In re SHAKESPEARE
BEECHING *v* GREENWOOD
REJOINDER ON BEHALF OF THE DEFENDANT.

Fernando Pessoa.

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THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED. By G. G. Greenwood, M.P. Demy 8vo.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: PLAYER, PLAYMAKER AND POET. A Reply to Mr. George Greenwood, M.P. By H. C. Beeching, D. Litt., Canon of Westminster. Crown 8vo.

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REJOINDER ON BEHALF OF THE DEFENDANT

BY G. G. GREENWOOD, M.P.

AUTHOR OF "THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED"

Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the Canon's mouth.

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PREFACE

ON November 25th, 1908, Canon Beeching read a lengthy paper before the Royal Society of Literature by way of answer to my book, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. By the kindness of the Secretary to the Society, Dr. Percy Ames, I received an invitation to be present, and by the kindness of Lord Collins, who presided, I was allowed, at the conclusion of Canon Beeching's paper, to utter a few words, not indeed of reply—there was no time for that—but of protest against a misstatement and, as I conceived myself justified in calling it, a mere travesty of my arguments.[1] The Canon has now published his paper, together with two lectures delivered by him at the Royal

[1] "I think it was generally recognized," wrote a distinguished Fellow of the Society on November 28th, "that you were at a double disadvantage, having your arguments caricatured by an opponent and insufficient time for reply." To anticipate critics on the pounce let me say at once that I, of course, make no charge of conscious and deliberate misrepresentation. I would rather call it "very remarkable," and I think this will be the opinion of the reader who will have the patience to read the following pages.

Institution previously to the publication of my book, under the title of *William Shakespeare, Player, Playmaker, and Poet. A Reply to Mr. George Greenwood, M.P.* This "Reply" I propose now to examine.

The Canon is so kind as to say at the outset (p. 2) that I am provided with "much of the equipment of the successful practitioner at the Old Bailey." I do not know exactly what this may be intended to imply. For myself I never practised at the Old Bailey, though I remember that, in my young days, I held two or three briefs there. I remember, too, being impressed by the excellent manner in which the work was, for the most part, done in those courts. Whether or not my own work has in any way benefited by that example of efficiency I must leave to my readers to judge. Canon Beeching himself is provided with all the equipment of the Theologian, and those who understand what that means will appreciate the disadvantage at which a layman finds himself when he has to contend against a sacerdotal dialectician. The Canon has a further advantage. His book is a short one and is sold at two shillings, whereas, I am sorry to say, Mr. John Lane found it impossible to issue my bulky volume at less than

the somewhat deterrent price of one guinea. Many persons, therefore, I have no doubt, will read the "reply" who have not the leisure, or who will not take the trouble, to peruse my five hundred pages. Nay, I am almost inclined to think that Canon Beeching's "short method" must be primarily intended for such; for he has adopted a plan well known to controversialists. He has put into my mouth arguments which I never uttered, and which I should not dream of uttering, and has proceeded to demolish them with great self-satisfaction and with the most entire success. This method has the advantage of being a remarkably easy one, and is, frequently, very effectual in attaining the object in view. It has, indeed, so far as I know, only one objection, but as that, no doubt, has at once suggested itself to the reader, it is not necessary that I should enlarge upon it. I will only say now, as I said to the audience at 20 Hanover Square, that if any member of the reading and thinking public should deem it worth while to form an honest judgment of my book as a whole and of the arguments there set forth, he must have the patience to read the original. Those, on the other hand, who are content to judge of that work by Canon Beeching's

travesty will, I fear, be like the afflicted persons in Hans Andersen's charming story, who saw all things through a distorting medium. They, too, will have in their eyes some fragment of that splintered mirror which made truth appear ridiculous because the reflections presented it in caricature.

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REJOINDER ON BEHALF OF THE DEFENDANT

CHAPTER I

SPELLING AND HANDWRITING

CANON BEECHING, in his dedicatory letter to the "Treasurer of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn," describes my book as "the latest statement by a lawyer, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., of the Middle Temple, of a curious paradox which seems to have a special fascination for legal minds; I mean the opinion originated by a Miss Delia Bacon in America, and since imported into this country, that 'Shakespeare's' works were written by the great Lord Chancellor, her namesake."

Now the Canon in his Preface (p. 3) speaks of what he is pleased to call my "forensic artifices." If I have employed such in my book (and I certainly am not aware that I have done so) I will

set this passage against them as a notable example not, indeed, of "forensic," but of sacerdotal artifice. It is really very subtly conceived. It is quite in accordance with the wisdom of the serpent to prejudice the reader's mind at the outset against the author whose work you are going to attack. The Baconian theory lends itself to ridicule. It has been brought into discredit by the extreme pretensions and absurdities of some fanatical enthusiasts. It is an American importation. And did not poor Miss Delia Bacon end her days under restraint as a harmless lunatic? Let readers note, therefore, that this "lawyer," viz. "Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., of the Middle Temple," is but the latest propounder of this "curious paradox," and then, dear brethren, I venture to think it is not likely that your faith will suffer much at the hands of this poor perverted heretic!

It is useless, of course, to point out that I expressly state in my Preface that I make no attempt whatever to uphold the Baconian theory; that I confine myself entirely to "the negative proposition, viz. that Shakspere of Stratford was not the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*"; that "I have made no attempt to deal with the positive side of the question," and that, throughout my book, I advance no single argument in support of the Baconian hypothesis. All that is nothing to Canon Beeching, as it is nothing to certain re-

viewers, who, not having had time, possibly, to read my book, persist in making me a Baconian *malgré moi*, and find it, doubtless,[1] mighty convenient to do so. True it is that Canon Beeching writes further on (p. vi), "*the latest defender of the paradox* has restricted himself to a denial of the Shakespearian authorship, without asserting the Baconian." But what *is* the "paradox"? The Canon has himself told us. It is "that 'Shakespeare's' works were written by the great Lord Chancellor." *That* therefore is the paradox which I am to be taken as defending, although I have said no single word in defence of it—nay, although I have expressly disavowed it! If these are the controversial methods which pass as fair in Little Cloisters, Westminster, I very much prefer the atmosphere and ethics of the "Old Bailey."

But such preliminary aberrations from the path of accuracy need not detain us long. They are only "pretty Fanny's way." I now come to a matter of much greater importance. I allude to what I have written concerning the spelling of the names Shakespeare and Shakspere, and Canon Beeching's comments thereon. I am very glad to have the opportunity of dealing with this matter, because some extraordinary absurdities have been

[1] I shall frequently make use of this convenient adverb, and shall not always deem it necessary to put it in inverted commas. *Verbum sapienti.*

written on the subject. I have been accused, for instance, of postulating "two Shakespeares"—"two Dromios, as like as two peas," I think one imaginative reviewer wrote—one of whom called himself Shakespeare and the other Shakspere; and with maintaining that the former gentleman wrote the *Plays* and *Poems*, while the latter gentleman had nothing whatever to do with them. It is the time-honoured joke over again. "*Shakespeare* was not written by Shakespeare, but by another gentleman of the same name!" Of course, nobody who had taken the trouble to read my book would have attributed such egregious nonsense to me unless with the deliberate intention to misrepresent; but, alas, reviewers, as I have reason to know, are a hard-worked and badly paid class, and as the Land Commissioners in Ireland were said to have poked the ends of their walking-sticks into the ground and then to have smelt them, in order to ascertain at what rent the land should be let, so I fear some of the critical fraternity think themselves qualified to write about a book when they have merely opened it and, perhaps, just sniffed the pages thereof![1]

What I have really said upon this question of

[1] One well-known humorist who made great fun out of my book, or, rather, out of what he conceived I had written, confessed to me that he had not even seen it. He had read a short notice in some newspaper. I am glad to add that he afterwards made generous amends in a second article.

nomenclature I will explain presently in a very few words, and, I trust, quite clearly. But let me now come to what Canon Beeching has written concerning my treatment of the matter. In my book (p. 1) I compare the statement that "we know more about the life of Shakspere than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him" to that "form of bluff" which we sometimes hear in a law court, when a counsel, "without a leg to stand upon," asseverates to the jury that "his case has been proved up to the hilt." Canon Beeching fastens upon the word "bluff" and, as schoolboys are wont to do, retaliates with a "*tu quoque*"; a form of compliment which I accept with great equanimity. "The other artifice which Mr. Greenwood himself allows me to call forensic (p. 1) is 'bluff'; and it is curious to discover that the very keystone of Mr. Greenwood's elaborate piece of architecture is nothing better—I mean his assumption that the difference between two spellings of Shakespeare's name is significant. Throughout his book he distinguishes 'Shakspere' the player from 'Shake-speare' the poet; as though this assignment of the two spellings were not, as it is, a mere fancy of his own, but clear on the face of the documents, and indisputable."

Now this is, really, an example of "the economy of truth" so remarkable that I invite

the reader's earnest attention to it. I presume that Canon Beeching had read my "Notice to the Reader," immediately following the title-page. If so, he read the following: "In this work I have followed the convenient practice of writing 'Shakespeare' where I am speaking of the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, and 'Shakspere' where I refer to William Shakspere of Stratford (*whether he was or was not the author in question*), except in quotations, where I, of course, follow the originals." My argument being that the Stratford player was not the author of "the works of Shakespeare," it was obviously necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to make this distinction, and the above-mentioned is generally recognized as the best method of doing so in order to avoid constant circumlocution. The distinction is made for the sake of clearness and convenience, and it involves no assumption whatever as to "the documents." And so far from its being "the very keystone" of my "piece of architecture," I, in fact, attribute very small significance indeed to the spelling of the name.

But before going on to examine the various deductions which Canon Beeching makes from this false premiss, let me state simply and clearly what I *have* said concerning the spelling of the name. To put it in one word, all that I say is that "Shakespeare," and, more particularly,

"Shake-speare," makes a very good pseudonym; while Shaksper, or Shakspere, or Shaxpur, or any other of the almost innumerable variations of the name, do not.

When, for instance, the author of *Venus and Adonis* published that extraordinary poem (as to which I would beg the reader to consult my book, chapter III), in the year 1593, as "the first heir" of his "invention," with a dedication to the Earl of Southampton, signed "Shakespeare," my firm belief is that that signature was not, in truth and in fact, the subscription of the Stratford player (whether any of his contemporaries believed it to be so I do not now stop to inquire), but that the name was used as a convenient *nom de plume* by a writer of high position, and one who was the representative of the highest culture of his day. And this is, in truth, all the importance that I attach to the spelling of the name "Shakespeare," or "Shake-speare," as distinguished from "Shaksper" or "Shakspere." "The name of Shake-speare, or *Shake-speare*, for so, without doubt, it was originally written, were we to regard etymology, might lead us to suppose that the founder of the family, in the tenth or eleventh century, before surnames became common, had, like Longue-espee, or Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, distinguished himself by military achievements, and thence obtained this designation."

So wrote Malone many years ago. (See Boswell's *Malone*, 1821, Vol. II, p. 14.) This is in accordance with what old Thomas Fuller writes, viz. that the name suggests *Martial* in its warlike sound, "whence some may conjecture him of military extraction, *hasti-vibrans* or Shake-speare" (quoted at pp. 36 and 519 of my book). And, similarly, Spenser is supposed by some to allude to Shakespeare when he writes of Aetion, "whose muse, full of high thought's invention, doth like himself heroically sound."

It is hardly necessary in this connexion to recall Jonson's often quoted lines, where he says of Shakespeare that "he seems to *shake a lance*, as brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance."

Now, obviously, if the man whom the late Professor Garnett has not hesitated to describe as "a Stratford rustic"[1] did not write the *Plays* and *Poems*, the name "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym; obviously, also, it was an excellent one. And because I have stated my belief that such was the fact, I have been charged with having given utterance to absurdities "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." But prejudice so blinds the eye of criticism that it often leads to errors quite as

[1] A reviewer has ascribed to me the expression "a Stratford yokel." I have never once made use of it, and I have only used the term "Stratford rustic" by way of quotation from Professor Garnett. (See *English Literature, an Illustrated Record*, Garnett and Gosse, Vol. II, p. 199.)

bad as those inspired by deliberate intention to pervert the truth.

But that is not all, it will be said. Have you not asserted that the Stratford player, so far as known, always wrote his name "Shakspere," and never "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare"? Yes, certainly, I have made that statement, and I am prepared to reassert it, though I may say at once that I do not attach very great importance to the fact. So far, indeed, from this being "the key-stone" of my arch, it is just a brick that may be built into it, or taken away at pleasure. But I do not accept the Canon's analogy. The cumulative arguments for the anti-Stratfordian faith are, as I have said in my book (p. 17 note), like many strands that together form a strong rope. The Canon's *pontifical* metaphors do not suit the case.

And now let us examine the proposition, disputed by Canon Beeching, viz. that the Stratford man wrote his name "Shakspere" and not "Shake-speare" in the five signatures which are all that have come down to us.

These five signatures were penned, two of them in March 1613, on a purchase deed and a mort-gage deed respectively, and three of them, in March 1616, on Shakspere's Will. Facsimiles of them have been published over and over again; by Malone, for instance, about 120 years ago. But Shakspere's signatures were written nearly

300 years ago, and ink has an unfortunate habit of fading. Thus the ink of the first Will signature has, as Mr. Lee tells us, "faded almost beyond recognition." But there is little or no dispute that the 1613 signatures are "Shakspere." They are so given by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. II, pp. 34 and 36). But, says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare apparently deemed it needful to confine his signature to the narrow strip of parchment that was inserted in the fabric of the deed to bear the seal, and he consequently lacked adequate space wherein to complete his autograph." Let us look, then, at the Will signatures. Now Malone, one of the ablest and acutest of Shakespearean critics, examined these with the greatest possible care, and he had the advantage of inspecting them when the ink was fresher by some 120 years than it is now. The conclusion to which he came was this: "In the signature of his [Shakspere's] name subscribed to his Will . . . certainly the letter '*a*' is not to be found in the second syllable." Of the same opinion was a later critic of very high standing, to whom orthodox Shakespeareans appeal with great confidence when it suits them to do so. I allude to Mr. James Spedding, who wrote, concerning the name as it appears in the Northumberland Manuscript, "the name of Shakespeare is spelt in every case as it was always *printed* in those days, and not as he himself in

any known case ever wrote it." It is not, indeed, the fact that the name was *always* printed "Shakespeare" in those days, for there are many instances to the contrary, but the passage quoted from the preface to *A Conference of Pleasure* clearly shows what Mr. Spedding's opinion was with regard to Shakspere's own usage. Dr. Furnivall, as is well known, invariably makes use of the form "Shakspere." "This spelling of our great Poet's name," he writes, "is taken from the only unquestionably genuine signatures of his that we possess. . . . None of the signatures have an *e* after the *k*; four have no *a* after the first *e*; the fifth I read *-eere*.[1] The *e* and *a* had their French sounds, which explain the forms 'Shaxper,' etc. Though it has hitherto been too much to ask people to suppose that SHAKSPERE knew how to spell his own name, I hope the demand may not prove too great for the imagination of the members of the New Society."

Let us now consult a critic whose honesty no one will be found to impugn. I allude to Dr. Ingleby, from whose work *Shakespeare: The Man and The Book* I have taken the above quotation. And what says Dr. Ingleby himself? "Unquestionably some, probably all, of the five signatures of Shakespeare are Shakspere; and certainly none of them has the *e* after the *k*."

[1] But this, says Dr. Ingleby, is a mistake.

And again, "We contend that the two last signatures to the will are not SHAKSPEARE, but, like Malone's tracing of the first (now partly obliterated), SHAKSPERE."

Here we must note that Mr. Lee does not dispute that the first of the Will signatures is "Shakspere"; for, although the ink has now faded almost beyond recognition, "that it was 'Shakspere' may be inferred from the facsimile made by George Steevens in 1776." Malone, as Dr. Ingleby observes, made a tracing of it. Now I am fully aware of the great latitude which prevailed in Shakspere's days with regard to spelling, but I think we may doubt if a man signing his name three times on one occasion, and to the same document, and that document his Will, would have indulged in a variety of signatures.

But what said Sir Frederic Madden, whom Dr. Ingleby cites as "the most accomplished palæographic expert of his day"? "The first of these signatures [i.e. to the Will], subscribed on the first sheet, at the right-hand corner of the paper, is decidedly William Shakspere, and no one has ventured to raise a doubt respecting the six last letters. The second signature is at the left-hand corner of the second sheet, and is also clearly Will'm Shakspere, although from the tail of the letter *h* of the line above intervening between the *e* and *r*, Chalmers would fain raise an

idle quibble as to the omission of a letter. The third signature has been the subject of greater controversy, and has usually been read, BY ME, William SHAKSPEARE. Malone, however, was the first publicly to abjure this reading, and in his *Inquiry*, p. 117, owns the error to have been pointed out to him by an anonymous correspondent, who 'shewed most clearly, that the superfluous stroke in the letter *r* was only the tremor of his (Shakspere's) hand, and no *a*.'[1] *In this opinion, after the most scrupulous examination, I entirely concur.*" (*Observations on an Autograph of Shakspere, and the Orthography of his Name*, 1837, pp. 11–14.) And what is Dr. Ingleby's conclusion? "With Sir F. Madden we adopt the view that all five signatures are alike SHAKSPERE."

In the face of this consensus of authority, which, I think, I may describe as overwhelming, Canon Beeching writes (p. 6 note), "On the will the final signature is unmistakably 'speare'." Mark that "*unmistakably*"! Malone, Sir F. Madden, Mr. Spedding, Dr. Ingleby, and Dr. Furnivall—to name a few high Shakespearean authorities, and their numbers might be largely added to—all came to the opposite conclusion. They all made the "mistake" which Canon Beeching says it is

[1] Malone subsequently came to the conclusion that this was a "mark of contraction." See Boswell's *Malone*, Vol. II, p. 1 note, and pp. 32 and 33 of my book.

impossible to make! Such is modern Shakespearean criticism! And it is of dogmatic assertion such as this that we are told we ought to speak with bated breath and in terms of whispering humbleness!

But Canon Beeching tells us that he has Dr. E. J. L. Scott's authority for saying that the second Will signature "also has the *a*." If this be so, all I can say is that, with all respect to Dr. E. J. L. Scott, I do not think his authority stands so high as that of Malone, or of Sir Frederic Madden, "the most accomplished palæographic expert of his day"; and further, I would respectfully point out that handwriting does not become more legible as the paper on which it is inscribed grows older. For this reason also I prefer the testimony of the more ancient examiners of the document. But let me hasten to add that I should not feel the argument for "the negative case" in the smallest degree weakened even if it could be proved that Shakspere occasionally wrote an "*a*" in the second syllable of his name. That argument, as all who have taken the trouble to read my book well know, depends upon other considerations than those of spelling and handwriting.

Canon Beeching, further, informs us that "the spelling of surnames in the seventeenth century was even more inconsistent than that of ordinary words." I beg to assure the reader that I am

quite as well aware of that fact as the learned Canon himself. I myself call attention (p. 31 of my book) to the many different varieties of the spelling of the name Shakspere. Dr. Ingleby (*op. cit.*, p. 3 note, and pp. 6 and 7) gives us some fifty different forms. Nobody, indeed, who has bestowed the slightest amount of attention to the literature of the period could be ignorant of this fact. Canon Beeching tells us that "Sir Walter Ralegh, for example, is known to have spelt his signature in five different ways—Rauley, Rawleghe, Rauleigh, Raleghe, Ralegh." But why does he omit to tell us, also, that from the age of thirty till his death he used no other signature than Ralegh?[1]

Upon this point the following interesting letter appeared in *The Times* of November 27th, 1908, from Sir J. K. Laughton, headed "The Seventeenth Century Spelling of Proper Names":—

"To the Editor of *The Times*.

"Sir,—According to the report in *The Times* of this morning of his interesting paper on 'The Shakespeare Problem,' Canon Beeching made a statement which, I think, is inaccurate, and drew from it an inference which is certainly incorrect. The words reported are:—'The spelling of surnames in the seventeenth century was even more

[1] See Stebbing's *Life*, p. 31. The Canon cites this work, but unaccountably omits to record this important fact.

inconsistent than that of ordinary words. Sir Walter Raleigh spelt his name in five different ways.' But Ralegh—to use his own spelling—did nothing of the kind. From the death of his father in 1583, when he adopted his father's spelling of the name, to the time of his own death in 1618, he never varied. As a boy he seems to have written it Rauleygh; but from the time he was twenty-one till 1583 he consistently signed Rauley. He would probably have considered it impudent to adopt his father's spelling. In this connexion I would ask leave to repeat what I wrote several years ago in the introduction to my *Defeat of the Spanish Armada*:—

note

"'It is commonly supposed that the spelling of sixteenth and seventeenth century names is indeterminate; a mistake due partly to the carelessness of other people, but still more to what seems now the curious custom of brothers, or members of the same family, differencing their names by the spelling, in much the same way that they differenced their armorial bearings by marks of cadency. Humphrey Gylberte and John Gilberte, Thomas Cecill and (after his father's death) Robert Cecyll, Marmaduke Darell and his cousin William Darrell, are some amongst many belonging to this period. The point is really one of some importance, for attention to the spelling of signatures is frequently the only way of avoiding great confusion; as, for instance, between George Cary of Cockington,

afterwards Lord Deputy of Ireland, George Carey of the Isle of Wight, afterwards Lord Hunsdon, and George Carew, Master of the Ordnance in Ireland, afterwards Earl of Totness. Each of these men, and indeed every man who could write, had an established signature, which he no more thought of varying than does any one at the present time.'

"I have never had occasion to examine the reputed Shakespeare signatures; but if, as I am told and as Canon Beeching seems to admit, the spelling varies, I should consider it as grounds for a suspicion that they are not all genuine; a suspicion which would be much strengthened if the signatures differ in other respects.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"J. K. LAUGHTON.

"King's College, London, Nov. 26."

All this is very interesting, and it has, no doubt, some bearing on the question whether the Stratford player ever wrote his name in other forms besides that of Shakspere; but it has very little relevancy to the simple proposition that I have advanced, viz. that Shakespeare (or Shake-speare) makes a very excellent *nom de plume*, while Shakspere does not.

But then, it is said, Shakspere of Stratford was often called "Shakespeare" by others—that his

name was often written or printed so by contemporaries. I am quite aware of this very familiar fact also, and have, certainly, never denied it. As I have said (p. 35), "the form 'Shakespeare' has the sanction of legal and certainly of literary use," though by no means invariably so.[1] As everybody knows, the *Plays* were published either anonymously, or in the name of Shakespeare or Shake-speare,[2] and it is not in the least surprising that in the Folio edition of Ben Jonson's works, published in 1616, we should find, in the list of the "tragedians" who performed in *Sejanus*, the name of "Will Shake-speare," or the name "Shakespeare" among the "comedians" who played in *Every Man in his Humour*.[3] I repeat this was the manner in which the name had come to be spelt, as a general rule, according to literary and legal usage. Shakspere had become

[1] For example, in the case of the conveyance of January 1596–7, from John Shakspere to George Badger, we have "Shakespere" in the body of the deed; and William and John Combe convey land in 1602 to William Shakespere of Stratford.

[2] Except in the unique case of that unique play *Love's Labour's Lost*, on which much yet remains to be written.

[3] One of the quaintest things I have seen in this connexion is a note signed H. Davey, in *Notes and Queries* (October 31, 1908). Mr. H. Davey is good enough to inform us that "varieties of spelling in Elizabethan times do not surprise literary or historical students." But then, as he sagaciously adds, "all readers are not literary or historical students." So this literary and historical student gravely warns the ignorant outsider against "eccentric theories" to the effect that "Shakspere, an actor from

the ostensible playwright; in his name plays had been published; and though he himself, according to the best evidence we have, adhered to the spelling "Shakspere," he was, at any rate in his later years, "Shakespeare" to Ben Jonson, and his fellow-players, and, doubtless, to many others of his contemporaries; though to Walter Roche, ex-master of the Stratford Grammar School, he was "Shaxbere," to Richard Quiney, his fellow-townsman, he was "Shackspere," to his "fellow-countryman," Abraham Sturley, he was "Shaxsper," to Thomas Whittington, of Shottery, he was "Shaxpere," and in the marriage bond of November 1582, he is "Shagspere."

All these things, I say again, are very interesting; but how they are evidence against my proposition that "Shakespeare" was used as a *nom de plume* I am at a loss to conceive. That it was so used, in Shakespere's time, by many writers

Stratford-on-Avon," was not "the immortal dramatist." "Such theories," he tells us, "are naturally judged beneath discussion." Where? In *Notes and Queries!* That is excellent. The learned editor will, I am sure, forgive my smiling! Mr. Davey then vouchsafes to narrate once more the old story of the spelling of Shakspere's name in the Jonson Folio of 1616.

"This," he says, is "decisive"! Decisive of what, I wonder! And will these didactic gentlemen always imagine that nobody is acquainted with the elementary facts of literature and history except themselves? And will they never learn that it is impossible to criticize intelligently arguments which they have not taken the trouble to read or to understand?

who published works in that name is a simple fact of history. The name was used sometimes with and sometimes without the hyphen. In either form it makes a very good pseudonym, though better, I think, with than without the hyphen. Whether or not it was so used in the case of the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare is the question which I have endeavoured to argue in my book.[1]

Before I leave this part of the subject, upon which I have been so greatly and, as I venture to think, so inexcusably misunderstood, and I must add, misrepresented, it will be convenient to deal with what Canon Beeching calls (though quite unwarrantably, as I shall presently show)

very curious

[1] I question whether there is in the whole of "Shakespeare" a nobler or more pathetic passage than the speech of the Duke of Buckingham in *Henry VIII* (II, 1), nor is any collection of the "Beauties of Shakespeare" deemed complete that does not include Wolsey's speech on his fall. Yet it is now the received opinion that a very large part of this play, including both these famous speeches, was written by Fletcher. "Shakespeare," therefore, was here a "pseudonym" so far as Fletcher was concerned. But is it not remarkable that a man like Fletcher, the son of a Bishop, and a man of University education, should have been content to "lie low," and see his work (and such excellent work) put forward in the name of "Shakespeare," and that everybody should have attributed it to Shakespeare till some 230 years after the death of Shakspere of Stratford, when the truth (if truth it be) was discovered by an English critic? And if Fletcher's work was published under the pseudonym of "Shakespeare," why is it an improbable hypothesis that the work of another and greater man, also of University education, and of higher position and culture than Fletcher, was so published also?

my eighth argument. Canon Beeching (p. 20) quotes my words to this effect: "It is hardly possible to conceive that the poems and plays were written in William Shakespeare's illegible illiterate scrawl." (Incidentally I may observe that the Canon here misquotes me. I wrote "Shakspere's," not "Shakespeare's.") My canonical censor objects to this. In the first place he observes that three of the signatures "were written on his will a month before his death," and "these," he says, "are beyond criticism *by any humane person*" (my italics). Now I trust my friends and colleagues on the Council of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will not cashier me on the ground of inhumanity; but why one is not at liberty to criticize a man's signatures written a month before his death I am really at a loss to imagine. But "perhaps," comments the tender-hearted Canon, "Mr. Greenwood was misled into calling the signatures 'illiterate' by the fact that they are written in the Old English hand," the innuendo being, of course, that I am not aware that a very great part of the literature of the period was handed down to posterity in this form of handwriting. My readers will, I venture to think, need no assurance from me that with this elementary fact also I am quite familiar. Nor am I "contemptuous," as the Canon alleges, of the

Old English hand. Such contempt would be, indeed, absurd. What I do, however, is to quote Mr. Lee to the effect that Shakspere "was never taught the Italian script, which at the time was rapidly winning its way in fashionable cultured society, and is now universal among Englishmen. Until his death Shakespeare's 'Old English' handwriting testified to his provincial education." And again, of the copyist of the dramatist's supposed manuscript, Mr. Lee says that he "was not always happy in deciphering his original, *especially when the dramatist wrote so illegibly as Shakespeare*"![1] Mr. Lee, therefore, has formed the opinion that Shakspere's handwriting generally, and not his signatures only, must have been more or less illegible.

So much, then, for my use of the word "illegible." But are the signatures "illiterate"? Let me say at once that I feel by no means deeply concerned to defend the epithet. Possibly it is not deserved. Possibly Shakspere's more or less illegible scrawl was the result of carelessness, or some reason other than illiteracy. But I am by no means the first to employ the epithet. It has, in fact, been common, even amongst the orthodox. For example, I have before me a large-sized pamphlet, admirably illustrated by facsimiles, which was issued by the Librarian of the Boston

[1] Introduction to the Folio Facsimile, p. xviii.

(U.S.A.) public library in the year 1889, concerning an interesting edition of North's *Plutarch*, printed by Richard Field (1603), wherein is found a signature which some have maintained to be a genuine Shakespearean autograph, though I do not think that that opinion has obtained acceptance among the critics. The Librarian at that date was Dr. Mellen Chamberlain, a recognized authority upon matters of this kind. "It may be observed," he writes, "that the field of comparison of the Library signature with the known originals is narrow, being limited to those written between 1613 and 1616, all of which show such a lack of facility in handwriting as would almost preclude the possibility of Shakespeare's having written the dramas attributed to him, *so great is the apparent illiteracy of his signatures*"!

One more observation and I leave this question of handwriting. Canon Beeching says that the two signatures to the conveyances of 1613 are "in two different scripts"; that is to say, that Shakspere made use of one "script" on March 10th and another on March 11th of that year. All I will say upon this is to beg the reader to place the facsimiles side by side (Mr. Lee has issued all five signatures in a sixpenny pamphlet), and see for himself how much one "script" differs from the other "script," and what value he thinks ought to be attached to this latest argument.

For myself I venture to think that it may properly be represented by a *minus* quantity.

I here, finally, take leave of this matter of handwriting, whether as a question of orthography, or of calligraphy, or of cacography ! I have done my best to explain clearly just how much importance I attach to it, and how little. I have shown how absurdly the simple proposition I have advanced has been misunderstood, and, therefore, misinterpreted by certain critics, canonical and otherwise. I am not sanguine enough to hope that these misrepresentations will not be repeated, but if so it will not be by those who have taken the trouble to read my book with care, and certainly not by those who have read this rejoinder, unless, indeed, they are such as wilfully pervert the truth ; and these may very properly be dismissed with a word from old Ben Jonson,

> If they spake worse 'twere better, for of such
> To be dispraised is the most perfect praise.

Note.—I have been not a little amused by the letter of an "orthodox" correspondent who bears a name not unknown in literary circles, and who wrote to me: "If I attributed any real importance to the spelling I should cite (1623) Jonson's verses 'My *Shakspere* rise,' Leonard Digges's verses '*Shakspere* at length thy pious fellows give,' etc., Sir W. Davenant's ode "In remembrance of Mr.

William *Shakspere*,'" etc. etc. I wrote in reply that, unfortunately, the name appears as "Shake-speare" in all these cases. Then came his apology. "A woman tempted me, and I fell." It appears that he had been reading *The Bacon Shakspere Question* (1888), by Mrs. C. Stopes, and that lady, who bears, I believe, a high reputation for accuracy, has in the work in question, for some reason known to herself, changed the spelling in all these instances, and many others, to "Shakspere"! Thus she makes W. Basse and "I.M.", in the Folio, write of "*Shakspere*" instead of "Shake-speare," which is the form that both these writers employ. Jonson is made to say that "the players have often mentioned it as an honour to '*Shakspere*.'" Milton is made to write, "What needs my '*Shakspere*,'" etc. etc. Now whether the spelling is of importance or not, it is inexcusable to take liberties with it in this way. I fully understood and sympathized with the annoyance of my disgusted friend who had been so entrapped. I would add here that this rejoinder to Canon Beeching was completed before I had read an admirable article on "The Shakespearean Problem," in the *National Review* for January 1909, by George Hookham. I would very strongly recommend all who are interested in this subject to read and consider this excellently written essay. Mr. Hookham points out, with regard to the name "Shakspere," that "the first syllable

was pronounced 'Shack,' and constantly written so," and that "it is also probable that the second syllable was pronounced 'spur.'" "Shake-speare" was, of course, pronounced differently, and the form "Shake-speare" prevented any confusion with the form "Shackspur." I believe this to be a true distinction, and the fact is not without significance.[1]

[1] In a second article (Feb. 1909) Mr. Hookham (p. 1021), speaking of Jonson's birthday poem to Bacon, inserts, in parenthesis, "not a sonnet, as Mr. Greenwood calls it." Mr. Hookham has fallen into a strange error, and has written to me to express his regret. I speak (p. 489) of Jonson's "ode" to Bacon, on his birthday. I nowhere call it a "sonnet."

CHAPTER II

MY SUPPOSED ARGUMENTS

CANON BEECHING, at p. 7 of his "Reply," writes as follows: "To come now to the *arguments* employed to show that the Stratford player could not have written the Shakespearian plays and poems. *I will take them one by one* [my italics] and treat them as briefly as possible."

The Canon, thereupon, sets forth fourteen brief statements, thrown into italics and duly numbered, which he gives the reader to understand are my arguments, with the further inference that I have thus stated and numbered them, one by one, in support of my case. I enter a most emphatic protest against this method of proceeding. The so-called "arguments" are, for the most part, not my arguments at all. They are "arguments" put into my mouth by Canon Beeching in order that he may have the satisfaction of replying to them, just as one sets up an "Aunt Sally" and puts clay pipes into her mouth in order to make a "cock-shy" of her defenceless head and have the

pleasure of smashing the pipes "to smithereens." I do not think the better-class of Shakespearean scholars will acclaim such methods. "*Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis*," will, I think, be their very appropriate comment.

I will now proceed to examine these supposed arguments seriatim.

"(1) *The town of Stratford was insanitary.*" Canon Beeching actually has the effrontery (I can call it nothing else) to put this forward as an argument advanced by me in support of the proposition that the Stratford player did not write the *Plays* and *Poems* of "Shakespeare"! I protested against this most energetically at the meeting of the Royal Society of Literature, before which the Canon read his paper. I begged the audience, if they thought my book was worth any consideration at all, to read it for themselves and not to be misled by such gross caricatures of it. I told them that, so far, I believed I had not been suspected of "drivelling idiocy," and I assured them that I had never advanced an argument of this preposterous character in support of the above-mentioned proposition. Nevertheless Canon Beeching, in spite of my protest and disclaimer, has thought it right and seemly to repeat the statement and to publish it.

Now what is the fact? In a brief biographical notice of "Shakspere of Stratford" it was, of

course, necessary that I should place before the reader what is known of the birthplace, family, and surroundings of the supposed poet—in a word of the *environment* in which he was born, and in which he spent the first twenty-three years or so of his life. In doing so I took occasion to quote, as others have done before me, Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's description of Stratford-on-Avon as it then was. It was apparently a dirty place, and, no doubt, many other provincial towns at that time were equally dirty, although Garrick, more than two hundred years later, seems to have considered it the worst town "in all Britain" in this respect. It is true that I speak somewhat irreverently of the "fancy pictures that have been drawn of a dreamy romantic boy wandering by the pellucid stream of the Avon, and communing with nature in a populous solitude of bees and birds," because all the evidence that we have suggests that such pictures are wholly imaginary. I make no point of the epithet "pellucid," as the Canon seems to think. The Avon may have been pellucid then for all I know. Or it may not. Readers of the Comte de Grammont's Memoirs will remember how rivers were polluted in his day, even if "there were no drains," and though the swans that were cited as witnesses were not swans of Avon! But I have not investigated the history of sewerage so far as to know how exactly

matters stood at Stratford during the sixteenth century in that respect. Dr. Rolfe thought that the boy Shakspere's delight in outdoor life (and of course he delighted in outdoor life, because the author of the *Plays* clearly did so !) "may have been intensified by the experience of the house in Henley Street, with the reeking pile of filth at the front door." Perhaps it was. Who shall say? But, really, all this is quite beside the point. Stratford may have been a dirty, squalid place (I never said it was "insanitary"—that word has been put into my mouth by Canon Beeching[1]), and yet the Stratford player may have become the world's poet. I have never advanced "dirty Stratford" as an argument to the contrary. "Dirty Stratford" is just one of the few known facts of Shakspere's life, just as the illiteracy of his parents, and of his daughter Judith, are similar facts. Canon Beeching knows this very well. He knows that I have never put forward this fact as being of itself an argument in the case. How he justifies to himself his assertion that I have done so it is not for me to explain.

And here let me say, once for all, that the

[1] It is in fact his own word, for in his lecture "on the character of the Dramatist" (written without reference to my book) he says (p. 83), "Stratford was notoriously insanitary," and, on p. 41, he says, very truly, "It is important for us to realise in what sort of social surroundings the son grew to manhood." Physical surroundings, also, should not be left out of sight.

case against the Stratfordian authorship must, of course, be judged as a whole. If I were asked to put forward just one argument, by itself, in support of that case, I should do it in some such way as this, putting it into an interrogative form: "Knowing all that we do of Shakspere of Stratford—so little and yet so much too much—taking into consideration all the known facts of his birth, parentage, surroundings, and early history, as well as those—meagre, indeed, and yet painfully suggestive—of his after-life and death, can we possibly believe that he was the author of, say, *Venus and Adonis*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Hamlet*, and *The Sonnets?*" Now to answer this question manifestly involves a prolonged study not only of the life of Shakspere, so far as we can ascertain it, and of the traditions concerning him, but also of the "works themselves," to say nothing of the history and literature of the period. It is impossible to state the arguments by a bald method of enumeration, as Canon Beeching asserts that I have done, though, "in truth and in fact," I have, of course, done nothing of the kind.

The next in order of the "arguments" which Canon Beeching ascribes to me is this: "(2) *William Shakespeare's father could not write his name.*" Well, the fact of the illiteracy of Shakspere's parents (Canon Beeching, of course, prefers to write "Shakespeare") is certainly an

important fact. But here, says the Canon, "there is a conflict of evidence. Mr. Lee prints, in the illustrated edition of his *Life*, a facsimile of John Shakespeare's autograph." Mr. Lee does nothing of the kind. He prints (p. 5) a reproduction of the name "Jhon Shaksper" written against John Shaksper's "mark." The reader will see this much better if he will refer to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines*, Vol. I, p. 38, where he will find this marksman's signature together with many others. These are the signatures of nineteen aldermen and burgesses of Stratford-on-Avon, in 1565, of whom seven only appear to have been able to write their names. John Shaksper's name and mark will be seen second in the right-hand column. Below are the names of four other "Johns," all of them marksmen. These "Johns" all appear to be written in the same handwriting. No doubt the same scribe wrote them all. John Shaksper, it may be observed, like some others of his "marksmen" contemporaries, used two marks, one somewhat in the form of a pair of "dividers," which is the one made use of in this particular instance, the other, a rough "cross," which may be seen at page 3 of Mr. Lee's illustrated *Life*, adorning the "Sign Manual of the Poet's Father, John Shakespeare" (*sic*).

But I have thoroughly gone into this question

of the worthy John Shaksper's supposed writing in my book. It is "a fond thing vainly invented." The scribe, by the way, who wrote his name against the "pair of dividers" certainly did not write "Shakespeare." "Shaksper" seems to have been the form employed in this case.

But, says Canon Beeching, "there is no evidence that Marlowe's father could write." Possibly; but there is no evidence that he could not, as there is in the case of John Shakspere. (As to Marlowe's education, by the way, see my book at p. 74.[1])

The fact that William Shakspere's father could not write cannot, thus baldly stated, be put forward as an argument to prove that William Shakspere did not write the *Plays* and *Poems*, and I have not so put it forward. But the fact that Shakspere was born of illiterate parents is certainly one to which due importance must be given when we consider the whole case for and against the Stratfordian authorship; just as the fact that Shakspere allowed his daughter to grow up in illiteracy has to be taken into consideration also.

[1] John Marlowe, the father of Christopher, was a member of the Shoemakers' and Tanners' Guild of Canterbury, and also acted as "clarke of St. Maries." He is said to have married the daughter of the rector of St. Peter's. There is no reason whatever, so far as I know, for supposing that he could not write. He was not a "marksman" like John Shakspere, or, at any rate, there is no evidence to that effect.

Let us now take the third of Canon Beeching's mock arguments, for mine they certainly are not.

"(3) *There is no evidence that William Shakespeare* [*sic*] *ever went to Stratford Grammar School.*" Now I beg the reader's particular attention to what follows. Canon Beeching says that, as the school was free to all burgesses, it must be accepted that Shakspere went there unless a presumption can be shown against it. Such a presumption he declares that I claim to have found. "There is such a presumption, replies Mr. Greenwood. 'He never in all his (supposed) writings makes mention of the Stratford school or of its master.'" Then, after making merry with this, he concludes: "It cannot be allowed, then, that there is any such presumption against Shakespeare's schooling as Mr. Greenwood contends for." The Canon, therefore, deliberately asks his readers to believe that it is part of my case that Shakspere never went to the Stratford school at all, and that I seek to found a presumption against it on the fact that Shakespeare in his works never makes mention of Stratford or the school there. It is really difficult to write with patience of such an egregious perversion of the truth. I have never argued against the probability that William Shakspere attended for a few years at the Free Grammar School. I have never suggested that there is a presumption against it. It is no part of my case

that Shakspere had no schooling at all; on the contrary, it is part of my case that he had a certain amount of education, and in all probability at the Stratford school. My words at the beginning of chapter II. are as follows: "That Shakspere attended the Free School at Stratford is, as I have said, an assumption only, though by no means an improbable one." What said the late Professor Churton Collins? "Nothing is known of the place of his [Shakspere's] education—that he was educated at the Stratford Grammar School is pure assumption" (*Ephemera Critica*, p. 213). That is simple matter of fact. But do I contend against the assumption? Decidedly not. At page 47 of my book I once more distinctly grant it as a probable one. But what about that other fact, viz. that "Shakespeare" makes no mention of the school? Well, I lament in this same chapter on "The Schooling of Shakspere," that we have not one tittle of evidence as to what Shakspere learnt at school, how long he stayed there, whether he was an industrious boy, whether he gave any "early presages of future renown" (to use Malone's words), and that tradition is entirely silent as to all this. In this connexion I refer to our much greater knowledge of Ben Jonson's life and schooling; and then follows this passage, part of which only the judicious Canon quotes: "Ah, 'Camden most reverend head'! What a

thousand pities it is that Shakspere never wrote an ode to Walter Roche or Thomas Hunt; that he never in all his (supposed) writings makes mention of the Stratford school, or of its master!" That is a regret in which I should imagine every Shakespearean would sympathize. It is, indeed, a thousand pities that nothing of this sort has come down to us. But to represent this, in the face of clear and distinct utterances to the contrary, as put forward in support of a presumption raised by me that Shakspere never went to the school at all, is, I venture to say, a perfectly inexcusable misrepresentation on the part of my canonical censor. Said I not well that he is fully provided with all the equipment of the theologian? Shade of Professor Huxley, oh that one little rag of the mantle which you wore in life might be granted to me in this unequal controversy!

The next supposed "argument" which Canon Beeching is so kind as to make me responsible for, is put in the form of a question. "(4) *Supposing Shakespeare* [*sic*] *went to the Stratford School, why should we assume that the school taught the ordinary grammar-school curriculum?*" But that is Canon Beeching's question, not mine. My question was, Why are we, in the absence of one tittle of evidence, to assume that the instruction given at the Stratford Free Grammar School was on a par with that given at the very best schools

in England at the date in question? *That*, as the reader will see, is quite a different question. "We know that Latin was taught in the school a few years before," writes Canon Beeching. Certainly, and so far as I know, nobody has ever suggested that Latin was not taught there in Shakspere's time. That, indeed, is just the one subject that would have been taught, as I have expressly said (p. 48), and if Shakspere attended the school for a few years, till he was thirteen years of age, at which age, according to the best evidence we have, he was withdrawn owing to his father's financial difficulties, he would, doubtless, have learned that "small Latin" with which Shakespeare is credited by Ben Jonson.

At this point Canon Beeching quotes four-and-twenty lines of Michael Drayton, whom he calls "another Warwickshire 'butcher's son,'" to show that Drayton worked hard at Latin. Then why not Shakspere also? Well, we have no evidence to show whether Shakspere was industrious or idle as a schoolboy, or how long he actually attended school. Certainly tradition, as I have shown in my book, and many others before me, is very far from supporting the hypothesis that he worked at books. The hitherto accepted theory has been that he was "a natural wit," with no learning, who wrote by natural inspiration as it were. As to Drayton, cited by Canon Beeching

as a witness, I shall have something to say about him presently. I do not think he will be found to support the Canon's case. On the contrary, I claim him as a witness on my side. And how his reading of Latin, with his "mild tutor," is any guide as to what was the instruction given at the Stratford school, I am at a loss to conceive. As to that, however, and what Shakspere may be supposed to have learnt at the school, I must ask leave to refer the reader to chapter II. of my book, and to chapter V. *infra*.

The next item on the Canon's Bill of Fare is: "(5) *But Shakespeare did not stay long enough at school to acquire as much Latin as the writer of the plays shows evidence of possessing.*" I do not greatly complain of this statement, but I would rather read after the word "school," "to acquire as much classical knowledge as the late Professor Churton Collins has shown that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare must have possessed."

Tradition, hitherto generally accepted, and endorsed by Rowe, says that owing to his father's pecuniary embarrassment, "and the want of his assistance at home," Shakspere was withdrawn from school at an unusually early age, and as we have evidence that John Shakspere was in financial straits in the year 1577, when William was thirteen years old, both Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee,

besides other biographers, accept it as probable that in this year the boy was, as Mr. Lee puts it, "enlisted by his father in an effort to restore his decaying fortunes." But some of our neo-Stratfordians, observing how important it is to keep Shakspere as long at school as possible, in order to cram him with all the Latin that they now see "Shakespeare" must have been endowed withal, quietly throw over this inconvenient tradition, and prolong the boy's hypothetical schooling for some further years, in order to get him into the higher classes of the school! Canon Beeching, rather timorously, joins the ranks of these eclectic philosophers. "As there were no school fees to pay we need not assume that he was withdrawn as early as this." No, there were no school fees, but how would that fact supply "the want of his assistance at home," on account of which we are expressly told his father removed him from the school? I have said in my book, and I think I was justified in so saying, that these neo-Stratfordians set all sound canons of criticism at defiance by the way in which they play fast and loose with the Shakespearean tradition. When it suits their theories they accept it "as Gospel"; when it is inconvenient they reject it at their own sweet will. This observation seems to have somewhat nettled Canon Beeching. He supposes that "everybody weighs each tradition separately."

My own experience is that the modern Stratfordian accepts or rejects it according as it squares or not with his preconceived ideas. But the Canon specially refers me (p. 11 note) to some of the traditions recorded by Aubrey. There is one, for instance, which he does not "remember to have seen quoted in Mr. Greenwood's pages to the effect that William Shakespeare was a remarkably clever boy. 'There was at that time another butcher's son in this town, that was held *not at all inferior to him for a natural wit*, his acquaintance and coetanean, but died young.'" (The Canon's italics.) It is quite true that I had not thought it worth while to quote this passage from Aubrey's *Lives of Eminent Men*, but I am delighted to do so now. So there were two clever butchers' sons in Stratford at the same time—*par nobile fratrum!* And let the reader take note that Canon Beeching seems here to accept the tradition that Shakspere's father was a butcher—not a glover or a wool-stapler, as some more apologetic biographers try to make out! No doubt these two talented boys killed calves "in high style" and in friendly rivalry! Whether "a natural wit" is exactly the same thing as "a remarkably clever boy" I am rather doubtful, but the expression is one which the "ancient witnesses" frequently apply to Shakspere. "I have heard," wrote the Rev. John Ward (1662–3) "that Mr. Shakespeare was

a natural wit, without any art at all." "His learning was very little," says Fuller . . . "nature itself was all the art which was used upon him." "Next Nature only helpt him," wrote Leonard Digges. "A natural wit"—well, it indicates a sharp boy certainly, and no doubt Shakspere was such. But as Canon Beeching refers me specially to Aubrey to Aubrey let us go.

"Tradition," writes the Canon (p. 11), "coming through Aubrey from Beeston the actor, says of Shakespeare, that 'though as Ben Jonson says of him, he had but 'small Latin and less Greek,' he understood Latin pretty well.'" But here is a *hiatus valde deflendus*. Why does not the Canon finish the sentence? Aubrey wrote, "He understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country"! Does the Canon accept that statement too? Does he make "Shakespeare" a provincial dominie teaching "hig hag hog" to country brats? But let us have Aubrey "all in all or not at all." What more does he say? "This William being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London I guesse about 18, and was an actor at one of the play-houses, and did act exceedingly well." Why, Shakspere married at eighteen, had his first child born to him at nineteen, was the father of twins at twenty-one, and probably did not come to

London till he was twenty-three. "And to close the whole," as Richard Farmer writes in his celebrated essay, "it is not possible, according to Aubrey himself, that Shakespeare could have been *some years a schoolmaster in the country*, on which circumstance only the supposition of his learning is professedly founded. He was not surely *very* young when he was employed to *kill Calves*, and he commenced Player about Eighteen!" When, then, I wonder, did this marvellous boy find time (before "eighteen"!) to be "in his younger years" a country schoolmaster? And all this is subscribed "from Mr. . . . Beeston"! I am exceedingly obliged to Canon Beeching for drawing my attention to this "roving maggoty-pated man," as Anthony Wood called Aubrey; but if the reader will kindly turn to my book, and to the index thereof, he will see that I have frequently referred to him (see especially page 105 note and page 207). This, then, is the main buttress for Shakspere's learning! "He understood Latin pretty well," because he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country![1]

[1] In his lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, and now reprinted as *The Story of the Life*, Canon Beeching adopts the "schoolmaster" theory with a little embroidery of his own. "A youth of proved abilities," he writes (p. 50), "with a known taste for letters, might well have been employed as usher at

As to the classical knowledge which must have been possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* of "Shakespeare," I will not go over that ground again here. I have gone into the matter very thoroughly in my chapter IV. on "The Learning of Shakespeare," and to that, and to Professor Churton Collins's illuminating essays on the subject, I must respectfully refer the reader. I note, however, that Canon Beeching writes (p. 12): "In the case of Plautus there was a translation available *in manuscript*." Now the *Comedy of Errors* was performed at Gray's Inn in 1594. "It is all but certain," writes Mr. Churton Collins,

the Grammar School when his father's business failed"! Observe; the country school has now become the Stratford Grammar School, to which young William returns as a pedagogue! It is true that the old writers, who are our only authority for the facts of Shakspere's early life—Rowe, for instance, and Dowdall, who speaks on the authority of the octogenarian clerk at Stratford—tell us that he was put as apprentice to his father's trade; but what of that? It is much better for our purpose to make him "usher" at the Grammar School, and as all records of the school have perished there is not much danger in so doing. It is true that there never seems to have been an "usher" at the school, but, again, what of that? As Canon Beeching very truly writes in the same lecture (p. 45), "of Shakespeare's education outside the walls of the Stratford Grammar School, *every one's imagination will furnish him with a better account than I can pretend to give.*" That is well said, and it is on this excellent principle that the critics and biographers have consistently acted. They have given free scope to their "imagination," with the result that we have now very full and very delightful biographies of "Shakespeare," which leave nothing to be desired, except, indeed, veracity.

"that it was written between 1589 and 1592." It is founded both on the *Amphitruo* and the *Menaechmi* of Plautus. "At that date there were no known English translations of those plays in existence, for Warner's version of the *Menaechmi* did not appear till 1595." But Warner says in his preface that he had shown his translation in manuscript "for the use and delight of his private friends, who, in Plautus's own words, are not able to understand them." Upon this Canon Beeching quietly informs us, without a *scintilla* of evidence to go upon, but as though it were an ascertained and unquestionable fact, that "there was a translation available in manuscript" for Shakspere of Stratford! Thus is this man's biography concocted!

But, be that as it may, we have the authority of Mr. Churton Collins for saying that "of his [Shakespeare's] familiarity with Plautus [i.e. in the original] there can be no question." And, in conclusion upon this point, I am of the same opinion still, viz. that Shakspere could not possibly have acquired all the classical knowledge and culture possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* during his few years at the Stratford Free Grammar School.

We come now to (6) "*But allowing that an industrious boy could get a knowledge of Latin at Stratford, he would learn nothing else.*" I will not

quarrel with this statement either. I think it expresses the truth, and I do not understand Canon Beeching to say that he seriously disputes it. But then, says he, many years elapsed between the time when Shakspere left school and the date of his first publications. Well, we know something about the life he led at Stratford till he was somewhere about the age of twenty-three, and it certainly is not suggestive of learning and culture. But, again says the Canon, "Shakespeare came to London, probably, in 1585." I do not think there is any such probability. Mr. Lee says (p. 28) that it was "doubtless . . . during 1586," and I think Mr. Lee's adverb is as little justified as Canon Beeching's. In 1586 the London theatres were closed on account of the plague, as the Canon himself observes (p. 56). In 1587 John Shakspere, "being at that time in prison for debt," had to make an arrangement with the mortgagee of the Asbies property, and William Shakspere's concurrence seems to have been required. "I believe," writes Mr. Fleay (*Life*, p. 95), "that immediately after this, in 1587, Shakespeare left Stratford either with or in order to join Lord Leicester's Company." And what did he do in London? Well, we have the horse-holding story (perhaps as well attested as most other facts in the life of Shakspere), and the well-known statement that he entered the theatres as "a serviture," i.e.

"call-boy," probably, or, it may be, "super." "As call-boy and prompter's assistant," says Canon Beeching (p. 57), he served a "long apprenticeship." Moreover, the actor's art is not exactly learnt in a day—except, of course, by amateurs! But here, it seems, was Shakspere's chance. "Actors' tradition, coming through Beeston from Augustine Phillips, who was in Shakespeare's own company, tells us that Shakespeare acted 'exceedingly well.' Now it is the distinguishing character of a good actor that he has a keen eye for manners. Nothing of this sort, that he sees, escapes him; and what he sees he can imitate" (p. 14). Now what is this "Actors' tradition"? It is Aubrey again! Now Aubrey, it is true, makes a general reference to Beeston, which would seem to imply that he derived such information as he had about Shakspere from that old seventeenth-century actor, but, so far as I know, there is nothing to show that Beeston pronounced this encomium on Shakspere's acting (if, indeed, he ever *did* pronounce it) on the authority of Augustine Phillips. But what does the learned Farmer say on this point? "Shakespeare most certainly went to London and commenced actor through necessity, not natural inclination. Nor have we any reason to suppose that he did act *exceedingly well*. Rowe tells us from the information of Betterton, who was inquisitive into this point, and had

very early opportunities of inquiry from Sir W. Davenant, that he was *no extraordinary Actor;* and that the top of his performance was the ghost in his own Hamlet." He then quotes Lodge's *Wits Miserie* to show that "even that *chef-d'œuvre* did not please." Rowe's words are: "His name is printed, as the custom was in those times, amongst those of the other Players, before some old Plays, but without any particular account of what sort of parts he us'd to play; and tho' I have inquir'd, I could never meet with any further account of him this way, than that the top of his performance was the ghost in Hamlet."

This seems to throw cold water on Canon Beeching's theory that Shakspere derived all the culture necessary for the author of *Venus and Adonis*, the *Sonnets*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the rest, behind the footlights. As to what sort of men the Players of that day really were I would beg to refer the reader to my book (see pp. 75, 83 note, 175, etc.). Canon Beeching has himself written, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Shakspere "belonged to a profession which, by public opinion, was held to be degrading" (and see his book at p. 70). Nevertheless, he thinks that a few years on the stage were quite sufficient to give the "Stratford rustic," turned Player, all that was necessary to qualify him as "Shakespeare."

As to *Venus and Adonis*, why should it be thought

extraordinary that a young man of Shakspere's antecedents should have written it? "Here," says the Canon, "we have a close parallel in Shakespeare's fellow-countryman Drayton, whom I have already called in evidence. He was born the year before Shakespeare, and, like him, had no learning beyond what a schoolmaster could afford. In 1594, the year after *Venus and Adonis*, he produced a volume of sonnets, which are as *précieux* as anything in Shakespeare's poem" (p. 15). The Canon then quotes one of these sonnets, and a very charming one it is, affording additional proof, if proof were needed, that other contemporary writers besides Shakespeare could produce poetry of the highest class, though it is not up to the level of that other magnificent sonnet of Drayton's, "Since there's no help come let us kiss and part," etc., nor yet of that grand martial lyric the "Ballad of Agincourt." But does Canon Beeching really imagine that Drayton's case is "parallel" with that of Shakspere, supposing that the latter was the author of the *Plays* and *Poems?* Let us see. Drayton, says the Canon (p. 10), was "another Warwickshire butcher's son." Who says so? Aubrey again! Thus, according to the "roving maggoty-pated man," there were *three* distinguished Warwickshire butchers' sons, two of whom were in Stratford, viz. Shakspere and that other butcher's son, his

"coetanean," who died young, and, thirdly, Michael Drayton. Well, in Shakspere's case we have, certainly, the corroboration of the octogenarian clerk of Stratford who told Dowdall (1693) that Shakspere "was formerly in this towne bound apprentice to a butcher"—the butcher being generally supposed to have been his own father, John Shakspere; but what warrant Master Aubrey had for making Drayton a butcher's son also I cannot conceive. His mind seems to have been running on butchers. As to Drayton, we are told in the *General Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Alexander Chalmers, that "His family was ancient, and originally descended from the town of Drayton in Leicestershire, which gave name to his progenitors, as a learned antiquary of his acquaintance has recorded; but his parents removing into Warwickshire our poet was born there. When he was but ten years of age he seems to have been page to some person of honour. He was some time a student in the University of Oxford, though we do not find that he took any degree there." To the same effect writes Mr. Gosse. "At the age of ten he was sent as page into some great family, and a little later he is supposed to have studied for some time at Oxford." We have it on Drayton's own authority that he was "nobly bred" and "well ally'd," so his father would appear to have been a very distinguished

"butcher" indeed! It seems highly probable that he was attached to the household of Sir Henry Goodere, of Powlesworth, to whom he acknowledges his indebtedness for the most part of his education. We are told, by the way, that Drayton, according to the custom of the time, "wrote numerous commendatory verses" to contemporaries, a thing which "Shakespeare," unfortunately, never did—under that name at any rate! Drayton evidently had friends in the highest ranks. He writes dedicatory epistles or poems to the Countess of Bedford; to the Lady Jane Devereux, of Merivale, to whose "boundless hospitality" he pays a high tribute; to Lady Anne Harrington; to Lucy, daughter of Sir John Harrington; and to many others. Hearken unto the learned Mrs. Stopes. "It would have been comforting to us to have had as much authoritative autobiography of Shakespeare as we have of Michael Drayton. The latter was very communicative about himself, he had many friends and patrons, he showered dedications among these broadcast, and from the dedications we learn much about his circumstances and ambitions. . . . Though no definite record is preserved, it is quite possible that Goodere sent him to the University. Sir Aston Cokaine in his *Remedy for Love*, 1658, refers to the poet as 'my old friend Drayton,' a phrase which implies some degree of intimacy,