theory (much in fashion at the present day) makes Pembroke the 'hero' of the *Sonnets*, and superadds an elaborate story of W.S.'s close personal friendship with Pembroke, his habit of week-ending at Wilton, his unfortunate love-affair with Pembroke's mistress, Mary Fitton,[1] and all the rest of the romantic legend which has appealed so strongly to the imagination of novelists, playwrights and 'intuitional' biographers. The story is pure fantasy from beginning to end. Tested by any of the ordinary tests one applies to 'historical' statements of the kind, it shrivels up to nothing. I will state the Herbertist case as impartially as I can, and leave the reader to judge for himself.

The historical facts on which the Herbertists rely are two, and two only. The first fact is that the theatrical company to which W.S. belonged gave a dramatic performance at Wilton in 1603. In the late autumn of that year owing to the plague then raging in London, the Court moved to Pembroke's house at Wilton, and remained there for two months. The King commanded a dramatic performance for December the 2nd, and "The King's Players"[2] journeyed down to Wiltshire to give it. We do not know the

[1] A Maid-of-Honour to Queen Elizabeth and a particularly bright star in the Court firmament. She was an immoral young woman, and had immoral relations with Pembroke and at least one other courtier. But that she should have deliberately invited social ostracism by engaging in a regular intrigue with a Court servant is, to say the least of it, extremely unlikely. But really, what is gravely called "The Fitton Theory" scarcely deserves the compliment of serious discussion. Mistress Fitton, no doubt, saw W.S. act in dramatic performances at Court and elsewhere (though there is no evidence that she actually did so), but that she distinguished him in any way from other members of his company, that she ever spoke or wrote to him—or even *of* him—there is not the tiniest scrap of evidence, no hint on which one can base even a conjecture.

[2] Every professional actor who desired to avoid being periodically whipped and put in the stocks as "a rogue and vagabond," *had* to take service with one of the four or five great personages who kept up a company of players as a part of his household establishment. He was treated as a kind of upper servant, and wore his master's livery—Royal or otherwise. So when James I in 1603 took over Lord Hunsdon's company (to which W.S. belonged) it became 'the King's Company," and all the members thereof "the King's Players." A

names either of the play (or plays) they performed, or of the performers themselves. W.S. was probably among them, but the fact is not on record. This is the sum-total of the evidence regarding " Shakespeare's visits to Wilton." The second fact is that the ostensible editors of the First Folio, Heminges and Condell, prefixed thereto a dedication (now usually held to be the work of Ben Jonson) to Pembroke and his brother, Lord Montgomery, which runs as follows (I quote only such parts as can be held to be in any way relevant) :—

" To the most noble and incomparable paire of brethren, William Earle of Pembroke, etc., Lord Chamberlaine to the King's most Excellent Majesty and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, etc., gentlemen of His Majesties Bed chamber. . . . But since your L.L. have beene pleas'd to thinke these trifles something, heretofore ; and have prosequuted both them, and their Authour living, with so much favour : we hope, that (they outliving him, and he not having the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings) you will use the like indulgence toward them, you have done unto their parent. There is a great difference, whether any Booke choose his Patrons, or finde them : This hath done both. For, so much were acted, as before they were published, the Volume ask'd to be yours. We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame ; onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. . . . In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H.H. these remaines of your servant [1] Shakespeare ; that what delight is in them, may be ever your L.L. the reputation his, & the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the living, and the dead, as is Your Lordshippes most bounden, John Heminge, Henry Condell."

I leave the reader to judge whether anything more can be twisted out of this than that Pembroke and his brother admired Shakespeare's plays, and encouraged their author with praise and pudding in the same way as other literary-minded noblemen of that day encouraged other deserving authors who sought their patronage. In any case, he has before him in the passage quoted the sum-total of the historical evidence regarding " Shakespeare's intimacy with Lord Pembroke."

But the Herbertists have another string to their bow in the shape of " the internal evidence of the *Sonnets* themselves."

This internal evidence is concerned with two points only. The first is the portrayal of the ' hero of the *Sonnets* '—the " sweet boy " to whom so many of them are addressed. The Herbertists say that he is depicted as a good-looking, licentious young aristocrat, the head of his family, who is disappointing his friends by declining to marry and beget a lawful heir. This is correct. They go on to say that this description fits the Lord Herbert of *circa* 1598 better than any other of Shakespeare's contemporaries. This is quite wrong. As a general description it would fit equally well half-a-dozen other young men about Elizabeth's court, including, of course, the real Simon Pure, *videlicet*, the Lord Southampton of *circa* 1595. But quite apart from this general description, there are, as the reader has seen, numerous passages and lines scattered through the *Sonnets* which point quite clearly to Southampton and Southampton alone. I challenge the Herbertists—and here I am glad to come at last to a point on which I can speak with some personal authority—to quote a single line which can be interpreted as a similar

good deal of nonsense has been written about W.S.'s " promotion " to this " Court appointment " (!) by people who choose to ignore contemporary evidence—such, for example, as the following note written in 1604 by Sir William Cope (an official in the Lord Chamberlain's department) to Lord Cranborne :—

" Sir, I have sent and bene all thys morning huntying for players Juglers & Such kinde of Creaturs, but fynde them harde to finde, wherefore Leavinge notes for them to seeke me, burbage ys come, & Sayes ther ys no new playe that the quene hath not seene, but they have Revyved an olde one, Cawled *Loves Labore lost*, which for wytt & mirthe he sayes will please her exceedingly. And Thys ys apointed to be playd to Morowe night at my Lord of Sowthamptons, unless yow send a wrytt to Remove the Corpus Cum Causa to your howse in strande. Burbage ys my messenger Ready attendyng your pleasure, Yours most humbly, Walter Cope."

The " Creatur " who delivered Cope's note was " King Richard " Burbage, principal tragedian and business head of the King's Company—the Henry Irving of his day.

[1] The King's Company of players was under the control of the Lord Chamberlain, and they were officially styled his ' servants.'

particular allusion to Herbert. The second point is the mysterious " Mr. W. H." itself. The Herbertists say that Thorpe is " playfully " addressing Pembroke by his " former appellation of Mr. William Herbert." This statement makes one rub one's eyes. Pembroke was the eldest son of the second Earl, and from the day of his birth in 1580 to the day he succeeded to the earldom in 1601, he was known by his father's second title of *Lord* Herbert—Baron Herbert of Cardiff. His intimates would, of course, know him as Herbert, or Will Herbert, but that *anybody*—his family, his servants, his friends, or any section of the public—could at *any* time in his career have addressed him in private or in public as " Mr." William Herbert is almost inconceivable. Whether a hand-to-mouth publisher anxious (presumably) to ingratiate himself with a new patron would have been likely to do so, " playfully " or otherwise, when the Earl was thirty years of age, a Knight of the Garter, and one of the leading men in the kingdom, I leave the kind reader to judge. Besides, we actually know that Thorpe knew better: " Proof is at hand to establish that Thorpe was under no misapprehension as to the proper appellation of the Earl of Pembroke," as LEE puts it. Lee is referring to the dedications to Pembroke prefixed by Thorpe to two of his publishing ventures, one in 1610 and the other in 1616. Extracts from the two specimens of T.T.'s 'familiar' dedications, *i.e.*, dedications of the brand he used for people belonging more or less to the same station of life as himself, have been quoted above. But for his *noble* patrons he kept on tap an entirely different and superior dedicatory style. Long involved sentences replace the staccato jocosities of the Blount and Florio dedications; and instead of a rather offensive familiarity, we find a servility which, judged even by the standard of that tuft-hunting age, is nothing short of disgusting. I will quote a few lines from each of the two Pembroke dedications. The 1610 one begins and ends as follows:—

" To the honorablest patron of the Muses and good mindes, Lord William, Earle of Pembroke, Knight of the Honourable Order (of the Garter) . . . Wherefore, his legacie, laide at your Honour's feete, is rather here delivered to your Honour's humbly thrise-kissed hands by his poore delegate, your Lordship's true devoted, Th. Th."

The 1616 one begins as follows:—

" To the Right Honourable, William Earle of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlaine to His Majestie, one of his most honorable Privie Counsell, and Knight of the most noble order of the Garter, &c. Right Honorable.—It may worthily seeme strange unto your Lordship, out of what frenzy one of my meanenesse hath presumed to commit this Sacrilege, in the straightnesse of your Lordship's leisure, to present a peece, for matter and model so unworthy, and in this scribbling age, wherein great persons are so pestered dayly with Dedications."

and so on to the end.

That so many eminent critics should have defended the Pembroke identification seems to me to be quite one of the strangest facts in the history of Shakespearean criticism. When one asks why Thorpe should in 1609 have addressed to Pembroke under the undignified pseudonym of " Mr. W. H." a smug, semi-facetious, thirty-word dedication written in his 'familiar' style, and in the following year have addressed to him under his full title of " Lord William, Earle of Pembroke, Knight of the Honourable Order of the Garter," a long whining dedicatory epistle written in his most fulsomely 'servile' style,' and receives the reply that the reason is that the author whose work Thorpe was pirating in 1609 was on peculiarly intimate terms with the Earl and the 1610 author wasn't, one is conscious of being wafted to a region of thought where the claims of common-sense carry something less than their proper weight. But when, on enquiring where the evidence of this peculiar intimacy is to be found, one is referred back to the *W.H. dedication itself*, one can only hastily acknowledge that the argument is altogether too wonderful for the ordinary person to attain unto, and drop it forthwith.

(b) *Author.*

This interpretation is supported by (among others) BARNSTOFF, BRAE, GODWIN, and INGLEBY. The three last-named critics explain W.H. as a misprint for W.S., *i.e.*, William Shakespeare, but HERR BARNSTOFF sticks to the text, explaining that Mr. W. H. stands for *Mr. W*illiam *H*imself ! One learns by sad experience that a *Sonnets* theory-monger at bay is *capable de tout,* but this typically German effort must surely be somewhere about the limit.

I might enumerate here the many intrinsic improbabilities and difficulties of the " Author " interpretation, *e.g.*, the difficulty of reconciling it with the seventh line of the dedication, but the kind reader will probably agree with me that this would be a waste of time. Let us pass on.

(c) *Procurer of the MS.*

This interpretation is supported by (among others) BOSWELL, CHALMERS, DELIUS, DRAKE, KNIGHT, LEE, and MASSEY. The original meaning of ' beget ' (A.-S. begettan), as the dictionaries and glossaries show, was simply to ' procure ' or ' obtain,' but seventeenth-century examples of its use in this sense are decidedly rare. The example usually quoted is in Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1602), " I have some cousin-germans at court shall *beget* you the reversion of the Master of the King's revels." But rarity of contemporary usage is, of course, no argument against accepting an interpretation of a phrase written by Thorpe, who, as we have seen, affected quaintness and singularity, and loved " to catch an ink-horn term by the tail." Besides it would give him an opportunity of making a characteristically vile pun on the " only-begotten " of the Prayer-book.

This interpretation undoubtedly does what the two others have signally failed to do, namely, offer an explanation of the " promised " and " well-wishing " of Thorpe's cryptically-worded sentence. If Mr. W. H. was the inspirer or addressee of the *Sonnets* —if, in short, the part he played in their production had been one of which the *author* was cognizant, why do we have merely " promised," and " not promised *him* " ? If he was the author himself, why " by *our* ever-living poet," and not " by *their* ever-living author," or " in *his* ever-living verse " ? Again, are we to suppose that " well-wishing " is merely a tautologous repetition of the " wisheth " in the previous line ? The answer is that lines 4-7 obviously refer (probably with satiric intention) to Shakespeare's vain-glorious sonnets in the B.I. series, more especially to the last four lines of his magnificent No. 18 :—

> Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
> When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st :
> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this and this gives life to thee,

and that the fulfilment of this confident anticipation of perennial popularity was naturally a consummation devoutly to be ' wished ' by T.T. " Eternity " for the dedicatee would mean a regular income for the owner of the copyright—one for W.H. and two for himself ![1] So plausible an explanation ought to give the ' procurer ' interpretation a strong prima facie claim to our suffrages. And its negative virtues are equally admirable ; it has come out of a heavy critical cross-fire practically unscathed. The general tone of this

[1] Thorpe's little joke appears to have been appreciated by the trade. George Wither prefixed to his *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (pub. 1613 by Thorpe's publisher, George Eld), the dedicatory sentence " To himselfe G.W. wisheth all happinesse."

criticism has been one of strong distaste for a distressingly humdrum solution of a problem which offers so many romantic possibilities; but nothing in the shape of a reasonably valid counter-argument has been advanced except the objection that it fails to account for "onlie." BEECHING, in voicing this objection, observes: "Allowing it to be conceivable that a piratical publisher should inscribe a book of sonnets to the thief who brought him the manuscript, why should he lay stress on the fact that 'alone he did it'? Was it an enterprise of such great peril?" But this objection is not as strong as it looks. In the first place, it does not allow for Thorpe's penchant for bad puns. In the second place, though it is true that on the orthodox single-author hypothesis, the *difficulty* (I do not understand why Canon Beeching should have assumed it to be the *peril*) of obtaining a complete manuscript of the *Sonnets* is not very apparent, *my* theory puts the matter on a different footing altogether. To collect single-handed the *disjecta membra* of a series of poetical tournaments fought out by five celebrated poets a dozen or so years ago and kept a secret from all but a small circle of initiates ever since, was a feat of which the most expert professional 'picker-up' of manuscripts might reasonably be proud.

The reader will note that this is the first time that The Theory has been brought into the discussion; it has been kept out on purpose, in order to avoid complicating the argument. Now that it *has* been mentioned, however, it will be convenient to set down here its verdict on the main issues involved. This verdict may be summarized as follows: "The Theory leaves the arguments for and against the various 'inspirer' interpretations very much as they were; it gives the *coup de grâce* to the far-fetched explanation that W.H.=W.S.; and it knocks the bottom out of the only serious objection to the interpretation of "begetter" as the person from whom, or through whom, Thorpe, directly or indirectly, obtained the MS. from which he printed the *Sonnets*." This 'procurer' interpretation is so reasonable in itself, and so well supported by what little evidence there is, that, speaking on behalf of The Theory, I unhesitatingly accept it as the only possible answer to the puzzle.

In searching among Thorpe's contemporaries for the man who did the deed, one has to bear in mind the 'familiar' tone of the dedication, and also the designation of the dedicatee by his initials only. As LEE observes, "The employment of initials in a dedication was a recognized mark of close friendship or intimacy between patron and dedicator. It was a sign that the patron's fame was limited to a small circle, and that the revelation of his full name was not a matter of interest to a wide public." W.H. was obviously one of Thorpe's personal friends (probably a fellow-professional like Edward Blount) who had 'picked up' a MS. of the *Sonnets* and made it over to him—for a consideration or otherwise. There are several more or less shadowy claimants to the honour, but the only person discovered hitherto who can make any pretence to filling the bill is a London stationer named William Hall. Hall's business career is on record, and may be summarized as follows: apprenticed to a master stationer, 1577 to 1584; stationer's assistant from 1584 to 1606; licensed as a master stationer and press-owner, 1606; printed his first book in 1608, and during the next six years "printed some twenty volumes, most of them sermons and almost all devotional in tone"; sold his business and retired in 1614. The 'historical' evidence on which Sir Sidney Lee and Hall's other supporters rely is *first*, that as a press-owner he would (from 1606) be entitled to the honorific 'Mr.'; *secondly*, that in one of his books (published 1608) he describes himself by his initials—"printed by W H."; and *thirdly*, that he may be identified almost certainly with the W.H. who in 1608 'picked up' and published a collection of religious poems written by the well-known Jesuit Robert Southwell. This W.H. (who informs his readers

that these poems "haply had never seene the light, had not a meere accident conveyed them to my hands,") prefixes a dedication which runs as follows: "To the Right Worshipfull and Vertuous Gentleman, Mathew Saunders, Esquire. W.H. wisheth with long life, a prosperous achievement of his good desires," and also a dedicatory epistle signed: "Your Worships unfained affectionate, W.H." (The book, by the way, was printed for him by George Eld—the printer of the *Sonnets* and most of Thorpe's other publishing ventures.) But what, to my mind, is by far the weightiest argument in Hall's favour is supplied by the third line of the dedication itself. Here, as it seems to me, Thorpe is making one of the miserable puns on proper names which distinguish his 'familiar' style; and it was in order to get in this pun without shifting his own name from its proper place at the end of his dedicatory sentence that he contorted it into the fantastic (fantastic even for *him*) and ambiguous shape which has so perplexed the critics. "Mr. W. H. (all) happinesse" [1] is a pun of exactly the same calibre—and, curiously enough, on exactly the same syllable—as "that pure element (all) wit Chr. Marlowe" of his dedication to Blount of Marlowe's Lucan in 1600. In my humble opinion the supporters of William Hall have proved their case as satisfactorily as one could reasonably expect them to prove such a case, at such a distance of time, by circumstantial evidence alone.

Accepting therefore on behalf of The Theory both the "procurer of the MS." interpretation of "begetter," and his identification with William Hall, I offer the following paraphrase of the famous dedication:—

"The merchant-venturer, T.T., on the point of setting sail with a cargo of sonnets supplied by Mr. William Hall, wishes him (h) all happiness, and trusts that by marking the consignment "Sole Supplier—Mr. W. H." he (T.T.) has secured for him (W.H.) a share in the "eternity" which (according to their "ever-living" author) awaits the Shakespearean portions thereof. Amen."

1 In the dedication there is a full-stop (.) after every word and initial. A reference to the original text shows that the space between the full-stop placed after the H. of Mr. W. H. and the A of ALL is perceptibly greater than that between any other full-stop and the letter immediately following it. Anybody who has had practical experience of the work of discovering cipher-keys will appreciate the significance of this fact.

CHAPTER X.—THE THEORY DEFENDED.

I approach the task of writing this chapter with great misgiving, not only because I have never engaged in literary controversy and do not know the rules and etiquette of the game, but also because the whole of the last nine chapters constitute one long progressive (and, as it seems to me, conclusive) argument in favour of The Theory, and I do not see how I am to condense it into a satisfactory summary. I find myself, in fact, in the embarrassing position of an architect under formal notice to 'defend' his completed work before a Building Committee which had inspected his plans before the work was started and had had full opportunity of watching the progress of construction from day to day. Those of my readers who have paid me the compliment of reading steadily through the foregoing chapters will know that the unseen foundation on which my building rests is the division on aesthetic grounds of the sonnets into Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean, that the four main pillars thereof are Similar Treatment of The Theme, Verbal Parallelism, Characteristics of Thought and Style, and Personal Allusion, and that it is reinforced from the outside by the two solid-looking buttresses, Catchword Order and Identification of the Poets. They will also, I feel sure, have realised the importance of the simple fact that it *is* a building, that is to say, not a mere congeries of more or less unrelated erections, any of which may be modified or even removed altogether without doing much damage to the rest, but a real structural whole, every part of which supports and is supported by every other part.

. . . . . .

In the first place then, let me make clear the vital distinction between The Theory and all the various other theories about the *Sonnets* which have been put forward from time to time. Put as broadly as possible, the current 'orthodox' view is, I take it, that expressed by Professor Dowden in his Introduction to his edition of the *Sonnets*, where he says:—"With Wordsworth, Sir Henry Taylor, and Mr. Swinburne, with Francois-Victor Hugo, with Kreyssig, Ulrici, Gervinus, and Hermann Isaac, with Boaden, Armitage Brown, and Hallam, with Furnivall, Spalding, Rosetti, and Palgrave, I believe that Shakespeare's Sonnets express his own feelings in his own person."

But there are other equally well-qualified critics who reject this personal interpretation altogether, and have convinced themselves that the *Sonnets* are, variously (I quote only the most popular of the many explanations): a literary exercise; a satire on the sonnetteering craze of the day; an allegory on the difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and the doctrine of a Celibate Church; a study of the 'materialised' Human Soul; and an appeal to William Shakespeare's sublimated spiritual self. But one and all, orthodox and unorthodox, realists and idealists, fictionist and allegorists, satirists and sentimentalists, agree in one point, namely, in regarding the *Sonnets* (or all but a very few of them) as the genuine work of the Bard of Avon.

Now, as the reader knows, my Theory asserts positively that he was responsible for not more than thirty-two or thirty-three of them at the most, and that the other

hundred and twenty odd are the work of four or five other poets writing in competition with him and with each other. There can obviously be no compromise between such a theory and *any* current theory, orthodox or unorthodox, and the useful ' much-to-be-said-on-both-sides ' formula is for once ruled out altogether. If even one of the ' essential ' first seven of the ten propositions in which The Theory has been set forth can be proved to be unsound, then the whole thing is rotten right through, and the sooner it is carted away to limbo along with The Biliteral Cipher and *honorificabilitudinitatibus* the better. But if, on the other hand, my fundamental hypothesis of ' Competitive Sonnetteering ' is accepted as, broadly speaking, correct, then the basis on which all the current theories are founded dissolves into nothingness, and a very large percentage of the enormous mass of *Sonnets* literature goes into the waste-paper basket.

I would like to ask the supporters of *any* one of the current theories the following five questions, none of which, to the best of my knowledge, have been asked before—or if they have, they have certainly never been answered.

Question No. I. Why did Shakespeare write such un-Shakespearean stuff as this ? [I give only a few of the more striking examples.]

No. 22.

O therefore, love, be of thyself so wary
As I, not for myself but for thee, will ;
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.

No. 28.

And each though enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me ;
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil, still farther off from thee.

No. 38.

Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
Than those old nine which rimers invocate ;
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to outlive long date.
If my slight Muse do please these curious days
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

No. 46.

To 'cide this title is impanneled
A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart ;
And by their verdict is determined
The clear eye's moiety and the dear heart's part :
As thus, mine eye's due is thy outward part,
And my heart's right thy inward love of heart.

No. 51.

Then can no horse with my desire keep pace ;
Therefore desire, of perfect'st love being made,
Shall neigh no dull flesh in his fiery race ;
But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade ;
Since from thee going he went wilful-slow,
Towards thee I'll run and give him leave to go.

No. 56.

Let this sad interim like the ocean be
Which parts the shore, where two contracted new
Come daily to the banks, that, when they see
Return of love, more blest may be the view ;
Or call it winter, which being full of care
Makes summer's welcome thrice more wish'd, more rare.

No. 67.

Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,
Beggar'd of blood to blush through lively veins ?
For she hath no exchequer now but his,
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.
O, him she stores, to show what wealth she had
In days long since, before these last so bad.

No. 81.

You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen—
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

No. 97.

And, thou away, the very birds are mute ;
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

No. 100.

Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life ;
So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked knife.

No. 103.

And more, much more, than in my verse can sit
Your own glass shows you when you look in it.

Can anything like the variegated vileness of these samples be found in any other genuine work of Shakespeare early or late ?

Question No. II. Why did Shakespeare, when dealing with certain conventional sonnetteering topics, repeat himself, contradict himself, or parody himself (sometimes all three together) as in the following example ? [Again I give a single handful from a full sack ; there are dozens more.]

Topic.—The Patron is the *worthiest subject* for the Poet's *Muse* to exercise her *invention* (imagination) upon, and furnishes an all-sufficient *argument* for his *verse.*

38. How can *my Muse* want *subject* to *invent*,
    When thou dost live who pour'st into *my verse*
    Thine own sweet *argument*, too excellent
    When thou thyself dost give *invention* light?
    Be thou the tenth *Muse*, ten times more *in worth*.
76. Why is *my verse* so barren of new pride
    So far from *variation* or quick *change?*
    And keep *invention* in a noted weed
    O know, *sweet love*, I always write of you
    And you and love are still my *argument;*
    So all my best is *dressing old words new*,
    Spending again what is already *spent:*
78. So oft have I invoked thee for *my Muse*
    And found such fair assistance in *my verse*,
79. *I grant, sweet love*, thy lovely *argument*
    Deserves the travail of a *worthier pen*
    Yet what of thee thy poet doth *invent*
82. *I grant* thou wert not married to *my Muse*
    Of their fair *subject*, blessing every book
84. Lean *pen*ury within that *pen* doth dwell
    That to his *subject lends* not some small glory
100. Where art thou, *Muse*, that thou forget'st so long
    To speak of that which gives thee all thy might
    Spend'st thou thy fury on some *worthless* song
    Darkening thy power, to *lend* base *subjects* light?
    And gives thy *pen* both skill and *argument*.
103. The *argument*, all bare, is of more *worth*
    That over-goes my blunt *invention* quite
    To mar the *subject* that before was well
    For to no other pass *my verses* tend.
105. Fair, kind, and true is all my *argument*
    Fair, kind, and true *varying to other words*
    And in this *change* is my *invention spent*.

Can anything *in the least* like this damnable iteration be found in the work of any other sonnetteer English or foreign?

Question No. III. Why did Shakespeare in the twelve Sonnets, Nos. 127, 130, 131, 132, 137, 139, 140, 141, 147, 148, 150 and 152, in which he refers to his love for a dark woman, imitate or parody over and over again the thoughts and language of a particular passage in his own Love's Labour's Lost? [I have not attempted to mark the 'parallelisms,' as this would mean the italicising of about three-quarters of the matter quoted.]

L.L.L. Act IV. Sc. III.

229. B. My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Berowne
    That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack,
    If that she learn not of her eye to look;
    No face is fair that is not full so black.
    K. O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
    The hue of dungeons and the school of night;
    And beauty's crest becomes the heavens well.
    B. Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light.
    O! if in black my lady's brows be deck'd,
    It mourns that painting and usurping hair
    Should ravish doters with a false aspect;
    And therefore is she born to make black fair.

Sonnets.

127. In the old age black was not counted fair,
    But now is black beauty's successive heir,
    Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face;
    Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
    Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
    At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
    Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
131. For well thou know'st to my dear doting heart
    Thy face hath not the power to make love groan,
    And to be sure that it is not false I swear
    Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
    In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds.
132. Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
    Have put on black and loving mourners be
    And truly not the morning sun of heaven
    Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east
    Than those two mourning eyes become thy face
    To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
    And suit thy pity like in every part;
    Then will I swear beauty itself is black
    And all they foul that thy complexion lack
137. Thou blind fool, Love what dost thou to mine eyes
    That they behold, and see not what they see?
    Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,
    To put fair truth upon so foul a face
141. I' faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes
    Who in despite of view, is pleased to dote
147. For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright
    Who art as black as hell, as dark as night
148. O me, what eyes hath Love put in my head,
    Which have no correspondence with true sight!
    Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
    That censures falsely what they see aright?
    If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
    No marvel then, though I mistake my view;

O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st
me blind
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should
find.
150. To make me give the lie to my true sight
And swear that brightness doth not grace the
day,
152. And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
For I have sworn thee fair; more perjured I,
To swear against the truth so foul a lie.

Question No. IV. Why did Shakespeare construct the following five sonnets almost entirely out of 'scraps' taken from his own plays and narrative poems? [I note only a few of the more striking of the many examples of the 'Shakespearizing' or 'patchwork' sonnet to be found in the collection.]

Nos. 33+34. *Henry IV, Venus and Adonis, Romeo and Juliet, Midsummer's Night's Dream, King John, Love's Labour's Lost.*
No. 51. *Venus and Adonis, Lucrece, Henry V, Henry IV, Midsummer's Night's Dream.*
Nos. 97+98. *Midsummer's Night's Dream, Love's Labour's Lost, Lucrece, Romeo and Juliet, Henry IV.*

Question No. V. There are twenty-one sonnets on the topic of The Poet's absence from his mistress, viz., Nos. 24, 27, 28, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 57, 58, 61, 75, 97, 98, 99, 113, 114. Why did Shakespeare work into these twenty-one sonnets *alone* a greater amount of this 'patchwork,' *i.e.*, a larger number of scraps taken from his own plays and poems, than in all the remaining one hundred and thirty-three sonnets put together? [I note only the absolutely unmistakable borrowings—there are many others more recondite which have been duly explained above in the Notes on the *Absence* series.]

Venus and Adonis	Nos. 56, 99
Lucrece	Nos. 24, 45, 51, 52, 75, 97, 99
Romeo and Juliet	Nos. 98, 99
Love's Labour's Lost	No. 97
2 Gent. of Verona	Nos. 43, 45
Richard II	Nos. 43, 99
Richard III	Nos. 113, 114
King John	Nos. 44, 113, 114
Midsummer's Night's Dream ..	Nos. 51, 97, 98, 113
Henry IV	Nos. 51, 52, 98
Henry V	Nos. 44, 45, 51

Can anything even remotely approaching the wholesale self-plagiarizing of the examples quoted under these last three questions be found in the work of any other author ancient or modern?

But a *questionnaire* of this kind would, of course, have no effect on the true Bardolater—the Shakespearean 'stalwart' determined to "lose no Drop of that immortal Man," and conscious only of yet another inexcusable outrage on the memory of the illustrious dead. His faith is founded on the rock of "The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare," and he is bound to regard my Theory as a pestilent heresy to be abjured by every decent-minded Shakespearean. But he must abjure it *as a whole;* he cannot pick and choose; he *must* assert and make good every one of the six statements given in the list below—to fail in one would be as fatal to his case as to fail in all.

List of Objections.

1. That there is no *aesthetic* reason why all the so-called ' Serial ' Sonnets should not have been written by the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *Romeo and Juliet.*

2. That the arrangement of these sonnets into thirteen groups each purporting to deal with the same ' Theme ' or set of subjects is a superficial and indefensible one.

3. That the so-called ' similar treatments of the Theme ' are due to the poet recurring to the same topic after an interval or intervals.

4. That the so-called ' Verbal Parallelisms ' are due to the same cause.

5. That the attempt to trace four different poets by their so-called ' characteristics ' has completely failed, such trifling differences in thought, feeling, expression and style as exist between sonnet and sonnet being no more than one might expect to find in the work of a single poet singing " to one clear harp in divers tones."

6. That the so-called ' Personal Allusions ' and references to the alleged ' Contest ' are explainable otherwise, and as a matter of fact most of them *have* been so explained, quite satisfactorily, by previous writers.

Now the issues between these six statements and those propositions of The Theory which they directly challenge cannot be tried at the bar of *fact ;* all six belong to the class of which instructed opinion can be the only arbiter—the opinion of the literary expert based on his " Nicety of Tast." This being so, it would be obviously futile to argue about them, and I propose, therefore, to place them all on a ' Non Disputanda ' list, and will content myself by suggesting to the kind reader that he should apply them systematically to four or five of my thirteen series chosen at random and judge for himself how far they are justified. If he finds that even one of them is unsustainable, then, as I have said above, I submit that he must hold that the Shakespeare ' whole-hogger ' has lost his case.

But there are many ' minor ' objections, *i.e.*, objections of a less fundamental and more particular character, which might appear as stumbling-blocks even in the eyes of a convert. I will set down all I have been able to think of, but it is not easy to act as advocatus diaboli in one's own cause, and there may, of course, be many more. Here is my list.

List of ' Minor ' Objections.

First. Five based more or less on *facts.*

1. The Sonnets were published as Shakespeare's.
2. Shakespeare never disclaimed sole authorship.
3. None of the four other alleged authors claimed a share in them.
4. There is no reference in contemporary literature to this alleged ' contest ' between four well-known poets.
5. There is no precedent for such a ' contest.'

Secondly. Two based more or less on aesthetic considerations.

6. Many of the Sonnets are written with a depth of tone and feeling quite incompatible with the supposition that they are merely exercises in ' Competitive Sonnetteering.'
7. Many of the sonnets attributed to Shakespeare's alleged rivals are too good to have been written by them. And

Lastly. One based on common-sense.

8. The hypothesis of ' Competitive Sonnetteering ' has never suggested itself to any of the numerous competent critics who have made a special study of the *Sonnets.*

I will now attempt to deal with these eight objections one by one and as briefly as possible.

1. *The Sonnets were published as Shakespeare's.*

This objection is of very little weight. In the first place it is quite clear that the publication was not authorized by Shakespeare. Sir Sidney Lee says :—" He [Shakespeare] cannot be credited with any responsibility for the publication of Thorpe's collection of his sonnets in 1609. . . . The book was issued in June, and the owner of the ' copy ' left the public under no misapprehension as to his share in the production by printing above his initials a dedicatory preface from his own pen. The appearance in a book of a dedication from the publisher's (instead of from the author's) hand was, unless the substitution was specifically accounted for on other grounds, an accepted sign that the author had no part in the publication " (*Life*, pp. 159-60). In the second place there have been many previous fraudulent ascriptions of literary works to Shakespeare. Disregarding several pieces published as by " W.S." (obviously intended to be taken as W. Shakespeare) we find that three non-Shakespearean plays had been published with Shakespeare's *full name* on the title page, viz. :—

(1.) *The First Part of The Life of Sir John Oldcastle*, 1600, printed for T.(homas) P.(avier).

(2.) *The London Prodigall*, 1605, printed by T.(homas) C.(reede) for Nathaniel Butler.

(3.) *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, 1608, printed by K. B. for Thomas Pavier.

But perhaps the most flagrant example of all is " The Passionate Pilgrim by William Shakespeare," published by William Jaggard in 1599. Of the twenty poems included in this collection only five are the work of Shakespeare. The rest were written by Barnfield, Griffin, Deloney and others unidentified. Jaggard issued a second edition in 1606, of which no copy is extant. In 1612 he issued a third edition with the following title page : " The Passionate Pilgrim, or Certaine Amorous Sonnets betweene Venus and Adonis, newly corrected and augmented. By W. Shakespeare. The third edition. Whereunto is newly added two Loue-Epistles, the first from Paris to Hellen, and Hellen's answere back againe to Paris. Printed by W. Jaggard, 1612." Of this edition Sir Sidney Lee writes as follows : " The old text reappeared without change ; the words ' certain amorous sonnets between Venus and Adonis ' appropriately describe four non-Shakespearean poems in the original edition, and the fresh emphasis laid on them in the new title-page had the intention of suggesting a connection with Shakespeare's first narrative poem. But the unabashed Jaggard added to the third edition of his pretended Shakespearean anthology two new non-Shakespearean poems which he silently filched from Thomas Heywood's ' Troia Britannica.' That work was a collection of poetry which Jaggard had published for Heywood in 1609." Compared with this abandoned sinner the " well-wishing adventurer " Thomas Thorpe, shows up as a model of virtue. Hyphened surnames were very rare in Shakespeare's day—they were entirely unknown in the class to which he himself belonged—and the casual poetry-lover who paid his fivepence for a copy of a new book of poems entitled " Shake-speare's Sonnets " would probably have been a good deal surprised to hear that " Shake-speare " was *not* a *nom-de-plume*, and would certainly *not* have been surprised to hear that the volume contained the work of others besides the author of *Venus and Adonis*. In fact, all things considered, this " tradesman-like form of title "[1] was about as honest and suitable a one as T. T. could have selected.

[1] See Lee.

2. *Shakespeare never disclaimed sole authorship.*

The answer to this is that Shakespeare never disclaimed authorship of *any* of the many spurious plays and poems published under his name, just as he never claimed authorship of *any* of the sixteen genuine plays published during his lifetime. As Sir S. Lee says : " only two of Shakespeare's works—his narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*—were published with his sanction and co-operation." Shakespeare never at any time displayed any care for his literary reputation, and he appears to have been singularly indifferent—even for that casual age—to the fate of his literary offspring. Poets and the art of poetry are rarely mentioned in his works, and always in terms of more or less good-humoured contempt : even in the case of his own two acknowledged narrative poems the dedications are plainly ironical, and parody the style and language of the patron-hunting versifiers of the day. In fact, all the evidence, external and internal, goes to show that our leading " decorator and colourman in words " did not take his trade very seriously.

3. *None of the four other alleged authors claimed a share of them.*

The answer to this objection is threefold. (*a*) *The Sonnets* failed to attract the attention of the reading public ; (*b*) in those days authors did not make such claims even in the case of popular *successes ;* and (*c*) there were special *personal* reasons why such claims should not have been made in the case of the *Sonnets*.

(*a*). *The Sonnets a failure.* It is difficult to understand why Thomas Thorpe should have expected to make anything out of the publication of his amorphous medley so many days ' after the fair.' There is nothing so dead as a dead craze, and by 1609 *pléiadiste* sonnetteering was as dead as a doornail—even in France. And that T. T.'s venture did actually ' fall dead from the Press ' is proved as certainly as anything can be proved by circumstantial evidence alone. Quotations from, and allusions to, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* and their author positively swarm in contemporary literature ; the *Sonnets* are not quoted from or alluded to even once. The two narrative poems went through what was for those days a really extraordinary number of editions—*Venus and Adonis*, 1593, 1594, 1596, 1599, 1600, 1602, 1617, 1620, 1627, 1630 (2), 1636, and *Lucrece*, 1594, 1598, 1600, 1607, 1616, 1624 ; the *Sonnets* were published only once. Further—most significant fact of all—when at length they were republished in 1640 along with other Shakespearean and pseudo-Shakespearean poems, they were (to quote from the beginning of Chapter I) " referred to in the preface in terms which clearly show that the editor, John Benson, regarded them as an entirely new ' discovery.' " Benson's preface—a masterpiece of mendacity—is an illuminating document, and is worth quoting in full :—

To the Reader.

I Here presume (under favour) to present to your view some excellent and sweetely composed Poems, of Master WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, Which in themselves appeare of the same purity, [*Lie Number One*] the Author himselfe then living avouched ; [*Lie Number Two*] they had not the fortune by reason of their Infancie in his death, [*Lie Number Three*] to have the due accomodatiō of proportionable glory, with the rest of his everliving Workes, yet the lines of themselves will afford you a more authentick approbation than my assurance any way can, to invite your allowance, in your perusall you shall finde them SEREN, cleere and eligantly plaine, such gentle straines as shall recreate and not perplex your braine, no intricat or cloudy stuffe to puzzell intellect [*Lie Number Four*], but perfect eloquence ; such as will raise your admiration to his praise : this assurance I know will not differ from your acknowledgement. And certain I am, my opinion will be seconded by the sufficiency of these ensuing Lines ; I have beene somewhat solicitus to bring this forth to the perfect view of all men ; and in so doing, glad to be serviceable for the continuance of glory to the deserved Author in these his Poems.

I.B. [i.e. *John Benson*].

Lie Number One. As Sir S. Lee says: "the order in which Thorpe printed the Sonnets is disregarded. Benson prints his poems in a wholly different sequence, and denies them unity in meaning. He offers them to his readers as a series of detached compositions. At times he runs more than one together without break. But on each detachment he bestows a descriptive heading." As Mr. Pooler says: "poems from *The Passionate Pilgrim* are interspersed singly or in groups among the Sonnets . . . in some cases, but not all, pronouns indicating that a man is addressed are changed to feminine forms." Also he omits (apparently by inadvertence) eight sonnets, and suppresses the W.H. dedication.

Lie Number Two. Shakespeare never "avouched" *anything* about either *The Passionate Pilgrim* or the *Sonnets*.

Lie Number Three. Seven years elapsed between the publication of the *Sonnets* and Shakespeare's death.

Lie Number Four. The collection includes many sonnets (mostly the work of The Humorist) which for sheer obscurity beat anything in English poetry before Browning. The kind reader is invited to find in the numerous contemporary sonnet-collections parallels to any of the following sonnets—24, 114, 124, 125.

Here is a collection of poems by a very popular author published only thirty years previously. Would any editor venture to herald a republication of them in these terms—to say nothing of taking the most unwarrantable liberties with the text—unless he felt certain that his public knew nothing of the original edition? Conceive of anyone treating *Venus and Adonis* or *Lucrece* in this fashion!

(*b*). *Indifference to piracy.* Very occasionally a professional poet might protest at being credited with inferior compositions by other pens, but in the case of the smaller fry, to have one's best efforts selected for publication under a popular author's name appears to have been regarded as a compliment rather than otherwise. For instance, none of the versifiers laid under contribution for *The Passionate Pilgrim*—Barnfield, Griffin, Deloney, and others—seem to have objected to Shakespeare being described on the title-page as sole author.

(*c*). *Special personal reasons.* Consider the position of the four 'rival poets' at the time of the publication of the *Sonnets* in June, 1609. Barnes had long ago disappeared from London society, and was ruralizing in Durham. He died there in December of the same year, and may possibly have been in failing health for some time before. Besides, in any case, he was not likely to take action which would reveal him as a boastful coward, and the butt of his fellow-competitors. Warner had died two months before. Donne was no longer the "Jack Donne" of *Songs and Sonnets*, but a serious, much-married man who had renounced his youthful follies and was preparing to take holy orders.[1] And as for The Newcomer, whether he was Daniel or another, he was not likely to trouble about his insignificant contribution of ten sonnets of no particular merit or originality. And finally, it must be remembered that the secret of the *Sonnets* could not have been divulged by *anybody* without 'giving away' the Earl of Southampton,[2] who under James I had become a very great man indeed—a Knight of the Garter, Governor of the Isle of Wight, and *persona gratissima* at Court.

[1] Ben Jonson told Drummond that Donne "since he was made a Doctor repenteth highly and seeketh to destroy all his poems." And Donne himself wrote to a friend: "Of my *Anniversaries* the fault that I acknowledge in myself is to have descended to print anything in verse, which, though it had excuse even in our times, by men who profess and practise much gravity; yet I confess I wonder how I declined to it and do not pardon myself."

[2] In those days a statesman could not afford to be known as a poet. Selden observes in his *Table-Talk*: "'Tis ridiculous for a lord to print verses; 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish." So in Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie* (1589) we read: "Now also of such among the

4. *There is no reference in contemporary literature to this alleged "Contest" between four well-known poets.*

Obviously the only authority competent to pronounce judgment on this point is a specialist in Elizabethan literature familiar not only with the printed and MS. works produced in the last decade of the sixteenth century, but also with the great mass of correspondence, memoirs, diaries, etc., belonging to that period which have survived to our day. Until this evidence is re-examined and a negative result authoritatively established, I am not prepared to allow this objection—especially as I have come across (in Sir S. Lee's *Life*) certain passages in Nashe and Gervase Markham which seem to me to indicate that these two men at any rate knew that some sort of contest *was* going on in 1594 and 1595.

The first passage occurs in Nashe's dedication to Southampton of his novel, *Life of Jack Wilton* (1594):

"How wel or ill I haue done in it, I am ignorant: (the eye that sees round about it selfe sees not into it selfe): only your Honours *applauding encouragement* hath power to make mee arrogant. Incomprehensible is the *heigth of your spirit* both in heroical resolution and matters of conceit. Vnrepriueably perisheth that booke whatsoeuer to wast paper, *which on the diamond rocke of your judgement disasterly chanceth to be ship-wrackt*. A dere louer and cherisher you are, as well of the louers of Poets, as of Poets them selues. Amongst their *sacred* number I dare not ascribe my selfe, though now and then I speak English: that smal braine I haue, to no further vse I conuert saue to be kinde to my frends, and fatall to my enemies. A new brain, a new wit, a new stile, a new soule will I get mee to canonize your name to posteritie, if in this my first attempt I be not taxed of presumption. Of your gracious fauor I despaire not, for I am not altogether Fames out-cast. . . . Your Lordship is the large spreading branch of renown, from whence *these my idle leaues* seeke to deriue their whole *nourishing*."

The words *italicized* recall the language of two of Barnes' sonnets in *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593), viz.: (1) The ridiculous dedicatory sonnet to Southampton quoted above in Chapter II, and (2), No. 91.

The dedicatory sonnet may be quoted again:

Receive, sweet *Lord*, with thy thrice *sacred* hand
(Which *sacred* Muses make their instrument)
These worthless leaves, which I to thee present,
(*Sprung from* a rude and unmanured land)
That with your countenance graced, they may withstand
Hundred-eyed Envy's rough encounterment,
Whose patronage can *give encouragement*,
To scorn back-wounding Zoilus his band.
Vouchsafe, right virtuous Lord, with gracious eyes—
Those heavenly lamps which give the Muses light,
Which give and take in course that holy fire—
To view my Muse with your judicial sight:
Whom, when time shall have taught, by flight, to rise,
Shall to *thy virtues, of much worth aspire*.

Nobilitie or gentrie as be very well seene in many laudable sciences, and especially in making of poesie, it has so come to passe that they have no courage to write, and if they have, yet are they loath to be a knowen of their skill. So as I know very many notable gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably and suppressed it agayne or els suffored to be publisht without their own names to it: as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seeme learned and to show himself amorous of any good Art." And in the anonymous play *Sir Thomas More* (1590) the Earl of Surrey is made to say:

". . . Oh my lord, you tax me
In that word poet of much idleness
It is a studie that makes poor the fate
Poets were ever thought unfit for state."

From No. 91 three lines may be quoted :

> My fancy's ship, tost here and there by these
> Still floats in danger, ranging to and fro.
> How fears *my thoughts' swift pinnace thine hard rocks*

The words I have *underlined* (in Nashe's dedication) would seem to indicate a certain amount of soreness on Nashe's part at some recent slight on his pretensions as a poet—such, for instance, as passing him over as a candidate for a poetical " contest " in favour of the versifier whose metaphor and language he is imitating.

The second passage appears in Markham's dedicatory sonnet to Southampton prefixed to his patriotic poem on Sir Richard Grenville's fight off the Azores (1595) :

> Thou glorious laurel of the Muses' hill,
> *Whose eyes* doth crown the most victorious pen,
> *Bright lamp of virtue*, in whose *sacred* skill
> Lives all the bliss of ear-enchanting men,
> From graver subjects of thy grave assays,
> Bend thy *courageous* thoughts unto these lines—
> The grave from whence *my humble Muse doth raise*
> True honour's spirit in her *rough* designs—

Note *first* the close resemblance (marked by italics) in tone and phraseology to Barnes' just-quoted dedicatory sonnet, and *secondly*, the personal allusions (marked by underlining) in lines 2 and 4—" the most victorious pen " in particular.

The third and last passage occurs in Nashe's poetical dedication to Southampton of his *Choise of Valentines* (1595 or 1596) :

> ' Pardon, sweete *flower* of matchles poetrye,
> And *fairest bud* the red *rose* euer bare,
> Although my muse, devorst from deeper care,
> Presents thee with a wanton Elegie.
> . . . . . .
> Complaints and praises, every one can write,
> And passion out their pangs in statlie rimes :
> . . . . . .
> Accept it, deare Lord, in gentle gree,
> And better lines, ere long, shall honor thee.

These lines contain several *possible* allusions to the " Contest " and the Personal series of sonnets. To save the tedious repetition of qualifying words and phrases, I will treat these possibilities as certainties.

1-2. An echo of the opening lines of the *Sonnets* (Shakespeare's first sonnet to Southampton) :

> From *fairest* creatures we desire increase
> That thereby beauty's *rose* might never die.
> . . . . . .
> Within thine own *bud* buriest thy Content.

The " matchles poetrye " = the Personal Sonnets.

3-4. Again the note of soreness. The " deeper care " is the " Contest," and the author's " devorst " muse is a reference to the mysterious union between the various competitors' muses and the object of their praises, which forms the basis of one of the leading *motifs* in the Personal sonnets—" The Obstetrics " conceit. *Cf.* especially Shakespeare—

> Let me not to the marriage of true minds

and The Lawyer—

> I grant thou wert not married to my muse.

9-10. The "complaints" are the six sonnets of the "Patron's Peccadilloes" series, and the "praises" are the rest of the Personal section. Note the "their" in line 10: it is, strictly speaking, ungrammatical, but it is interesting as shewing that Nashe had more than one poet in mind: these are, of course, the four competitors in "The Contest"—the "ear-enchanting men" of Markham's sonnet.

13-14. An echo from the dedication to *Venus and Adonis*. It is a significant fact that in all the other three dedicatory passages quoted above (counting Barnes' as one) similar echoes occur. The reader is invited to trace them for himself.

> "I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolisht lines to your Lordship . . . and vowe to take advantage of all idle houres till I have honoured you with some graver labour . . . and never after eare so barren a land for fear it shall yield me still so bad a harvest."

All these numerous allusions and similarities may, of course, be explainable otherwise; but it cannot be denied that the dates, viz., 1593-1596, and the persons, viz., Southampton, Shakespeare, and Barnes, fit into The Theory *exactly*.

5. *The history of sonnetteering furnishes no other example of such a contest.*

One need not go very far to find an answer to *this* objection—two excellent examples of competitive sonnetteering of exactly the same type as the five "Dramatic" series set forth in Chapter V. above are to be found in the *Plays and Poems* themselves! *Love's Labour's Lost* supplies one in the shape of the four love-sonnets written by Navarre, Berowne, Longueville, and Dumain, respectively; and *The Passionate Pilgrim* the other, in the shape of the four "Venus and Adonis" sonnets, Nos. IV., VI., IX. and XI. Further, the four authors of the latter set "Shakespearize" just as M.P., L., and H. do in the Absence Series, with this difference, that they draw their echoes of Shakespeare's thought and language from *one* source exclusively, namely, *Venus and Adonis*.

The two sets of sonnets are set forth below arranged in the form with which the reader has become familiar, but the order in which the sonnets in each set have been placed is an arbitrary one, there being nothing to shew in either case which (if any) was the 'copy' sonnet. 'Verbal Parallelisms' are indicated by *italics*, and the echoes from *Venus and Adonis* (P. P. set only) are indicated by underlining in the usual way.

The L. L. L. Love Sonnets.

The Theme.—The Lover praises his mistress.

THE L. L. L.

Theme—The Lover

King

So sweet a kiss the *golden sun* gives not
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose
As *thy eye*-beams when their fresh rays *have smote*
The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows :
Nor shines the silver moon one half so bright
Through the transparent bosom of the deep,
As doth thy face through tears of mine give light ;
Thou *shin'st* in every tear that I do weep .
No drop but as a coach doth carry thee ;
So ridest thou *triumphing* in my woe,
Do but behold the tears that swell in me,
And they thy glory through my grief will show ;
But do not love thyself ; then thou wilt keep
My tears for glasses, and still make me weep.
O *queen of queens* ! how far dost thou excel,
No thought can think, nor *tongue of mortal* tell.

Longaville

Did not the heavenly rhetoric of *thine eye*,
'Gainst whom the world cannot hold argument,
Persuade my heart to this false perjury ?
Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.
A woman *I forswore* ; but I will *prove*,
Thou being a goddess, I *forswore* not thee ;
My *vow* was *earthly*, thou a *heavenly love* ;
Thy grace being gain'd cures all disgrace in me.
Vows are not breath, and breath a vapour is :
Then thou, *fair sun*, which on my earth *dost shine*.
Exhalest this vapour-vow ; in thee it is :
If broken, then it is no fault of mine :
If by me broke, what fool is not so wise
To lose an oath to win a paradise ?

THE PASSIONATE

Theme—Adonis rejects Venus'

IV.

Sweet Cytherea, *sitting by a brook*
With young Adonis, lovely, fresh, and green,
Did *court the lad* with many a lovely look,
Such looks as none could look but *beauty's queen*.
She told him stories to delight his ear,
She show'd him favours to allure *his eye* ;
To win his heart, she touch'd him here and there ;
Touches so soft still conquer chastity.
But whether unripe years did want conceit,
Or he *refused to take her figured proffer*,
The tender nibbler would not touch the bait,
But smile and jest at every gentle *offer* :
Then *fell she* on her back, fair queen, *and toward* :
He rose *and ran away* ; ah, *fool* too froward.

VI.

Scarce had the sun dried up *the dewy morn*,
And scarce the herd gone to the hedge for shade,
When Cytherea, all in love forlorn,
A longing tarriance for Adonis made
Under an osier growing *by a brook*,
A brook where Adon used to cool his spleen :
Hot was the day ; she hotter that did look
For his approach, that often there had been.
Anon he comes, and throws his mantle by,
And stood stark naked on the brook's green brim :
The sun look'd on the world with glorious eye,
Yet not so wistly as *this queen* on him.
He, spying her, bounced in, whereas he stood :
'O Jove,' *quoth she*, 'why was not I a flood !'

VENUS AND

Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear
Measure my strangeness with my unripe years
No fisher but the ungrown fry forbears
He on her belly falls, she on her back.

Even as the sun with purple colour'd face
Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn
Poor queen of love, in thine own law forlorn
And Titan, tired in the mid-day heat
With burning eye did hotly overlook them
Who doth the world so gloriously behold
'O Jove !' quoth she, 'how much a fool was I.

LOVE SONNETS

praises his Mistress.

Berowne

If love make me forsworn, how shall I *swear* to *love*?
Ah! never faith could hold, if not to beauty *vow'd* ;
Though *to myself forsworn*, to thee I'll faithful *prove* ;
Those thoughts to me were oaks, to thee like osiers bow'd
Study his bias leaves and makes his book thine eyes,
Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend.
If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice ;
Well learned is that tongue that well can thee commend ;
All ignorant that soul that sees thee without wonder ;
Which is to me some praise that I thy parts admire.
Thine eye Jove's lightning bears, thy voice his dreadful thunder
Which, not to anger bent, is music and sweet fire.
Celestial as thou art, O! pardon love this wrong,
That sings *heaven's* praise with such an *earthly tongue*.

Dumain

On a day, alack the day!
Love, whose month is ever May,
Spied a blossom passing fair
Playing in the wanton air ;
Through the velvet leaves the wind,
All unseen can passage find ;
That the lover, sick to death,
Wish'd himself the heaven's breath.
Air, quoth he, thy cheeks may blow ;
Air, would I might *triumph so!*
But alack! my hand is *sworn*
Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn :
Vow, alack! for youth unmeet,
Youth so apt to pluck a sweet.
Do not call it sin in me,
That *I am forsworn* for thee ;
Thou for whom Jove would swear
Juno but an Ethiop were ;
And deny himself for *Jove*,
Turning *mortal* for thy love.

PILGRIM SONNETS

improper advances and runs away

IX.

Fair was *the morn* when the *fair queen* of love,
. . . . .
Paler for sorrow than her milk-white dove,
For Adon's sake, a *youngster* proud and wild ;
Her stand she takes upon a steep-up hill :
Anon Adonis comes with horn and hounds ;
She, silly queen, with more than love's good will,
Forbade the boy he should not pass those grounds :
'Once,' *quoth she*, 'did I see a fair sweet youth
Here in these brakes deep-wounded with a boar,
Deep in the thigh, a spectacle of ruth!
See in my thigh,' quoth she, 'here was the sore.'
She showed hers : *he saw* more wounds than one,
And blushing *fled*, and left her all alone.

XI.

Venus, *with young Adonis sitting by her*
Under a myrtle shade, began to *woo* him :
She told the *youngling* how god Mars did try her,
And as he fell to her, so *fell she to him*.
'Even thus,' *quoth she*, 'the warlike god embraced me,'
And then she clipp'd Adonis in her arms ;
'Even thus,' *quoth she*, 'the warlike god unlaced me,'
As if the boy should use like loving charms ;
'Even thus,' *quoth she*, 'he seized on my lips,'
And with her lips on his did act the seizure :
And as she fetched breath, away he skips,
And would not take her meaning nor her pleasure.
[But he, a wayward boy, *refused the offer*
And ran away, the beauteous Queen neglecting
Showing both *folly* to abuse her *proffer*
And all his sex of cowardice detecting.
(*Variant from 'Fidessa.'*)]
Ah, that I had my lady at this bay,
To kiss and clip me till I *run away!*

ADONIS

She hearkens for his hounds and for his horn
. . . she by her good will
. . . brakes obscure and rough
. . . deep-sore wounding
That her sight dazzling makes the wound seem three.

. . . she hasteth to a myrtle grove
And like a bold fac'd suitor 'gan to woo him
I have been woo'd as I entreat thee now
Even by the stern and direful god of war
Making my arms his field . . .
Away he springs . . .

Treatment of the L. L. L. Theme.

There are four main thoughts :

(a) You have caused me to break my vow to keep myself heart-whole. L. 1-5 ; B. 1-3 ; D. 11-16.
(b) But this was not my fault. L. 4-7, 12 ; D. 15-20.
(c) Because you are a celestial being. L. 6-7 ; B. 13 ; D. 17-18.
(d) And your beauty is beyond the power of a mortal to describe. K. 14 ; B. 13-14.

Verbal Parallelisms.

1.

K. So sweet a kiss the *golden sun* gives not
As the eye-beams when their fresh rays *have smote*
The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows
Thou *shin'st* in every tear that I do weep
L. Then thou, *fair sun*, which on my earth dost *shine*
Exhal'st this vapour-vow ; . . .

2.

K. As *thy eye*-beams when their fresh rays have smote
L. Did not the heavenly rhetoric of *thine eye*
B. *Thine eye* Jove's lightning bears . . .

3.

K. O *queen of queens !* how far dost thou excel
No thought can think, nor *tongue of mortal* tell.
L. *Thou being a goddess* I forswore not thee
My vow was *earthly*, thou a *heavenly* love
B. *Celestial as thou art*, O ! pardon love this wrong
That sings *heaven's* praise with such an *earthly tongue*
D. *Thou for whom* Jove would swear
Juno but an Ethiop were
Turning *mortal* for thy love

4.

L. *Vows* for thee broke deserve not punishment
A woman *I forswore ;* but I will *prove*
Thou being a goddess *I forswore* not thee
My *vow* was earthly, thou a heavenly *love*
B. If *love* make *me forsworn*, how shall I swear to *love ?*
Ah ! never faith could hold, if not to beauty *vow'd*
Though *to myself forsworn*, to thee I'll faithful *prove*
D. *Vow*, alack ! for youth unmeet,
That *I am forsworn* for thee.

Minor Parallelisms—*Catchwords:* (1) triumph . . . so. K. 10, D. 10 ; (2) Jove. B. 11 ; D. 9, 13.

NOTE.

In the play as we have it there is, of course, no sonnetteering competition—each of the four lovers writes his sonnet without suspecting that the others are doing the same. We know, however, that the play was " corrected and augmented " by Shakespeare just before its performance before Queen Elizabeth in 1597. The theory that suggests itself, therefore, is that this revision was a very drastic affair indeed, and that one of the changes made in the interest of dramatic effect was the excision of a scene in which the four sonnets designedly written on a common theme were produced for comparison, and the substitution therefor of the very effective Sc. III., Act IV., in which Berowne plays the eavesdropper while his three fellow-perjurers come forward one

after the other to soliloquize on their love and declaim their respective love-sonnets, each, as he imagines, unseen and unheard by anybody else.

The remarkable "life-history" of Berowne's own sonnet lends support to this theory. To secure the maximum of stage-effect it was necessary that just as Berowne had worked up to the climax of his hypocritical tirade against his companions for their breach of the common vow, his own apostasy should suddenly be brought to light—if possible by the Comic Man. And so in order that (*a*) his sonnet to Rosaline might be disclosed to the audience before the scene opened, and (*b*) it might be produced precisely at the right moment by that "whoreson loggerhead" Costard, it was made to go through the following series of manœuvres:—Berowne writes it and hands it over to Costard for delivery to Rosaline. Armado at the same time writes a love-letter to Jaquenetta, and also hands it over to Costard for delivery. Costard mixes up the two missives and by mistake hands over Armado's to the Princess [why?] to deliver to Rosaline. The Princess, although she is told by Boyet that it is addressed to Jaquenetta, opens it and reads it [why?]; she then tells Costard of his mistake, and he departs and hands over Berowne's sonnet to Jaquenetta, telling her that it is from *Armado* [although he knows it isn't] and goes with her to Nathaniel the parson to have it read. Jaquenetta tells him that "It was given me by Costard and sent me from Don Armado." Nathaniel thereupon opens it and reads it aloud[1] for the benefit of his friend Holofernes, who says to Jaquenetta, "But damosella virgin was this directed to you?" She replies, "Ay, Sir; from one Monsieur Berowne *one of the strange Queen's lords*" [!!][2] Holofernes then (rather late in the day) "over-glances the superscript," and finding that it is addressed to Rosaline hands it back to the pair to deliver to the King [why?]. They accordingly appear before the King and deliver it to him. He gives it to Berowne to read [why?], and while Berowne is reading it, asks Jaquenetta where she got it. She says, from Costard: and Costard, on being asked where he got it, again says from *Armado* [!]. Meanwhile Berowne has torn it up, but Dumain picks up the pieces and recognises Berowne's handwriting, whereupon Berowne confesses that it is a love- sonnet to Rosaline.

This hopelessly confused and most improbable story could not have formed part of the original plot.

Treatment of the P. P. Theme.

The action is much the same in all four sonnets, but the scene varies—in IV. and VI. it is "by a brook," in IX. on a "steep-up hill," and in XI. "under a myrtle shade."

Verbal Parallelisms.

IV. Sweet *Cytherea, sitting by a brook*
With young Adonis, lovely, fresh and green
Did *court the lad* with many a lovely look
VI. When *Cytherea,* all in love forlorn
A longing tarriance for *Adonis* made
Under an osier growing *by a brook*

[1] It is obviously a 'rag' sonnet—meant probably to burlesque Thomas Lodge's wooden-jointed Alexandrines. Holofernes criticizes it as follows: "let me supervise the canzonet. Here are only numbers ratified; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, *caret.* Ovidius Naso was the man: and why, indeed, *Naso,* but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention? *Imitari* is nothing; so doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the tired horse his rider."

The kind reader will appreciate the significance of *Imitari*; there is certainly nothing in the context to suggest it.

[2] From Furness' *Variorum* edition of the play it would appear that Jaquenetta's inexplicable blunder in making Berowne a member of the Princess' suite has not been noticed by any of the commentators.