

THE SHAKESPEARE
PROBLEM RESTATED
BY GEORGE GREENWOOD, M.P.

Fernando Pessôa.

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*The Earliest Presentment of the Stratford Bust
as it was seen by Sir William Dugdale about 1636.
(see p. 246)*

THE SHAKESPEARE
PROBLEM RESTATED

BY G. G. GREENWOOD, M.P.

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

AND FELLOW-SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

PHOTODUPLICATION FRONTISPIECE



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The seated Representation of the Hartford Trust
and was made by Sir William Dugdale about 1636.
(see p. 225)

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PROBLEM RESTATED

BY G. G. GREENWOOD, M.P.

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLL. CAMB.

WITH A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

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NOTICE TO THE READER

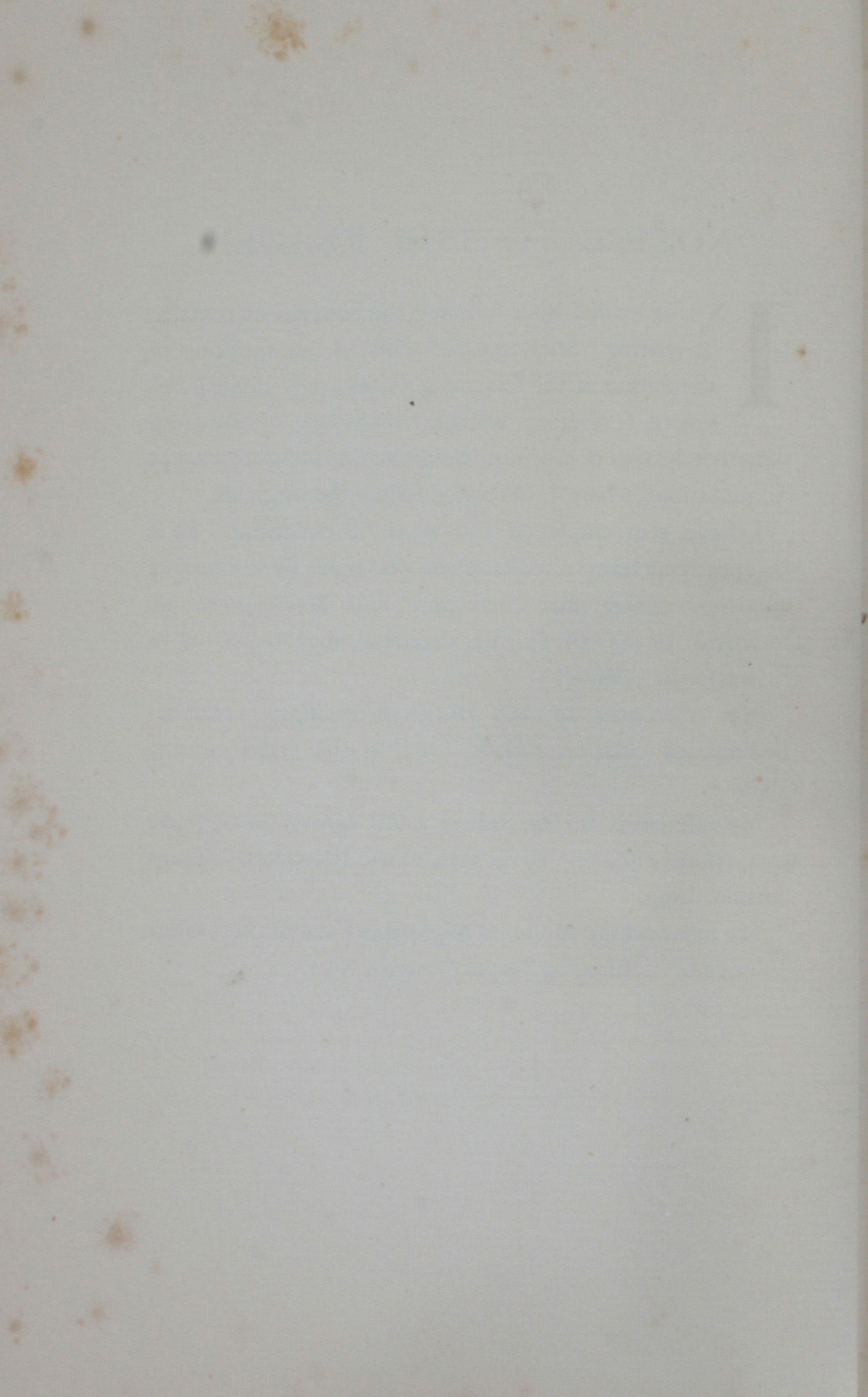
IN this work I have followed the convenient practice of writing "Shakespeare" where I am speaking of the author of the *Plays and Poems*, and "Shakspere" where I refer to William Shakspere of Stratford (whether he was or was not the author in question), except in quotations, where I, of course, follow the originals.

I have also employed the word "Stratfordian" as a compendious term to indicate one who holds the commonly received opinion that Shakspere and Shakespeare are identical, or as an epithet denoting such belief, as in "Stratfordian faith."

My references to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines* (sometimes cited as "H.-P.") are to the sixth edition, 1886.

My references to Mr. Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare* (sometimes cited as "S. L.") are to the Illustrated Library edition, 1899.

My references to Malone's *Shakespeare* are to the "Third Variorum" edition, by James Boswell, 1821.



PREFACE

IN a letter published in *The Times* of December 20th, 1901, Mr. Sidney Lee emptied all the vials of his wrath upon the heads of the unfortunate "Baconians." He assailed them with a wealth of derisive and denunciatory epithets which was really quite startling. Their theory was characterised as "foolish craze," "morbid psychology," "madhouse chatter." They were suffering from "epidemic disease" and were "unworthy of serious attention from any but professed students of intellectual aberration," etc., etc. This language, be it observed, was addressed not only to the propounders of cryptograms and ciphers, but to all believers in the Baconian theory, in any degree and in any form. Well, it is no part of my plan or intention to defend that theory, and Mr. Sidney Lee is certainly entitled to hold, and to express, his own opinion upon it. But, as friend Sneer would say, "Why so warm, Sir Fretful?" Upon a purely literary question such a nice "derangement of epitaphs" seems quite uncalled for; more especially when we bear in mind the names of some of those who are included in this indiscriminate vilification. For instance, those of the past generation who knew Sir James Plaisted Wilde at the Bar, and on the Bench as first Baron Penzance, and who, therefore, were familiar with his high reputation, his fine intelligence, his clear and logical mind, his great power of marshalling facts, and his remarkable grasp of legal principles, would, I think, have hesitated long, unless, indeed, prompted by what the lawyers would call "actual malice," before applying such language to one of the most

distinguished of our judges. It is easy to throw mud pies at great men, but, in such cases, it is not infrequently worse for the assailant than the assailed. Again, his Honour Judge Webb, Regius Professor of Laws and Public Orator in the University of Dublin, and sometime Fellow of Trinity College, was a man not undistinguished either in literary, scholastic, or legal circles. Is it wise, is it good taste, does it help the Shakespearean cause, to speak of such a man in terms of unmitigated contempt, and to dismiss him as "unworthy of serious attention from any but professed students of intellectual aberration," just because he happens to disagree with you about the authorship of the Shakespearean plays and poems? Judge Holmes, too, once Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of the State of Missouri, and Professor of Law at Harvard University, might be entitled, as one would think, to better treatment at the hands of a literary critic. And there are not a few other distinguished disciples of the Baconian faith whose names I might mention were it worth while to do so—all misguided it may be, but all, surely, entitled to some measure of courtesy at the hands even of Mr. Sidney Lee.

To Mr. Lee *proxime accessit*, in the matter of strong language, Mr. Churton Collins. Adopting, but without acknowledgment, the expression previously employed by Mr. Lee, he speaks of the Baconian theory as fit only for "the student of morbid psychology." It is a "ridiculous epidemic" with "many of the characteristics of the dancing mania of the Middle Ages." The Baconians are indiscriminately charged with "ignorance and vanity," "impudent fictions," and "prodigious ignorance of the very rudiments of the literature with which they are concerned."¹

¹ See *Studies in Shakespeare*, chap. IX, pp. 333, 334, 368, 369, and *passim*. Apparently it does not always follow that

"ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores!"

"Absurd," "palpably absurd" are the epithets which Mr. Collins is most fond of applying to those who are so unfortunate as to disagree with him, and without even that humanising *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ* which does so much to soften the asperities of unqualified assertion, and to preserve the amenities of discussion.

But the keynote of this writer's controversial style is struck in a letter which he addressed on March 6th, 1904, to Mr. Robert M. Theobald. That "far-advanced septuagenarian," as he describes himself in the course of the correspondence, having been bitterly assailed by Mr. Collins, and conceiving that he had been most unjustly treated and altogether misrepresented, writes to his assailant, offering him a presentation copy of the work which was the subject of controversy, in order that he may satisfy himself as to the injustice of which he had been guilty. Whereupon Mr. Collins declines the gift, because "this whole subject is so distasteful and repulsive to me that it would not be a kindness to send me the work!"¹

Here we have, frankly stated, the explanation of that bitter tone and unreasoning violence which too often characterise the writings of our modern Stratfordian critics. It is that petulant spirit which cannot examine an argument with calmness, or discuss it with moderation of language, because "the whole subject is so distasteful and repulsive"!

In a similar spirit Professor Collins scorns to read Dr. Schröder's work on *Titus Andronicus*. "I abominate German academic monographs, and indulge myself in the luxury of avoiding them, wherever it is possible to do so, being moreover insular enough to think that, on the question of the authenticity of an Elizabethan drama, an English scholar can dispense with German lights." Whereupon Mr. J. M. Robertson comments: "The trouble is

¹ See *The Ethics of Criticism*, by Robert M. Theobald, M.A. (Watts and Co.), a very edifying little pamphlet.

that Professor Collins dispenses with all lights. On the one hand he dismisses the German critics as unreadable, though his special thesis may be said to have been 'made in Germany'; on the other hand the whole line of English critics who are against him are dismissed by him, without argument, as paradoxers, iconoclasts, and illegitimate practitioners."¹

In view of these and other incidents of the controversy, I have often thought that a close parallel might be drawn between Shakespearean and Theological disputation. On the one side we have the strictly orthodox doctors of the old Stratfordian faith; on the other the sceptics, the rationalisers, and the "higher critics." Let me hasten to add that I do not for a moment presume to say on which side the truth must be taken to lie so far as the theological

¹ See *Studies in Shakespeare*, Preface, p. xii, and *Did Shakespeare Write "Titus Andronicus"?*, by J. M. Robertson (Watts and Co.), p. 241. Messrs. Sidney Lee and Churton Collins are, of course, distinguished in the realms of literature and criticism, and I trust I shall always write of them with becoming respect. They speak, it seems, with authority, and not as the scribes, and no doubt feel that they are entitled to hurl thunderbolts from their high altitudes on the heads of lowlier mortals who are so presumptuous as to disagree with them, although they not infrequently disagree as between themselves. It is not unnatural to inquire who those are who take upon themselves to chastise us with scorpions, and the historian of criticism will note of these "duo fulmina belli" that they are both men of Balliol, and, by a rather curious coincidence, both took a Second Class Degree in Modern History, Mr. Collins in 1872, and Mr. Lee, just ten years afterwards. To be strictly accurate Mr. J. C. Collins, as we learn by the Oxford Calendar of 1873 (p. 148), took his B.A. degree, in 1872, with a Second Class "In Jurisprudentia et Historia Moderna," i.e. in "Law and Modern History"; while Mr. Lee, as appears from the Calendar of 1883 (p. 54), took his B.A., in 1882, with a Second Class "In Historia Moderna," Jurisprudence having by that time been separated from Modern History. In the Calendar of 1880 he is mentioned for the first time as Minor Exhibitioner of Balliol College. For the benefit of the puzzled investigator (and such, at first, was I) it may be mentioned that he there appears under a slightly different form of appellation to that by which he is now familiar to us, not having at that date discarded two Biblical *praenomina* in order to assume the more Saxon name of Sidney. I cannot help thinking, by the way, that Mr. Sidney Lee might be rather more tolerant of those who imagine that some great man in Elizabethan times might have seen advantages in the assumption of a pseudonym.

controversy is concerned ; still less do I assume any sort of superiority for any section of the anti-Stratfordian school by comparing them with the "higher critics" of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. On the contrary, it seemed to me that Judge Webb made an unfortunate mistake when he applied that "awe-inspiring title," as Professor Dowden calls it, to the work of those who have had the hardihood to question the generally received tenets of the Shakespearean religion.¹ But having thus premised, I trust I may without offence pursue the analogy a little further. The late Professor Huxley used to say that the theologians apparently considered that they had a prescriptive right to make use of strong language, and we find that the High Priests of the Stratfordian shrine are entirely disposed to emulate their example in this respect. Then, too, the theologians are, unfortunately, very much divided among themselves, and the same is true of the defenders of the Stratfordian faith. There are, for example—a matter which I have discussed at some length further on—two schools of Stratfordian belief with regard to the learning of Shakespeare. There is, first, the traditional school which places reliance upon the "ancient witnesses," such as Thomas Fuller, who has told us that "his learning was very little," and which cites Jonson to the effect that the immortal bard had "small Latin and less Greek." For these Farmer's famous essay has settled the question "for all time." Accordingly we find Canon Beeching asserting that "*every literary critic knows* that the Shaksperian plays reveal precisely that small Latin and less Greek which Jonson, who did know his classics, attributed to

¹ See "Shakespeare as a Man of Science," by Professor Dowden, in the *National Review* of July, 1902. At the same time we must remember that the adjective "higher," as applied to the criticism of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* and other works, "has reference simply to the higher and more difficult class of problems, with which, as opposed to textual criticism, the 'higher' criticism has to deal." See Preface to *The Higher Criticism*, by S. R. Driver, D. D., and A. F. Kirkpatrick, D. D.

Shakespeare ;”¹ and Mr. Andrew Lang writing to Mr. Edwin Reed, “I am indeed surprised that you should think the author of the Plays was a scholar. The reverse is patent, I think, to any one acquainted with classical literature.”² On the other hand are those who, relying on “the works themselves” and all that they there find, assert with equal confidence that Shakespeare, if not indeed a “scholar” in the modern sense of that term, had, at any rate, a very extensive knowledge of the classical authors. Of the latter school the most recent and the most distinguished exponent is Mr. Churton Collins, who has written three very able and very illuminating articles in the *Fortnightly Review*, under the title “Had Shakespeare read the Greek Tragedies?”³ in which he claims to have demonstrated that Shakespeare “could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French, that with some at least of the principal Latin classics he was intimately acquainted, that in the Latin original he most certainly read Plautus, Ovid, and Seneca,” and, further, “that through the Latin language he had access to the Greek classics, and that of the Greek classics in the Latin versions he had, in all probability, a remarkably extensive knowledge.” Moreover, Mr. Collins not obscurely hints that, in his opinion, Shakespeare could probably have studied the Greek authors also in their original language.

But this is but one example of the manner in which the pundits of the Stratfordian temple are at loggerheads among themselves. Upon such questions, for instance, as the authorship of *Titus Andronicus*, the trilogy of *Henry VI*, or the old plays of *The Troublesome Reign of*

¹ *The Guardian*, January 8th, 1902, p. 47. My italics.

² *Noteworthy Opinions, Pro and Con*, by Edwin Reed, A.M., p. 50.

³ *Fortnightly Review*, April, May, and July, 1903. These articles have been since republished in Mr. Collins's *Studies in Shakespeare*, under the title of “Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar.” I refer to them at length further on.

King John and *The Taming of a Shrew*, they are hopelessly at variance.¹ In fact, to do justice to these various and multifarious differences of opinion I should require to devote a whole volume to the subject. When, therefore, the "heretics" are assailed by the "orthodox" with such extraordinary exuberance of epithet; when they are told that they are fit subjects for "the student of morbid psychology," and bidden to seek shelter in a lunatic asylum; the words which the late Sir Leslie Stephen addressed to the theologians always come back to my mind: "Gentlemen, wait till you have some show of agreement amongst yourselves!"²

But although I had long ago been struck by this analogy between Shakespearean and Theological controversy, I had never realised its full application till I read the late Mr. Bellyse Baildon's Introduction to *Titus Andronicus* in the "Arden" Edition of Shakespeare (pp. xx, xxi). Mr. Baildon, as Mr. J. M. Robertson observes,³ has a somewhat "high *priori* way" of disposing of hostile views. He sees fit to describe as "anti-Shakespeareans" those who do not think *Titus* to be Shakespeare's, brackets them with the "Baconians," and passes judgment on all together in this fashion: "I have never seen it remarked, though the fact seems obvious enough, that the scepticism with regard to Shakespeare's authorship of the works at one time universally attributed to him, is part of that general sceptical movement or wave which has landed us first in the so-called 'Higher Criticism' in matters of Re-

¹ Professor Courthope, for example, has recently contended, in opposition to the great preponderance of "authority," that not only was "Shakespeare" the author of *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI*, but that he also wrote *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, and further, the old plays of *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* and *The Taming of a Shrew* (*Hist. of English Poetry*, Vol. IV, Appendix). The Baconians have, of course, welcomed this contention, and so should I if I could believe it to be true, for it immensely strengthens the anti-Stratfordian case.

² *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 41.

³ *Did Shakespeare Write "Titus Andronicus"?*, p. 6.

ligion and finally in Agnosticism itself. The Baconian and the anti-Shakespearean, whether they know it or no, are merely particular cases of critical 'Agnosticism.' . . . All so-called scepticism has always been based on a kind of conceit, and is the work of persons with whom wisdom was born. Surely the world might by this time accept Kant's great proof of the futility of Pure Reason! It is, at any rate, the use of an almost *a priori* form of reasoning which leads to the sceptical, or, if you like, 'higher critical' views on the Bible, Shakespeare, or any other subject whatever. The position of the man who declines to believe that the Stratford Shakespeare wrote the works attributed to him is precisely the same as that of Hume on 'Miracles.'"

I confess that I am mightily amused at finding my friend, Mr. J. M. Robertson, an Agnostic of Agnostics, or, rather, a Rationalist of Rationalists, but, at the same time, a quite orthodox Shakespearean—albeit he *does* deny the Shakespearean authorship of *Titus*—confronted with such a pronouncement as this. He finds himself in the unusual position of having to defend himself against a charge of heresy! *Qua Titus Andronicus* he is, at least in Mr. Baildon's eyes, on the slippery slope of Infidelity. He would be the last to combat the proposition that his position as regards "Miracles" is very much the same "as that of Hume"; yet he is called upon to vindicate his faith as an orthodox member of the Stratfordian congregation, though, in regard to *Titus*, he has to plead guilty of heresy and schism, or what Mr. Bellyse Baildon, speaking *ex cathedra* from the heights of irreproachable orthodoxy, stigmatises as such. Here is a delightful topsy-turvy kind of comedy, quite in the Gilbertian style! And Mr. Robertson is, truly, "in a parlous state." He has begun with scepticism—nay, with actual unbelief—as to *Titus*. Who shall secure him against an entire collapse of his Stratfordian faith? Let us hear him on his defence. "Doubtless Mr. Baildon's line of approach

will secure him some respectable suffrages, on the quality of which he is to be congratulated; but inasmuch as some other respectable persons are likely to be caused some painful perturbation by the hint that if they deny *Titus* to be the work of Shakespeare they will end in denying miracles with Hume, it is only humane to explain to them that Johnson and Hallam, Malone and Coleridge were really not Agnostics; while, on the other hand, Mr. W. Watkiss Lloyd,¹ who was very much of Mr. Baildon's opinion, incurred much suspicion of heresy by his work on *Christianity in the Catacombs*."

All this is really delightful, and we may be grateful to Mr. Bellyse Baildon for having, at any rate, added to the gaiety of some few of his readers. But here is another terrible example of internecine strife among the orthodox Shakespeareans!

I might pursue the analogy still further, and speak of the great demands made on our faith by the High Priests of the Shrine; of the spurious documents that have been put forward; of the subtlety, more ingenious than ingenuous, of certain Stratfordian harmonists; of the assumption that Player Shakspeare wrote, as it were, by "plenary inspiration." I might quote Coleridge: "What, are we to have miracles in sport?" or James Russell Lowell: "Nobody believes any longer that immediate inspiration is possible in modern times . . . and yet everybody seems to take it for granted of this one man Shakspeare." But I fear that the reader has already murmured, in the words of Hamlet, "Something too much of this"; so I now pass on to other considerations.

As I have already said, I hold no brief for the Baconians, though, like Mr. Gladstone, "I have always regarded their discussion as one perfectly serious and to be respected."

But I am quite free to admit that some of the extreme advocates of that "heresy" have done much harm by

¹ Author of *Critical Essays on the Plays of Shakespeare*.

putting forward wild, ridiculous, and fantastic theories. It has been truly said that the worst enemies of good causes are those who try to support them by bad arguments, and thus it is that the way of the rational doubter as to the Stratfordian authorship is blocked by quite unnecessary obstacles. He is classed with "cranks" and "fanatics," and finds himself involved, quite unjustly, in the cloud of prejudice and ridicule which attaches to ciphers that failed and cryptograms that will not bear the light. But I beg the reader of "candid and open mind" to put aside all such prejudice, and to bestow upon the question the fair consideration which is due from every honest and impartial inquirer.

I will now state my own position. I have long found it impossible to believe that the Stratford Player was the author of the *Plays and Poems* of Shakespeare. That Shakespeare, whoever he was, did not write a very large portion of the thirty-six dramas which were published as his in the Folio of 1623 is now generally admitted. "It may surprise some of my hearers," said Dr. Garnett, in the course of a lecture to the London Shakespeare Society, "to be told that so considerable a part of the work which passes under Shakespeare's name is probably not from his hand."¹ The first thing to do, therefore, is to make up our minds, so far as we can, as to how much of the *Plays and Poems* published under Shakespeare's name are, in reality, Shakespeare's work. Otherwise we shall be founding arguments with regard to Shakespeare's learning, or opinions, or experiences, or other kindred matters, upon plays, or parts of plays, in the writing of which Shakespeare had no part.

Now there is very good authority for saying, and I think the truth is so, that at least two of the plays published among the works of Shakespeare are not his at all; that at

¹ Published as a Preface to *At Shakespeare's Shrine*, by Chas. F. Forshaw, LL.D. This lecture was delivered in April, 1904.

least three others contain very little, if any, of his writing ; and that of the remainder, many contain long passages that are non-Shakespearean. But when we have submitted them all to the crucible of criticism we have a magnificent residuum of the purest gold.¹ Here is the true Shakespeare ; here is the great magician who, by a wave of his wand, could transmute brass into gold, or make dry bones live and move and have immortal being. Who was this great magician—this mighty dramatist who was “not of an age, but for all time” ? Who was the writer of *Venus and Lucrece* and the *Sonnets* and *Lear* and *Hamlet* ? Was it William Shakspeare of Stratford, the Player ? So it is generally believed, and that hypothesis I had accepted in unquestioning faith till my love of the works naturally led me to an examination of the life of the supposed author of them. Then I found that as I read my faith melted away “into thin air.” It was not, certainly, that I had (nor have I now) any wish to disbelieve. I was, and I am, altogether willing to accept the Player as the immortal poet if only my reason would allow me to do so. Why not ? There, thank Heaven, in my bookcase, are the Plays—there are *Hamlet* and *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, and *Lear*, and *Henry IV*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*, and *Cymbeline*, and the *Winter's Tale*, and the *Dream*, and the rest. They are “a joy for ever,” and among the most precious of human possessions, whoever

¹ I do not mean, of course, that *all* that is Shakespeare's is pure gold, still less do I mean that all that is not Shakespeare's is base metal. For example, there are few nobler lines in all the Folio than Buckingham's speech on his way to execution, *Henry VIII* (Act II, Sc. 1, 55). Yet the critics tell us that these are not Shakespeare's, but probably by Fletcher. Again, no collection of “The Beauties of Shakespeare” is complete without Wolsey's speech on his fall in the same play (Act III, Sc. 2), yet this also we are told by Spedding, Lee, and others is non-Shakespearean. A very large part of Shakespearean criticism is vitiated by the assumption tacitly made by so many critics that the whole of the First Folio, and *Pericles* as well, is the work of Shakespeare.

wrote them. But the question of authorship is, nevertheless, a most fascinating one. If it be true, as the Rev. Leonard Bacon wrote, that "The great world does not care sixpence who wrote *Hamlet*," the great world must, at the same time, be a very small world, and many of us must be content to be outside it. Having given, then, the best attention I was able to give to the question, and more time, I fear, than I ought to have devoted to it, I was brought to the conclusion, as many others have been, that the man who is, truly enough, designated by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse as a "Stratford rustic"¹ is not the true Shakespeare. I do not think (*pace* some of the pundits of literature) that this is the judgment of a fool or a fanatic. I venture to believe (*pace* Mr. Lee and Mr. Collins) that I am really quite sane; nay, more, that I have even some powers of weighing evidence—powers which, I trust, have not become atrophied after more than half a century of life, and not inconsiderable professional experience. And it is just as a matter of evidence and reasonable probabilities that I have considered, and should desire the reader to consider, the question. I have, then, in the following chapters, made an endeavour to set forth the evidence, and the arguments, or rather some of the evidence and arguments (for they might be extended almost *ad infinitum*), which seem to me to make in favour of the negative proposition, viz. that Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author of the *Plays and Poems*. I have endeavoured to avoid all fantastic theories, and although, of course, a certain amount of hypothesis is unavoidable (Is not every Life of Shakespeare for the most part built upon hypothesis, and rather a work of imagination than of true biography?), my wish has been to depart as little as possible from the realm of fact, so far as we can ascertain it, and of legitimate argument founded thereon. I have made no attempt to deal with the positive side of

¹ *English Literature. An Illustrated Record*, Vol. II, pp. 199, 200.

the question. I leave it to others to say, if they can, who the great magician really was.

I will take this opportunity of dealing with an argument which has been advanced by a very distinguished Baconian scholar, and frequently (but, I think, thoughtlessly) repeated by supporters of the orthodox Stratfordian faith.

Sir Theodore Martin, in his essay *Shakespeare or Bacon?* (p. 17), quotes Mr. Spedding as having written to Judge Holmes in the following terms:—"That the author of *Pickwick* was Charles Dickens I know upon no better authority than that upon which I know that the author of *Hamlet* was a man called William Shakespeare." Now we must all have unfeigned respect for Mr. Spedding as an authority where Bacon is concerned, but if it were my desire to depreciate the value of his judgment I think I should quote the above deliverance as frequently as possible. For what is the meaning of it? It is, I presume, that Mr. Spedding knew Charles Dickens to be the author of *Pickwick* by reputation only, and that similarly he knows William Shakespeare (i.e. Shakspeare) to be the author of *Hamlet*, because that work was published under that name, and because Shakspeare is and always has been the reputed author thereof. A very little consideration is sufficient to show the worthlessness of this argument. Mr. Spedding was a contemporary of Charles Dickens, being his senior by two years only. He had seen Dickens in the flesh. I do not know if he had ever seen him writing at his works, but he might have done so. He had seen, or could have seen, if he had chosen, Dickens's manuscripts, and there would have been no difficulty in getting the handwriting identified by those who knew it. At this day there would be no difficulty whatever in getting direct evidence from living persons who knew Dickens, who knew his writings, and who could identify his manuscripts. Mr. Spedding knew that Dickens professed to be the author of *Pickwick*, and had put his name to it, and that

no suggestion was ever made that he was not the writer of it. Now, in a case of this sort, where no doubt is raised, and where there is not the slightest ground for suspicion, we are, of course, quite justified in accepting as true that which nobody has disputed. It would be absurd to do otherwise. It is for this reason that I unhesitatingly hold the belief that Miss Marian Evans was the author of *Adam Bede*. But if somebody were to assert the contrary, to give reasons in support of the assertion, and to make something of a *prima facie* case for doubting the identity of Miss Evans with George Eliot, then we should at once be put upon investigation, and it would be futile to refuse even to consider the alleged reasons for doubt, because, up to that date, Miss Evans had always been the reputed author of the work. Nay, if Mr. Spedding's reason holds good, it holds for any work published in Shakspeare's time and under the name of Shakespeare. Then must we hold that not only are *Pericles*, and *Titus*, and *Henry VI*, Part I,¹ by "Shakspeare," but that various other works published in the name of Shakespeare and in his lifetime, and without protest on his part, were written by him also. Here, then, is a ready answer to the "Higher Critics." That the author of *Pickwick* was Charles Dickens I know upon no better authority than that upon which I know that the author of Genesis was a man called Moses, or the author of the fourth gospel a man called John, or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews a man called Paul of Tarsus, and so forth ; which, indeed, would be an easy method of settling vexed questions without the trouble and annoyance of investigation.

To these remarks I will only add here that how far the Player William Shakspeare of Stratford was the reputed author of *Hamlet* when the quarto edition of that play

¹ *Pericles* was published in 1609 as "By William Shakespeare." The two other plays mentioned were, as we all know, included in the Folio of 1623.

appeared in 1603, under the name of "William Shakespeare," is a matter of very great doubt. So far as we know William Shakspeare never exercised any "acts of ownership" over, or asserted any claim to, the various works published under that modification of his name which became famous in literature, but which he himself never appears to have made use of. And just as little did he protest against, or in any way endeavour to prevent, the publication of other works which bore that name on the title-page, but which certainly were not by him.¹

"There are certain traditions," writes Mr. Collins,² "which the world appears to have made up its mind to accept without inquiry. Their source or sources may be suspicious, their intrinsic improbability may be great, but no one dreams of seriously questioning them. Whatever else becomes the subject of dispute, of doubt, or of dissent, a strange superstition seems to exempt them even from debate. If here and there a note of scepticism should be struck it finds no response." Mr. Collins applies these remarks to the tradition that Shakespeare had no knowledge of Greek and Latin. I venture to apply them to the tradition that *Lear* and *Hamlet* and *Othello* were written by William Shakspeare of Stratford. They are not quite accurate as applied to either tradition, for both have been the subject of much questioning and much debate. They might, equally well, have been applied, some fifty years ago, to the Homeric question. When I was a boy we were taught to believe that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and the *Hymns* were all written by one man, "blind Melesigenes, thence Homer called." I have now my old Eton Homer, edited by the Rev. William Trollope,

¹ We must not forget that "Shakespeare," whoever he was, "after *The Rape of Lucrece*, so far as we can tell, published no more, neither poem nor drama" (Professor Raleigh in "Englishmen of Letters" series, p. 85). "Shakespeare," therefore, so far as we know, published two poems with dedications bearing that name upon them, and published no more.

² *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 1.

note.

who tells us in his Preface that "Homer must have written his two great poems before the return of the Heraclidæ." "Among the ancients," writes Mr. T. Thomas,¹ "none appear to have doubted that Homer was a real personage, and that he was the author of the most wonderful poem [the writer might have said "poems"] of antiquity." To the ancients he was, as Ovid styles him, the unrivalled Maeonides,

a quo, ceu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

There did, indeed, arise about the time of the Christian era, or a little before that date, an heretical school, called *χωρίζοντες*, or "Separators," who denied that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were the productions of the same author; but modern scholars and critics had allowed that question to go to sleep till, in 1795, F. A. Wolf startled the world by his celebrated *Prolegomena*. Then arose a battle royal around "the Homeric question," and much passion was aroused, and many epithets—e.g. "fools" and "fanatics"—were scattered abroad, and it was, doubtless, said that we have just as much reason to believe Homer to have been the author of the poems traditionally ascribed to him as to believe that Virgil was the author of the *Æneid*, or Fielding the author of *Tom Jones*. But I do not think that many scholars at the present day will contend that a man called Homer wrote (or composed) both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. At any rate, one is no longer styled fool and fanatic, or threatened with a lunatic asylum, for asserting the belief that "tradition," in this case, has been blown to the winds by modern criticism.

The question, then, is, as a matter of evidence and reasonable probability, Was Shakspeare the Player identical with Shakespeare the Poet? It seems to me that that question must, on full consideration of the whole matter, be answered in the negative, and in this work I have en-

¹ *Dictionary of Biography and Mythology*. I cite from the book of reference that lies nearest to my hand.

deavoured to state some of the reasons which, as it seems to me, make for that conclusion. I am quite aware that by many it will be thought to be time and labour wasted. The High Priests of Literature will treat it with frigid and contemptuous silence. The College of Stratfordian Cardinals will at once put it on the Index. The Grand Inquisitors—or Inquisitress!—of the Temple by Avon's sacred stream will decree that it shall be burnt (metaphorically, at any rate) by the common hangman, and "The brilliant Young Man," who has, perhaps, bestowed half an hour to the subject, and therefore understands it in every detail, will, if he should condescend to notice it at all, see in it a grand opportunity for once more convulsing the world with his side-splitting original joke about "gammon of Bacon," or his famous paradox that "There is no Learning but Ignorance." Meanwhile, from the Professors of "Morbid Psychology," those of them, at least, who are interested in homes for feeble-minded patients, I shall, no doubt, receive offers, on very reasonable terms, of board and lodging for the rest of my natural life. Yet am I sanguine enough to hope that by some open-minded and impartial readers the following chapters may be found to be not altogether devoid of interest, nor, possibly, of instruction. To such a reader, then, I venture to offer this work. "Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti," and by "honesti" I mean one who is fair and honourable, and does not allow his reason and his judgment to be obscured by prejudice—still less by petulance and ill-temper. I think he will at least admit that there is such a thing as a "Shakespeare Problem."¹

G. G. G.

¹ As I have said above, every "Life of Shakespeare" is, for the most part, built upon hypothesis, and rather a work of imagination than of true biography. Unfortunately many Shakespearean biographers and critics, not content with giving full rein to their imagination, resort to methods which in every other case than Shakespeare's would be condemned as inconsistent with the rules of common honesty. In this connection I wish particularly to direct attention to the misleading and disingenuous manner in which Chettle's supposed reference to Shakspeare is habitually miscited in flagrant violation of all the canons of honest criticism. See chapter XI. p. 307 *et seq.*

TABLE OF DATES

1564. April 23rd. Supposed date of birth of William Shakspere (baptized April 26th).
1574. Ben Jonson born (according to Gifford. See his *Memoirs of Jonson*, edited by Col. Cunningham, p. xxii. Prof. Herford in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* gives 1572-3 as the year of Jonson's birth).
1582. William Shakspere (*æt.* 18) marries Anne Hathaway (subsequently to November 28th).
1583. May 26th. Susanna, eldest child of William and Anne Shakspere, baptized.
1585. The twins Hamnet and Judith born (Shakspere *æt.* 21).
1586. Theatres closed in London on account of the plague. Bacon (*æt.* 25) becomes Bencher of Gray's Inn.
1587. Shakspere perhaps came to London. (So Mr. Fleay surmises. Mr. Lee postulates 1586 as the date of this *Hegira*. It is mere guesswork.)
1588. Destruction of the Spanish Armada.
- 1588-93. Between these years *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are supposed to have been composed.
1589. Lodge publishes his *Scilla's Metamorphosis*.
- 1589-93. Civil war in France.
1592. Publication of Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*. Henslowe opens the Rose Theatre on Bankside, under the management of Edward Alleyn.
1593. Publication of *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heire of my invention." Dedication signed "William Shakespeare."

1594. Publication of *The Rape of Lucrece*. Dedication signed "William Shakespeare."
The Comedy of Errors performed at Gray's Inn.
1597. Shakspeare enters into contract to purchase New Place (completed 1602).
1598. Publication of *King Richard the Second* by "William Shake-speare," *King Richard the Third* by "William Shake-speare," and *Love's Labour's Lost* by "W. Shakspeare."
First appearance of Shakespeare's name on title-page.
Meres's Palladis Tamia.
1599. Publication of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, containing two of "Shake-speare's Sonnets."
Richard and Cuthbert Burbage build the Globe Theatre on Bankside.
1601. Execution of Essex.
Publication of Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*; or *Rosalin's Complaint*, containing *The Phœnix and Turtle* by "William Shake-speare."
Twelfth Night performed at the Middle Temple (see *Manningham's Journal*).
1603. March 24th. Death of Queen Elizabeth.
July. Coronation of James I.
Publication of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*.
1604. Publication of the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*.
1605. Gunpowder Plot.
1607. Bacon becomes Solicitor-General.
1608. Two Quarto editions of *King Lear* published.
1609. Publication of "Shake-speares Sonnets."
- 1610-11. About this date Shakspeare retires permanently to Stratford.
1613. Bacon becomes Attorney-General.
The Princess Elizabeth m. the Elector Palatine.
Burning of the Globe Theatre.
1616. Death of William Shakspeare at Stratford.
Publication of Vol. I of the First Folio of Ben Jonson's works.

1618. Bacon becomes Lord Chancellor. Created Baron Verulam.
Between September, 1618, and January 19th, 1619,
Jonson with Drummond of Hawthornden.
1621. January. Bacon created Viscount St. Alban. His fall
the same year.
1622. First publication of *Othello*.
1623. Publication of the First Folio.
1625. Death of James I.
1626. Death of Bacon.
Birth of John Aubrey.
1632. Publication of the Second Folio.
1637. Death of Ben Jonson.
1640. Publication of Vol. II of the First Folio of Ben Jonson's
works, containing *Timber or Discoveries*.
Publication of *Sonnets* (rearranged) "By Wil. Shakespeare,
Gent."
1664. Publication of the Third Folio.

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THE SHAKESPEARE
PROBLEM RESTATED

THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED

CHAPTER I

SHAKSPERE OF STRATFORD

MR. SIDNEY LEE, in a letter published in the *Times* of January 8th, 1902, delivers himself as follows concerning the Stratford Player whom, following the literary usage, he calls William Shakespeare, but whom, for the sake of convenience, I prefer to designate as William Shakspere, as he himself appears to have written the name. "Patient investigation which has been in progress for more than two hundred years has brought together a mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare."

Now if this is to be taken to mean (and I can assign no other reasonable significance to the words) that we know more about the life of Shakspere than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him, there is an audacity about the statement which borders on the sublime. So have I heard a counsel, "without a leg to stand upon," as they say in the Law Courts, asseverate to the jury that his case has been proved up to the hilt by irrefragable evidence; a form of bluff which is usually estimated at its true value when the judge proceeds to sum up. It is

quite true that around the name of "Shakespeare" there has been gathered together a mass of literature, of criticism, of illustration, of theory, of allusions (real or supposed), which is perfectly appalling in its extent and variety; but notwithstanding that the whole world has been ransacked for evidence, and notwithstanding that lives have been devoted to the subject and an incredible amount of labour bestowed upon it, when we come to inquire what are the actual facts which we know concerning the life of William Shakspeare, we find it as true to-day as it was when the late J. R. Green published his *History of the English People*, that "of hardly any great poet do we know so little."¹

Let us take Mr. Lee's own *Life of Shakespeare*, which some look upon as an epoch-making work, and see, apart from the wealth of critical and literary and historical illustration, what biographical facts are adduced—facts resting upon evidence, and not upon theory or imagination—and we shall find that such facts are meagre and unsatisfactory in the extreme. Having done this, let us turn to the biographies of the first "contemporary poet," whose name naturally occurs to us—I mean, of course, Ben Jonson—and let us mark the contrast. We shall find that "Rare Ben" stands out as a tangible, substantial human entity. We feel that we know him, that we are in personal touch with him. There is no room for doubt, no problem, no mystery. Can the same be said about "Shakespeare"? Why, it is just *because* everything is so uncertain here—*because* there is so much doubt and so much mystery—

¹ Mr. Lee's flamboyant assertion does not seem to have made much impression upon Mr. C. W. Crook, B.A., B.Sc., editor of many Shakespearean plays for educational use; for in his "Life of Shakespeare" prefixed to his edition of *The Tempest* (Ralph, Holland & Co., 1906), he writes, "Of the fifty-two years of his life in which he played his part, the most careful research has discovered but a few meagre incidents." But he consoles himself with Halliwell-Phillipps's dictum: "Fortunately, of Shakespeare all came from within—I mean from his soul and genius; circumstances and the externals contributed but slightly to his development"!

that all this mountainous literature has been accumulated around him. Yes, it is certainly a very remarkable statement this, for which Mr. Lee has made himself responsible.¹

But now let us see, in as short compass as may be, what is really known concerning William Shakspeare.

William Shakspeare² was born at Stratford-on-Avon on April 22nd or 23rd, 1564.³ We are accustomed to think

¹ This was written some years before the publication of *In a Nook with a Book*, by F. W. Macdonald (1907), from which I take the following: "Ben Jonson can never be to the world what Shakespeare is, but his personality is far easier to get at. After all that has been written about Shakespeare we do not know him, and it is pretty certain we never shall. What Matthew Arnold wrote of him is true.

'Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still
Out-topping knowledge. . . .
Thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honoured, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so.'"

It will scarcely be believed, but it is, nevertheless, the fact, and a highly characteristic one, that Mr. Lee writes (*Shakespeare and the Modern Stage*, p. 29)— "Others abide our *judgment* (*sic!*). Thou art free,"

telling us that this "is the first line of Arnold's *well-known* sonnet"! One is reminded of Byron's "just enough of learning to misquote."

Mr. Macdonald proceeds: "Other men you may arrive at through their writings, but not Shakespeare. As Coleridge says: 'His poetry is characterless, that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare, while John Milton himself is in every line of *Paradise Lost*.' This thought will bear further illustration. Read Dryden, or Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Tennyson, and you may say you know them. Read Shakespeare all your life and you cannot say that. You may know Hamlet, Lear, Iago, and a hundred men and women of his making, but he himself, though 'we ask and ask,' is 'free . . . out-topping knowledge.' 'How well we seem to know Chaucer,' says Coleridge again. 'How absolutely nothing do we know of Shakespeare!' But Ben Jonson 'abides our question.' None of the Elizabethans do we know better, few so well." As to Arnold's "self-school'd" I shall have a word to say later on.

² As to the name see note at end of this chapter.

³ Mr. Henry Davey writes: "William [Shakspeare] is conventionally said to have been born in Henley Street, and on April 23rd, 1564. There is no proof of either assertion. The 'Birthplace' was not bought by the Shakespeares till 1575." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 266.)

4 THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED

of Stratford as a delightful haunt of rural peace, "meet nurse for a poetic child"; and fancy pictures 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." Far different was the real historical Stratford. A dirty squalid place was the Mecca of Shakespearean pilgrims in the sixteenth century. "At this period," writes Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (the most industrious and not the least trustworthy of the many biographers of the Player and reputed Poet), "and for many generations afterwards, the sanitary condition of the thoroughfares of Stratford-on-Avon was, to our present notions, simply terrible." The "general humidity intensified the evils arising from the want of scavengers, or other effective appliances for the preservation of cleanliness. House-slops were recklessly thrown into ill-kept channels that lined the sides of unmetalled roads; pigs and geese too often revelled in the puddles and ruts; while here and there small middens were ever in the course of accumulation, the receptacles of offal and of every species of nastiness. A regulation for the removal of these collections to certain specified localities interspersed through the borough, and known as common dung-hills, appears to have been the extent of the interference that the authorities ventured or cared to exercise in such matters. Sometimes, when the nuisance was thought to be sufficiently flagrant, they made a raid on those inhabitants who had suffered their refuse to accumulate largely in the highways. On one of these occasions, in April, 1552, John Shakespeare (the father of William) was amerced in the sum of twelve pence for having amassed what was no doubt a conspicuous *sterquinarium* [*Anglice* muck-heap] before his house in Henley Street, and under these unsavoury circumstances does the history of the poet's father commence in the records of England. But although there was little excuse for his negligence, one

of the public stores of filth being within a stone's throw of his residence, all that can be said to his disparagement is that he was not in advance of his neighbours in such matters, two of whom were coincidentally fined for the same offence."

Such was Stratford at that time, and such it long remained; for Garrick, more than two hundred years later, described it as "the most dirty, unseemly, ill-paved, wretched-looking town in all Britain."

The inhabitants of this rural Paradise appear to have been as illiterate as they were dirty, though in neither respect need they be considered exceptional, for in the time of Shakspeare, as Dr. Johnson has told us, "to be able to read and write, outside of professed scholars, or men and women of high rank, was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity." I take the following quotation from Malone's *Prolegomena* (ed. 1821 by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 97):¹ "About the time of our poet's birth the majority of the Corporation of Stratford appear to have been entitled to the eulogy bestowed by Jack Cade upon those who 'do not use to write their names, but have a mark of their own, like honest plain-dealing men'; for out of nineteen persons who signed a paper relative to one of their body who had been elected bailiff, ten of whom were aldermen, and the rest burgesses, seven only² could write their names; and among the twelve marksmen is found John Shakspeare."

Here we are brought to the first point of controversy. Until Mr. Lee published his *Life* it was accepted history that neither the father nor the mother of William Shakspeare could read or write. "Both his parents," says Mr. Phillipps, "were absolutely illiterate." Charles Knight, indeed, in 1843, made a gallant attempt to prove that

¹ This is "Boswell's Malone," commonly known as "The Third Variorum."

² It seems that, really, six only of the nineteen could write their names.

the mark prefixed to John Shakspere's name in the document referred to was not in truth his mark, but that of another signatory; but in a later edition he was constrained to give up the contention. "We were reluctant," he writes, "to yield our consent to Malone's assertion that Shakespeare's father had a mark to himself. The marks are not distinctly affixed to each name in this document. But subsequent discoveries establish the fact that he used two marks, one something like an open pair of compasses, the other the common cross."

Mr. Lee, however, professes to have made the discovery that Malone, Knight, Halliwell-Phillipps, and all the other critics and biographers were in the wrong. In the preface to the Illustrated Edition of his *Life of Shakespeare* (p. xii) he writes as follows: "An unjustifiable scepticism has occasionally manifested itself respecting the identity of Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspere] the native of Stratford-on-Avon with Shakespeare the writer of plays. The sceptics base their destructive criticism on few grounds that merit respect. The only position with the smallest pretensions to consideration which they have hitherto held rests on the assumption that Shakespeare's father and near kinsmen and kinswomen were illiterate and brainless peasants."

With such thoughts in his mind Mr. Lee appears to have gone to Stratford to make a re-examination of the records, and there he professes to have discovered what he must have so ardently desired to discover, and what had escaped the acute and practised eyes of Malone, Phillipps,¹ and all others. So, he continues, "Good ground is here offered for the belief that the poet's father wielded a practised pen." And again (at p. 4 of the *Life*), "*When attesting documents* [my italics] he occasionally made his

¹ Halliwell-Phillipps made an especial study of the documents connected with John Shakspere. See *Outlines*, II, 215-248, and his *Extracts from the Council Books*.

mark, but there is evidence in the Stratford archives that he could write with facility."

Now let us examine this very remarkable statement a little further. There are several other "mark-signatures" of John Shakspeare in existence. Thus at page 40 of H.-Phillipps's *Outlines* (Vol. I) we have facsimiles of the mark-signatures used by Shakspeare's parents in 1579, when they executed a deed conveying their interests in two houses in Snitterfield to one Robert Webb. Again, at page 13 of Vol. II we have a facsimile of John Shakspeare's mark-signature to a deed of conveyance of a slip of land to one George Badger in the year 1596-7. It is thus indisputable that John Shakspeare used a mark, not only "when attesting documents," but also when executing deeds. If, then, we are to credit Mr. Lee, we have this very remarkable fact, viz., that one who "could write with facility" nevertheless deliberately chose to appear as a marksman when executing a deed, the most solemn of all documents; that, too, in an age when to be able to write one's name was something to be proud of, at any rate in the class to which the Shakspeare family belonged. And what says Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps on the point? "There is no reasonable pretence for assuming that in the time of John Shakespeare, whatever might have been the case at earlier periods, it was the practice for marks to be used by those who were capable of signing their names. No instance of the kind has been discovered amongst the numerous records of his era that are preserved at Stratford-on-Avon, while even a few rare examples in other districts, if such are to be found, would be insufficient to countenance a theory that he was able to write. All the known evidences point in the opposite direction, and it should be observed that in common with many other of his illiterate contemporaries he did not always adhere to the same kind of symbol, at one time contenting himself with a rudely-shaped cross, and at another delineating a fairly good

representation of a pair of dividers, an instrument that is used in several trades for making circles, or setting off equal lengths in leather and other materials. Joan Lambert, the poet's aunt, and Edmund, her husband, used, respectively, at least three and four differently formed marks, and the 'sign-manual' that George Whateley, bailiff of Stratford, penned in September, 1564, is very different from one that he adopted in 1579." (H.-P., Vol. II, p. 369, where an engraving is given of George Whateley's 1579 signature.)

Facsimiles of the signatures of the nineteen aldermen and burgesses of Stratford referred to by Malone are given in Mr. Phillipps's *Outlines* (Vol. I, p. 38), and in many other books on the "Shakespeare" question. It is to be noticed that in the second column the name "John" occurs five times, one being the baptismal name of John Shakspeare. All these Johns are "marksmen," and, judging from the facsimile, I should say that, in all the five cases, the name "John" was written by the same hand.¹

I do not know if it will be contended that all the worthy burgesses (thirteen in number) who appear as "marksmen" in this interesting document (which was inspected by Malone and is referred to by him as the order of September 27th, 1564) could "write with facility" and were "marksmen" from choice only!²

¹ A learned Canon, who has himself the reputation of being a Shakespearean expert, writes to me: "The documents *signed* and *marked* [my italics] by John Shakespeare are in the Stratford Registry. Mr. Lee made an examination of them and convinced himself that some of the signatures were those of John Shakespeare himself." On this hypothesis John Shakspeare, though he could sign his own name, did not always do so, and, when he did, preferred to make his mark as well! If this is, really, all the "evidence in the Stratford archives that he could write with facility," I venture to say it is not worth much consideration.

² We also learn from Malone that "on the 29th of January 1588-9 of 27 persons who signed a paper in the council-chamber of Stratford, 14 make their marks, and among the marksmen are found Mr. William Wilson, the high-bailiff and four of the Aldermen." (See Malone's *Shakespeare*, edited by James Boswell (1821), Vol. II, pp. 97-8).

But however that may be, we are now asked to believe that John Shakspere "wielded a practised pen" simply on the authority of Mr. Lee's statement that there is "evidence in the Stratford archives to that effect." I fancy, however, that "the sceptics" whom Mr. Lee is anxious to confute will adhere to the testimony of Malone and Knight and Halliwell-Phillipps, supported as it is by the evidence of their own eyes, until very clear proof is brought forward in support of this novel contention. "When attesting documents he *occasionally* made his mark," says Mr. Lee. This implies that *generally* he did not make his mark, or at least that there were occasions when he did not do so. Let us see, then, in original or facsimile, at least one authentic document undoubtedly "attested" by John Shakspere with his autograph signature. Until this is produced the "sceptics" may well be content *stare super antiquas vias*. Meantime it may, perhaps, be well to bear in mind Mr. Phillipps's remark that the Shaksperes were formerly exceedingly numerous in Warwickshire, and "thus it has happened that more than one John Shakespeare has been erroneously identified with the father of the great dramatist."¹

I have lingered some time over this point, because Mr. Lee brings forward his alleged discovery as a new and most important fact. It is indeed, so far as I know, the only new (alleged) fact adduced by him bearing on the personal life of Shakspere. But it seems that here, too, as

¹ Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, in their *Illustrated English Literature*, are discreetly (or shall we say *politely*?) silent about John Shakspere's facility of penmanship. John Shakspere died in 1601. He left no will. Apparently he felt no temptation to demonstrate his facility of writing in testamentary dispositions! Mr. A. R. D. Anders writes: "Shakespeare's parents could not have taught him writing, as they could not even sign their names. To think of a modern mayor who could not write his name!" (*Shakespeare's Books*, p. 10, note 2.) As Mr. Anders's work, which has been highly commended by Dr. Garnett, was published in 1904, he does not seem to have been impressed by Mr. Lee's assertion!

so often, what is "new" is not "true." We may, therefore, now return to the point from which we started. William Shakspeare was born in the squalid surroundings of Stratford-on-Avon of "absolutely illiterate parents"; and while on this part of the subject it may be well to mention that he allowed his daughter Judith to grow up in similar ignorance. He, the great poet and philosopher, the "myriad-minded man," who "was not of an age but for all time," the wonder of all ages, he who wrote "there is no darkness but ignorance," did not even take the trouble to have his daughter taught to write her name! Here, at the outset, is surely food for reflection and much marvelling.

As to the worthy "marksman," John Shakspeare, we are told by Mr. Lee that he "set up as a trader in all manner of agricultural produce. Corn, wool, malt, meat, skins, and leather, were among the commodities in which he dealt. Documents of a somewhat later date often describe him as a glover. Aubrey, Shakespeare's first biographer, reported the tradition that he was a butcher." In the year 1557 he married Mary Arden, daughter of a wealthy farmer of Wilmecote, near Stratford. Of this lady, the mother of the reputed poet, Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps writes as follows: "There can be no doubt that the maiden with the pretty name, she who has been so often represented as a nymph of the forest, communing with nothing less æsthetic than a nightingale or a waterfall, spent most of her time in the homeliest of rustic employments, and it is not at all improbable that, in common with many other farmers' daughters of the period, she occasionally assisted in the more robust occupations of the field." And thus as to the manner of living of the class to which Shakspeare's parents belonged. "Existence was passed in her father's house in some respects, we should now say, rather after the manner of pigs than of that of human beings. Many of the articles that are considered necessaries in the humblest of modern

cottages were not to be seen—there were no table knives, no forks, no crockery. . . the means of ablution were lamentably defective, if, indeed, they were not limited to what could have been supplied by an insulated pail of water, for what were called towels were merely used for wiping the hands after a meal, and there was not a single wash-hand basin in the establishment. As for the inmate and other labourers it was seldom indeed, if ever, that they either washed their hands or combed their hair, nor is there the least reason for suspecting that those accomplishments were in liberal requisition in the dwellings of their employers.”¹

Mr. Lee has not contended that Mary Arden, though a “markswoman,” could “write with facility.” He is, perforce, content to write, “although she was well provided with worldly goods, she was apparently without education, several extant documents bear her mark, and there is no proof that she could sign her name.”

With such parents and amid such surroundings, what sort of education are we justified in assuming for the young William Shakspeare? Well, there was a Free Grammar School at Stratford, and undoubtedly the boy may have been sent there. Tradition says that he went there, and we may, perhaps, be content to follow tradition in this matter. But beyond tradition there is no evidence of the fact. There are no school records showing the name of William Shakspeare, or Shakespeare, or Shaxper, or Shaky-sper (there were very many varieties of spelling) as that of one of the free scholars; there is no contemporary letter or document of any sort referring to the boy's attendance at the school, notwithstanding the “mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare”! Here, again, what a contrast to the case of Ben Jonson, whom we can follow first to his preparatory school at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and thence to Westminster, “that noble nursery of

¹ H.-P., Vol. I, p. 28.

English youth," as John Addington Symonds so justly styled it!

Camden! Most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know.

So wrote Ben Jonson of the great antiquary who was during his time Second Master, and subsequently Head Master, of Westminster School, where he absorbed, as Mr. Symonds says, "all the new learning of the Greeks and Romans which England had derived from Italian humanism." But to the master of Stratford Free School who instructed the mighty dramatist, the poet of all time, the "myriad-minded man" (if such indeed were William Shakspeare, of Stratford), there is no tribute paid by his supposed scholar either in prose or in verse. Of this, as of all other personal matters connected with the life of "Shakespeare," there is a silence that can be felt.

Assuming, however, that Shakspeare was sent to the Free School, at what age did he go there? This, in the absence of all evidence, is entirely a matter of guesswork. It is usually assumed that he entered the school at the age of seven. To place him at school as early as possible is, obviously, of some importance, since, as we shall presently see, all tradition agrees that he was removed from school at the age of thirteen. Five or six years schooling, then, is the utmost that can be allowed for him, and, so far as we know, he may not have entered the school (if, indeed, he did enter it) till his ninth or tenth year. A contemporary poet, Joshua Sylvester (1563-1618. Shakspeare *b.* 1564, *d.* 1616), who was also taken from school at the age of thirteen, entered the renowned school at Southampton in his ninth year.

Let us see, however, what our biographers tell us of Shakspeare's going to school. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps writes: "Although both his parents were absolutely

illiterate, they had the sagacity to appreciate the importance of an education for their son, and the poet, somehow or other, was taught to read and write, the necessary preliminaries to admission into the Free School."¹ Mr. Lee, however, says nothing of the ability to read and write as the condition precedent to entry at the Free School. He assumes that the boy was taught to write at the school. "Happily," he says, "John Shakespeare was at no expense for the education of his four sons. They were entitled to free tuition at the Grammar School of Stratford, which was reconstituted on a mediæval foundation by Edward VI. The eldest son, William, probably entered the school in 1571, when Walter Roche was master, and perhaps he knew something of Thomas Hunt, who succeeded Roche in 1577."² As was customary in provincial schools, he was taught to write the 'Old English' character, which resembles that still in vogue in Germany. He 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."

On this it may be observed (1) that no evidence can be given to support the adverb "probably" ("probably entered the school in 1571"), but we are told that it was usual, or at any rate not unusual, for boys at that time to enter a Grammar School at the early age of seven;³ (2) it is assumed that Shakspeare might have entered the school

¹ Mr. A. F. Leach says the same. To the Grammar School, he tells us, "boys were not admitted until they had learnt their accidence." They learnt to write in the Song School, or Writing School. *English Schools at the Reformation*, p. 105. Query—who taught the boy Shakspeare to write?

² These dates appear to be erroneous. See note at p. 43.

³ Halliwell-Phillipps writes: "Although there is no certain information on the subject it may perhaps be assumed that at this time boys usually entered the Free School at the age of seven, according to the custom followed at a later period."

without being able to write; and (3) that he was taught at the school to write in the "Old English," i.e. German fashion.

That he did write in this old-fashioned style is most painfully apparent when we examine the hopeless scrawls that do duty for his signatures, so different from Ben Jonson's clear and excellent "Italian" handwriting, or the equally admirable writing, in the same style, of Joshua Sylvester, as presented to us in Mr. Grosart's edition of his works (Vol. I, p. 16). It is, indeed, hardly possible to conceive that the *Poems* and *Plays* were written in William Shakspeare's illegible illiterate scrawl.¹

But here I have to consider a brand new theory as to Shakspeare's handwriting. I had fondly thought that the limits of preposterous assumption had been long since reached by the Stratfordians, but it has been left to that "incomparable paire of brethren" Messrs. Garnett and Gosse to supply the *ne plus ultra*. "A word may be added," write these great men of literature, "respecting Shakespeare's handwriting, which has been made an argument against his authorship of the works ascribed to him. All the undoubted autographs of Shakespeare appear on legal documents and are written in the hand *appropriate to business matters*. This affords no proof that he could not write the Italian script if he thought fit."² This is delightfully characteristic of the methods of modern Shakspearean criticism!

According to Mr. Lee, John Shakspeare, although he "could write with facility," yet deliberately preferred to appear as a marksman when executing or witnessing "legal documents." The "sign of the cross" appeared to him most "appropriate to business matters." *Now* we

¹ We have it on Mr. Lee's authority that Shakspeare wrote illegibly. See *infra*, p. 272.

² *English Literature: An Illustrated Record*, Vol. II, p. 195.

handwriting

have the theory started that one who could write the Italian script "with facility" considered the "Old English" handwriting to be the hand appropriate to such matters. Here I should like to put one or two interrogatories to Messrs. Garnett¹ and Gosse such as the following: Can they supply us with another example of a man *temp.* Elizabeth or James I who could write Italian script "with facility," and who habitually made use of it for his ordinary correspondence, but who, nevertheless, preferred, or thought it incumbent on him, to sign his name to a conveyance, or, more especially, to his *will*, in old English characters?² And can they tell us why the old English should be more "appropriate to business matters" than the Italian hand? Mr. Lee, I may remark, tells us just the contrary. He says that those who wrote *both* hands used the "Italian" when they signed their names. "In Shakespeare's day *highly educated men who were graduates of the Universities and had travelled abroad in youth* [my italics] were capable of writing both the old 'English' and the 'Italian' character with equal facility. As a rule they employed the 'English' character in their ordinary correspondence, but *signed their names in the 'Italian' hand.* Shakespeare's use of the 'English' script exclusively was doubtless a result of his provincial education. He learnt only the 'English' character at school at Stratford-on-Avon, and he never troubled to exchange it

handwriting

¹ This was written before Dr. Garnett's lamented death.

² I am informed by those who have studied the records of the period that no such example can be produced. It is, *primâ facie*, extremely improbable that any such practice should have existed. Shakspeare, we may be sure, could not have said with Malvolio, "I think we do know the sweet Roman hand"! (*Twelfth Night*, III, iv, 30.) Here I cannot forbear to mention that Mr. Robert Bridges, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare* (Vol. X, p. 334), has been guilty of a criticism on Malvolio's remark when he picks up Maria's letter (II, v, 95), which, I fear, has caused the profane to laugh consumedly, though in truth they ought to envy the critic who has succeeded in keeping himself so unspotted from the world. But the answer to Sir Andrew's question must be sought in Messrs. Farmer and Henley's Slang Dictionary.

for the more fashionable 'Italian' character in later life" (p. 231).

Three of the five Shakespearean autographs which have come down to us are signatures to his will. Now it is a great mistake to suppose that in Shakspeare's time a will was a "legal document" for the signature of which solemn formalities were required. So far was this from being the case that a will in those days was not even required to be signed at all. A will of personalty might even have been verbal (or nuncupative as it was called) if made by a testator *in extremis* before witnesses and afterwards reduced to writing.¹ For written wills of personalty no witnesses were required, and if the will was written in the testator's hand, though neither signed nor sealed, and though there were no witnesses present, it was good on proof of the handwriting. Even if the will were in another man's hand and not signed by the testator, it was good on proof that the writing was according to the testator's instructions and approved by him. As to wills of lands they were required, by 32 Henry VIII, c. 1, and 34 Henry VIII, c. 5, to be in writing, but it was sufficient if the will was put in writing by the testator, or another with his privity and direction, without any other execution. So, too, if notes or instructions were taken by the testator for his will, and it was reduced into form pursuant to such instructions in the life of the testator, though it was never read or shown to him, it was sufficient. No particular form was required for a will. Thus notes or memoranda written from the testator's mouth by a physican or scrivener were good if afterwards executed.²

It is clear, therefore, that it was not really necessary that Shakspeare's will should have been signed at all. Why it should have been signed in the Old English

¹ Such a will was made by John Hall, Shakspeare's son-in-law. (See H.-P. II, 61.)

² See among many authorities, Comyn's Digest, *Estates by Devise*, E. i.

hand instead of the Italian, if Shakspeare was really in the habit of using the Italian script, I am at a loss to conceive.¹

Those who deny the Stratfordian authorship are frequently charged with fanaticism. What is fanaticism? It is the madness which seizes upon the worshipper at the shrine. Such it appears to me is the mental aberration of those Shakespearialaters who shrink from no hypothesis, however preposterous, in order to maintain the worship of their idol. The old gospel harmonists must really look to their laurels. They are being beaten, in their own line, by the Stratfordian apologists of to-day.

And, now that we are upon this part of the subject, let us here stop to ponder on a fact that may well give us pause. 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—two to deeds and three to his will.² 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 "Shakspeare." I do not wish to delay over this question

¹ The words "by me" in Shakspeare's third will signature, of which Mr. Lee gives a facsimile, are, as we are told, also in the testator's handwriting. If he had habitually used the "Italian script" why should he not have employed it here? (See Lee's *Life*, p. 233.)

² See as to this p. 52. I would point out here that the negative evidence against the Stratfordian authorship is cumulative. It must be judged as a whole. A very small strain is sufficient to break one horse-hair, but a large number of horse-hairs combined together to form a rope will support a very heavy weight.

here, so I need, perhaps, only make appeal to Mr. Spedding, whom orthodox Shakespeareans cite as infallible when it suits their purpose to do so. In no known case, writes Mr. Spedding, did the reputed poet ever write his name as "Shakespeare."¹ "The name of Shakespeare is spelt [viz. in the MS. referred to] in every case as it was always printed in those days, and not as he himself in any known case ever wrote it." I will add, however, the testimony of Malone, perhaps the acutest of Shakespearean critics, who had the advantage of inspecting the signatures when they were much less faded than they are now. "In the signature of his name subscribed to his Will certainly the letter *a* is not to be found in the second syllable." Further, "I suspect that what was formerly supposed to be the letter *a* over his autograph was only a coarse and broad mark of a contraction."²

Let us now return to Shakspeare's assumed education at the Stratford Free School. Whether he went there at the age of seven, or at a later age, it is at least agreed on all hands that he was removed at the age of thirteen, if not earlier. Let us first turn to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps. "The defective classical education of the poet is not, however, to be attributed to the conductors of the local seminary, for enough of Latin was taught to enable the more advanced pupils to display familiar correspondence in that language. It was really owing to his being removed from school long before the usual age, his father requiring his assistance in one of the branches of the Henley Street business. . . . John Shakespeare's circumstances had begun to decline in the year 1577, and, in all probability, he removed the future dramatist from school when the latter was about thirteen, allowing Gilbert, then between ten and eleven, to continue his studies." To the same effect writes Mr. Lee. "His father's financial difficulties grew steadily,

¹ See Spedding's preface to *A Conference of Pleasure*.

² As to the spelling of the name see note at end of this chapter.

and they caused his removal from school at an unusually early age. Probably in 1577, when he was thirteen, he was enlisted by his father in an effort to restore his decaying fortunes."¹ Aubrey, who at Shakspeare's death was ten years old, wrote: "His father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he killed a calf he would do it in high style, and make a speech." "It is possible," comments Mr. Lee, "that John's ill luck at the period compelled him to confine himself to this occupation, which in happier days formed only one branch of his industry." "All that can prudently be said," writes Mr. H.-Phillipps, "is that the inclination of the testimonies leans towards the belief that John Shakspeare, following the ordinary usage of the tradesmen of the locality in binding their children to special occupations, eventually apprenticed his eldest son to a butcher. That appellation was sometimes given to persons who, without keeping meat shops, killed cattle and pigs for others, and as there is no telling how many adjuncts the worthy glover had to his legitimate business, it is very possible that the lad may have served his articles under his own father. . . . It is scarcely possible that he (Aubrey) would have given the story about the calf if he had not been told that the poet himself had followed the occupation." Moreover we have the testimony of one Dowdall who visited Stratford in 1693. "The clarke that showd me this church is above eighty years old, he says that Shake-

¹ "What cannot be doubted," writes Professor Dowden, "is that his father had passed from wealth to comparative poverty. In 1578 he effected a large mortgage on the estate of Asbies; when he tendered payment in the following year it was refused until other sums due had been repaid; the money designed for the redemption of Asbies had been obtained by the sale of his wife's reversionary interest in the Snitterfield property. His taxes were lightened, nor was he always able to pay those which were still claimed . . . he fell into debt and was tormented with legal proceedings." In 1586 a distress was issued against his goods, but none were found. Later he was reported as one of those "who come not to church for fear of debt."

speare was formerly in this towne bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he ran from his master to London and there was received into the playhouse as a serviture, and by this meanes had an opportunity to be what he afterward prov'd." Finally the story is accepted as true by Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, who find that "the Stratford tradition preserved by Aubrey that Shakespeare assisted his father in this business (of a butcher) is confirmed by a minute detail. 'When he killed a *calf*,' says Aubrey. The lad would not yet be old enough to slaughter an ox, but would be fully up to a calf"! After this brilliant bit of criticism who can possibly doubt the veracity of the calf-killing tradition?¹

Assuming, then, in accordance with tradition, that William Shakspeare was sent to the Free School, it appears that he could only have enjoyed such advantages as it may be supposed to have provided for a period of five or six years at the outside. He was then withdrawn and, as it seems, put to calf-slaughtering. How otherwise he occupied himself between that time and his marriage at the age of eighteen we have not the remotest idea. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps appears to think it extremely fortunate that no more school education was provided for him. "Although the information at present accessible does not enable us to determine the exact natures of Shakespeare's occupations from his fourteenth to his eighteenth year, that is to say, from 1577 to 1582, there can be no hesitation in concluding that during that animated and receptive period of life he was mercifully released from what, to a spirit like his, must have been the deleterious monotony of a school education. *Whether he passed those years as a butcher or a wool-dealer does not greatly matter.*" I

¹ "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there." We shall be told that this is, "doubtless," a reminiscence of the poet's early days! (Since this note was in print I find that Mr. Henry Davey finds reminiscences of Shakspeare's "slaughter-house experiences" in *Lucrece*, stanza 250. See the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 277.)

am tempted to add here the note of admiration which Mr. Phillipps has omitted, but it is sufficient to say that here again there is abundant food for marvel and meditation.

I have hitherto said nothing of what Shakspeare may be supposed to have learnt during those five or six supposed years at the Free School in the little squalid town of Stratford. But this is such an important matter that I must reserve its consideration for the next chapter. Meantime we may briefly continue the narrative of his life at Stratford so far as we can collect it from the extremely meagre records that have come down to us.

It appears that there was in Shottery (a hamlet in the parish of Old Stratford) a "husbandman" of the name of Richard Hathaway, who died in 1582 (his will was proved July 9th, 1582) possessed of house and land "two and a half virgates," and who by his will left, *inter alia*, the sum of £6 13s. 4d. (representing probably about £50 of our money at the present day) to his eldest daughter Agnes, "to be paid at the day of her marriage." Agnes and Anne, we are told, were in the sixteenth century alternative spellings of the same Christian name, and, says Mr. Lee, "there is little doubt that the daughter 'Agnes' of Richard Hathaway's will became, within a few months of Richard Hathaway's death, Shakespeare's [i.e. Shakspeare's] wife." The bridegroom was little more than eighteen and a half years old; the bride was his senior by eight years. There was, it appears, good cause for hastening the marriage ceremony, for within six months a daughter was born, who, on May 26th, 1583, was baptized at Stratford Parish Church in the name of Susanna.¹

¹ Mr. Lee's *Life* may be consulted on the subject of Shakspeare's marriage. It is a curious fact that according to an entry in the Bishop of Worcester's registry a licence was issued on November 27th (the day before the signing of what is known as "the bond against impediments," executed to guarantee the Bishop against all liability should a lawful impediment to Shakspeare's hurried marriage be subsequently disclosed) authorising the marriage of William Shakespeare with one Anne Whateley, of Temple Grafton, so

possibly
important.

"Anne Hathaway's greater burden of years," writes Mr. Lee, "and the likelihood that the poet was forced into marrying her by her friends, were not circumstances of happy augury. To both these unpromising features was added, in the poet's case, the absence of a means of livelihood, and his course of life in the years that immediately followed implies that he bore his domestic ties with impatience. Early in 1585 twins were born to him, a son (Hamnet) and a daughter (Judith); both were baptized on February 2nd. All the evidence points to the conclusion (which the fact that he had no more children confirms) that in the later months of the year (1585) he left Stratford, and that, although he was never wholly estranged from his family, he saw little of wife or children for eleven years."

Whether, then, it was his wife's age or her temper or her too opulent fecundity which drove Shakspeare from his native town it is impossible to say. Another reason has been found in his alleged prosecution by Sir Thomas Lucy for killing deer in his park. That old poaching story is accepted by Mr. Lee as "a credible tradition," and is thus related by Nicholas Rowe, the first who attempted to write a Life of "Shakespeare."

that, if this be another William Shakespeare, it seems that two persons of that name were on two successive days not only arranging with the Bishop's official to marry, but also engaged, as Mr. Lee says, "in more elaborate and expensive forms of procedure than were habitual to the humble ranks of contemporary society." He adds, however, that "the Worcester diocese was honeycombed with Shakespeares of all degrees of gentility," and concludes that the husband of Anne Whateley was "another of the numerous William Shakespeares who abounded in the diocese." A curious coincidence this! Mr. G. C. Bompas, after noting the fact that "to hurry on his marriage with Anne Hathaway, two friends of her father (who had lately died) took the unusual step of giving a bond in the Worcester registry on the 28th November, 1582, which enabled the marriage to take place immediately, with only one publication of banns," writes as to Anne Whateley's licence, "the coincidence of time, and the sudden and unusual pressing on of Anne Hathaway's marriage, leave little room for doubt that, but for her friends' interference, Shakspeare would have deserted Anne Hathaway and married another woman; nor does this disagree with his after conduct to his wife."—*The Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 10.

"He had by a misfortune common enough to young fellows fallen into ill company, and, among them, some, that made a frequent practice of deer stealing, engaged him with them more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought somewhat too severely, and in order to avenge that ill-usage he made a ballad upon him, and though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire and shelter himself in London."

Whether this story be true or false seems to me to be a matter of much indifference. It has found favour with the Stratfordians because, by assuming that Shakspeare subsequently turned Sir Thomas Lucy into Mr. Justice Shallow, they get that great *desideratum* a supposed connection between Player Shakspeare and the author of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Slender, it will be remembered, says of his Cousin Shallow's claim to write himself *armigero*, "all his successors gone before him have done it, and all his ancestors that come after him may; they may give the dozen white luses in their coat." Shallow observes, "It is an old coat"; upon which Sir Hugh Evans remarks, "The dozen white louses do become an old coat well. It agrees well, passant, it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love." Whereupon Shallow makes the enigmatical comment, "The luce is the fresh fish, the salt fish is an old coat."¹ Now inasmuch as we learn of Geffray Lord Lucy that "he did bear gules three lucies hauriant argent," it has been assumed that in Justice Shallow "Shakespeare" had a hit at some member of the Lucy family. It may,

¹ Possibly this means that the "old coat" had "a very ancient and fish-like smell"! Perhaps there is a pun on "coat" and "goat." The old coat *olet hircum!*

possibly, be so, but if the fact be granted it can hardly be said to raise a presumption in favour of the truth of the poaching story; indeed, as several critics have pointed out, it is quite possible that the tradition itself grew out of the scene in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

There is, however, one great objection to the story, which is that the Charlecote deer park was of later date than the sixteenth century. Mr. Lee makes light of this, for, says he, "Sir Thomas Lucy was an extensive game-preserved, and owned at Charlecote a warren in which a few harts or does¹ doubtless found an occasional

¹ This is a mistake. It should be either "bucks or does" (fallow deer), or "harts (or stags) or hinds" (red deer). A hart is a stag from its fifth year, or, as Amoretto says in *The Returne from Parnassus* (in a passage with which Mr. Lee is doubtless familiar): "Your Hart is the first year a Calfe, the second year a Brochet, the third year a Spade, the fourth yeare a Stagge, the fift yeare a great Stagge, the sixth yeare a Hart." But if Shakspeare stole any deer it was "doubtless" (to use Mr. Lee's adverb) a buck. (See *Malone*, Vol. II, pp. 145-7.) It seems clear that Sir T. Lucy never had any deer at all at Charlecote. And what does Mr. Lee mean by "a warren"? In popular language a warren is merely an enclosed place for the breeding of hares or rabbits. But what the law calls a *Free Warren* is a very different thing. It is a right, which need not be associated with the ownership of the soil (being what the law calls an "incorporeal hereditament"), to pursue and take "beasts and birds of warren" on the lands subject to this franchise. This right must be claimed by grant from the Crown, or by prescription from which a lost grant may be presumed. I am not aware that there is any evidence to show that Sir Thomas Lucy had a right of Free Warren, nor do I see how it affects the case if it was so. Deer, except roe deer, were not "beasts of warren." Those who wish to read about forests, chases, parks, and warrens in *Plantagenet times* should consult *Select Pleas of the Forest*, edited for the Selden Society by G. J. Turner, of Lincoln's Inn, barrister-at-law. I believe I have correctly stated the law as it stood in the time of Elizabeth. "The word 'park'," as Mr. Turner tells us, "was applied to a district of land enclosed with a paling" (p. 115), and in a note we are informed that "the word 'imparcare' means to impound or to put in an enclosure," but that "as a general rule 'a park' was used of an enclosure expressly made for deer" (p. 116). As to certain mistakes made by Manwood in his *Treatise on the Forest Laws* (1598), and as to roe deer being made beasts of the warren, see p. 10 *et seq.* Manwood, by the way, tells us that whereas the Hart and the Hind were "beasts of the forest," Bucks and Does were "beasts of the chase." Mr. Lee has married a "beast of the forest" to a "beast of the chase," and appears to think that both are "beasts of warren"!

home. "Doubtless" is, as we shall see, Mr. Lee's favourite adverb. But let us examine this statement about the "few harts or does" a little further. Mr. Lee prays in aid "the independent testimony of Archdeacon Davies," who was vicar of Saperton, Gloucester, late in the seventeenth century, to the effect that Shakspeare "was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits, particularly from Sir Thomas Lucy, who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country to his great advancement." Mr. Lee then tells us that "the law of Shakespeare's day (5 Elizabeth, c. 21) punished deer stealers with three months' imprisonment and the payment of thrice the amount of the damage done" (p. 25).

This, however, is an inaccurate statement and suggests that the writer's well-known industry had not extended to the careful perusal of the statute in question. The Act, 5 Elizabeth, c. 21, after reciting that "The Queen's Majesty and her most noble Progenitors as also the Noblemen Gentlemen and divers other persons of great dominions, Lordships, Manors and Possessions within this realm, have of ancient and longtime . . . imparked, invironed and inclosed many parcels of their said demesns, soils, grounds, and possessions for the breeding cherishing and increase as well of red as fallow deer within their several parks and inclosures," proceeds to enact (Section 3) "that if any person or persons at any time by night or by day wrongfully or unlawfully break or enter into any *Park impaled or any other several ground closed with wall, pale, or hedge, and used for the keeping, breeding, and cherishing of deer*, and so wrongfully hunt, drive or chase out, or take, kill, or slay any deer *within such impaled Park or closed ground with wall pale or other inclosure, and used for deer as aforesaid*, and thereof be lawfully convicted at the suit of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, or the party grieved, as is aforesaid, shall suffer imprisonment of his or

their bodies by the space of three months, and shall yield, and pay to the party grieved his treble damages, and after the said three months expired, shall find sufficient sureties for his or their good abearing for the space of seven years after."

By Section 4 it is provided "that this act or anything therein contained extend not to any Park or inclosed ground hereafter to be made and used for deer without the grant or licence of our Sovereign Lady the Queen her heirs etc."

It is clear, therefore, that this statute applied only to hunting or killing deer within an impaled park used for the keeping and breeding of deer, and as it is admitted that there was no such park at Charlecote in Shakspeare's time, it is obvious that these provisions could not apply to his supposed case.

Even in later times it is clear from Section 4 that the Act had no application except in the case of a deer-park enclosed by licence of the Queen. "If, after all, it shall be said," writes Malone, "that Sir Thomas Lucy though he had no park at Charlecote might yet, without any royal leave, have had some deer in his grounds, and that still our poet may have been guilty of the trespass which has been imputed to him, the objector must be told that no such grounds were protected by the common law, every one having right to kill therein all beasts of chase as *ferae naturae*, and that as the penalties of the statute of Elizabeth, already mentioned, as well as preceding statutes on this subject, extended only to offences committed in a legal park, our author, had he been guilty of the act imputed to him, would not have fallen within the peril of the law. He might, indeed, have been proceeded against by an action of trespass, but it never has been alleged that any civil suit was instituted against Shakespeare on this ground. In truth, the objection which I have now stated is scarcely worth considering, for of

keeping deer in unenclosed grounds no example can be produced." (Vol. II, p. 14.)¹

So much for the "few harts and does"! But what of Archdeacon Davies with his stories of frequent whippings? Well, in the first place, as Malone points out, all this must have happened, if at all, some years after Shakspeare's marriage, and after his wife had borne him three children. Moreover, there is very good evidence to show that there had been no quarrel with Sir Thomas Lucy up to January, 1583-4, at any rate (Malone, ed. Boswell, Vol. II, p. 121). "From Mr. Davies's account of this transaction, it should seem that he either thought the trespass which, according to him, consisted in purloining not only venison but rabbits, was committed at so early a period of life, that Sir Thomas Lucy could, with propriety, punish the youthful trespassers by corporal chastisement, or, supposing them to have been adult, that

¹ It has sometimes been said that deer were the subject of larceny at common law, but this is a mistake. Deer were and are animals *ferae naturae* in which the common law recognises no right of property, and where there is no property there can be no larceny. It is true that where deer were in a forest, or the "purlieu" of a forest, they belonged to the owner of the forest, but if they escaped out of the forest the first finder might capture them. The law as to this is thus stated in Coke's *Institutes* (Bk. IV, chap. LXXIII). "When the king's game of the forest do range out of the forest (and purlieu if any be) they belong not to the king, but are at their natural liberty *et occupanti conceduntur*," i.e. as Mr. Justice Ridley explained, in the case of *Threlkeld v. Smith* (1901, 2 K.B. 531), "the person who found them might make himself owner of them." The general effect of the law on this subject was thus stated by the same learned judge. "A person who killed one of the animals outside the forest did not break the laws of the forest; he may have broken the civil law by taking something which did not belong to him, but he was not liable to criminal proceedings. Within the forest the owner's right was absolute; within the purlieu if he caught the animals he might kill them, but he was not entitled to hunt them; outside the purlieu he had no rights at all as owner of the forest." Accordingly it was held in the recent case above cited that a person who kills and carries away a deer usually kept in a forest when it is outside the limits of the forest and upon the land of a third person cannot be convicted, under Section 14 of the Larceny Act, of being in unlawful possession thereof. Had deer, even on enclosed land, been the subject of larceny at the common law, there would have been no

the law inflicted such a punishment. The former of these suppositions I have already shown to be highly improbable [he might have said "impossible"] and the other is equally erroneous." (*Ibid.*, p. 135.)

Finally, we ask who was this Archdeacon Davies? Well, it appears that a Mr. William Fulman had made some scrappy notes ("little more than the dates of his birth and death") on Shakspeare, and at his death in 1688 he bequeathed his papers to this Mr. Richard Davies, rector of Saperton in Gloucestershire, who seems to have added certain further notes to this effect: "Much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits particularly from Sir . . . Lucy [Mr. Lee has inserted "Thomas," but, as Malone says, he (Davies) did not even know the knight's Christian name], who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country to his great advancement, but his revenge

need of the series of statutes passed from time to time to make it criminal to take deer in "impaled Parks," etc. (see 13 Rich. II, st. 1, 13; 19 Henry VII, c. 11; 5 Elizabeth, c. 21 (above cited); 3 James I, c. 13; and 7 James I, c. 13). It will have been seen that the statute of Elizabeth did not apply to any parks, etc., inclosed after the passing of the Act without the licence of the sovereign. By 3 James I, c. 13, all then existing deer-parks were brought under similar provisions, but by a proviso apparently added at the last moment, the Act was only to apply to offences committed by night, and there was a similar proviso to that of the Act of Elizabeth excepting parks thereafter to be made without royal licence. 7 James I, c. 13, repealed the proviso restricting the former Act to offences by night. To prevent misunderstanding I may add that if deer were closely confined, as in a paddock (e.g.), so that they might be taken at any time, they might, of course, be the subject of larceny at common law; for, as Blackstone lays it down, "It is felony by the common law to steal those animals *ferae naturae* which, being fit for the food or service of man, are either tame and known by the thief to be so, or are so confined that the owner can take them whenever he pleases." But this does not affect Shakspeare's case. It is curious that Professor Dowden falls into the same error about the law of deer-stealing, when he writes that though Sir Thomas Lucy had no park at Charlecote, "he may have had deer there"! Then he suggests, as an alternative, that the deer-stealing may have been from Fulbroke Park some miles away from Charlecote, but Mr. Lee (p. 25) shows that this explanation of the story is a "pure invention." I quote from Professor Dowden's *Introduction to Shakespeare* (p. 13).

was so great that he is his Justice Clodpate, and calls him a great man, and that in allusion to his name bore three lowses rampant for his arms." The annotator adds, "he died a papist."¹ All this is just a little mixed. It appears to have been written some time between 1690 and 1708, that is, seventy-five or eighty-five years after Shakspere's death.

It seems to me, then, that Malone, who had no heretical theories of authorship to contend against and desired only to discover the truth (though like other "Shakespeare" biographers when facts were wanting he drew copiously upon his own imagination), has effectually disposed of this poaching story, which I fancy most of the Stratfordians would have abandoned also, were it not for the imaginary "missing link" supplied by identifying Sir Thomas Lucy with Mr. Justice Shallow. For it can hardly be agreeable to them to suppose that the great poet of the world's admiration was an habitual stealer of deer and rabbits, and that he was frequently in prison and oft whipt at the age of twenty and twenty-one. We may, however, be well content to leave them to fight this matter out among themselves.

As to the lampoon which Shakspere is said to have composed against Sir Thomas Lucy "in revenge," here, too, there is some little difficulty. "Thinking he was prosecuted too severely," says Rowe, "he revenged himself on his prosecutor by making a ballad on him." But, says Malone, "if he was indicted² this certainly was not a likely mode to conciliate the Knight of Charlecote, and to induce him to release the recognisance for good behaviour, to which the law entitled him. [See the provisions of the Act.] On the other hand, if he was only threatened with

¹ Quoted by H.-P., Vol. II, p. 71. See *post*, ch. vii, on "The Traditional Shakspere."

² But if indicted it must have been under 5 Elizabeth, c. 21, and this, as I have shown, is really out of the question.

a prosecution, a lampoon would not contribute to mitigate his adversary's wrath, or to defend the criminal from its effects. We are therefore compelled to suppose that our poet did not choose to abide the consequences of the prosecution (which is hardly consistent with thinking he was prosecuted too severely), and before it could be commenced fled from his native country, leaving it to some friend to affix his verses on the *park gate* of the Lord of Charlecote," for such is the tale which has been transmitted.

With regard to the lampoon itself, there are some very low lines beginning "A parliament member, a justice of peace" which have really as much claim to be accepted as Shakspeare's as the poaching story has to be accepted as true; the authority being an old man who lived near Stratford and died in 1703, i.e. before Rowe's *Life of Shakespeare* was published. They make merry over the theme that "Lucy is lousy," and are such as might well have been written by a poaching butcher's apprentice in such a place as Stratford-on-Avon then was, but, inasmuch as they could hardly have been penned by the great bard who was not of an age but for all time, they have naturally not been accepted as the work of "Shakespeare."¹

¹ They will be found in *Malone's Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 565. But the real truth of the matter seems to be that, as Mrs. Stopes writes, "Shallow was not intended to represent Sir Thomas Lucy . . . and that the whole story was built upon a misreading of Shakespeare's plays and a misunderstanding of his art" (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, ch. ii, and *Fortnightly Review*, Feb. 1903. See also an article on "Justice Shallow," by Mr. John Hutchinson, in *Baconiana*, Jan. 1908).

NOTE TO CHAPTER I

THE NAMES "SHAKSPERE" AND "SHAKE-SPEARE"

The dedicatory pages of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594) were subscribed "William Shakespeare." The title-page of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598) bore the name of "W. Shake-spere." This is exhibited by Mr. Sidney Lee as "the earliest title-page bearing Shakespeare's name." But in the same year appeared editions of *Richard II* and *Richard III* by "William Shake-speare," and subsequently the plays were published under the name of "Shakespeare," and very frequently with the hyphen "Shake-speare." So, too, the *Sonnets* were published (1609) as *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, and that curious poem *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (1601) was subscribed "William Shake-speare."¹

Now, the family of William Shakspere of Stratford wrote their name in many different ways—some sixty, I believe, have been noted, such as Shaksper, Shakysper, Shaxper, Shaxpur, Shaxysper, Shacksper, Shaxpere, Shakspere, Shaksbere, Shakspear, etc. etc., but the form "Shakespeare" seems never to have been employed by them. As Mr. Spedding truly says in his essay on *The Conference of Pleasure*, Shakspere of Stratford never so wrote his name "in any known case." In 1573, when his father John was witness to a conveyance, the name was spelt by Walter Roche, ex-master of the Stratford Grammar School, as "Shaxbere."²

¹ In the forty-one title-pages exhibited by Judge Willis I find Shake-speare with the hyphen eighteen times. Judge Willis thinks the hyphen "only an accident—a fancy of the printer"!

² Richard Quiney, writing to Shakspere, calls him "Mr Wm. Shackspere" (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 151), while his brother-in-law, Abraham Sturley, writing to him on January 24th, 1597-8, speaks of "our countriman, Mr. Shaksper." (H.-P., Vol. II, p. 57.) "Countryman," I take it, refers to the fact that they were of the same county. Thomas Whittington, of Shottery, from whom Anne Shakspere borrowed money, writes the name "Shaxpere." (H.-P., Vol. II, p. 186.) The marriage bond of Nov. 28th, 1582, is made between William Shagspere and Anne Hathwey.

(H.-P., Vol. II, p. 232.) Roche was an educated man, and ought to have known, if anybody did, how the name was spelt. How lamentable it is, we may reflect in passing, that neither he nor Hunt, both of whom may have had William Shakspeare under them at the Free Grammar School, has left us a single word concerning their highly distinguished pupil!

In the extracts from the accounts of the revels at Court in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I, published by the Shakespeare Society in 1842, are statements to the effect that on St. Stephen's night, December 26th, 1604, "a play called Mesur for Mesur" was acted at Whitehall, and on Innocents' night, December 28th, *The Plaie of Errors*, and in each case, under the title of "the Poets which mayd the plaies," is given the name "Shaxberd." On Shrove Sunday, 1605, we are told that "a play of the Merchant of Venis," also by "Shaxberd," was acted, and repeated at the King's command on Shrove Tuesday. But no confidence can be placed in these documents, which, at any rate in their present form, appear to be undoubted forgeries.¹ It is a remarkable fact that Shakespeare's name does not appear elsewhere, in any form, in the accounts of the revels, nor at all in the Stationers' Registry. Philip Henslowe, the theatrical manager, who built the Rose Theatre on the Bankside, kept a diary which has been preserved, and contains minute information respecting the history and condition of the English drama from 1591 to 1609, and the names of many dramatists employed by him, and the names of plays identical with or very similar to the titles of Shakespeare's plays. Yet it nowhere mentions Shakespeare's name.² The player himself appears to have spelt his name "Shakspere." Malone says (Boswell's edition, 1821, Vol. II, p. 1, note): "That he himself wrote his name without the middle *e* (i.e. Shakspere, not Shakespere) appears from his autograph, of which a facsimile will be found in a subsequent page. With respect to the last syllable of his name, the people of Stratford appear to

¹ Mr. E. A. Bond, Keeper of the MS. Department of the British Museum, saw serious reason for doubting their genuineness, and they are evidently rejected by Mr. Gollancz, since he writes in his preface to *Measure for Measure*, "No direct reference to the play has been found anterior to its publication in 1623, nor is there any record of its performance before the Restoration." See further H.-P., Vol. II, p. 161.

² See *post*, chap. xii, "The Silence of Philip Henslowe."

have generally written the name *Shakspere* or *Shackspere*, and I have now great doubts whether he did not frequently write the final syllable so himself, for I suspect that what was formerly supposed to be the letter *a* over his autograph above mentioned was only a coarse and broad mark of contraction, and *in the signature of his name subscribed to his will* (as a very ingenious anonymous correspondent observes to me) certainly the letter 'a' is not to be found in the second syllable. It should be remembered that in all words in which *per* occurred in old English writing, this contraction (*p^r*) was generally substituted. . . . In some of the writings of the borough I have found the name written at length *Shaksp^r*, which was probably the vulgar pronunciation." Mr. Sidney Lee writes (p. 233): "The ink of the first signature which Shakespeare appended to his will has now faded almost beyond recognition, but that it was 'Shakspere' may be inferred from the facsimile made by George Steevens in 1776." He wishes us to believe, however, that the third signature is "Shakespeare"; but apart from the fact that, even in that age of uncertain nomenclature, a testator would probably have adhered to the same form for his three will signatures, we must remember that Malone inspected the signatures about a hundred years before Mr. Lee examined them, when the ink had not, as now, "faded almost beyond recognition," and, moreover, that not having any particular bias in favour of "Shakspeare" or "Shakespeare," he was not so likely to allow his imagination to decide according to his preconceptions.¹ How difficult it is to read the will signatures at the present day may be inferred from the fact that, as Mr. Lee tells us, the second and third signatures "have been variously read as 'Shakspere,' 'Shakspeare,' and 'Shakespeare,'" truly a fine latitude of choice! However, there seems to be no doubt that the signature to the purchase-deed of March 10, 1612-13, is "William Shakspere." I think the same may be said of the mortgage-deed of the following day, March 11, 1612-13, and the signatures are so given by Mr. H.-Phillipps (Vol. II, pp. 34 and 36), though here again some would "inter-

¹ Ireland, the clever forger, was careful to write the name "Shakspere," which is the form that appears in the entries of the baptism of William Shakspere's children.

pret" (to use Mr. Lee's expression) "Shakspeare" rather than "Shakspere." But it really seems to be doing scant justice to William of Stratford to make him thus vary his signature from day to day, to say nothing of his supposed "ringing the changes" on the same day in his three will signatures. It will, of course, be remembered that these five signatures and, perhaps, the words "by me" in the will are the only specimens of Shakspere's handwriting that have come down to us. Mr. William H. Edwards thinks that the name of the Stratford player was written "Shaksper," pointing out that "the German *r* carries a flourish that has sometimes been taken for 'an *e*'; and with this may be compared what Malone writes as to the usual contraction "where *per* occurred." "The use of the German *r*," we are told, "was common among scribes during the reigns of Elizabeth and James; but that it was also used half a century later can be seen in the facsimile of John Milton's contract with Samuel Symons for the sale of the manuscript of *Paradise Lost*, given in Pickering's edition of Milton's works, Vol. I. In this the German *r* repeatedly occurs in such words as 'whereby,' 'whereof,' and 'were,' followed by a distinct *e* of the same species as the one which precedes the *r*, in these same words. Inasmuch as nearly, if not quite, all the mentions of John Shaksper's name occur in the records, and were therefore written by scribes, the larger part of them undoubtedly ending in *r*, it is to be presumed that these sprawling characters spoken of were intended for *r* also," for (as the writer had already observed) "a German *r*, when made separately, naturally carries a flourish at the extremity, as seen in Malone's figure of that letter accompanying his facsimile of Shaksper's signature to the deed of 1612." (See *Shaksper not Shakespeare*, by W. H. Edwards, chap. 1, and the facsimiles there given and in chap. xv).¹ However, whether the Stratford player wrote his name "Shaksper" or "Shakspere" does not seem very material. It is more important to observe that he did not write it "Shakespeare," and still less "Shake-speare."

At the same time we must bear in mind that the name which

¹ The scribe who wrote John Shaksper's signature for him, against the mark of "a pair of dividers," seems to have written "Shaksper." See facsimile, Lee, p. 5.

appears in the body of the conveyance and of the mortgage bearing his signature is "Shakespeare," while "Shackspeare" appears in the will, prepared, as we must presume, by or under the directions of Francis Collyns, the Stratford solicitor, who was one of the witnesses thereto. The legal usage, however, was not altogether uniform, for in the case of the conveyance of January, 1596-7, from John Shakspere to George Badger, we have "Johannes Shakespere" in the body of the deed, and William and John Combe convey land in 1602 to William Shakespere of Stratford-on-Avon. Still we may readily admit that the form "Shakespeare" has the sanction of "legal," and certainly of "literary" use which Mr. Lee claims for it (p. 234); indeed, if we may include the law with literature, we may perhaps say with Mr. Edwin Reed that "literature had an absolute monopoly of it."

The forger of the signature in the copy of Florio's translation of *Montaigne's Essays*, which "was purchased for a large sum by the trustees of the British Museum" (as Knight tells us), certainly thought that the (supposed) poet wrote "Shakspere." (See the facsimile prefixed by Charles Knight to Vol. I of the *Comedies*.) Knight, both here (p. 3) and afterwards (p. 78), calls this "Shakspeare's *undoubted* autograph." Mr. Lee writes (p. 233): "The genuineness of that signature is disputable." When in 1904 Mr. Tree brought out the *Tempest* at His Majesty's Theatre, he had prepared, as is his wont, for the instruction of the audience, a booklet giving a sketch of the play and its history. The compiler (a not unknown journalist, as I understand) here took occasion to inform us "that Shakespeare was acquainted with these essays [of Montaigne] we may be certain, for a copy of the book with *his name attached* is now in the British Museum." Knowing Mr. Tree's scrupulous regard for accuracy, I wrote to him to point out that this statement was altogether indefensible, since the "Florio" signature was evidently a forgery. This caused inquiries to be made at the British Museum, with the result that Sir Edward Maunde Thompson wrote (30 November, 1904): "There is no doubt that the Shakespeare signature to which you refer is a forgery." Such are the humours of Shakespearean controversy. A signature which an eminent critic of the last generation pronounced "an *undoubted* autograph," and upon which a fine

superstructure of argument has been built, is dismissed by one of the highest authorities of to-day as an undoubted forgery. But, in truth, it did not want an expert to tell us this. One might safely come to Sir Maunde Thompson's conclusion by an inspection of the facsimile only. Still, I cannot help thinking that had the "Florio" signature been written "Shakespeare" there would have been a struggle on the part of the Stratfordian critics to maintain its authenticity!¹

And now a word upon the name "Shakespeare." That in this form, and more especially with a hyphen, "Shake-speare," the word makes an excellent *nom de plume* is obvious. As old Thomas Fuller remarks, the name suggests *Martial* in its warlike sound, "*Hasti-vibrans* or *Shake-speare*." It is, of course, further suggestive of Pallas Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, for Pallas also was a spear-shaker (Pallas ἀπὸ τοῦ πάλλειν τὸ δόρυ), and all will remember Ben Jonson's verses prefixed to the First Folio, in which he speaks of Shake-speare's "well tornéd and true filéd lines,"

In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.

"The earliest allusion to Shakespeare by *name*," writes Mr. Israel Gollancz in his preface to *The Rape of Lucrece* (Temple Shakespeare Edition, p. vi.), "occurs in connection with a reference to his *Lucrece* in the commencing verses of a laudatory address prefixed to 'Willobie his Avisas,' 1594." The lines are:—

Yet Tarquyne pluckt his glistering grape,
And Shake-speare paints poor Lucrece rape.

So that Shakespeare is first introduced to us in his spear-shaking and hyphenated form! These lines, be it observed, are of the same date as the publication of *Lucrece*, which was in the year following that which saw "the first heir of my invention" (*Venus and Adonis*) given to the public.

Pallas, the *hasti-vibrans*, who sprang fully armed from the

¹ Mr. Israel Gollancz, in his preface to *The Tempest* ("Temple Classics" edition), actually states that "Shakespeare's own copy of this work, with his autograph, is among the treasures of the British Museum"!

head of Jove, brings to our minds Francis Mere's *Palladis Tamia*, or *Wit's Treasury*, the *Palladis Palatium* of William Wrednot, etc. It has been suggested that Jonson's "Crispinus or Crispinas" may be an allusion to "Shake-speare," for *crispo* means to brandish (a spear, e.g.), as in Virgil (*Æneid*, XII, 165):—

Bina manu lato crispans hastilia ferro.

Nor do I think this suggestion in any way negatived by the fact that Jonson puts the hyphen after the three first letters of the name so as to make "a face crying in chief . . . between three thorns *pungent*." That was part of "the humour of it."¹

¹ As to this see chap. xv. p. 460.

CHAPTER II

THE SCHOOLING OF SHAKSPERE

THAT Shakspeare attended the Free School at Stratford is, as I have said, an assumption only, though by no means an improbable one; but at what age he went there and how long he stayed are mere matters of guess-work. He may have attended the school for two or three years only. That he was there for more than five years, at the outside, is very unlikely. Assuming, however, that he was at the school for a short time, what was he likely to have learnt there?

Here we are brought face to face with a great diversity of opinion among the Stratfordians. Like the members of the various churches they unite in pouring contempt upon the infidel, but they are hopelessly divided in the matter of their own faith.

There are two distinct schools with regard to Shakspeare's supposed education. The elder, clinging to tradition and citing Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek," postulate a man of little or no education, but of prodigious genius, writing as it were by plenary inspiration. The other school appeals to the poems and plays themselves as showing that their author must have been a man of wide reading and almost universal culture, and, therefore, brushing aside the testimony of all the earlier writers, they make all assumptions necessary for providing William Shakspeare of Stratford with such education as their theory requires.

Let us, first, see what Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who until

Mr. Lee published his recent work, was generally looked upon as the greatest of Shakespearean authorities, has to tell us of the education likely to be provided at the Stratford Grammar School. "The best authorities unite in telling us that the poet imbibed a certain amount of Latin at school, but that his acquaintance with that language was, throughout his life, of a very limited character. It is not probable that scholastic learning was ever congenial to his tastes, and it should be recollected that books in most parts of the country were then of very rare occurrence. *Lily's Grammar* and a few classical works, chained to the desks of the free schools, were probably the only volumes of the kind to be found at Stratford-on-Avon. Exclusive of Bibles, Church Services, Psalters, and education manuals, there were certainly not more than two or three dozen books, if so many, in the whole town."¹

Now this account certainly harmonises not only with what we know as to the illiteracy of the inhabitants of Stratford, but also with all the early traditions concerning Shakspeare's schooling. Thus Rowe, to whom I have already referred, writes: "His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that, though he was his eldest son, he could give him no better education than his own employment. He had bred him, 'tis true, for some time at a free-school, where 'tis probable he acquired that little Latin he was master of; but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language."

So, too, Fuller, in his *History of the Worthies of England* (1662). "He was an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, *poeta non fit sed nascitur*, one is not made but born a poet. Indeed, his learning was very little, so that, as

¹ On this matter see note to chap. III. p. 55.

Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so nature itself was all the art which was used upon him."

All the old tradition is to the same effect,¹ and most important of all, of course, is Jonson's well-known line, "And, though thou had'st small Latin, and less Greek." Jonson, at any rate, was in a position to speak from personal knowledge, and if this testimony is to be explained away as not seriously written, then are we justified in applying the same methods of interpretation to his other utterances as published in the Folio of 1623. But I shall have more to say as to that further on.²

Let us now turn to Mr. Sidney Lee on the matter of Shakspeare's education. Here we come to the more modern teaching with regard to the "learning of Shakspeare." It is seen that Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's very meagre assumptions "won't do," and that it is really making too large a demand upon human credulity (extensive though it be) to ask us to suppose that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* had no more learning than that to be obtained from "*Lily's Grammar* and a few classical works chained to the desks" of the school. Hearken, therefore, unto Mr. Lee: "The general instruction that he received was mainly confined to the Latin language and literature. From the Latin accidence, boys of the period, at schools of the type of that at Stratford, were led through conversation books like the 'Sententiae Pueriles' and *Lily's Grammar*, to the perusal of such authors as Seneca, Terence, Cicero, Virgil, Plautus, Ovid, and Horace.

¹ e.g. Sir John Denham in 1668: "Old mother wit and nature gave Shakspeare and Fletcher all they have." Chetwood in 1684: "Shakspeare said all that *Nature* could impart." Winstanley, in the same year: "Without learning" and "Never any scholar, as our Shakspeare if alive would confess." Gerard Langbaine in 1691: "He was as much a stranger to French as to Latin." See chap. VII. on "The Traditional Shakspeare."

² For the very latest interpretation of these well-known words see p. 475 n.

The eclogues of the popular renaissance poet, Mantuanus, were often preferred to Virgil's for beginners." Here it will be seen that we have given tradition and Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps the go-by altogether. Mr. Lee does not, indeed, tell us if we are to believe that the youthful Shakspeare studied *all* the authors he mentions between the ages of, say, eight and thirteen, during which we are to assume that he was at the Free School, but the passage I have quoted seems to make that demand upon our faith. I think it will be admitted that it is a pretty good assumption to make for a school of the period at such a squalid, stagnant, illiterate village as we know that Stratford was. With such an education in their midst, to be had for nothing, it is indeed sad to think of the Master Bailiff and the aldermen and burgesses who could not even write their names. But what is the evidence on which we are required to believe that this extensive Latin education was provided at the Stratford school?

Here let us turn to the latest champion of the learning of Shakspeare the Stratfordian Player. Mr. Churton Collins has published three articles in the *Fortnightly Review* (April, May and July, 1903)¹ under title "Had Shakespeare read the Greek Tragedies?" in which he has produced some very cogent evidence in favour of the contention that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have had a very extensive knowledge of the classics, not merely derived from translations, but from the study of the original works. Naturally, therefore, he has to give consideration to the question of Shakspeare's education at the Free School. As to this the late Mr. Spencer Baynes made some prodigious and very absurd assumptions. He took Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius* (1611) and Hoole's *New Discoverie of the Old Arte of Teaching Schoole* (1636) and calmly assumed that the methods and courses of study

¹ Now republished in *Studies in Shakespeare*. See Essay I, "Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar."

therein described were those also of the little Stratford Free School. Hoole's book, written twenty years after Shakspeare's death, "abounds with references to the course of instruction in the Wakefield Grammar School," so, of course, "we may accept them as a guide to the course of instruction at Stratford"! This, indeed, is quite characteristic of the ordinary style of "Shakespeare biography"; but, as Mr. Collins says, "What was prescribed by professed educational reformers, about 1611 and 1636, is hardly likely to be exactly analogous to what actually obtained in a provincial grammar school in or about 1571." No, indeed, *hardly likely to be exactly analogous!* But what is Mr. Collins's own method of procedure? "I shall therefore substitute for the curriculum prescribed by them the curriculum drawn up for Ipswich Grammar School in 1528." This, he says, "may fairly be taken as typical of the instruction provided in the best schools of Shakespeare's time." Yes; but what right has he to assume that the Stratford school was one of the "best schools" of the time? For all he knows it may have been one of the worst. And what possible right has he to select Wolsey's celebrated foundation for comparison? Can we for a moment entertain the assumption that the school at the very unimportant and, as we know, very illiterate Stratford was a school of similar character to one of the very best schools of the time? "Until his death," says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare's 'Old English' handwriting testified to his provincial education." If this "provincial education" was on a par with that provided by the best schools of the time it seems strange that its "curriculum" did not include that "Italian script" which at the time was rapidly winning its way in cultured society, and which men like Ben Jonson and Joshua Sylvester "wrote with facility"!¹ But, says Mr. Collins, "that

¹ Writing was, of course, taught in the song school, or writing school, where such existed, a very different thing from the Grammar School, "*to which,*" according to Mr. Leach, "*boys were not admitted until they had learnt*

the instruction at Stratford School was of a superior kind and included Greek is very probable. *The headmaster when Shakespeare entered the school was Walter Roche.* Roche was, or had been, a Fellow of Corpus College, Oxford, and Corpus in Roche's time—he was elected Fellow in 1558—was in point of learning and intellectual activity pre-eminent in Oxford."

Mark the words I have italicised. Mr. Collins had shortly before this written: "It may be safely assumed, *though we have no proof*, that Shakespeare received his education at the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School." He now commits himself to the unqualified statement that "the headmaster when Shakespeare entered the school was Walter Roche." Seeing that Walter Roche was succeeded in 1571 or 1572 by Thomas Hunt,¹ and that we have nothing to guide us as to the age at which Shakspeare went to school, the statement is a mere assumption and ought to have been so put. Mr. Collins himself says, "He would enter the school sometime between his eighth and ninth year." This at once brings us to 1572. Nothing is

their accidence." (*English Schools at the Reformation*, by A. F. Leach, page 105.) The masters at the grammar schools, of course, wrote the "Italian script." Thus at Chigwell, Essex, the second master was required to "write fair secretary and Roman hands." Anders, *Shakespeare's Books*, p. 10, note 2, citing Lupton's letter in the *Athenæum*, October 7th, 1876.

¹ Mr. Lee says (p. 12) that Hunt succeeded Roche in 1577. This seems to be an error. Malone (Vol. II, p. 100) says that Jenkins succeeded Hunt about 1577. So, too, Spencer Baynes, who writes: "No fewer than three [masters] held the post during the decade from 1570 to 1580. In the first two years Walter Roche, for the next five, the most important in Shakespeare's school history, Thomas Hunt, and during the last three years Thomas Jenkins were headmasters in the school." Therefore *if* Shakspeare went to the school in 1571, aged seven, he might just have seen Roche, and if he left in 1577, at the age of thirteen, he could not have seen much of Jenkins. Mrs. Stopes (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 243) gives the dates as follows: Roche 1569-70, Hunt 1571, and says, "Jenkins became master about 1577." It is very possible, therefore, and indeed probable, that Shakspeare, if he went to the Free School, saw nothing at all of Roche. This worthy was "Lanc. Fellow" in 1558. Neither he nor Hunt took an M.A. degree. About Jenkins nothing seems to be known.

known of Thomas Hunt or Thomas Jenkins who succeeded him about 1577, but Mr. Collins tells us we "may safely assume that as scholars they were not inferior to their predecessor." Well, it seems that anything may be "safely assumed" when Shakspeare's life is in question, but why on earth we should make this assumption as to the scholarship of Hunt or Jenkins, or why we should imagine that the little Stratford school was a first-class one, even if they *were* good scholars, I am at a loss to conceive! I think it would be quite as rational to assume that Roche left the school in the prime of life because he was disgusted with the place.

And now what is the curriculum complacently assumed by Mr. Collins for the Stratford Free School? "After passing out of the hands of the A.B.C.-darius, who would teach him his alphabet, he would at once begin Latin, which he would learn as we now commonly learn, for practical purposes, modern languages, that is, colloquially through questions and answers in the language itself, and by getting phrases and sentences by heart; in other words, through what is prescribed in the curricula of those times as *Sententiæ Pueriles*, *Pueriles Confabulationculæ*, and Corderius's *Colloquia*. He would at the same time be thoroughly drilled in Lily's Latin Grammar (*Brevissima Institutio seu Ratio Grammatices cognoscendæ ad omnium puerorum utilitatem præscripta*) prescribed by royal proclamation in each reign for use in every grammar school, and in construing and parsing the sentences learnt. . . . He would then proceed to such books as Erasmus's Colloquies, Mantuan's Eclogues (see *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, 2), and Cato's *Disticha*, on to such books as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Heroides*, and *Tristia*, Virgil's *Æneid* and *Georgics*, selected comedies of Plautus and Terence, and portions of Cæsar, Sallust, Cicero, and Livy."

"Pro-digious"! as the Dominie would exclaim, and the Stratford Dominie more than all others, could he only read

that passage. Many a man who has taken his "First" in classics and been a scholar of his college has not had anything like such a good grounding in Latinity as this. But it is certainly none too little if Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the *Plays* and *Poems*, as Mr. Collins himself subsequently demonstrates. Mr. Collins, however, has made one little omission. He assumes that Shakspeare entered the school between his eighth and ninth year, but he has forgotten to mention that he was taken away at the age of twelve or thirteen. I know that the Stratfordians have the habit of accepting tradition when it tends to support their theories and rejecting it when it does not, but as the only authority for saying that Shakspeare ever went to school at all rests upon tradition, and as tradition is unanimous in saying that he was withdrawn at an early age, the biographers have not felt at liberty to reject this portion of it. Mr. Lee is no exception to the rule. "His father's financial difficulties," he writes, "grew steadily and they caused his removal from school at an unusually early age." "In Ipswich Grammar School," says Mr. Collins, "there were eight classes," and I suppose he would presume that there were the same number at Stratford. Possibly; but where was poor Shakspeare when he was taken from school "at an unusually early age"? How much of this imaginary "curriculum" is he to be assumed to have gone through, I wonder!¹ I maintain, therefore, that to assume

¹ Professor Spencer Baynes gave us a list, quite to his own satisfaction, of the various books which Shakspeare must have studied in his first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth year at school respectively. Mr. H. R. D. Anders, in quoting this (*Shakespeare's Books*, p. 16) not unwisely appends a note saying, "The word 'year' used in the following sentences *should not be taken too literally* [!] At any rate Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Seneca are mentioned by Hoole and Brinsley (Baynes's authorities) as works read in the highest class, the boys of which were about fifteen years of age, or in their eighth school-year. If we suppose that Shakespeare left school at an earlier date he could scarcely have been familiar with these authors." But then, says Mr. Anders, "there is no cogent reason" for supposing that Shakspeare left school early. This is characteristic of Stratfordian style. Tradition says that Shakspeare

this elaborate Latin curriculum in the little Stratford Free School is absolutely unwarranted.¹ There is no evidence of anything of the kind, and it is in the highest degree improbable. Even had it existed Shakspeare was not long enough at the school to have profited by any instruction except in the lower classes, and there is nothing to make us think that he was an industrious boy. On the contrary, his traditional character leads us to the very opposite conclusion. The hypothesis is necessary in order to square facts to theories—and that is all that can be said for it.

“Of his school days,” says Malone (Vol. II, p. 101), unfortunately no account whatsoever has come down to us; we are therefore unable to mark his gradual advancement or to point out the early presages of future renown which his extraordinary parts must have afforded; for as it has been observed by a great writer of our own time, all whose remarks on human life are sagacious and profound, ‘there is no instance of any man whose history has been minutely related that it did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour.’² Were our poet’s early history accurately known it would

went to the Stratford Free School. Let us accept that as most cogent and indisputable evidence. Tradition also says that he was taken away at an unusually early age, because his father had need of his services. But this is highly inconvenient because we have to cram him with classical knowledge. Therefore a fig for tradition!

¹ Ipswich school was an exceptional institution. Previously to 1483 it had been a fee-paying school. In 1483 it was endowed as a Free Grammar School by Richard Felder, and in 1528 it was made part of “Cardinal’s College.” It then became a school “of the new learning.” It may be noticed that a boy would not study Horace or Ovid till he arrived at the seventh class, the highest but one. See *English Schools at the Reformation*, by Arthur F. Leach, who contrasts Wolsey’s advanced provisions with the far less liberal intellectual menu provided by Colet for St. Paul’s School. Mr. Leach has, by the way, much contempt for “Baptista Mantuanus (save the mark!), a Carmelite friar, who died in 1516, and composed Eclogues.” I may add that it is one thing for an enthusiastic founder, or educational reformer, to prescribe a very advanced curriculum, and quite another thing to secure that such curriculum shall be adhered to in practice.

² Dr. Johnson.

unquestionably furnish us with many proofs of the truth of this observation ; of his acuteness, facility, and fluency ; of the playfulness of his fancy, and his love of pleasantry and humour ; of his curiosity, discernment, candour, and liberality ; of all those qualities, in a word, which afterwards rendered him the admiration of the age in which he lived." All this is natural enough of the boyhood of the man who wrote the *Plays* and *Poems*, but if Shakspeare was that man, how comes it that in all the early tradition there is not a word about such things? If he learnt all that Mr. Collins assumes that he learnt at school (as to which more anon), how is it that the old writers, those who talked with "ancient witnesses," and were nearest to contemporary tradition—say just the contrary?¹ Why are we to accept traditional belief in Shakspeare as dramatist, and to reject tradition when it tells us of a poaching butcher's apprentice, of scanty education, who made a speech when he killed a calf?² It is, indeed, passing wonderful.

Ah, "Camden most reverend head"! What a thousand pities it is that Shakspeare 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!

Granting then, as by no means improbable, the assumption that Shakspeare attended for a short time the Stratford Free School, I cannot but believe that Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps is quite right in thinking, in accordance with all tradition, that he could have learnt but little there. No doubt boys at Elizabethan grammar schools, if they remained long enough, had a good deal of Latin driven

¹ "If he had been an enthusiastic student, and by some extraordinary means had acquired many languages and much learning, his contemporaries must surely have known it; but the impression he produced on them was the contrary." Bompas, *The Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 8.

² This trait, by the way, is suggestive of the embryo player rather than of the embryo poet.

into them. Latin indeed was the one subject that *was* taught, and an industrious boy who had gone through the course and attained to the higher classes would generally be able to write fair Latin prose. But he would learn very little else. What we now call "culture" certainly did not enter into the "curriculum." English, at any rate, formed no part of the studies of the young Shakspeare at the Stratford Free School, for the teaching of the vernacular was not known to the Elizabethan grammar schools. Equally out of the question is it to suppose that he was taught either French, or Italian, or Spanish, or studied literature, whether of his own or any other country.

The much-debated question of "the learning of Shakspeare" (which has been so ably dealt with by Mr. Collins in the work to which I have referred) I will consider later on.¹ Let us now return to the meagre story of Shakspeare's life. Meagre indeed it is; in fact, except for some evidence that in 1587 he gave his assent to his father's proposal to sell some mortgaged property (John Shakspeare's affairs being in a very bad way), the life of William Shakspeare from the time when he is supposed to have left Stratford is for many years an absolute blank. Mr. Lee, indeed, jogs along merrily with his convenient adverb. "To London Shakespeare naturally drifted, *doubtless* trudging thither on foot during 1586, by way of Oxford and High Wycombe" (p. 28). "When Shakespeare became a member of the company [the Lord Chamberlain's] it was *doubtless* performing at the theatre, the play-house in Shoreditch" (p. 34). "The Rose Theatre was *doubtless* the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist." Adverbs, however, are not evidence, and as Mr. Phillipps writes (Vol. I, p. 83), "There is not a single particle of evidence respecting his career during the next five years, that is to say, from the

¹ See chap. IV.

time of the Lambert negotiation in 1587 until he is discovered as a rising actor and dramatist in 1592." Whether he was then discovered as a "dramatist" we will consider later, but the rest of Mr. Phillipps's statement is unquestionably correct.

We have, however, some credible traditions concerning Shakspeare's early life in London. Assuming that he "trudged" thither in 1586, as Mr. Lee conjectures, he was then in his twenty-second year.¹ "That he was also nearly, if not quite, moneyless is to be inferred from tradition, the latter supported by the ascertained fact of the adverse circumstances of his father at the time rendering it impossible for him to have received effectual assistance from his parents; nor is there reason for believing that he was likely to have obtained substantial aid from the relatives of his wife [whom he had practically deserted]. Johnson no doubt accurately reported the tradition of his day when in 1765 he stated that Shakespeare came to London a needy adventurer, and lived for a time by very mean employments." (H.-P., Vol. I, pp. 67, 68.) Tradition, which both Mr. Phillipps and Mr. Lee think credible, says that his first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready at the close of the performance. That this tradition "was originally related by Sir William Davenant [who was proud of being considered Shak-

¹ It seems, however, much more probable that he did not leave Stratford till 1587. There is some evidence that he was in Stratford in that year, since he joined with his father and mother in a formal assent given at that date to an abortive proposal to confer on John Lambert, son of the deceased mortgagee of Asbies, an absolute title to the estate on condition of his cancelling the mortgage and paying £20. (H.-P. I, 78.) In the same year several companies of players visited Stratford. At that time John Shakspeare's fortunes were at the lowest possible ebb. What more likely than that William should have gone to town with the returning players? In 1586 the plague prevailed in London to such an extent that the theatres were closed. "It was not, then, during this year," says Mr. Fleay, "that Shakespeare held horses at stage-doors, or obtained employment in London theatres" (p. 94).