

and speaking of the colleges which had produced poets, he says in his poem :—

‘Oxford, our other Academy, you  
Full worthy must acknowledge of your view :  
Here smooth-tongued Drayton was inspired by  
Mnemosyne’s manifold Projenie.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

In the face of all this what warrant has Canon Beeching for saying of Drayton that he “had no learning beyond what a schoolmaster could afford”? Of Shakspeare’s early life we know little, and yet a great deal too much. Of Drayton’s early life we know little, indeed, but nothing that forbids us to believe—nay, much that compels us to believe—that it was spent in an atmosphere of culture and refinement. What “parallel” is there here? The “proper goodly page,” in the household of Sir Henry Goodere, “nobly bred and well ally’d,” with his “mild Tutor,” and (as seems highly probable) with his University education—how can *his* early life be compared (except, indeed, to his infinite advantage) with that of the young “Stratford rustic,” “much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits” for (Canon Beeching, at any rate, accepts the poaching

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare’s Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 188. Meres, also, seems to have had a personal knowledge of and affection for Drayton, for he says of him “*quem toties honoris et amoris causa nomino.*” In his epistle to Reynolds, “Of Poets and Poetry,” Drayton boasts of his friendship with “the two Beaumonts . . . my dear companions.”

story), "oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned," and "fallen into ill company," who deserted his wife and young children in order to rise on stepping-stones of horse-holder and call-boy to the position of an actor whose "top performance was the ghost in *Hamlet*"?

It may, of course, be said that all these traditions as to the young Shakspeare are not necessarily historical. Granted; but let the reader take the whole life so far as we know it at all—as the "ancient witnesses" have revealed it to us; as Rowe has handed it down; as Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee have told the story, working on the best evidence in their possession; and then consider what analogy he is justified in assuming between the circumstances of Drayton's early training and that of William Shakspeare of Stratford. But the fact is that there is no "parallel" case to that of Shakspeare in the world's history—that is, supposing Shakspeare and "Shakespeare" are one.

Canon Beeching, by the way, is commendably prudent in not going too closely into the matter of dates. There is nothing extraordinary, he thinks, in the (supposed) fact that Shakspeare of Stratford should compose that wonderful, highly cultured, highly polished, and scholarly poem of *Venus and Adonis*, because it was published, "not in the twentieth, but at the end of the six-

teenth century," in the spacious days, "when the Spirit of Literature was abroad in England," and when there were still grammar-schools to teach Latin classics. Moreover, Shakespeare was "twenty-nine when he printed his poem." Yes, Shakspeare was twenty-nine in 1593, when *Venus and Adonis* was first "printed," but the author calls it "the first heir of my invention," and, therefore, it must have been composed a very considerable time before that year. And how about *Love's Labour's Lost*? In the form in which we now know it, says Canon Beeching, it shows evidence of much correction and revision. That may be granted as extremely probable. But when was it originally composed? "The date of the original production," writes Mr. Fleay (*Life*, p. 202), "cannot well be put later than 1589," and we have this and other high authority for saying that it must have been composed in 1588, i.e. as I have shown, in the year after Shakspeare, in all probability, came to town a penniless fugitive to seek employment as a "serviture" in a London theatre, in order to "keep the wolf from the door"!

Canon Beeching sees nothing in the least extraordinary in all this. Well, well; *quot homines tot sententiae!*

What is the next of my supposed arguments? It is "(7) *There is no contemporary evidence*

*identifying the player with the author of the plays and poems.*" But I have not said this. I have not said that there is *no* evidence. To do so would be absurd. If Shakspeare of Stratford did not write the plays and poems, then, obviously, "Shakespeare" was used as a *nom de plume*, or, if you will, "a mask name," by somebody who did not wish to reveal his identity. Naturally in that case many persons would imagine that the player was the author. Some, indeed, would see through it, and roundly accuse the player of putting forth the works of others as his own. To such he would be a "Poet-ape,"<sup>1</sup> or "an upstart crow," beautified with the feathers of other writers. Others would simply accept the ostensible as the real author. My belief is that, in those days, the general public did not care a twopenny button-top who wrote the plays. As Henslowe's *Diary* conclusively proves, plays, at that date, were constantly written by two, three, four, or even five authors in collaboration, and nobody, outside a very small circle, troubled his head as to who the dramatist or dramatists might be. There

<sup>1</sup> Canon Beeching writes: "I may also, perhaps, point out to Mr. Greenwood that whether Jonson's epigram on *Poet-ape* refers to Shakespeare or not—a point that cannot be determined—the word 'Poet-ape' means, and can only mean, 'Poet-player.'" If by that expression the Canon means "a player who pretends to be a poet," I should say that that is too obvious to require to be pointed out. See the epigram quoted by me at p. 455, and the Prologue to the *Poetaster* quoted at p. 456.

was no *Daily Mail* then, and no "dramatic critics"—no Press to inquire into matters of authorship, or to write columns on "The Great Unknown." I repeat there were, of course, some, and there were probably many, who accepted Shakspeare the player, whose name was (in his later days at any rate) so commonly written Shakespeare (though, as it seems, not by himself), as the author of the plays put forth in that name. I repeat, it would be absurd to say that there is *no* contemporary evidence identifying the player with the author. The question is, Is the evidence so strong and so trustworthy as to outweigh all the arguments for the negative case? Can we be sure that those contemporary writers who use expressions which seem to identify the player with the poet really believed in that identity, or, if they believed in it, that they were not themselves deceived? What I actually say in my book on this point is as follows: "What we require is evidence to establish the identity of the player with the poet and dramatist;<sup>1</sup> to prove that the player was the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. *That* is the proposition to be established and *that* the allusions fail, as it appears to me, to prove. At any rate, they do not disprove the theory that the true authorship was hidden under

<sup>1</sup> Observe, to "establish the identity"—not the fact that some contemporaries believed in it.

a pseudonym" (see chapter XI., *Shakespeare Allusions and Illusions*, p. 307).

But Canon Beeching calls witnesses to show (what, as I have said, I do not deny) that there is *some* contemporary evidence suggesting that the player was identical with the poet. Let us then examine them. No doubt they are the best that can be produced. Let us see what weight ought to be attached to any evidence that they can give.

The first is Richard Field, who, says Canon Beeching, "published the *Venus and Adonis*, and was a native of Stratford." He further says (p. 17), "Mr. Greenwood acknowledges this," but, nevertheless, I fear I cannot quite agree. It is true that Richard Field printed *Venus and Adonis* (as I say at p. 62 note), but the publisher, I apprehend, was John Harrison. Like the *Lucrece*, it was "to be sold at the signe of the white Greyhound in Paules Church-yard," where Harrison carried on business. Field's printing office was at Ludgate. I am aware, of course, that on April 18, 1593, "Richard Field entered for his copie under the handes of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Master Warden Stirrop, a booke intituled *Venus and Adonis*" (*Arber. Transcripts, II*, 631), and it was not till June 25, 1594, that he actually assigned his copy in this work, "in open court," to Master John Harri-

son senior, but I believe it is quite correct to say that the real publisher was Harrison, for whom Field printed two subsequent editions, and the first edition of *Lucrece*.<sup>1</sup> I think, then, the strong probability is that the publisher, John Harrison senior, a well-known member of the Stationers' Company, of the White Greyhound in St. Paul's Churchyard, was the man who, in the natural course of things, employed Field to print the work. There is really no reason to suppose that "Shakespeare" had anything whatever to do with it.<sup>2</sup>

Canon Beeching goes on to dispute, with no little scorn, my statement that "there is absolutely nothing to show that Field had any acquaintance with, or any knowledge of, Shakspeare,"

<sup>1</sup> As Mr. H. R. Tedder puts it, in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "he [Field] printed three editions of *Venus and Adonis* and the first of *Lucrece* for John Harrison." Field himself was made free of the Stationers' Company on February 6, 1586-7, but from an entry in the Registers on June 4, 1599, he seems to have been at that time among the unprivileged printers (see *Arber. Trans.*, III, 678).

<sup>2</sup> If Field and the author were close friends, as some have assumed, one would hardly have expected to find Field parting with his copyright; rather, we should have expected to find him in possession of the copyright of *Lucrece* also. The Baconians, however, maintain that Richard Field *was* a friend of "Shakespeare's," for, in the autumn of 1592, Francis Bacon rode to Twickenham Park in company with his friends, Richard Cecil, Robert Gosnold, and Richard Field! (Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of Lord Bacon's Life*, p. 56). Was this Richard Field the printer and stationer? I do not profess to know.

Note

i.e. William Shakspeare of Stratford. Why, says Canon Beeching, "Richard Field, who was of Shakespeare's own age, did not leave Stratford till he was fifteen; and their fathers were acquainted, for John Shakespeare, when Henry Field died, attested the inventory of his goods and chattels." What says T. Payne Collier on this matter? "The printer of the earliest impressions of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* was Richard Field . . . and it has been conjectured that Shakespeare had been induced to employ him because he, or his family, came from Stratford-on-Avon. In 1592 the father of our great dramatist was appointed, with two others, to value the goods of a person of the name of 'Henry Fielde, of Stratford, tanner,' and he may possibly have been the father of Richard Field, the printer" (*Annals of the Stage*, Vol. III, 439). I am quite aware that what Collier thought only a possibility is now supposed to be proved, but the identity of Henry Field, of whose goods an inventory was taken, with the father of Richard Field, does not seem to have been conclusively shown. But even if it be so, what does the evidence amount to? In 1587 Shakspeare had left Stratford for London. In 1592 his father, with two others, is employed in the way of business, to value the goods of Henry Field, assumed to be the father of Richard Field,



who seems to have gone to London, as a boy of fifteen, some eight years before Shakspeare left his home. And this is cited as though it were conclusive evidence that William Shakspeare was personally acquainted with Richard Field! Of course, if Shakespeare, who dedicated the first heir of his invention to the great Earl of Southampton, was, in truth, Shakspeare of Stratford, it is, perhaps, probable that he knew Field, who printed the poem for his publisher Harrison; but that is just the point at issue. On full consideration of the circumstances, therefore, it seems to me that I am amply justified in saying that there is no evidence whatever showing any personal acquaintance between Shakspeare and Richard Field; for to pray in aid the dedication of the poem for that purpose is, of course, merely to reason in a circle.<sup>1</sup>

A word more as to this Richard Field. He printed three editions of *Venus and Adonis* for Harrison, and the first edition (and only the first) of the *Lucrece*, for the same publisher. Not one of the quarto plays came from Field's press. Yet

<sup>1</sup> At page 48 Canon Beeching speaks of Richard Field as Shakespeare's "school friend." This is a characteristic illustration of the manner in which Stratfordian biography is written. There is not a tittle of evidence to show that Field was at school with Shakspeare, or at all, for the matter of that. But he *might have been, therefore he was!*

it seems odd, if Shakspeare was really such a great friend of Field's, that as actor-manager and rising dramatist he did not employ his friend to print for him! If it be said that he had sold his plays to "the Company," his influence, nevertheless, would surely have been sufficient to secure the printing for his friend had he so desired! Close friendship between the two men has been quietly assumed by modern Stratfordian critics on the strength of Field having been a native of Stratford. It has been suggested that, doubtless, Shakspeare went to Field for help and assistance when he first came to town. Did Field help him to get the position of call-boy, I wonder? If so, it is a pity he could not do rather better than this for his friend; pity too that neither Canon Beeching's favourite Aubrey, nor Rowe, nor any of the "ancient witnesses," record the fact! Mrs. Stopes, however, goes one better than all. She assumes that Shakspeare acquired his learning, classical and other, including his knowledge of Giordano Bruno, *inter alia*, by assiduous reading at Vautrollier's shop where Field had been an apprentice and to the control of which he succeeded by marrying either Vautrollier's daughter or widow, for as to this the evidence is conflicting (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, pp. 8 and 9). This in an orthodox Stratfordian is considered quite sane

and reasonable. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

The next witness cited is the author of the *Return from Parnassus*. Now I have dealt with that curious old play at considerable length in my book (see p. 319 *et seq.*); I have shown, amongst other things, how the "scholar" author who wrote it pours scorn and ridicule upon the players in the persons of Kempe and Burbage, who are represented as ignorant, conceited, half-educated vulgarians, "rude grooms," as Greene called them, who speak of "that writer *Metamorphosis*," under the impression that he was a Latin author, just as they speak of that writer *Ovid*"!<sup>1</sup> These buffoons are, certainly, made to talk of "our fellow Shakespeare" in such a way as to show that the author of the play ascribed to them the belief that player Shakspeare was also an author. I fully admit this in my book, where I write, in a passage which Canon Beeching has *not* quoted, "In fact, the only thing of real importance in these allusions is this, that the Cam-

<sup>1</sup> I further call attention to the feud which existed in those days between the scholars and the players, and ask the reader to appreciate the fact that the scholar-playwright is satirizing the players. See the quotation from Gifford's *Memoir of Ben Jonson* at p. 324. Gifford has shown, and I have endeavoured to make clear, how absurd it is to cite this passage as to "our fellow Shakespeare" as though it bore testimony to Shakespeare's "confessed supremacy" at the time (see p. 322).

bridge dramatist makes Kempe and Burbage speak of 'our fellow Shakespeare' as an author." Whether the dramatist himself believed this also we do not know. Possibly he did, but very possibly he did not. I repeat, the anonymous scholar who wrote these old plays had a supreme contempt for the players, and expresses it with great bitterness. The commendation of player Shakespeare which he puts into the mouth of Burbage was, I suspect, received with much laughter by the Cambridge scholars and students assembled. It would be altogether to misunderstand the satire if we were to take it that the belief attributed to the supposed players on the stage was also necessarily the belief of the author or of his cultivated audience. But we really know nothing of the scholar author, or what means he had of knowing the facts of the case.

The next witness is John Davies of Hereford. I have cited this writer's epigram, referred to by Canon Beeching, at page 335 of my book, where I admit that "John Davies of Hereford is more to the point, for he writes lines to 'our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare,'" etc. Now as Terence was a writer of comedies, it would certainly seem that John Davies looked upon "Mr. Will Shake-speare," whom he speaks of as a player, as a writer of comedies also. This must be conceded, and I have made no attempt

to deny it. The epigram is a curious one. Davies, addressing "good *Will*," informs him that according to some, if he, "*Will*" to wit, had "not played some kingly parts in sport," he had been "a companion for a *King*," and been "a King among the meaner sort." The first "*King*" is thrown into italics, which is rather curious. Old writers sometimes put all their important nouns into italics, but this is not the explanation here, because, in the first six lines of the epigram, "*Will*" and the first "*King*" (but not the second) are alone italicized. It has been suggested that Davies is alluding to somebody of the name of "King," or to the "King's Players," or to King James; or he may have had Horace's line in his mind, "*At pueri ludentes Rex eris aiunt*," which seems to me very probable. In any case, even if "Mr. Will Shake-speare" had not disqualified himself to be "a companion for a *King*," he would only have been "a King among the meaner sort," which does not seem to place him very high in Davies's estimation, though in the four last lines he praises him for having "no rayling, but a raigning Wit," concluding thus—

"And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape;  
So to increase their Stocke which they do keepe."

What the real meaning of all this is I honestly confess that I do not know, and the commentators

Davies'  
epigram.

shed no light on the matter. John Davies, as everybody knows, was a writing-master and a voluminous writer of poetry which few people have the patience to read, though it contains much interesting matter. Let it be admitted, then, that John Davies of Hereford, to all outward appearance, thought that "Mr. Will Shake-speare, our English Terence," was the player whose name was occasionally so written. So far as I know that has never been denied. *Valeat quantum*. But is it not rather strange that he should have looked upon the player (if in truth and in fact he did so look upon him) as a writer of comedies only? And that, too, in 1611 or thereabouts, when William Shakspeare, at the age of forty-seven, was just seeking retirement in the congenial society of the small tradesmen of Stratford! John Davies does not seem to have been struck by such trifles as *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, and *Othello*! Perhaps he did not know very much about the matter. Calligraphy was more in his line. If only he could have given Shakspeare a few lessons!<sup>1</sup>

The next witness whom Canon Beeching puts into the box is that great Earl to whom player Shakspeare, with unprecedented and unparalleled

<sup>1</sup> Davies of Hereford is generally supposed to have been the "scribbler" on the outside of the Northumberland Manuscript, but this is not the place to dilate upon that theme, tempting as the subject undoubtedly is.

audacity, is supposed to have dedicated the first heir of his invention in somewhat familiar terms.<sup>1</sup> I have denied that there is a scrap of evidence showing that Shakspere the actor was intimate with or patronized by the Earl. Canon Beeching, however, professes to be able to produce that scrap. What is it? Why, Nicholas Rowe tells us that somebody told him that Sir William D'Avenant told somebody else "that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him ["Shakespeare" or "Shakspere"—which you please] a thousand pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." This, Rowe says, is an "instance so singular in the magnificence of this Patron" that he "would not have ventured to have inserted" it if he had not

<sup>1</sup> Canon Beeching, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, adverting to the theory that the earlier sonnets were addressed to Southampton not as an adored friend but merely as a patron, remarks: "If it is remembered that Shakespeare's patron, Lord Southampton, was one of the greatest peers in England at a time when all social degrees, even that between peer and gentleman, were very clearly marked, and that Shakespeare belonged to a profession which, by public opinion, was held to be degrading, it will hardly need saying that such addresses from a player, however fashionable, to a patron, however complaisant, were simply impossible." But the fact is that from player to peer they were "simply impossible" in any case; and so I venture to think is this dedication. He that wrote it, with the "*vilia miretur vulgus*" motto, was no player (see my book, p. 57). As to the Sonnets, that enigma will never be solved so long as the hopeless attempt is made to adapt them to the life of William Shakspere of Stratford.

been told that D'Avenant said so. "This tradition," says Canon Beeching, "came to Rowe on the authority of Sir William Davenant." But did Rowe get the story from D'Avenant? Scarcely, for D'Avenant died some five years before Rowe was born. As for Shakspeare, he had been dead nearly one hundred years before Rowe essayed to write a memoir of him. And what *was* this "purchase"? I should like to know. Not the purchase of New Place, which Shakspeare bought in 1597 for £60. But the story is evidently just a bit of Stratfordian mythology. And it is this piece of hopeless "hearsay," this fifth-hand fable, that Canon Beeching parades as "evidence" (save the mark!) that player Shakspeare was intimate with the great Earl and patronized by him! I repeat there is "not a scrap of *evidence*" to that effect."<sup>1</sup>

These, then, are Canon Beeching's four witnesses, called to establish the identity of the player

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, although we have not any evidence for it, I would not deny that it is probable enough that Southampton may have given a munificent gift to "Shakespeare," the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, just as Essex, in 1595, gave Bacon some land which he sold for £1800. "The story," says Canon Beeching with reference to Rowe's "tall tale," "has no parallel that I know of." But this story of Essex and Bacon is quite "parallel" except in the position of the donee, and may, indeed, have given rise to the Shakspeare-Southampton myth. *That* story, says Mr. Bompas, "is not reconcilable with the facts of Shakspeare's life" (see the *Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 69).



with the author of the plays. I have shown that two of them, viz. Richard Field and the Earl of Southampton, have no evidentiary value at all; and I submit that what the players are made to say by the unknown author of the *Return from Parnassus* gives very little help indeed towards proving the proposition. John Davies of Hereford is certainly the Canon's best card, but I do not think it is good enough to win the game for him. Let it not be forgotten that what those of the "orthodox" faith have to do is (I say it again) to establish the identity of the player with the poet; not merely to show (what so far as I know nobody has ever denied) that some contemporary writers believed in that identity. The strange thing to my mind is that there is not much more evidence of such belief.<sup>1</sup>

Shakspeare was buried, as we are told, in the church at Stratford, and there somebody, at some time—nobody knows who or when—set up a monu-

<sup>1</sup> Let the reader set against these extremely unconvincing witnesses such pregnant negatives as that of Manningham's diary, 1601 (see my book at p. 340), or the petition of Cuthbert and Winifrid Burbage, in 1635, to the Earl of Pembroke, the survivor of the "incomparable pair" (p. 339). Is it not a suggestive fact that the proprietors of the theatres which had been made famous by the production of the Shakespearean plays, should, twelve years after the publication of the Great Folio (with the "Swan of Avon" lines) describe the illustrious author of the dramas (?) merely as a "man-player" and a "deserving man"! Why was he not "the great poet and dramatist"?

ment with an inscription telling the "passenger" that "Shakspeare" had been placed within that monument, which, unless the monument conceals some unsuspected mortal remains, is not exactly veracious; and with some Latin verses which seem singularly inappropriate. However, the inference certainly is that those who erected the monument<sup>1</sup> believed, or at any rate intended others to believe, that Shakspeare of Stratford was the Shakespeare of immortality. In his name, under the form "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare," had the *Plays* (such of them as had been published, and not published anonymously) been put forth. Nay, in that name, or under those initials, had many other plays been published which nobody now believes to be the work of "Shakespeare." This is worth noting, because it shows that the publishers of these "spurious" plays knew very well that they might use this name without any fear of interference on the part of Shakspeare, or anybody else. Of what other contemporary author can this be said?

It seems that "Shakespeare" was unique in this respect. But these spurious plays, doubtless, were accepted as the works of Shakespeare, nobody taking the trouble to inquire, and the general

<sup>1</sup> Not Shakspeare's "fellow-townsmen," as one of Mr. Lee's comments in *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century* would seem to imply. See on this point and on the inscription generally a letter signed "G. Krueger" (of Berlin) in *N. and Q.*, October 31st, 1908.

Note.

public not caring two straws, whether they were really Shakespeare's or no. Then, seven years after Shakspeare's death, came the Folio, and Jonson's lines, and so it seemed to be settled for all time that Shakspeare, whose gravestone in the chancel (for at least we are told that he lies under it) imprecates a curse against any one who shall move his bones, was the immortal poet and dramatist. And for nearly a hundred years nobody thought of making any serious inquiry into the life of this man. "That almost a century should have elapsed," writes Malone (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 10), "from the time of his death, without a single attempt having been made to discover any circumstance which could throw a light on the history of his private life, or literary career; that, when the attempt was made, it should have been so imperfectly executed by the very ingenious and elegant dramatist who undertook the task; and that for a period of eighty years afterwards, during which this 'god of our idolatry' ranked as high among us as any poet ever did in any country, all the editors of his works, and each succeeding English biographer, should have been contented with Mr. Rowe's meagre and imperfect narrative, are circumstances which cannot be contemplated without astonishment."

Perhaps if no "attempt" had been made "to throw a light on the history of his private life and literary career," if the dry bones of Shakespearean

biography had been left undisturbed, on the principle of letting sleeping dogs lie, the searchlight of criticism would never have discovered so many grave reasons for seriously doubting the time-honoured tradition of authorship.

My *eighth* supposed argument refers to Shakspeare's handwriting, and I have already dealt with it, so I now pass on to *No. 9*, which, in Canon Beeching's book, stands as follows: "There is not a letter, not a note, not a scrap of writing from the pen of Shakspeare which has come down to us except five signatures." It is true that I state this well-known fact, and in these words, but if the reader will do me the honour to refer to my book (p. 17), he will find that I do not, as Canon Beeching's comments would lead him to believe, use it as an important fact on the question of authorship, as though the case of Shakspeare (or Shakespeare) were unique in this particular. I merely refer to it in connexion with the dispute as to the spelling of the name. The passage quoted by Canon Beeching continues: "All these five signatures appear to differ. Almost illegible as they must have been when written, except to expert decipherers of hieroglyphics, they are doubly so now on account of the fading of the ink. Modern biographers, therefore, reading through the spectacles of their own prepossessions, have made valiant attempts

to read the name 'Shakespeare'—the literary name—in one or two instances. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that the earlier and less prejudiced critics, who had no particular theory to support or combat in this matter, were correct in reading 'Shakspere.'” I was not considering the absence of Shakespearean manuscripts, as Canon Beeching suggests. Nevertheless, I would say here that, seeing we have specimens of the writing of such men as Spenser (*pace* Mr. Lee), and Ben Jonson, and Joshua Sylvester, and other poets of the time, it does seem a remarkable fact that nothing of Shakspere's has been preserved beyond these five signatures, if Shakspere was indeed recognized by his contemporaries as the greatest poet of the age. But I am quite content to leave this matter as I have left it in my book. One comment of Canon Beeching's, however, I will briefly notice. He says: “Still, undoubtedly there may have been something *complexional* in Shakespeare's silence. Every man has his humour, and all men are not given to letter-writing. An evidence of this *idiosyncrasy* may be found in the absence of the commendatory lines on other poets of which the Elizabethan Age had its share, *though the fashion set in later.*”<sup>1</sup> I venture to say that this “fashion set in” vigorously in Elizabethan times,

<sup>1</sup> The italics in this quotation are mine.

and most certainly in those times it was the constant practice of poets to write commendatory lines to well-known and distinguished persons, poets or not. Few better examples of this "fashion" can be found than the case of Michael Drayton, in which Canon Beeching so vainly seeks to find a parallel to that of Shakspeare.

The *tenth argument* attributed to me by Canon Beeching also has reference to the fact that not a scrap of writing from Shakespeare's pen has come down to us revealing himself, as other poets of the age have revealed themselves, in a personal light, unless, indeed, the enigmatic sonnets are to be looked upon as an exception. I write (p. 200): "But if Shakspeare was indeed Shakespeare, it does seem unaccountable that he should have written no lines to friends or patrons, no elegies on famous men or women of his day, no lyrics other than those, or some of those, which appear in the dramas, no epigrams, no epitaphs, no epithalamiums." I would respectfully refer the reader to the whole passage. I have reread it, and the argument appears to me to be sound. I compare the practice of other poets generally, and that of Jonson in particular. Canon Beeching takes my instances, of the things some of which Shakspeare might have been expected to have written, not collectively but separately and *singillatim*. He says Lyly wrote no "epigrams";

Kyd no "epithalamiums"; Marston no "elegies." Such a method of argument seems to me to merit no reply. But he is particularly annoyed at my comparing Shakspeare with Jonson. "How thoughtless is this constant comparison of Shakespeare with Jonson! . . . Mr. Greenwood does not seem to have grasped the elementary fact about Jonson, that in most things he did he was exceptional in his age." But why do I frequently institute this comparison between the lives and habits of these two men? No reader of my book needs to be told. He has only to turn to page 1, where I quote Mr. Lee's remarkable pronouncement to the effect that "Patient investigation, which has been in progress for more than two hundred years, has brought together a mass of biographical detail [in Shakspeare's case] which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare." This, as I point out, must mean, if it means anything at all, that we know more about the life of Shakspeare of Stratford than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him. Well, the best method of bringing this singularly audacious statement to the test is to compare what we know about Shakspeare with what we know about Jonson. I have done so, and see no reason to apologize for so doing. Next, please!

*The next supposed argument (No. 11) consists*

merely in a comment which I make upon the fact that Jonson's death "was greeted with a chorus of elegiac and panegyric verses, poured forth by the best poets of the moment," as the late Mr. J. A. Symonds wrote. "How different," I add, "was the case of Shakespeare!" To class this as one of the main "arguments" in support of my case seems to me to display a want of the sense of proportion on the part of the learned Canon. It is, however, I venture to think, a fact in the case which is well worthy of consideration.

*The attributed arguments (12) and (13) are, to adopt Canon Beeching's headings (which, it must be remembered, are his own words and not mine), first, "Ben Jonson's mysterious relations with the Folio of Shakespeare's plays"; and, secondly, "Jonson's commendatory poem."* As they both deal with Jonson's cryptic utterances I will take them both together, commencing with *No. 13*. As to this, Canon Beeching, once more indulging in the *tu quoque* style of argument, writes: "Mr. Greenwood gives us one of the finest exhibitions of what he calls 'bluff' that I have ever witnessed." In support of this he quotes the expression of my own personal conviction that "had it not been for the poem prefixed to the Folio of 1623 . . . I verily believe that the Stratfordian hypothesis would long ago have been given up as an exploded myth, or, rather,



would never have obtained foothold at all." As the Canon's sacred calling probably will not allow him to take a hand in the profane game of "poker," he may well be excused for having hazy ideas of the meaning of the expression "bluff," and, therefore, he is quite welcome to apply it, if he chooses, with reference to an expression of personal belief. He cannot, however, be absolved from the duty of not misrepresenting an author whose work he has taken it upon himself to criticize. But that duty, unfortunately, appears to be one of very imperfect obligation with him. I devote many pages to a careful consideration of Jonson's utterances, including, of course, the celebrated poem prefixed to the First Folio. This is how the Canon sums up my observations upon it (p. 26). "In regard to the whole poem, he says that it is a 'riddle' and that 'by the Stratfordians it has to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously, explained away.'" "This is pretty good," comments the Canon, "from the author of the comment on the 'Swan of Avon'!" Canon Beeching here discreetly refrains from giving the reference to the page of my book from which he quotes, and, as the reader can hardly be expected to look all through it for the passage in question, he will, of course, accept my critic's statement as canonically accurate. If, however, he will turn to page 498 of my book, he will

discover that his confidence has been misplaced. There he will find that I say (it is just at the end of chapter xv.), "I here leave the Jonsonian riddle." That last word, "riddle," is applied, as the most cursory reader will see, not only to the poem in question, but to all Jonson's various utterances with regard to "Shakespeare," including the well-known passage in the "Discoveries," the words recorded by Drummond, and others—passages which, as every competent critic, orthodox or heretic, must recognize, are, in some respects, extremely difficult to reconcile and to explain. And do I say "in regard to the whole poem" that "by the Stratfordians it has to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously, explained away"? No, I do not, as the Canon must have very well known, because he has read the words, and these are they: "'Small Latin and less Greek' . . . may be true enough of the 'Stratford rustic,' but is found to be entirely inappropriate to the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. It has therefore to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously explained away." It is obvious, therefore, that I was referring to those modern Shakespearean critics, who, like the late Professor Churton Collins, have found irresistible evidence of a cultured and learned Shakespeare in "the works themselves," and are therefore under the necessity of explaining the words "small Latin and less

Greek" as importing "much Latin and perhaps a little Greek"! Yet Canon Beeching thinks it consistent with fair criticism to tell his readers (while suppressing all reference to the passage) that I use these words "in regard to the whole poem"!

As to the poem itself, there are, undoubtedly, many things in it which it is extremely difficult to explain and to reconcile with other Jonsonian utterances. But I have gone at length into this matter in my chapter on "Jonson, Shakespeare, Shakspeare, and Bacon," and if the reader cares to read that chapter for himself, rather than to view it through the distorting medium of Canon Beeching's "theological telescope," he will, at any rate, know the truth with regard to my arguments, suggestions, and opinions.

I have suggested, as others have suggested before me, that it is quite possible that Jonson knew, but was engaged not to reveal, the true facts as to the authorship of a great part of those plays, which, collectively, were published in the Folio of 1623 as *The Workes of William Shakespeare*; that it was not really player Shakspeare whom he had in mind when he writes of the "Sweet Swan" whose reappearance upon the Thames he so much desires:—

"What a sight it were  
To see thee in *our waters* yet appeare  
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames  
That so did take Eliza, and our James!"

“But if that is his [i.e. my] case,” says Canon Beeching, “must he not at this point bring evidence that Jonson was a notorious liar?” Now I have dealt with that well-worn, and, as it seems to me, futile objection more than once in my book. For example, at p. 499, I write as follows:—“But some good person will exclaim, with an air of much virtuous indignation, do you mean to suggest that Ben Jonson, ‘honest Ben,’ would have deliberately made himself party to a lie? I reply once more that Jonson’s namesake, the great lexicographer, defined a lie as ‘a criminal falsehood,’ meaning thereby, of course, an unjustifiable or immoral falsehood; that justifiable falsehoods are not lies; that whether or not a particular false statement is or is not justifiable is a matter for the individual conscience (Scott, for instance, thought he was quite justified in denying the authorship of *Waverley* when questioned on the subject); that ‘there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so’; that, for all we know, Jonson might have seen nothing in the least degree objectionable in the publication by some great personage of his dramatic works under a pseudonym, even though that pseudonym led to a wrong conception as to the authorship”; and more to the like effect.

But I have yet more to say to Canon Beeching. I have argued, following Malone, that it was

Jonson who wrote the preface "to the great variety of readers," signed by the players Heminge and Condell. In this opinion Canon Beeching agrees (p. 25).<sup>1</sup> But in this preface occurs the following celebrated passage:—"It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right,<sup>2</sup> we pray you do not envy his Friends the office of their care and pain, to have collected and publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them as where (before) you were abus'd with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds

<sup>1</sup> "I would *add*," says the Canon, "that one of the strongest arguments for Jonson's authorship is the passage *he puts into the players' mouth*: 'What he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers'; for he tells in his *Discoveries* that he had *often* had from the players this testimony to their fellow's facility." Apparently he had not read my note at p. 482, where I point out this similarity of expression. But the "facility" which Jonson speaks of was in his "excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions."

<sup>2</sup> Observe "*right*". According to the author of this preface, therefore, Shakespeare, if he had lived, would have had the right to publish his own works, whereas the modern theory is that he had sold his manuscripts "out and out" to the theatre, and ceased to have any further interest in them, either financial or otherwise. He had not the least idea of publishing, or the least wish to do so! If he had really sold his MSS. to the company he had no "right" to publish, and this would be yet another false statement by him who wrote the preface.

and stealth of injurious impostors that expos'd them, even those are now offered to your view cur'd and perfect of their limbs; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them: Who as he was a happy imitator of nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province who only gather his works and give them you, to praise him." Now what do these words mean? Canon Beeching, who quotes only the three last sentences (and the last one incorrectly), makes what I can only consider an unhappy attempt to explain away their obvious meaning, quite after the manner of a Biblical harmonist. But let the Cambridge editors speak. "The natural inference to be drawn from this statement is that all the separate editions of Shakespeare's plays were 'stolen,' 'surreptitious,' and 'imperfect,' and that all those published in the Folio were printed from the author's own manuscripts. But it can be proved to demonstration" that such was not the fact. "As the 'setters forth' are thus convicted of a *suggestio falsi* in one point, it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another," etc. So too that highly and deservedly respected critic Dr. Ingleby. Speaking of the players he

says: "Unfortunately for their credit and our satisfaction their prefatory statement contains, or at least suggests, what they must have known to be false. They would lead us to believe that their edition was printed from Shakespeare's manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> . . . Now we have positive knowledge of a fact inconsistent with this excerpt." (*Shakespeare: The Man and The Book*, p. 66.)

But Canon Beeching agrees with me that Jonson wrote this preface to which the signatures of Messrs. Heminge and Condell were appended. Jonson, therefore, was a party to a statement which he knew to be false; he is convicted of a deliberate *suggestio falsi*, to use the mildest term! Are we, then, to set down Jonson as "a liar"? Well, Canon Beeching may do so if he pleases. I prefer to think that the standard of strict literary veracity in those spacious times not being up to the high level at which it now stands (as we hope at any rate), old Ben was under the impression that he had only committed a very venial offence, if, indeed, he did not think himself entirely justified in what he did.

But now with the Cambridge editors we can

<sup>1</sup> Here he quotes the statement about the papers without a blot, which the players say that they had "received from him." Canon Beeching says this is "an advertisement of the inspiration of the plays, not of the state of the text"! Mr. Lee, on the other hand, writes "clearly they wished to suggest that the printers worked exclusively from Shakespeare's undefiled autograph"! Introduction to the Folio Facsimile, p. xvii.

say, *mutatis mutandis*, if Jonson is "thus convicted of a *suggestio falsi* in one point, it is not improbable that" he "may have been guilty of the like in another." *Quod erat demonstrandum!*

Canon Beeching quotes at length, as I have quoted (p. 478), Jonson's well-known and very remarkable reference to Shakespeare in his *Timber or Discoveries*, and he puts his own gloss upon what I have ventured to say about it. I write (at page 481), "*sufflaminandus erat*, i.e. in modern English, he had to be shut up!" Canon Beeching interprets this to mean that I suppose Jonson is referring to Shakspeare as a player *on the stage*, where "evidently he used to 'gag,'" and therefore had to be stopped! The reader will not, I think, be surprised to learn, by this time, that I say nothing of the kind. I never make any reference to "gag" in this connexion, nor had I such a thing in my mind. True it is that I write, "Surely it is of the player, not the poet, that Jonson speaks when he says that his volubility was such that, like Aterius, he had to be (or ought to have been) shut up!" Yes, of Shakspeare the player, and not of the poet Shakespeare; but not of the player *on the stage*, but of the player when his tongue was loosed among companions—at a tavern, for instance.<sup>1</sup>

*Note*  
<sup>1</sup> But see Mr. George Hookham in *The National Review* (Jan. 1909) at p. 846.



The Canon says "the reference to Haterius cannot refer to actor's gag." I never said it did, nor did I think so! Then, says the Canon further, "The heading 'Augustus in Hat'<sup>1</sup> governs the whole paragraph, and the sense of the paragraph is fixed by the first clause, which refers not to speech but to writing." I entirely disagree. Jonson passes away from what the players had told him about Shakespeare's writings, and comes to "the man," and I venture to think that the words "wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped," undoubtedly refer to speech and not to writing. The reference to Haterius, upon which Canon Beeching lays so much stress, proves this conclusively. "'Sufflaminandus erat,' as Augustus said of Haterius." Was it in his *writing* that Haterius had to be stopped? No, in his *speech*. "Tanta illi erat *velocitas orationis* ut vitium fieret. Itaque d. Augustus optime dixit, Aterius noster sufflaminandus est." Those last two words do not apply to writing. "Sufflaminare" means, as the Latin dictionaries tell us, "to stay, check, or repress *in speaking*." Besides, who would think of stopping Shakespeare in his *writing*?

As I have freely admitted in my book, the various Jonsonian utterances constitute the *crux*

<sup>1</sup> Is this in the original? It is not in my edition. But it is quite immaterial from my point of view. *It is in the Gifford-Cunningham edition (III. 398)*

*Note.*

of the Shakespeare Problem. The "Jonsonian riddle," as I have said, presents grave difficulties whichever side of the controversy we adopt—difficulties as great for the "orthodox" as for "the heretic." I cannot see that the Canon has done much to throw any light upon it.

And now, before saying good-bye to old Ben, I will briefly deal with Canon Beeching's criticism of my remarks concerning Jonson's Ode to Bacon upon his sixtieth birthday.<sup>1</sup> I may say at once that I quoted these lines incidentally, and perhaps unnecessarily, for I base no argument upon them. Commenting upon the lines

'Tis a brave cause of joy let it be known,  
For 'twere a narrow gladness kept thine own,

I ask (p. 490) what is "the brave cause of joy" of which Jonson writes "let it be known"? And what is the "mystery" to which Jonson refers when he addresses the "Genius of this ancient pile," as standing in the midst, as if performing some mystery? Thereupon I mention that "the Baconians assert that here is an allusion to the secret Shakespearean authorship, a secret known to Jonson, and which he hoped might soon be published to the world." I do not make the slightest suggestion that I share in this Baconian hypothesis; but I do say that it has not been

<sup>1</sup> See page 3 of his book.

The "mystery" alludes to lines further up.

explained what Jonson meant by "let it be known." But why, asks Canon Beeching, with some scorn, "should 'Stratfordians' invent explanations for what Jonson himself explains in the next line?"

Pardon, *I read it in thy face*, the day  
For whose returns, and many, all these pray:  
And so do I. This is the sixtieth year," etc.

But, with all respect, this is not the next line. The words "*let it be known*" occur thirteen lines further down. Does the Canon really suppose that Jonson, having come, doubtless with many others, expressly to celebrate Bacon's sixtieth birthday, solemnly invoked the genius of the place to let that "be known," which was known to everybody? *That* seems to me a truly ridiculous supposition, and it further seems to me that the Canon has entirely missed the point of my remarks, which he quotes, I observe with a smile, as a specimen of my "forensic artifices." No, the Canon has suggested no plausible or reasonable explanation of what it was that Jonson meant when he wrote "let it be known"; but I will venture to suggest one. The lines conclude—

Give me a deep-crown'd bowl that I may sing,  
In raising him, the wisdom of my King.

This was on January 22nd, 1621. On January 26th Bacon was created Viscount St. Alban. He

*It is, to the one about the "mystery" + it is to that that C.B. refers.*

*all this has nothing to do with Canon B.'s argument. (See C.B.'s book, p. 3-4)*

Note. probably knew of his coming promotion, and had, perhaps, confided it to Jonson, whereupon the latter cries, "Let it be known . . . in raising him the wisdom of my King." I make Canon Beeching a present of that suggestion.

So much for this passage. I repeat that I attach little or no importance to it, and the true criticism upon it would, I think, be that it might well have been omitted from my book. I should hardly have thought it worth while to correct the Canon's mistake with regard to it if it were not that I wish to exhibit his remarks as a fine specimen of his, I do not say "forensic," but controversial "artifices."

Referring to the passage in Jonson's *Discoveries*, above alluded to, Canon Beeching writes (p. 31): "If anyone can bring himself to think that Jonson, knowing that his friend Shakespeare, the player, was not the author of the plays that went by his name, and hoping (*as Mr. Greenwood tells us he was hoping*) that the secret of the true authorship would soon come out, nevertheless wrote down this serious judgment for 'posterity,' which, when posterity came to know the truth, would prove him either a fool or a liar—all I can say is he must keep his opinion, which I cannot share or respect."

Now for a long time I puzzled my brains in a fruitless attempt to discover what possible warrant

Canon Beeching could imagine he had for inserting the parenthesis which I have put into italics. I certainly have never said that Jonson, when he wrote this passage in the *Discoveries* (probably about the year 1626, or rather later), "was hoping" that the secret of the true Shakespearean authorship would soon come out. What pretext, then, could the Canon possibly have for saying so? At last, happening to turn back from page 31 of the Canon's book to page 3, I discovered the explanation. There Canon Beeching quotes my mention (at p. 490) of the fact that certain Baconians imagine that Jonson in 1621, on the occasion of Bacon's sixtieth birthday, was hoping that the secret might soon be published to the world. Upon this basis the Canon considers himself justified in making the assertion not merely that Baconians contend that Jonson was indulging in the same hope in 1626, but that I have signified my concurrence in this imaginary contention, the fact being that I have never said a word indicating any agreement on my part with the idea that Jonson entertained such a hope either in 1621 or 1626. "Mr. Greenwood tells us," quietly writes the Canon, "that he [Jonson] was hoping that the secret of the true authorship would soon come out." Kind reader, Mr. Greenwood tells you no such thing. It is pure canonical invention. Such is the gentle art of perversion

as practised by a "man of letters" of the present day!<sup>1</sup>

I now come to the last of the fourteen arguments attributed to me by Canon Beeching, and I certainly cannot complain of the words used to indicate it, for they are those which stand at the head of my own twelfth chapter, viz. "*The Silence of Philip Henslowe.*"

Canon Beeching says that "the argument indicated by this heading . . . can be stated and answered in a few lines." Shakespeare's company, he tells us, "acted at the Rose Theatre [owned by Henslowe] only between the following dates:

<sup>1</sup> In his note at p. 27 Canon Beeching asks why, if Jonson was in touch with the author of *The Winter's Tale*, as it was going through the press (in 1623), he did not get him to correct the blunder? And, further, "If the blunder struck Jonson as so silly that he could not help talking about it, was Mr. Greenwood's imaginary poet—the man of learning and culture—likely to be less well-informed about the continent of Europe, so as to be at the mercy of Greene's novel, on which the play is based, where the mistake is first made?" I am not very much perturbed by this question. I presume Canon Beeching has not read Sir Edward Sullivan's article in the *Nineteenth Century* for August last, on "Shakespeare and the Waterways of North Italy." Sir Edward there points out that there is nothing in the play to warrant the assumption that the period of the action is that during which it was written. The mention of the oracle of Delphos suggests the Bohemia of a much earlier date, and under the rule of Ottocar (1255-78) Bohemia extended from the Adriatic to the shores of the Baltic. The "man of learning and culture" would, therefore, I opine, have told Jonson, not only that he was content to follow Greene's novel, but also that the blunder was not his, nor Greene's, but Jonson's!

Note.

February 19 to June 27, 1592; December 29, 1592, to February 1, 1593; June 3 to 15, 1594; and with their internal affairs Henslowe had no concern at all. Hence the only references to Shakespeare that we could expect must come in the few months that his company was acting at the Rose in 1592-3 or the few days in 1594. And, as a fact, we have a reference to takings at sixteen performances of 'harey the VI'—i.e. 1 *Henry VI*—between March 3, 1592, and January 31, 1593, though no author's name is mentioned to that or any other play in the account. Where, then, is the problem of Henslowe's silence?" (p. 32.)

Note that, although "harey the VI" is mentioned by Henslowe, no author's name is mentioned. If it had been I venture to say it would not have been Shakespeare's, that is if by "harey the VI" is meant 1 *Henry VI*, as the Canon says, for I entirely agree with some of the most eminent of Shakespearean critics that 1 *Henry VI* is not Shakespeare's work at all. This I have endeavoured to show in my chapter v. on "Titus and the Trilogy," which Canon Beeching quietly ignores.

But again I must ask the reader to mark specially what follows. "To show," says the Canon, "that I am not doing Mr. Greenwood an injustice, I must give an extract from his argument." And he accordingly gives the following quotation from

my book (p. 353): "Now here is another most remarkable phenomenon. Here is a manuscript book, dating from 1591 to 1609, which embraces the period of Shakespeare's greatest activity; and in it we find mention of practically all the dramatic writers of that day with any claims to distinction—men whom Henslowe had employed to write plays for his theatre; yet nowhere is the name of Shakespeare to be found among them, or, indeed, at all. Yet if Shakespeare the player had been a dramatist, surely Henslowe would have employed him also, like the others, for reward in that behalf! It is strange, indeed, on the hypothesis of his being a successful playwright, as well as an actor, that the old manager should not so much as mention his name in all this large manuscript volume!" And here Canon Beeching, who is so anxious not to do me an injustice, breaks off the quotation. How does the passage continue? "*Nevertheless it is quietly assumed by the Stratfordian editors that Shakspeare commenced his career as a dramatist by writing plays for this very Henslowe who so completely ignores his existence.*" I then quote Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. I, p. 97), who, referring to the production of *Titus Andronicus*, by Henslowe, in January 1594, writes: "Thus it appears that Shakespeare, up to this period, had written all his dramas for Henslowe, and that they were acted, under the sanction of that manager, by the various com-



panies performing from 1592 to 1594 at the Rose Theatre and Newington Butts. The acting copies of *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* must, of course, have been afterwards transferred by Henslowe to the Lord Chamberlain's company"! After this I quote Mr. Lee (p. 35): "The Rose Theatre was doubtless the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist."

Now if these statements, made by such distinguished and orthodox Shakespearean critics as Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee, are true, it cannot, surely, be denied by any man possessed of ordinary reasoning power, that the fact that Henslowe, who mentions the names of almost every other known dramatist of the period, makes no mention of Shakspeare, whose earliest plays (according to this hypothesis) were produced by him at the Rose Theatre with such pronounced success, is, indeed, not only a "remarkable phenomenon," as I have called it, but a most extraordinary phenomenon. And why did Canon Beeching, who is so anxious not to do me an injustice, deliberately omit the concluding words of the passage from which he has taken his quotation? I say "deliberately," because I complained of the omission at the meeting of the Society of Literature, when the Canon read his paper in reply to my book; and not only did I complain,

but having my book with me, I intervened in order to read these concluding words to the audience. Nevertheless, Canon Beeching, in despite of my protest, has published to the world (or to such part of it as may read his "Reply") this "maimed and deformed" quotation, in the truncated form in which he read it to the gathering at Hanover Square. I can only say, Heaven preserve me from canonical justice!

Let me say further, however, before taking leave of this matter, that, whether or not the above-cited assumptions of Mr. Phillipps and Mr. Lee are true or false, I venture to think that the absolute "Silence of Philip Henslowe" with regard to Shakespeare is a very "remarkable phenomenon" indeed, for the reasons which I have endeavoured to set forth in my twelfth chapter. The argument can, indeed, be "answered in very few lines," after the manner in which Canon Beeching answers it. Some critics answer arguments which displease them by writing "bosh" in the margin of the book; but that summary method does not satisfy all men. Neither, it may be added, does the method of misquotation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I once more append a note in answer to a note. Canon Beeching writes: "Mr. Greenwood's attempt at a parallel between Shakespeare's coat-of-arms and that of Crispinus is not very happy." But I have not instituted such a comparison. I have suggested (p. 459) that when Jonson makes Crispinus talk

Part C. B.  
continues;  
v. his book  
p. 33 (note).

grandiloquently about his arms he may have intended a hit at Shakspeare's newly acquired coat-of-arms, and I have further suggested that when Crispinus says "My name is Crispinus, or 'Cri-spinas' indeed, which is well expressed in my arms," the reference may be to "Shakespeare, or Shake-speare"; further that "Crispinus" may be derived from *crispo*, to shake, used by Vergil of a spear. It is just possible too that there is a sly reference to "Crispin Crispianus." The words "between three thorns *pungent*" are suggestive of Puntarvolo's motto "Not without mustard" (in *Every Man out of his Humour*), which M. Jusserand agrees with me in thinking probably has reference to Shakspeare's audacious "Non sans droit." But these, it must be admitted, are speculative matters not of the highest consequence.

## CHAPTER III

### CHETTLE'S SUPPOSED ALLUSION TO SHAKSPERE

CANON BEECHING (p.78) has a lengthy note on this matter. He writes: "Mr. Greenwood (*The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 318) has charged the biographers of Shakespeare with dishonesty for their interpretation of the familiar passage of *Kindhart's Dream*, in which Chettle apologises for the rudeness of Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit*." But here the Canon's unfortunate genius for misstatement again pursues him. I have not charged the biographers with dishonesty for their *interpretation* of the passage in question. What I complain of, and complain of in very strong terms, is, that these "biographers and critics . . . actually so write as to convey to the mind of the ordinary reader that Chettle makes mention of Shakespeare by name in the Preface to his work, and that, consequently, the supposed allusion is not a matter of inference and argument, but a fact patent on the document itself! The usual way of doing

this is by quietly slipping in Shakespeare's name in a bracket, without any admonition to the reader that his name is not mentioned by Chettle at all" (p. 317). *This* I call a "dishonest method of writing a biography," and so it is. If these biographers fairly stated the terms of the document, and gave their reasons for supposing that Shakespeare is alluded to therein, there would be no reason to complain of this "interpretation," however widely one might disagree with it. The mischief is that they state what is merely their own "interpretation" as though it were an historical fact, and the ordinary reader, who does not examine documents for himself, naturally believes it to be so. I repeat, this is a dishonest method of writing biography, but I have, of course, made no charge of personal dishonesty. I am quite aware what prejudice and self-deception will do, especially where "Shakespeare" is concerned!

To come now to the "interpretation" of the passage. Canon Beeching states that "only Mr. Fleay, and Mr. E. K. Castle, K.C.," among known writers upon the passage, deny that it refers to Shakespeare. It is strange that he is not aware that of the same opinion also was that distinguished Shakespearean scholar Howard Staunton (see "A mistaken allusion to Shakespeare," *Athenaeum*, Feb. 7, 1874). Then says Canon Beeching: "I am not at all surprised that Mr. Greenwood

takes the view of Chettle's reference, because I once took the same view myself for five minutes." I sincerely congratulate the Canon for having taken a right view, even for five minutes only, though I cannot honestly say I am not surprised to hear it. The passage in dispute I will not quote again, because I have set it forth in my book (pp. 313-14), and it is quoted by Canon Beeching. The "play-makers" addressed by Robert Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit* have been identified as Marlowe, Nash, and Peele, or Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele. Now in my book (p. 308, note 2) I express the opinion that Nash cannot be alluded to, because of certain allusions made to him by Chettle. I now believe that I was in error. I had not given due consideration to what Howard Staunton, Richard Simpson, and Dr. Grosart have written on the subject. Lodge, as I now believe, cannot be identified as "The Young Juvenal" addressed by Greene. Lodge was three years older than Greene, and in 1592 was thirty-five years of age. He was at that date "a weather-beaten sailor." On August 26, 1591, he had sailed with Thomas Cavendish for South America, and did not return to England till the early part of 1593. Therefore, as Mr. Fleay pointed out, he was not in this country at the time. These, and other considerations, seem to make it in the highest degree unlikely that he was

Note 1

one of the playwrights referred to by Greene. On the other hand, Nash was seven years younger than Greene. In 1592 he was only twenty-five years old. He was famous for his "biting" satires, and was known as "Juvenal," or "Young Juvenal," and is so styled by Meres amongst others. (See the arguments stated at length in Dr. Grosart's edition of Green's works, Vol. I, p. lviii.)

The strong probability, therefore, seems to be that Marlowe, Nash, and Peele are the "play-makers" addressed by Greene, by two of whom, according to Chettle, his remarks were "offensively taken." One of these two is commonly identified with Marlowe. Who is the other? Canon Beeching says it cannot have been either Nash or Peele, because there is nothing in Greene's allusion at which either of them could reasonably have taken offence. I think that is an assumption which we are not entitled to make. Men very frequently take offence when it seems very unreasonable that they should do so, and the tone of Greene's remarks is such that it is quite possible that one of these, perhaps very sensitive, writers should have taken offence at them. As Canon Beeching himself records (p. 63), Greene makes a solemn address to them "to forsake their vicious courses . . . and to live repentant lives before it was too late," and we know that many people

strongly object to being preached at, even by an ecclesiastic, and still more by a layman! Possibly the offended playwright did not relish being coupled with the notorious "atheist" Marlowe.<sup>1</sup> But, however this may be, I still maintain with Mr. Fleay, Mr. Howard Staunton, and Mr. Castle, K.C., that there is here no allusion to Shakspeare. *He* was not one of the playwrights addressed; on the contrary, he was one of those players against whom they are warned with such a wealth of epithets—one of "those burrees," "those puppits," "those anticks garnisht in our colours." Ah, but, says Canon Beeching, this is only "the illogical Tudor way." Chettle must have been referring to the "player-play-maker, abused as 'Shak-scene.'" Let me quote the Canon's *apologia*. "We must admit that Chettle should have distinguished more clearly the play-makers Greene was writing *to*, from the play-maker he was writing *about*; but because he wrote muddled prose in the illogical Tudor way, we need not deprive what he wrote of all meaning." "Deprive what he wrote of all meaning"! Certainly not. I give it its natural meaning, viz. that two of the playwrights ad-

<sup>1</sup> The whole of Greene's address "To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies," to whom he "wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities," should be considered, and not only the passages quoted by Canon Beeching.



dressed by Greene took offence, as Chettle tells us they did. Note also how Canon Beeching quietly assumes that Shakspeare was known as a "play-maker" in 1592, though he admits that he was not one of the "play-makers" written to by Greene! Why, when the *Groatsworth of Wit* was written, the name "Shakespeare" (with or without the hyphen) was unknown to literature, nor did it appear on any play till 1598. The *True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*, in which the line parodied by Greene, "O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide," occurs, was not published till 1595, and then anonymously. It is not, therefore, absolutely certain that under the name of "Shakespeare" Greene himself was referring to Shakspeare (or Shake-speare), though it, of course, seems probable that he did so. But having made this assumption I decline to go further and to distort the plain meaning of English in order to find an unwarranted allusion to William Shakspeare, which the Stratfordians, of course, grasp at, as drowning men grasp at a straw. Why, writes Mr. Edwin Reed, "even Dr. Ingleby admits that Chettle's commendatory words cannot be applied to Shakspeare without a violation of the text. It is necessary, he says, to interpolate a few words, to the effect that Greene wrote his letter *to* divers playwrights, his friends and associates, and *against* another, his avowed enemy, and that two of these,

*including the latter*, took offence!" "No wonder," he continues, "that Dr. Ingleby finally confesses, in despair, that contemporary evidence on this point is 'contemporary rumour,' and that he attaches 'little weight' to it." It appears, therefore, that the learned Dr. Ingleby had, at any rate, grave doubts about the "interpretation" of this passage.<sup>1</sup> And has Canon Beeching, who is so certain on this matter, actually forgotten that even Professor Churton Collins himself recognized, at any rate as recently as the year 1901, when he published his *Ephemera Critica* (however much he may have "let himself go" afterwards upon the tide of controversy), that there is no certainty at all about this matter? "It is at least doubtful," he then wrote (in his review of "Lee's Life of Shakespeare"), "whether the supposed allusion to him in *Greene's Groat's Worth of Wit*, and in Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream* have any reference to him at all." Perhaps after all it was truth which shone upon the Canon for that all too short interval of just "five minutes"! But then, says the Canon, the man alluded to by Chettle was "excellent in the quality he professes," and "in those days there was no 'quality' or profession of authorship." Well, I am not quite sure of that. There was such, or something much

<sup>1</sup> I take the above from the late Mr. Edwin Reed's *Bacon vs. Shakspeare*, p. 152.

like it, about the middle of the seventeenth century, for Butler writes :—

He served his Master  
In *quality* of poetaster.

But, however that may be, I have shown in my book (p. 317, note 2) that the word “quality,” though frequently used of the actor’s profession, is by no means confined to that, but is applied to many another occupation or calling. But even though it should be unwarrantably assumed that in “quality” there must be an allusion to the actor’s profession, it by no means follows that the allusion is to Shakspeare. For was not George Peele, one of the playwrights addressed by Greene, an actor also? “There seems sufficient proof,” writes Principal Ward, “that he was a successful player as well as a playwright. Fleay (*English Drama*, ii. 154) concludes that Peele left the Lord Admiral’s Company of Players (Henslowe) and joined the Queen’s Men in 1589” (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*). It is by no means impossible, therefore, that Peele may be the person alluded to by Chettle in this celebrated passage.<sup>1</sup> However, the Stratfordian critics will, of course, adhere to their own “interpretation,” however unwarranted and how-

<sup>1</sup> Nash, in an epistle prefixed to Greene’s *Arcadia* (1589), writes of Peele’s “pregnant dexteritie of wit, and manifold variety of invention, wherein, *me judice*, he goeth a step beyond all that write.” Peele was not only “excellent in the quality” he professed, but he had much “facetious grace in writing.”

ever strained. It is a too valuable asset to be lightly given up, for upon this flimsy basis has been erected a huge pile of mythological superstructure. But let them, at least, change their methods; let them, at least, have the candour to inform their readers that it is a matter of interpretation, and that *their* interpretation is entirely disputed not only by "heretics," but also by some very distinguished members of the orthodox communion.

## CHAPTER IV

### CANON BEECHING ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF SHAKSPERE

CANON BEECHING writes in his "Epistle Dedicatory" (p. vii): "In order to show more clearly what positive evidence there is for the traditional view, I have revised and reprinted two lectures given at the Royal Institution, which endeavour to set out the facts of the Player's life as simply as possible, and to show the congruity of what is recorded of his character with the impression made upon our minds by the dramas themselves." These lectures have no direct reference to my book, having been, as I understand, delivered previously to its publication. I might here, therefore, be content to leave my assailant, for I think I have given a tolerably complete answer to his criticisms, and demonstrated that they are, apparently, designed for those readers only who have not read the work in question, but are content to take from "the Canon's mouth" arguments which he has put into mine, as though mine they really were. I will, therefore, make but a few observations upon these

two lectures, which are headed, respectively, "The Story of the Life" and "The Character of the Dramatist."

In "The Story of the Life" the Canon follows the traditions with which we are all so familiar. He accepts the old deer-stealing story told us by Archdeacon Davies, Rowe, and others, not even rejecting the detail supplied by Davies (whom, by the way, Canon Beeching misquotes)<sup>1</sup> that Lucy caused Shakspeare to be "whipt." "Speaking for myself," he says, "I cannot be sorry that his resentment took this shape, because it has supplied me, times without number, with an *unanswerable question* [italics mine] to put to those persons who tell me that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon, viz. How Bacon, who was a friend and correspondent of Sir Thomas Lucy's, can be conceived making this unprovoked and very ungentlemanlike jest upon another gentleman's coat of arms?"—the jest in question being found in the line of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—

The dozen white louses do become an old coat well.

Now it greatly facilitates the task of the "unorthodox" Shakespearean critic that such is the disagreement among the Stratfordians that he can

<sup>1</sup> Davies says: "Much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits particularly from Sr . . . Lucy, who had him oft whipt, and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country," etc. Canon Beeching (p. 54), though purporting to give us a quotation, omits the words in italics.

generally answer one "orthodox" prophet out of the mouth of another; and so it comes to pass that the answer to Canon Beeching's "unanswerable question" is supplied by the learned and industrious Mrs. Stopes. This lady has written much and written well upon the "Lucy" tradition, and the conclusion she has come to is thus expressed: "I am sure that 'Shallow' was not intended to represent Sir Thomas Lucy; that there was no foundation for the tradition, and that the whole story was built upon a misreading of Shakespeare's plays, and a misunderstanding of his art." I will not here reproduce the arguments upon which this conclusion is based, but will content myself with a reference to the lady's writings.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, is a very simple answer to Canon Beeching's portentous question. Bacon, or anybody else, might have put these words into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans in the play, so far as Sir Thomas Lucy was concerned, because there

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 32 et seq. *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1903, "Sir Thomas Lucy not the original of Justice Shallow." Yet Mr. Leach, in his account of the Stratford Grammar School, written for the *Victoria History of Warwickshire*, to which I refer later on, says: "It is admitted on all hands that Shallow, with the white louses on his coat, is Lucy of Charlecote, who had punished Shakespeare for poaching, with the lucas or pike for his arms"! So far from this being "admitted on all hands," Mr. Leach will find that the more reasonable Stratfordians have entirely given up the supposition in question.

is no allusion to him at all! Observe, in passing, that, according to Canon Beeching, it would not have been "ungentlemanlike" of William Shakspeare to make this gibe at "another gentleman's coat of arms," because "Shakespeare at the date of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was not yet 'a gentleman born'" (p. 55). But wait a moment. Here again the accurate Mrs. Stopes may be of use to us. "The acting copy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is taken from the Folio Edition of 1623. But a Quarto Edition was allowed to Busby in January 1601-2, printed by Creede 1602, 'as it had been divers times acted by my Lord Chamberlain's Company both before her Majesty and elsewhere.' A second issue appeared in 1619, *but in neither is there the slightest allusion to the coat of arms*"! Now Shakspeare, as we know, obtained his arms, after he had much "toiled among the harrots," in 1599, so it seems that the Canon is again somewhat at fault, and that the player was, at the time in question, entitled to describe himself as "William Shakspeare, Gent."<sup>1</sup>

In my book (p. 23 *et seq.*) I have shown, at considerable length, that the poaching story is a myth. Malone had argued to the same effect, on

<sup>1</sup> "The date of the first composition of the play," says Professor Gollancz, "may with certainty be placed at about 1600." It is, therefore, clear that Shakspeare had obtained his new "coat" before the passage supposed to refer to Lucy's "old coat" was written.



legal grounds, which I have very fully developed, because Sir Thomas Lucy had no deer-park at Charlecote. Canon Beeching, though he calls Malone "the most learned, and also the sanest, of Shakespearian commentators," declines to follow him here. Halliwell-Phillipps, he says, "produced evidence that Sir Thomas Lucy presented a buck to Lord Keeper Egerton in 1602, so that he had deer to steal" (p. 53 note). But what says Mrs. Stopes? "Sir Thomas Lucy never presented deer to the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon as other neighbouring park-holders did. The park of Sir Thomas Lucy was of his wife's inheritance, far away in Worcestershire." Really Canon Beeching appears to go on from error to error, but I suppose this sort of thing is thought good enough for the "Royal Institution" at the present day! Then he says: "It does not follow because Sir Thomas, not having the Queen's licence, could not indict under the statute (5 Eliz.), that he had not power to make himself unpleasant." What is "the statute 5 Eliz."? One might just as well talk about the statute 16 and 17 Victoria. But no doubt the Canon meant to allude to 5 Eliz. ch. 21, the material words of which I have set forth at page 25 of my book. Well, Sir Thomas certainly could not have "prosecuted" Shakspeare under this statute, as Rowe said he did, nor could he have had him "whipt

and imprisoned," as Davies says he did; but, "doubtless," he might have "made himself unpleasant"! So we are now left with this "residuum of denudation" of the original story, upon which the biographers have so exuberantly exercised their imaginations.

However, let the galled jade wince, *our* withers are unwrung. It is a matter of supreme indifference to us of the "unorthodox" faith whether or not the story be true or false. If the Stratfordians are determined to maintain that their idol had got into bad company, was a deer-stealer, and oft whipt and imprisoned, and that he had his "revenge" by making jokes about "lousy Lucy," by all means let them so have it. It is, I presume, a weighty argument for the proposition that Shakspeare of Stratford was the author of *Hamlet*. We may be well content to "leave it at that."

But when Canon Beeching comes to lecture on "The Character of the Dramatist" he throws tradition to the winds. "Let me say unhesitatingly," he writes, "that I have no faith in the traditions" (p. 83). It is fair to say, however, that this refers only to "certain local traditions that Shakespeare's convivial habits occasionally led him into intemperance." Well, I am not by any means concerned to contest this point with him. As I have said in my book (p. 187), I place no

reliance at all upon John Ward's story of the convivial meeting of Shakspeare, Jonson, and Drayton, when Shakspeare is said to have drunk "too hard." I do not believe that Michael Drayton, the "other Warwickshire butcher's son" (according to Aubrey and Canon Beeching), was a personal friend of Shakspeare's. Had he been so, I think this "very communicative" poet would have left us some evidence to that effect. But whether or not Shakspeare at times indulged too freely in alcohol I do not stop to inquire. Other traditions exhibit him as a shrewd, cautious, money-lending, money-saving man of business (as I say at p. 230 note).<sup>1</sup> But there is one important allusion to Shakspeare the player which Canon Beeching (out of delicacy perhaps) entirely ignores. I mean the

<sup>1</sup> On one matter it is perhaps possible that Mr. Lee (whom I have quoted at p. 187) has done injustice to Shakspeare, namely, concerning his part in the scheme for enclosing the common fields at Stratford. It is possible that Greene wrote "I" by mistake for "he" in his entry of September with regard to this matter, as Canon Beeching (p. 74) contends, though Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. II, p. 382) brings cogent reasons against the supposition that Shakspeare opposed the enclosure. What a pity it is, by the way, that Thomas Greene, who resided for a time at New Place, and was clerk to the Stratford Corporation, always speaks of the owner of that estate as "Mr. Shakspeare" or "my cousin Shakspear," and never alluded, in any way, to the fact that he was the greatest poet and most successful dramatist of the day! These "unbroken silences" are really most provoking. By the way, also, why should Canon Beeching insist on making Greene write "Shakespeare" always, though it is a form which he seems never to have employed! See Halliwell-Phillipps, Vol. I, p. 229.

entry in John Manningham's diary of March 13, 1601. Yet this entry, as Mr. Lee says, gives us "the sole anecdote of Shakespeare [Shakspeare] which is positively known to have been recorded in his life time" (see my book, pp. 340 and 229 note), and its chief importance consists in this, that whereas John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, barrister-at-law, had shortly before, viz. on February 2, 1601, made an entry in his diary concerning *Twelfth Night*, which had been acted at the "feast," in the Middle Temple Hall, as we may presume, yet he says nothing whatever to lead us to suppose that he in any way connected the play with the player. Similar reflections arise on the Petition of the Burbages, in 1635, to which I have already alluded.

Canon Beeching, starting with the conviction that Shakspeare the player wrote the works of Shakespeare, is, of course, one of those who think (for this is what the argument comes to) that nobody but an experienced actor could possibly have written the plays. "He gained that skill in stage-craft—the arrangement of exits and entrances, and so forth—which only experience can give," and more to the like effect (p. 57). The late Sir Henry Irving developed this theory, and stated the arguments for it with great ability and much emphasis in his "Trask lecture," delivered at the Princeton University in New Jersey in

March, 1902, and as a reviewer in one of the newspapers took me to task for not dealing with that pronouncement, I will take this opportunity of saying a few words with regard to it. I am, and was, well acquainted with that lecture. It was published verbatim in *The Daily News* (among other papers) of March 20, 1902. I have just read it once more, and it is, certainly, a very forcible deliverance. But the title of the lecture was "Shakespeare v. Bacon," and Sir Henry's arguments throughout are directed against the Baconian theory, and the Baconian theory in its most extravagant form, as revealed in supposed ciphers and cryptograms. As I cannot enter the lists on behalf of that theory even to gratify the reviewers, whose desire it is to make me a "Baconian," I will say nothing as to the lecture generally, except that Sir Henry Irving evidently spoke from full and very sincere conviction, but, unfortunately, he seems to have conceived that all those who, though they yield to none in their admiration of Shakespeare's works, cannot credit that the Stratford player was the author of them, are possessed with "antipathy to the actor's calling." That is, indeed, a curious conception at the present day, when actors and actresses are to be found in the highest society, and certainly it would be a grotesque suggestion if applied to myself, for I can most sincerely say, with John