

that Davies describes Shakspeare as "much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits," speaks of his having been "oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned" by Lucy, says he had to "fly his native country to his great advancement," and adds that "he dyed a papist." I have already discussed these notes (with the exception of the allegation that Shakspeare died a papist) in connection with the poaching story.¹ All, then, that this reverend gentleman has to tell us, as the result of the gossip which he had collected (we are now nearly a hundred years after the death of Shakspeare), is that the Stratford young man was a confirmed poacher; that he was often whipt and sometimes imprisoned; that he fled to London; that he caricatured Sir Thomas Lucy as Justice Clodpate (a confusion worthy of Aubrey); that "he dyed a papist," and that he "lays a heavy curse on any one who shall remove his bones." Fulman had noted that "from an actor of playes he became a composer," that "he dyed Ap. 23, 1616, aetat 53, probably at Stratford, for there he is buried, and hath a monument." So Fulman in 1687 was not even certain as to the place of Shakspeare's death.

Dowdall.

We now come to the year 1693, when one Dowdall seems to have paid a visit to the church at Stratford. There he "saw the effigies of our English tragedian, Mr. Shakspeare." He quotes the inscription on the monument, "Judicio Pylum," etc., and the verses on the gravestone. He then goes on to say "the clarke that show'd me this church is above eighty years old,"² he says that this

¹ *Ante*, p. 24 *et seq.*

² This could hardly have been the parish clerk of Stratford, for, as Mr. Elton points out (p. 333), "the Parish-books shew that one William Castle, born in 1628, was clerk and sexton at the time of Mr. Dowdall's visit, and throughout all the latter part of the century." He, therefore, instead of being "above eighty years old," was only sixty-five at the time. Either, then, Dowdall made a bad mistake as to his age, or we must imagine some other unknown "ancient witness."

Shakespear 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 play house as a serviture, and by this meanes had an opportunity to be what he afterwards prov'd." Here, then, is the traditional Shakspeare according to this old clerk of Stratford in the year 1693.¹ He confirms Aubrey's story that Shakspeare was apprenticed to a butcher, and says that he ran from "his master" (i.e. his father, according to Aubrey) to London, and became "a serviture" (a "call-boy," it has been said, or a "super" maybe) in the play-house, and thus obtained the "opportunity to be what he afterwards prov'd," viz., in the words of this traveller, "our English tragedian."² Dowdall, it will be observed, says nothing about Shakespeare's works, though he quotes the inscription on the monument.

A year after this, viz. in 1694, nearly eighty years after Shakspeare's death, one William Hall, an Oxford graduate, writes to a friend concerning Stratford-on-Avon: "That place I came unto on Thursday night, and the next day went to visit the ashes of the great Shakespear which lye interr'd in that church. The verses which in his lifetime he ordered to be cut upon his tombstone, for his monument have others, are those which follow:—[he then quotes the lines]. The little learning these verses con-

Wm. Hall on S.

¹ If he were really "above eighty" (see note on last page) he would have been about four years old at Shakspeare's death.

As to Archdeacon Davies's assertion that Shakspeare "died a Papist," see Canon Beeching in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 349, note. I agree with the conclusion arrived at by Canon Beeching in his essay on "The Religion of Shakespeare," viz., that the Shakespeare of the Plays cannot be shown to have been either a Roman Catholic or a Puritan. I am convinced that he held very liberal opinions on the subject of religion—that he might have said with Tom Hood—

"My heart ferments not with the bigot's leaven,
All creeds I view with toleration thorough;
And have a horror of regarding Heaven
As anybody's rotten borough"!

² See p. 473 n.

tain would be a very strong argument of the want of it in the author, did not they carry something in them which stands in need of a comment. There is in the church a place which they call the bone-house, a repository for all bones they dig up, which are so many that they would load a great number of waggons. The poet, being willing to preserve his bones unmoved, lays a curse upon him that moves them, and having to do with clarks and sextons, for the most part a very ignorant set of people, *he descends to the meanest of their capacitys and disrobes himself of that art which none of his co-temporaries wore in greater perfection.*"¹

This Oxford graduate evidently asked himself what so many others have asked themselves, viz. how it was possible that the great bard of all ages, the grand poet-philosopher, of lofty soul and divine imagination, could have written such mean lines—lines which any ignorant village rhymester might have composed as the embodiment of his paltry thought—to be inscribed above his last resting-place? So making no doubt that Shakspeare the Player and Money-lender and Shakespeare the great dramatist are identical, he puts forward a much-needed defence, which however is more ingenious than convincing. He makes the author of *Hamlet* write down to the meanest of capacities, in order that he may be understood of sextons and clerks, and strike terror into their minds by his curse on all body-snatchers; and thus it is that a vulgar thought in vulgar language is the last message to posterity from him who was wont to clothe the noblest thoughts that the human mind can conceive in the noblest language which the human tongue can utter.

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,

¹ My italics.

Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

* * * * *

And curst be he that moves my bones !

Such are the extraordinary things that we are called upon to believe by the Stratfordian faith.¹

So far we notice that although these collectors of traditional gossip have only succeeded in gleaning very meagre details, they are, at any rate, very much in agreement. We have the butcher's apprentice, whose learning was very little, more given to poaching than to study, who ran away from home at a very early age, and became first a servitor at a London theatre, and then a play actor. A great natural wit, of course, he must have been ; otherwise, how could he have written the *Plays* and *Poems* attributed to him ? Withal a boon companion and a hard drinker. But here we notice that our ancient witnesses are chiefly remarkable for what they do *not* say. There is an entire silence as to William Shakspeare's schooling. Yet surely some of those who visited Stratford, and who saw the monument at the church—Dowdall, for instance, or Hall—would have been told something about Shakspeare's school-time at the Grammar School ! One would have imagined that they would have made it a point to visit the school, in order to see where the great man received his education, as well as the monument erected to his memory in the church. Or are we to suppose that the "ancient witnesses" were silent on this subject ? Let us turn again to what the Rev. John Ward, vicar of Stratford-on-Avon, wrote in 1662 or 1663. "He frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford." Not a word about the Grammar School.

¹ I trust I shall not be accused of a misquotation because I have substituted "an" for "this" in the above celebrated passage.

But this is really a prodigious omission. If Shakspeare had acquired at the Free School one half of the learning attributed to him by Mr. Churton Collins—one half or one third of the learning that must have been possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*—he must surely have become remarkable at school, if not as a worker, at any rate as a wonderful natural genius. Where are “those early presages of future renown, which,” as Malone writes, “his extraordinary parts must have afforded”? “There is no instance,” says Dr. Johnson, “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,” and therefore, says Malone, Shakspeare’s early history “would unquestionably furnish us with many proofs of the truth of his 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.”¹ Alas! tradition has preserved for us the calf-killing and the poaching, but of all those qualities—all those presages of future greatness—which, if Shakspeare and Shakespeare be identical, must, as Malone and Johnson say, inevitably have forced themselves upon the notice of his masters and his school-fellows, tradition has unfortunately nothing whatever to tell us. It is as silent as the grave.

We now come to the first attempt to write a biography of Shakespeare, viz. that made by Nicholas Rowe, who, in 1709, published *Some Account of the Life, etc., of William Shakespear*.²

¹ “Liberality,” by the way, does not seem to have been one of these!

² This has been republished *in extenso* by Mr. Nichol Smith, in his *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*. The editor has (p. 307) a curious note on Betterton, viz. “Downes has an interesting note in his *Roscius Anglicanus* showing how in the acting of this part (Hamlet), Betterton benefited by Shakespeare’s coaching.” This is astonishing, seeing that Shakspeare had been

Rowe was a writer of plays in the reign of Queen Anne, and was poet-laureate to George I. He tells us that he was indebted for the greater part of his information to the actor Betterton. Thomas Betterton was born in 1635 and appeared on the stage in 1660. He is said to have made a journey to Warwickshire about the year 1690 (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 12), more than seventy years after Shakspeare's death, "to gather up," as Rowe says, "what remains he could of a name for which he had so great a value." Rowe's *Life*, it will be observed, was not published till nearly a hundred years had elapsed after Shakspeare's death. Let us see what he has to tell us concerning the traditional Shakspeare of his time.

"He was the son of Mr. John Shakespear, and was born at Stratford upon Avon, in Warwickshire, in April, 1564. . . . His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that tho' 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, were 'tis probable he acquir'd that little Latin he was master of: but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forc'd his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language."

Rowe on S.

Here, then, we have, at last, mention of a school. "He had bred him for some time at a Free-school." What Free School? We are not told, but as there was a Free School at Stratford it has been not unreasonably assumed that this must have been the one. There, then, according

in his grave nearly twenty years when Betterton was born. The explanation is that Taylor, of the Black Fryars Company, was, according to Sir William Davenant, instructed by Shakspeare, and Davenant, who had seen Taylor act, according to Downes, instructed Betterton. There is a similar story as to Betterton playing King Henry VIII. Betterton was said to have been instructed by Sir William, who was instructed by Lowen, who was instructed by Shakspeare! (Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 34.)

to Rowe, "'tis *probable* [evidently he had no evidence before him] he acquired *that little Latin he was master of*." According to his first biographer, therefore, he appears to have had "small Latin" and *no* Greek. Anyhow, his father's financial embarrassments caused him to remove the boy from school "at an unusually early age," as Mr. Lee says, and "prevented his further proficiency in that language." Let us listen again to Nicholas Rowe.

"It is without controversie that he had no knowledge of the writings of the antient poets, not only from this reason, but *from his works themselves, where we find no traces of any thing that looks like an imitation of 'em*." The absurdity of the latter part of this passage is truly monumental, and reminds one of the ridiculous lines of Leonard Digges:—

Next Nature onely helpt him, for looke thorow
This whole Booke, thou shalt find he doth not borrow,
One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,
Nor once from vulgar Languages Translate!

It is a pity we cannot call up the spirits of these writers and present them with a copy of Mr. Collins's Essays! But, in truth, any intelligent reader of the "works themselves," though but *mediocriter doctus*, can but laugh at statements so curiously in opposition to the facts. No; it may be true enough that Shakspeare had little learning, and "no knowledge of the writings of the antient poets," but the proposition is not only false, but "gross as a mountain, open, palpable" when applied to Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*.

But "whatever Latin he had," says Rowe, "'tis certain he understood French, as may be observ'd from many words and sentences scatter'd up and down his Plays in that language; and especially from one scene in *Henry the Fifth* written wholly in it. Upon his leaving school he seems to have given intirely into that way of living which his father propos'd to him; and in order to settle in the

Curious; proves
the unobtrusive
and little evident-
character of the
learning in the
plays.

world after a family manner, he thought fit to marry while he was yet very young." Then follows the deer-stealing story which I have already discussed ; the result, according to Rowe, being that Shakspeare "was oblig'd to leave his business and family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London. It is at this time, and upon this accident, that he is said to have made his first acquaintance in the Play-house. He was receiv'd into the Company then in being, at first in a very mean rank [as "a serviture" Dowdall says]; but his admirable wit, and the natural turn of it to the stage, soon distinguish'd him, if not as an extraordinary Actor, yet as an excellent writer. His name is printed, as the custom was in those times, amongst those of the other Players, before some old Plays, but without any particular account of what sort of parts he used to play ; and tho' I have inquir'd I could never meet with any further account of him this way, than that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet. I should have been much more pleas'd to have learn'd from some certain authority which was the first Play he wrote."

With the last reflection we shall all certainly be in full agreement. It would be infinitely more satisfactory to learn which was Shakespeare's first play than to be informed that his top performance was the Ghost in *Hamlet*! But apparently there was no better evidence in Rowe's day than now as to the chronological order of the plays. Thomas Betterton apparently had nothing to say on that point.

Rowe goes on to say that "art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that, for ought I know, the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, and had the most fire and strength of imagination in 'em, were the best." This phrase about "art" and "nature" as applied to Shakespeare had already become a stock expression in Rowe's time.

The biographer then goes on to say of Shakespeare:

"Besides the advantages of his wit, he was in himself a good-natur'd man, of great sweetness in his manners, and a most agreeable companion; so that it is no wonder if with so many good qualities he made himself acquainted with the best conversations of those times." This acquaintance "with the best conversations of those times" is a little bit of assumption on Rowe's part for which he adduces no evidence. Dryden had said in his *Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age*, "I cannot find that any of them had been conversant in courts, except Ben Johnson; and his genius lay not so much that way as to make an improvement by it. Greatness was not then so easy of access, nor conversation so free, as it is now." That last statement is a very true one, and the evidence that Dryden desiderated is still to seek in Shakspeare's case. However, it is certain that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* was both "conversant in courts" and "acquainted with the best conversations of those times."

We may observe here how Rowe differs from the earlier collectors of Shakspearean tradition. They had jotted down what was told them by gossips and "ancient witnesses" concerning Shakspeare. Rowe adds to these certain propositions as to which a study of "the works themselves" makes us affirm that they must be true concerning the author Shakespeare. All modern biographies (so called) of Shakespeare, of course, do likewise. He goes on to admit, however, that he has no evidence for this acquaintance "with the best conversations of those times," for he writes, "what particular habitude or friendships he contracted with private men, I have not been able to learn, more than that every one who had a true taste of merit, and could distinguish men, had generally a just value and esteem for him"—a very general proposition indeed, and a very vague one. It *must* have been so; therefore no doubt it *was* so! We need not follow Rowe

any further. We may remark in passing that he thought Spenser was referring to Shakespeare in the line—

Our pleasant Willy ah ! is dead of late,

although Spenser's death happened twenty years before Shakspeare's,¹ and that he announces that Ben Jonson was "altogether unknown to the world" in 1598, although he is mentioned by Francis Meres in that year as one of the principal writers of tragedy! Gifford has poured the vials of his scorn on this statement, and on the "arrant fable" to the effect that Shakspeare patronised Jonson by bringing out *Every Man in His Humour*.²

Moreover, this biographer does not seem to have consumed much time in making inquiries concerning Shakspeare's life, for he states that "he had three daughters," having added one out of his imagination, and never having heard of the son Hamnet. Surely Betterton, who is said to have made a pilgrimage to Stratford to gather up what remains he could, ought to have collected better materials!

How came it, I ask again, that none of these pilgrims visited the Free School to consult the records and the master and such "ancient witnesses" as they could find concerning Shakspeare's school time? If only one of them could have left such a note as this: "I saw the Free School, and was shown the name of William Shakspeare on the old school lists, and was told that he was a boy of great natural talents and of great promise, and, indeed, of no small industry, since, though he was only a short time at the school, and never reached the upper classes, he nevertheless contrived to read the books that were read in those classes, as well as those read in the lower classes, reading, in fact, not only Erasmus and Mantuanus, but

¹ It is quite possible that he is right in this. See p. 518.

² *Memoirs of Ben Jonson*, by Gifford. Col. Cunningham's edition (1875), pp. l, li.

also Virgil and Ovid and Horace and Cæsar and Sallust and Cicero and Livy and Plautus and Terence and Seneca, not to mention a few Greek authors as well"! What a thousand pities it is that the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford, or Dowdall, or some other record hunter, has not left us such a precious legacy as this, so that Mr. Sidney Lee and Mr. Churton Collins might have had something to rest upon besides their own fertile imagination, *and* the works of Shakespeare!¹

Combining Rowe, then, with the earlier diarists and *chiffonniers* in the field of tradition, we are able to obtain a very fair picture of the traditional Shakspere. It is, as I have already described it, the picture of a Warwickshire rustic, with no learning, with very little schooling, with no reputation either for industry or talents. All are agreed in this.

Dr. Johnson. "There has always prevailed a tradition," wrote Dr. Johnson, "that Shakespeare wanted learning, that he had no regular education, nor much skill in dead languages. Jonson, his friend, affirms that *he had small Latin and less Greek*; who, besides that he had no imaginable temptation to falsehood, wrote at a time when the character and acquisitions of Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspere] were known to multitudes. His evidence ought therefore to decide the controversy, unless some testimony of equal force could be opposed."

¹ Rowe says: "There is one Play of his, indeed, *The Comedy of Errors*, in a great measure taken from the *Menæchmi* of Plautus. How that happen'd I cannot easily divine, since, as I hinted before, I do not take him to have been master of Latin enough to read it in the original, and I know of no translation of Plautus so old as his time." Dr. Johnson says: "*The Comedy of Errors* is confessedly taken from the *Menæchmi* of Plautus; from the only play of Plautus which was then in English." But the translation of the *Menæchmi* by "W. W." (supposed to be William Warner) was not published till 1595, and *The Comedy of Errors* was acted at Gray's Inn in 1594. Those who believe that Shakespeare could not translate Latin of course adopt the hypothesis that he saw the translation in manuscript. Everybody who had a work in manuscript appears to have shown it to Shakspere. There was no end to the MSS. that he saw and read!

But as to Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, it is found that testimony not only of equal but of overwhelming force can be opposed, namely, the testimony of the "works themselves." What, then, is the conclusion? We may accept tradition or we may reject it, but we must not deal with it arbitrarily, according to our caprice, or to suit our preconceived theories. We must not claim Jonson as an infallible witness of truth when we can cite him in favour of the hypothesis which we wish to support, and summarily dismiss him when his testimony does not square with our views. Counsel cannot at the same time discredit his own witness, and ask the jury to act on his evidence where it seems to make in favour of his client; or, if he does, he will probably make the other side a present of the verdict. So, too, we are not justified in summarily dismissing the old gleaners of ancient tradition when they tell us that Shakspeare was a butcher's apprentice with no learning, and at the same time appealing to them in support of other alleged facts as to the Stratford Player which we are ready and willing to accept as true.

One thing, at any rate, stands out very clearly, and it is this. Those who accept Mr. Collins's estimate of the learning and culture of Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* (and I for one believe it to be founded on the "impregnable rock" of "his works themselves"), must be prepared to throw over altogether not only Jonson's testimony in this particular, but all the old tradition accumulated by gleaners in the field of hearsay evidence from Thomas Fuller to Nicholas Rowe. For, as "An old Scholar of Trin. Coll., Cam.," wrote in *The Speaker*, of June 11th, 1904: "We have given good-bye to tradition with its unlearned Shakespeare; we have realised that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* must have been a man of wide reading, of large classical knowledge, and of the highest possible culture; we have said a long farewell to Dr. Farmer's celebrated essay which was sup-

posed to have settled the question 'for all time,' and we have recognised that Jonson's 'small Latin and less Greek' must be explained away. *E pur se muove.*" The ignorant Shakespeare writing by plenary inspiration has gone to the realm of fallen leaves and outworn faces.

We recognise, then, that the traditional Shakspeare will not fit the case. The Stratford Player, as revealed to us by this evidence, cannot sustain the part of Shakespeare, the immortal poet and dramatist. As Emerson said, "We cannot marry the man to his writings." Did, then, the old writers referred to collect mere fables without foundation in fact? is the tradition nothing but a myth? and did Ben Jonson speak untruly with his lips? Or is there an explanation?

Well, to those who are not of the Stratfordian faith there is an explanation, and a fairly simple one. The tradition is true, and Jonson's statement is true. Jonson when he wrote those famous words had Shakspeare of Stratford in his mind, and Shakspeare *had* "small Latin and less Greek."¹ Fuller was right, "his learning *was* very little." And so of the rest. Their statements may be accepted as very good "evidence of reputation," and true, for the most part, as to Shakspeare. It is only when we come to weave the life of Shakspeare into the biography of Shakespeare that endless difficulties arise.

ὄξος τ' ἀλειφά τ' ἐγγέας ταύτῳ κύτει
διχοστατοῦντ' ἂν οὐ φίλως προσεννέποις.

Imagine Shakspeare of Stratford, as he is revealed to us by tradition (and what other evidence of him have we than tradition?)—imagine *this* man writing, as the first heir of his invention, that polished, scholarly, cultured poem *Venus and Adonis*, redolent of the Court and of aristocratic graces! Imagine *him* as the author of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*! Imagine *him*, finally, as the author of *Hamlet*!

¹ See p. 475 for Dr. Konrad Meier's novel interpretation of these words.

this is far
from clear

Renan has said that in the realm of the supernatural men accept as beliefs things at which, were it not for *atavism*, they would simply smile. And what is "*atavism*"? It connotes all those prejudices and tradition which a man has inherited from his forefathers. He accepts the irrational without question because it was unquestioningly accepted by his ancestors. And so it is, as it seems to me, in this Shakespearean question. We accept as articles of faith things at which, were it not for *atavism*, we should simply smile. We believe in a miracle because our fathers and grandfathers have believed in it. And the more incredible it is shown to be when the searchlight of truth and reason is turned upon it, the more closely do we grapple it to our souls with hoops of steel. The more our faith is undermined the greater becomes our indignation and our contempt for the rationalist. Here, too, *Credo quia impossibile* becomes the motto of the orthodox.

No; the man who wrote those works must, undoubtedly, have represented the highest culture of his age—must have been one familiar with courts, and accustomed to meet the greatest of his time on a footing of equality.

Shakspeare, on the other hand, was, in all probability, very much what tradition has revealed him to us. He had had but little schooling; he had "small Latin and less Greek"; but he was a good *Johannes Factotum*; he could arrange a scene, and, when necessary, "bumbast out a blank verse." Whether in truth he wrote the lines to Sir Thomas Lucy, or to old "John o'Coombe,"¹ or to Ben Jonson, "who was *once* one," etc., or the other doggerels ascribed to him by tradition, we do not know, but the man who wrote the epitaph on the Stratford gravestone was

¹ Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps in his monumental edition of Shakespeare's works, in sixteen volumes, quotes (Vol. I, p. 197) from the MS. Ashmole: 38, p. 180, as written not many years after the death of Shakspeare: "On John

evidently capable of such things ; just as evidently Shakespeare was not.

Here, then, is the reconciliation of tradition with the evidence afforded by "the works themselves."

Even as I write comes into print some instructive correspondence concerning the traditional Shakspeare. Dr. Furnivall sends to the *Westminster Gazette* (Oct. 31st, 1904) "some interesting extracts from the Plume MSS. at Maldon, Essex," supplied to him by "that excellent antiquary and editor, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Clark, of Great Leighs Rectory, Chelmsford." The first of these extracts (which, by the way, are for the most part very old stories often published before) is another version of the well-known yarn that Ben Jonson once began to write his own epitaph as follows : "Here lies Ben Jonson—who was *once* one," and challenged Shakspeare to complete it ; whereupon "Shakspeare took the pen from him and made this :—

Here lies Benjamin—with short hair upon his chin—
Who, while he lived, was a slow thing—and now he's dead is
no-thing."

Combe a covetous rich man Mr. Wm. Shak-spear wright this att his request while hee was yet liveing for his epitaphe :—

Who lies in this tombe ?

Hough, quoth the devill, tis my sone, John a'Combe. *Finis.*

But being dead, and making the poore his heiers, hee after wrightes this for his epitaphe :—

Howere he lived judge not.

John Combe shall never be forgott,

While poor hath memmorye, for hee did gather

To make the poore his issue : hee their father

As record of his tilth and seedes

Did crowne him in his latter needes. *Finis.* W. Shak."

This is a little better than the doggerels to "old John o'Coombe" quoted by Aubrey as having been composed by Shakspeare at a tavern ; viz.—

Ten in the hundred the devill allowes,

But Combes will have twelve he swears and vowes.

If any one askes who lies in this tombe

Hoh ! quoth the devill, tis my John o'Combe !

The reader may take his choice which of these poetic effusions he will ascribe to "Shakespeare" !

Now we shall have no difficulty at all in believing that Shakspeare wrote these brilliant lines. They are quite after his style. But that Shakespeare wrote them we may, I think, very reasonably doubt.

Let us pass on to the second extract, which is headed, "Ben Jonson: Shakspeare and his Father," and runs as follows: "Ben Johnson at the Christning of Shakespeare, his child, to which he was invited god father, said to him, 'Now you expect a great matter. But I will give it a Latin (latten) spoon, and you shall translate it.'" Now this remark might well have been made to Shakspeare by Ben Jonson, for it agrees remarkably with Ben's statement that Shakspeare had "small Latin and less Greek," implying as it does that the Stratford Player would have found it no easy matter to translate Latin. The remark, however, would have had no point if addressed to Shakespeare, the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, who, as we have seen, had much Latin, and, probably, no inconsiderable amount of Greek also.

But let us proceed to the third extract, which Dr. Furnivall evidently thinks important, and even illuminating. Here it is: "He (Shakspeare) was a glover's son. Sir John Mennes saw once his old father in his shop—a merry-cheekt old man, that said, 'Will was a good honest fellow, but he *darent* have crackt a jesst with him att any time.' (*This is the only known notice of the look of Shakspeare's father, and his opinion of his gifted son, and is a great gain.*")¹

Upon this Dr. Furnivall subsequently wrote (*W. G.*, November 2nd, 1904) to say that "darent" is an "unlucky misprint," for "Plume—afterwards Archdeacon of Rochester and founder of the Plumean Professorship of Astronomy at Cambridge—wrote that the father (John Shakspeare) 'darest' (or 'durst') have so crackt his jest with his son at any time."

¹ The italics in this parenthesis are Dr. Furnivall's.

of course.

Now that Plume did *not* write as Dr. Furnivall suggests seems clear from a perusal of the extract itself. According to Dr. Furnivall, what Plume wrote was that *John Shakspeare said* that "Will was an honest fellow, but he durst have crackt a jest with him at any time." This, however, seems inconsequential, and is, in fact, a *non sequitur*. For why "but"? If "Will was an honest fellow" *raison de plus* that his father should not have been afraid to crack a jest with him! In fact, "darent" makes sense, and "durst" does not. But we need not much disturb ourselves about the true reading, for a correspondent, signing himself "A. G.," points out (*W. G.*, November 3rd, 1904) that "Sir John Mennes was born on March 1, 1599, and that the father of Shakspeare died in September, 1601. Hence it was at a very early age that the future knight 'saw once' John Shakspeare 'in his shop'—apparently travelling from Kent especially for that purpose, accompanied by his nurse! This, doubtless, enhances the 'great gain' of his report of 'Shakspeare's father, and his opinion of his gifted son'; since this report may be regarded as the sweetly unsophisticated impression of the innocent little toddler!"

In order that the point of this may not be lost, I must add that Dr. Furnivall has written: "I hope Dr. Andrew Clark's discovery of this unique record of the appearance of old John Shakespeare and what he said of his son will lead all folk who have the chance of seeing sixteenth and seventeenth century MSS. to read them carefully through in the hope that something about Shakespeare may occur in them. *Surely some note about his Sonnets and his dark Lady must be lying hid somewhere!*"

There could scarcely, I think, be found a much better example than the above of the futilities which are gravely trotted out by enthusiastic Stratfordians as valuable evidence to illustrate the life of Shakspeare. Plume quotes Sir John Mennes as having spoken to John Shakspeare,

and as describing the appearance of the "merry-cheeked old man." Here, says Dr. Furnivall, is "the only known notice of the look of Shakspeare's father, and his opinion of his gifted son," and this is "a great gain!" It turns out that the witness cited must have been a toddler of about two years old when he is supposed to have taken notes of his conversation with the Stratford "glover"! But Dr. Furnivall is so impressed that he trusts there will be further reading of sixteenth and seventeenth century MSS. in the hope of further rich discoveries. Surely, he thinks, there must be some note about the *Sonnets* and the *Dark Lady* lying hid somewhere! Well, it is just possible that such there may be, and that it will some day be found, but I venture to predict that it will have no reference to the son of John Shakspeare the illiterate glover or butcher or general dealer of Stratford-on-Avon.

No account of the traditional Shakspeare could be considered complete which omitted a reference to the famous Crab Tree story. I will give it in the words of Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps. "It would appear from this tradition that the poet [Shakspeare to wit] one summer's morning set out from his native town for a walk over Bardon Hill to the village of Bidford, six miles distant, a place said to have been then noted for its revelry. When he had nearly reached his destination, he happened to meet with a shepherd, and jocosely enquired of him if the Bidford drinkers were at home. The rustic, perfectly equal to the occasion, replied that the Drinkers were absent, but that he would easily find the Sippers, and that the latter might perhaps be sufficiently jolly to meet his expectations. The anticipations of the shepherd were fully realized, and Shakespeare, in bending his way home late in the evening, found an acceptable interval of rest under the branches of a crab-tree which was situated about a mile from Bidford. There is no great wonder and no special offence to record, when it is added that he was overtaken by drowsiness, and

that he did not renew the course of his journey until early in the following morning. The whole story, indeed, when viewed strictly with reference to the habits and opinions of those days, presents no features that suggest disgrace to the principal actor, or imposition on the part of the narrator. With our ancestors the ludicrous aspect of intoxication completely neutralized, or rather, to speak more correctly, excluded the thought of attendant discredit. The affair would have been merely regarded in the light of an unusually good joke, and that there is, at least, some foundation for the tale may be gathered from the fact that as early as the year 1762, the tree, then known as Shakespeare's Canopy, was regarded at Stratford-on-Avon as an object of great interest."¹

Now this story of Shakspeare's getting "intoxicated" and passing the night under a crab-tree may be only a myth; just as the story of his last drinking bout with Jonson and Drayton is almost certainly an invention. The existence of the tree, a sketch of which was made by Ireland in 1792 or 1793, is certainly no evidence of the truth of the tale told by the host of the White Lion Inn to the anonymous gentleman who visited Stratford in 1762, and was taken by the innkeeper to Bidford to see "Shakespeare's Canopy."²

At the same time it would be a great mistake to omit all reference to such stories, for whether true or false, they afford, as I have already said, very good "evidence of reputation" as to the habits and character of Shakspeare. They tell us (and there is nothing else to tell us) what sort of man he was according to early belief.

Again, Manningham's story, to which I allude else-

¹ *Outlines*, Vol. I, p. 217; and see Vol. II, p. 325 *et seq.*, where the authorities for this tale are collected.

² *British Magazine* for June, 1762, quoted by H.-P., Vol. II, p. 326. Halliwell, in his colossal edition of Shakespeare's works, also gives a sketch of this famous tree.

where,¹ of how Shakspeare played a trick on Burbage like that which d'Artagnan played on "Miladi's" lover, shows the traditional Shakspeare in another light, as a man of pleasure; and it must be remembered that John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law, is a contemporary witness, for the entry in his diary bears date March 13th, 1601. The story on the face of it is by no means an improbable one, but true or false, when taken in conjunction with others, and with what we know of the history of Shakspeare's early marriage, it shows that the Stratford Player was, according to tradition, a worshipper at the twin shrines of Venus and Bacchus. The "unco' good and rigidly righteous" may hold up their hands in holy horror, and the ardent worshippers of the Stratfordian Temple may be highly indignant, that such stories should be even mentioned (though they are ready to hug fiction of any sort to their souls when it suits their purpose), but surely no impartial biographer can pass over such traditions in silence, for they are his only guide as to the estimate which was formed of the Player's character and temperament by his contemporaries. Quite in keeping with these old anecdotes is the story that Sir William d'Avenant was Shakspeare's son, which, as Mr. Lee remarks, "was at times complacently accepted by the reputed son," and of which Mr. Lee further says, "the antiquity and persistence of the scandal belie the assumption that Shakespeare [i.e. Shakspeare] was known to his contemporaries as a man of scrupulous virtue." This story, again, may be true or false, but taken with the others, it helps to reveal to us what sort of man the traditional Shakspeare was—a boon companion, a lover of pleasure and good company, but withal (as we must not forget) a shrewd man of business, having "*rem facias rem*"

¹ See p. 340. This, as Mr. Lee says, is "the sole anecdote of Shakespeare [Shakspeare] which is positively known to have been recorded in his lifetime" (p. 214).

as his practical motto, a creditor not to be trifled with, and looking as sharply after the pence as after the pounds.¹

Such, then, being the traditional Shakspeare, we may ask once more, Is this the sort of man to write, among other things, those adoring *Sonnets* to a beautiful boy—the young Earl of Southampton, as it seems most reasonable to believe; the young Earl of Pembroke as some maintain? Is this the man who came from Stratford with *Venus and Adonis* in his pocket, and who wrote *Love's Labour's Lost* immediately he came to town?

These questions appear to me to carry their own answer with them. That answer is an "everlasting no." And yet I know there are many men and women who find no difficulty in accepting these and other miracles. But we are not all gifted with such sublime faith.

I desire to guard against misunderstanding. I do not mean, of course, to suggest that because Shakspeare was a lover of wine and woman, therefore he could not have been the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. Such a suggestion would, indeed, be idiotic, for "wine, woman, and song" are a notorious and a time-honoured association. Still less do I write in any censorious spirit. I have too much anxiety for the preservation of my own glass house to think of throwing hypocritical stones at either the living or the dead. But what I submit is that this traditional Shakspeare, taking him as a whole, and considering his parentage, his environment, his character, and all the circumstances of his life, so far as the old witnesses reveal them to us, does not, in any way or in any measure, fulfil the conditions necessary for the sublime poet, the profound philosopher, the universal teacher, the object of the world's admiration, the writer of the *Sonnets*, the

¹ It must be confessed that it is not very easy to reconcile the pleasant, "gentle," easy-going, joke-loving, amatory boon-companion, with the shrewd, cautious, money-lending, money-saving man of business. Shakspeare, it seems, combined all these apparently antagonistic qualities. But here is only one contradiction the more.

Note this.

author of *Adonis* and *Lucrece*, the creator of Hamlet, and Lear, and Prospero, the cultured courtier, the erudite lawyer, the—in short, the all in all that the greatest of critics have recognised in Shakespeare, as revealed to them not by tradition, and not by biographers, but by the immortal works themselves.

But here I have to face the outraged virtue of Judge Willis. Mr. Willis is very nobly indignant at those who repeat traditional anecdotes of the dead. Historians and biographers, it seems, should never repeat hearsay. "Nothing can be more discreditable than to listen to hearsay when it affects the character of another. If the person who speaks it to the disparagement of another professes to speak of his own knowledge, his statement should never be accepted, without an opportunity being afforded for denial or explanation. This conduct is due to the living; in respect of the dead, it is atrocious to accept or repeat to their injury second-hand gossip, or even direct statements, which they have not had the opportunity of denying or explaining."¹

Noble sentiments! They swell with conscious virtue in every line. But what is the unfortunate historian or biographer to do when he is dealing with men who have been dead some hundreds of years? What evidence has he to go upon if he is to reject all "hearsay"? The usual method has been to collect records and traditions, to examine them critically, having regard to their source, their date, and other matters necessary to be taken into consideration, and to form such judgment as may be possible as to their probable truth and historical value. But this will not do for the lofty soul of Judge Willis—at any rate, where Shakspeare is concerned! "Nothing can be more discreditable than to listen to hearsay, when it affects the character" of a living person, and "in respect of the dead, it is atrocious." What, then, is to be done?

¹ Prefatory note to Judge Willis's Mock Trial.

Mr. Willis has a plan of his own, and nothing could be simpler. You have only to put the dead witnesses into the box and examine them *vivâ* (? *mortuâ*) *voce*, and allow (under restrictions) certain facilities for friendly cross-examination, and there you are! You then have their direct personal statements—no atrocious “hearsay.” And Mr. Willis,

with a smile that is childlike and bland,

really believes, or affects to believe, that this mock trial, “although imaginary, is a real test”! In pursuance of this marvellous method of “judicial investigation,” he proceeds to call “spirits from the vasty deep” as witnesses in the case, merely to put into their mouths what he wants them to say, while he is careful to prevent his imaginary counsel on the other side from putting any effective questions in the so-called cross-examination. This strikes me as being about the most childish and futile method of dealing with a great question that can possibly be conceived.

Mr. Willis, for example, calls Edward Blount, one of the publishers of the First Folio, to say, amongst other things, that he has “seen Shakespeare [meaning the player] in conversation with the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Montgomery.” Thus we have direct evidence that the Stratford actor was on terms of personal intimacy with these great noblemen, and Mr. Lee’s assertion to the contrary as regards Pembroke¹ is at once scattered to the winds. But why should we stop there? Why, when he was about it, did not Mr. Willis make the witness produce a bundle of correspondence between “Shakespeare” and these two noble Earls, or the Earl of Southampton, or Essex, or any others of the great men of his time with whom it is assumed that he was so intimate, and as to whom some shreds of connecting testimony would be so extremely valuable? Such “evidence” (save the mark!) would have been just as useful—and just as childish.

¹ See Lee’s *Life*, Appendix VII.

Blount is further made to say that when Heminge and Condell brought him the manuscripts, "I saw I had in my hands a treasure," but nevertheless, says the supposed witness, "I did not preserve these priceless papers which the two players professed to have received from him (Shakespeare) absolute in their numbers as he conceived them."¹ "I did not see any reason for keeping them," complacently observes the complaisant phantom.

Heminge and Condell are made to swear that they undertook their editorial work without any remuneration at all, and without any thought of such a thing, just as "the authors of the four gospels, the finest biographies in the world, received nothing for them!" This analogy is mightily provocative of a reply; but it is perhaps sufficient to say *nil agit exemplum litem quod lite resolvit*.

William Jaggard is called to say "I never heard a doubt cast on Shakespeare being the author of the plays and poems printed and published in his lifetime." Yet Jaggard was himself the piratical printer who published another man's work as Shakespeare's in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Of course, no question as to this is allowed to be put in cross-examination.²

Ben Jonson is called to swear that he had nothing whatever to do with the writing of the Players' Preface to the Folio, though Malone long ago claimed to have established "beyond a doubt" that "every word of the first half of this address to the reader, which is signed with the names of John Heminge and Henry Condell, was written by Ben Jonson."³ Here, again, none of the questions suggested by

¹ I deal further with this absurd fiction in chap. IX.

² I wrote this criticism in *The Westminster Review* of February, 1903. A very effective cross-examination of William Jaggard was supplied by Mr. George Stronach in *Baconiana* of April, 1903. Jaggard died before the Folio was licensed or issued, and four years before the date (1627) at which Mr. Willis makes him give "evidence"!

³ See *Malone's Shakespeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 663, ed. 1821, and *infra.*, p. 264.

Malone's able and, as it seems to me, conclusive criticism are put to old Ben, though they might, according to the common saying of the courts, have "knocked the witness into a cocked-hat!"

Heminge is made to say that the Folio is the final, best, and perfected text of Shakespeare. "The same with Hamlet; there are important portions in the Folio, not in the quartos." Not a word about that magnificent "soliloquy on reason and resolution," as Mr. Swinburne calls it, where "the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height, and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth," and which, nevertheless, is only to be found in the quartos. Mr. Willis would really seem to have imperfectly studied his brief here.

When Bacon's name is mentioned, as that of the possible author, the whole court is convulsed with laughter, and the judge has to retire for some minutes. This is Mr. Willis's idea of "judicial investigation." It would be equally simple to make the judge and the whole court roar with laughter at the idea of the "Stratford rustic" having written the *Plays* and *Poems*. Now this, certainly, is not argument, neither is it at all calculated to convert opponents. We can only conclude, therefore, that Mr. Willis aspires merely to preach to the already converted.¹ He tells us that when he was reading his paper in the Inner Temple Hall some of his hearers supposed he was reading the report of a trial which had actually taken place, and asked for an inspection of the MS. they thought he had discovered! Of a truth there must be many simple, ingenuous youths—many Slenders—in the Temple nowadays! The case, too, appears to have been tried by Mr. Justice Shallow.

I have, perhaps, wasted too much time over this non-

¹ Yet Mr. C. E. Hughes has thought it worth while to cite this foolish passage in his *Praise of Shakespeare*, to which Mr. Lee has contributed a preface.

sense, but I thought it well to cite it as an example of the sort of stuff which does duty for argument among a certain class of Stratfordian enthusiasts. I certainly prefer the "hearsay" of early tradition to Mr. Willis's brand-new method of procuring direct evidence to order. "Is this *law*?" once asked the Duke of Wellington in a Court of Justice. "Oh! Yes, your Grace," was the reply. "You may depend upon it that everything you hear *here* is law." "Hum!" said the Duke. "*Damned nonsense*!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE PORTRAITS OF "SHAKESPEARE"

WHEN we ask what was the appearance of Shakspeare of Stratford, and what sort of features had nature endowed him withal, we are again forcibly reminded of Mr. Lee's superb bit of bluff to the effect that we have far more "biographical detail" in the case of Shakspeare than in that of any poet contemporary with him, which, if it means anything at all to the purpose, must mean that we know more about "the man from Stratford" than about any poet of Elizabethan times. We turn again to the comparison with Ben Jonson. I have never heard it suggested that Jonson's portrait by Gerard Honthorst is either spurious or fails to give us a true likeness of the original. Neither have I heard any similar doubts cast upon the miniature portrait of Ben in the royal library at Windsor Castle. Moreover, when we compare these two we see that they are undoubtedly portraits of the same man. In fact, we feel that we know, without any reasonable doubt, what manner of man Jonson was in appearance; just as his voluminous writings, and especially his numerous personal references to himself, his friends, patrons, and acquaintances, coupled with the many references to him in the contemporary writings of others, enable us to know, beyond reasonable doubt, what manner of man he was in the matter of character and temperament, and what sort of life he led.¹

¹ Octavius Gilchrist writes (Colonel Cunningham's Edition of *Gifford's Jonson*, Vol. I, p. CCLXXII): "The regret which is felt by every lover of the

But who will venture to say that he knows what Shakspeare was in the matter of personal appearance? Well, no doubt there are some enthusiasts who will assert that they know perfectly well; but it will be found that their asserted knowledge is really an example of that faith which is said to become "a passionate intuition," the strength whereof is in inverse proportion to the evidence on which it is supposed to rest. It is another instance of that convenient "illative sense" which enables some favoured mortals to know just what they want to know without being put to the trouble of searching for evidence or of finding reasons for the faith that is in them.

In Shakspeare's case there is no lack of "counterfeit presentments," but they labour under the disadvantage that none of them can be said to be beyond suspicion, and that they all differ so widely, one from the other, as to suggest that a different model posed for each. We have only to compare the Stratford bust, the so-called "Droeshout original," the "Ely Palace" portrait, and the "Chandos" portrait, to say nothing of the terra-cotta bust in the possession of the Garrick Club, and the alleged "death-mask," to see at once the truth of this statement, unless, indeed, we look through glasses of a very pronounced Stratfordian colour, in which case we shall, no doubt, see anything that we desire to see.¹

drama that no painting of Shakspeare has been authenticated, has no existence in the case of his friend. While the rude graver of Droeshoet preserves in the title-page of the First Folio the only genuine resemblance of Shakspeare, numerous portraits of Jonson remain to which no suspicion attaches. Their age, the excellence of their execution, their general correspondence with one another, concurring with their similarity to Vaughan's curious engraving, all combine to establish their general authenticity. Ben does not appear to have felt any reluctance at having his features conveyed to posterity, they were such as he needed not to be ashamed of—nor is it likely from his extensive attachments, even if he had felt this reserve, that the partiality of friendship should not have triumphed over his scruples. We know, however, that he submitted to the pallet." See further *ubi cit.*

¹ Dr. Grosart in his Introduction to Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr* (p. 63, note) tells a story of a certain Marquis who asked, "Can I doubt of the

The fact is, that just as the utter dearth of information concerning Shakspeare tempted unprincipled men to deceive the public by the forgery of documents purporting to supply new facts—such as John Jordan's fabrications, Ireland's wholesale forgeries, and the numerous forgeries promulgated by John Payne Collier—so the absence of any authentic portrait of Shakspeare prompted needy and unprincipled artists to supply the public demand, and their own necessities at the same time, by fabricating likenesses of "the immortal bard"—all of them, of course of undoubtedly contemporaneous date!

The following extract is from Mr. John Corbin's recently published book, *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*. Mr. Corbin, I may add, is a Stratfordian, and writes to advocate the claims of the Ely Palace portrait:—

"For many decades the Director of the National Portrait Gallery was asked on an average of rather more than once a year to buy a presentment of the great dramatist, a counterfeit presentment, usually at an exorbitant price, and to this day, the Director informs me, the supply continues. The origin of these portraits is easily accounted for. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, as is well known, the national interest in Shakespeare became feverish, and broke out in forgeries, of which those of the notorious Ireland are the most memorable. One of the plague-sores of this unwholesome time was the manufacture of portraits of Shakespeare, 'mock originals,' as their fabricators called them, which bade fair to become one of the permanent products of England. Literally dozens of them are known to have been circulated. In the case of one Zincke and one Holder, the method of manufacture was laid bare. Any old painting from a

existence of Homer when I possess his bust and portrait?" Similarly, certain persons seem to ask to-day, "Can I doubt as to the authorship of the Plays when I can see the bust at Stratford, and as many portraits of Shakespeare as I desire?"

junk-shop, an antique dancing master, an elderly lady in cap and blue ribbons, a Dutch admiral, was bought for a few shillings and deftly furnished forth with a set of new features, ostensibly those of the great poet. These were, of course, painted over the original portrait in a manner more or less archaic, and artificially blackened with smoke, so as to seem a part of the original painting. Wivell has a curious passage with regard to the smoking of a mock original.¹ Very often a story was concocted connecting the 'original' with Shakespeare's family, and pasted on the back in pseudo-Elizabethan script. Life portraits thus manufactured sold to the delighted connoisseur for prices from three to six pounds, the smallness of which, no doubt, contributed to the purchaser's delight, as well as to his belief in the keenness of his connoisseurship. The most amusing circumstance with regard to these mock originals, and at the same time the circumstance most pertinent to the present discussion, is that as soon as a connoisseur bought one of them he fell hopelessly beneath its spell. Both Zincke and Holder, when suffering from lapses into honesty, found the utmost difficulty in convincing the purchaser that there was a shadow of doubt as to the authenticity of an 'original,' such is the magic of the worship of Shakespeare when joined with the pride of connoisseurship. The old lady became the property of the French actor Talma, who enshrined it in a costly frame and displayed it to his admiring friends. Charles Lamb it is said—and one scarcely knows whether to laugh or to weep—fell down on his knees and kissed it. The story of the Dutch admiral, which is preserved in a written confession of the forger, is pure farce. Having picked the portrait up for five shillings, Holder repainted it, and sold it to a print-seller, named Dunford, for four pounds ten shillings. Dunford, waxing enthusiastic over his find, induced

¹ See Abraham Wivell on Shakespeare's Portraits (1827). See also James Boaden on the same subject (1824).

literally hundreds of 'connoisseurs' to inspect it, and they all seem to have acknowledged its great value." Dunford, who declared that Sir Thomas Lawrence, Benjamin West, "and four hundred competent judges" had recognised the portrait as authentic, himself sold it for one hundred guineas. "When the portrait was exposed as a fraud, Sir Thomas Lawrence is said to have denied that he had vouched for its authenticity; but it is evident that neither he nor Benjamin West discovered the imposture when they examined the portrait—a fact that throws some little light on the value of the critical opinion of celebrated painters, even when they are presidents of the Royal Academy. In his confession Holder laughs somewhat more than in his sleeve, and remarks that the crowd of connoisseurs were 'blind altogether'. . . . Holder had an admirable craftsman's pride in his art. The Dutch admiral Shakespeare he seems to have regarded as a poor thing, though his own; but he records with pride: 'I afterwards made another Shakespeare worth a score such as the above.' The fate of this worthy Shakespeare is, unhappily, not recorded. The known dozens of mock originals cast a gloom over the prospect of any portrait subsequently brought to light; but this mock original has a separate claim upon the imagination. The more one is convinced that any particular portrait is an original, and no mock, the greater the lurking terror of Holder's 'other Shakespeare,' and in view of it—or in the lack of a view of it—we shall not be justified in pursuing any but the most cautious and scientific mode of investigation."

This "mock original" in which Holder took such pride for all we know is now one of those which adorn the Stratford shrine. But this story of the fabrication of Shakespeare "originals" teaches us another lesson besides that of caution in dealing with alleged portraits of "the great dramatist." Why was it that these ingenious artificers set to work to make these counterfeit present-

ments? And why, when made, did they differ so much among themselves? The reason was that, except the Stratford bust and the Droeshout engraving in the Folio, the artists had really nothing to work upon. There were portraits of Ben Jonson, there were portraits of the actors Alleyn and Burbage, there was a portrait of Mr. Willis's friend, Richard Sibbs, so fond of bringing "legal phraseology into his sermons," and many engravings thereof;¹ but of "Shakespeare" there was really no portrait at all. Mr. Corbin, indeed, finds "evidence of the currency of Shakespeare's portrait during his lifetime" in a well-known passage in *The Return from Parnassus*, where Gullio, after quoting from the opening stanza of *Venus and Adonis*, exclaims: "O sweet Mr. Shakespeare, I'll have his picture in my study at the Courte!" Mr. Corbin tells us that when he showed this passage "to Mr. Sidney Colvin, keeper of the Prints in the British Museum, he remarked that it would almost indicate the currency of prints of Shakespeare." Here I cannot help suspecting that the writer's memory must be somewhat at fault. He speaks as though he introduced this passage to the notice of Mr. Sidney Colvin for the first time, whereas that very learned scholar must of course have been perfectly familiar with words so often quoted from a work which he had doubtless many times perused. Nor can I think that Mr. Colvin would have considered the words cited as either "almost," or at all indicating the currency of prints of Shakespeare in his lifetime, though, possibly, he laid great emphasis on the useful word *almost*! The fool Gullio, revelling in the very luxurious imagery of the poem, says he really must have "sweet Mr. Shakespeare's" picture in his "study at the Court." Gullio is a ridiculous impostor, and his "study at the Court," as the dramatist makes us clearly understand, is not supposed to have any existence except in his

¹ See p. 394. Sibbs's portrait was four times engraved. The portrait of Burbage, said to be by himself, and the fine portrait of Alleyn are in the Dulwich Gallery.

own imagination. To make an impression on his hearers this pretentious vapourer, affecting rapture at the verses quoted, boasts that he will have the poet's "picture," but to take this as proof that such pictures were actually in existence at the time is merely "to give to airy nothings a local habitation," and to find "evidence" in clouds and soap bubbles.

But we have, at any rate, the Droeshout engraving and the Stratford bust. These two have always been cited as undoubtedly authentic portraits of Shakespeare. Thus Mr. Corbin writes (p. 14): "In judging a portrait without history two tests are indispensable. It must resemble one or both of the two portraits of Shakespeare which we know to have been approved by his contemporaries—the Droeshout engraving and the bust at Stratford—and it must be demonstrably painted in the manner in vogue during Shakespeare's life." But here our difficulties at once begin. Except when viewed through those Stratfordian glasses which make everything appear as the worshipper desires it to appear, the bust and the engraving really bear no resemblance the one to the other. Hearken first unto Mr. Sidney Lee: "Only two extant portraits are *positively known*¹ to have been produced within a short period after his death. These are the bust in Stratford Church and the frontispiece to the folio of 1623. Each is an inartistic attempt at posthumous likeness. There is considerable discrepancy between the two; their main points of resemblance are *the baldness on the top of the head*, and the fulness of the hair about the ears."

Well, two bald men always resemble each other so far as their baldness is concerned, and since a great many men are bald on the top of the head there is no lack of resemblances to this extent. Let us cheerfully admit

¹ My italics. We shall see further as to this with regard to the bust presently.

baldness and fulness of the hair about the ears as the "main points of resemblance." But when one comes to look at the features, which after all are generally considered the important things in a portrait, the resemblance is seen to vanish into "thin air." I assure the reader that no pun is intended; the words were written *currente calamo*! Look at the bust. "It is," says Mr. Lee, "a rudely carved specimen of mortuary sculpture. There are marks about the forehead and ears which suggest that the face was fashioned from a death mask,¹ but the workmanship is at all points clumsy. The round face and eyes present a heavy unintellectual expression." This unhappy bust is supposed to have been the work of Gerard Johnson or Janssen, "who was," as Mr. Lee says, "a Dutch stonemason or tomb-maker settled in Southwark."² "Unfortunately," writes Mr. Corbin, "he seems scarcely to have deserved his very modest title of 'tomb-maker.' *The face of the bust is even cruder in modelling, if possible, than that of the print is in draughtsmanship.*" These, be it remembered, are the words of an ardent Stratfordian, and, I believe, an authority on portraiture and sculpture. Mr. Corbin goes on to point out what is, indeed, evident to the most casual observer, viz. that the bust resembles nothing that ever was on sea or land, for "in the normal face the hair begins at the base of the nose, often in the very nostrils, and this is notably the case in the Droeshout engraving. In the bust there is a wide and very ugly interval." This is well shown in Mr. Corbin's engraving of the mask taken from the bust (facing p. 26 of his book), though Mr. Lee's frontispiece of the Stratford monument fails to reveal it. The bust, in fact, shows what appears to be an abnormal upper lip,³

¹ This is rather amusing in the light of subsequent investigations.

² It is not a little extraordinary that nothing should be known as to how the monument came to be erected. Who erected it, and when?

³ Mr. Spielmann says that this is appearance only, but Sir F. Chantrey, who examined the bust carefully, spoke to the Rev. William Harness of "the extraordinary length of the upper lip."

with a moustache stretched across it, but leaving, as Mr. Corbin says, a wide and ugly interval between the hair and the nose (a thing for which we search natural humanity in vain), and also a narrow but very distinct interval between the hair and the upper lip.¹

The conditions which Mr. Corbin lays down as "indispensable tests" in judging of a Shakespeare portrait are then, as he admits, "fraught with difficulty." "For," says he, "the two authentic portraits obviously represent Shakespeare at widely different periods; they are both rude in technique, and have been impaired by accident or clumsy alteration."

As for the Droeshout engraving I can never understand how any unprejudiced man, with a sense of humour, can look upon it without being tempted to irreverent laughter. It is not only that it is, as Mr. Corbin points out, altogether out of drawing; not only is the head preternaturally large for the body; not only is it quaintly suggestive of an unduly deferred razor; but it looks at one with a peculiar expression of sheepish oafishness which is irresistibly comic. Well indeed might Jonson advise the reader "if he wants to find the real Shakespeare," as Mr. Corbin excellently puts it, "to turn to the plays," to look "not on his picture, but his book."²

To return to the bust, with its expression of heavy

¹ Mr. Spielmann thinks that this "shaven space between the nose and moustache, and between moustache and lip" is merely a "long-prevailing fashion carried to an extreme," and mentions other portraits where the same thing may be observed. If this be so, it is very curious that none of the other (supposed) portraits of Shakespeare exhibit the same "fashion." Had he adopted it "for this occasion only"?

² Mrs. Stopes, in the article subsequently referred to (*Monthly Review*, April, 1904), speaks of "the inartistically designed, and coarsely executed engraving of Droeshout," and adds that in the reproduction which appeared as frontispiece to Shakespeare's Poems in 1640, the engraver Marshall "increased the inanity of the expression." "Inanity" is certainly the right word for that particular expression of face (see further, as to this quaint engraving, p. 467 *et seq.*).

V. Bernard Hol-
lander: "Scientific
Phrenology," on
this portrait
(p. 275 and plate 46)

stupidity. "It seems strange, no doubt, according to modern ideas," says Mr. Corbin, "that Shakespeare's family should have accepted so imperfect a likeness; but here as elsewhere modern ideas are perhaps misleading. In days when the stone for the monument had probably to be carted the hundred and more miles from London, a fraction of an inch might not have been so grave a consideration even on a poet's nose"! Mr. Corbin, of course, quotes Leonard Digges's stilted lines once more,

Thy workes, by which out-live
Thy tombe, thy name must when that stone is rent
And Time dissolves thy Stratford monument,

as making it certain that the present monument was in existence in 1623, and concludes that "crude as the bust is, it is to be regarded as the presentment of the Shakespeare who in 1616 was familiar to Stratford-on-Avon."

Yet, as Mrs. Stopes says (*Monthly Review*, April, 1904), "Every one who approaches the Stratford bust is more disappointed in it, as a revelation of the poet, than even in the crude lines of Droeshout. There is an entire lack of the faintest suggestion of poetic or spiritual inspiration in its plump earthliness."

Here, however, we are brought face to face with one of those extraordinary surprises which are always meeting us in this marvellous Shakespearean "biography." It seems absolutely certain that this Stratford bust, the Mecca-stone of so many pilgrimages, and to which so many worshippers have bowed the knee in rapt adoration, is in reality not the original bust at all; neither is the monument which now stands at Stratford the original monument. This is surprising enough, but more surprising still is it that nearly all the Shakespearean critics, biographers, and general rum-magers should have overlooked, or ignored, the fact till it was pointed out to them by Mrs. Charlotte C. Stopes in the *Monthly Review* of 1904.

The fact is that the earliest representation of the Shakespeare bust and monument is to be found in Sir William Dugdale's great *History of the Antiquities of Warwickshire*, and both bust and monument as depicted therein differ widely in every important particular from the bust and monument of the present day!

Mrs. Stopes, in the article referred to, gives a reproduction of Dugdale's engraving of the monument, and also an enlargement of the bust as represented in his work.¹ The whole thing is changed. Instead of the heavy, stupid-looking man, holding the pen and paper which the designer has put into his hands, "after the manner of the schoolboy who wrote under his drawing of something on four legs, 'this is a horse,'" we see a melancholy-looking individual with hollow cheeks. "The moustache drops down softly and naturally instead of perking upwards, there is no mantle on the shoulders, no pen in the hand, no cushioned desk." Moreover, "the arms are bent awkwardly, the hands are laid stiffly, palms downward on a large cushion, suspiciously resembling a *wool-sack*."²

Now, Dugdale, according to Mrs. Stopes, "seems, judging from the notes of his diary, to have prepared his work in the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon about 1636, though the publication was delayed by the civil wars for twenty years." From what we know of him, and from a comparison of other representations given in his work with existing monuments, we may be confident that he has reproduced the Shakespeare bust, as it was in his

¹ I have compared these with the engraving in an extremely well-preserved copy of Dugdale's *Antiquities*, and find that they are quite accurate. (See Frontispiece.)

² This is quite true, but Mrs. Stopes, it is to be remembered, is very ardently anti-Baconian! It is rather curious, I may add, that the "Felton" portrait, which has been hotly claimed by some as an "original," is the only one of the numerous "Shakespeare portraits" in which "the moustache grows downwards," as does that shown in Dugdale's engraving. It is also very curious that Mr. Spielmann says nothing about this engraving. See his essay in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 397, as to the "Felton" portrait.

time, with, at any rate, as Mrs. Stopes says, "some degree of fidelity." But he has placed an entirely different god in the shrine. I can see no resemblance whatever between the melancholy man depicted by him and any of the (so-called) portraits of Shakespeare, except in the high forehead (which, however, is not exaggerated as in the Droeshout engraving), and in "the fulness of the hair about the ears," which is certainly not a very peculiar characteristic for a man of Elizabethan times. His hands, with extended fingers, rest lovingly on "the woolsack," as if pressing it towards him, but "melancholy marked him for her own" might well have been the inscription for the stone below.

Of this original bust Mrs. Stopes writes, "the unsatisfactory, or rather, in some aspects, the satisfactory fact is, that it *differs in all important details from the bust as it appears now*" (original italics).¹

One cannot help smiling as one thinks of all the ingenious efforts made by Mr. Corbin and others to show that the present bust (which really bears not the faintest resemblance to Dugdale's) does not so greatly differ from the Droeshout engraving. Mrs. Stopes, indeed,

¹ The entire monument as depicted by Dugdale differs in almost every detail from the present one. (See the engravings in Mrs. Stopes's article.) She omits to state that the engraving in Dugdale is by Hollar; but, as she observes, it is "open to the interpretation that Dugdale or his draughtsman was careless and inexact in details." I should certainly suspect that the little sitting figures, e.g. (holding spade and hour-glass) are by no means exact copies of the originals. They are placed as no monumental sculptor would be likely to place them. But unless Hollar was a fraud and devised an effigy of his own "out of his inner consciousness," and Dugdale was so untrustworthy as to accept it, the bust in his time must have been entirely different from what it is now. Mere carelessness or inaccuracy will certainly not account for the discrepancy. Halliwell, in his *Works of Shakespeare* (16 vols., 1853), writes that this engraving "is evidently too inaccurate to be of any authority; the probability being that it was not taken from the monument itself, and a comparison of it with Vertue's drawing, published in Pope's edition of Shakespeare, 1725, evidently shows that the details were fanciful." But this is mere assertion, and the suggested comparison proves nothing at all, nor does it raise any presumption against Hollar's or Dugdale's accuracy or honesty.

thinks that Dugdale's presentment "is not unlike an older Droeshout," but it requires a vast amount of imagination to detect any likeness whatever between the Folio engraving and Dugdale's melancholy man. But Mrs. Stopes is certainly not deficient in imagination. She imagines that the Dugdale picture "shows us the tired creator of poems, exhausted from lack of sleep, 'Nature's sweet restorer,' weary of the bustling London life, who had returned as soon as possible to seek rest at home among his own people." Well, well, it is indeed marvellous what imagination can do! I have never heard it suggested, however, that the Stratford Player, "William the Conqueror," was so exhausted by his effort as a "creator of poems" that he suffered from want of sleep; but in this suggestion the lady sees "something biographical." Well, almost any freak of the imagination does duty as "biography" where Shakespeare is concerned; but if I should be told that Dugdale's effigy represented an elderly farmer deploring an exceptionally bad harvest, "I should not feel it to be strange"! Neither should I feel it at all strange if I were

In his *Outlines* Halliwell simply ignores Dugdale. His engraving was doubtless too inconvenient to be brought to public notice! (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 258.) Mrs. Stopes writes: "In order to compare his work in other examples, I asked a friend to take a photograph of Sir Thomas Lucy's tomb, as pictured in Dugdale, and another from the original, which has been very little restored since it was sculptured in Shakespeare's time. He took that from the book, but found that the tomb itself was in a bad light for photography, and sent me instead a pencil outline. This supports Dugdale's rendering of important details, though he failed somewhat, naturally, in catching the expression. It allows us to believe that he reproduced the Shakespeare's bust with some degree of fidelity." On the whole, I see no reason at all why we should doubt the substantial accuracy of Dugdale's figure. It holds the field as the representation of the Stratford bust as it was in its original form. Dr. Whitaker has told us that Dugdale's "scrupulous accuracy, united with stubborn integrity," has elevated his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* "to the rank of legal evidence." Mr. Spielmann quotes this pronouncement only to dissent from it, but he supplies us with no proof of Dugdale's inaccuracy. Certainly the general opinion hitherto has been that of Dr. Whitaker. Anyhow, it is impossible to suppose that Hollar would have drawn and that Dugdale would have published a mere travesty of the Stratford Monument.

told that it was the presentment of a philosopher and Lord Chancellor, who had fallen from high estate and had recognised that all things are but vanity!

But when, we may well ask, was this alteration made? When was the god in the shrine thus tampered with? Mrs. Stopes thinks the culprit was John Ward, the grandfather of Mrs. Siddons, who "was in Stratford in 1746, and gave the whole proceeds of a representation of *Othello* in the Town Hall on September 8 towards the restoration of Shakespeare's tomb. Orders were given to 'beautify' as well as to repair it. We are left altogether in the dark as to the degree of decay and the amount of reconstruction, but that it was fundamental seems evident." This may be so, but we have no evidence to prove that the substitution of the new for the old monument was not done even before this date.

Another question suggests itself. Why was the alteration made? Was Dugdale's bust thought to bear too much resemblance to one who was not Shakspeare of Stratford? Or was it thought that the presence of the "woolsack" might be taken as indicating that Shakspeare of Stratford was indebted for support to a certain Lord Chancellor? Or what was the reason that operated to induce these vandals to destroy the old monument, and to erect a brand new one, altered in every particular (always excepting the turned-down collars, and the buttons down the centre of the jerkin), in substitution for it? It is impossible to find the answer, but once more, one smiles (rather sadly this time) to find that of "the two authentic portraits" of Shakespeare, as Mr. Corbin and so many others call the present bust and the Droeshout engraving, one at any rate is now shown not to be authentic at all, leaving the Stratfordians to find such comfort as they can in the "inanity" of the Droeshout print, unless indeed they are content to recognise a new idol, of an entirely new type, in Dugdale's melancholy figure.

And now a word as to the other so-called portraits of "the immortal bard." Of these the one which is now most favoured by the orthodox is that which is generally known as the "Flower portrait," because the theory has been put forward that this is the original painting from which Martin Droeshout executed his engraving. "As recently as 1892," writes Mr. Lee (p. 236), "Mr. Edgar Flower, of Stratford-on-Avon, discovered in the possession of Mr. C. Clements, a private gentleman with artistic tastes, residing at Peckham Rye, a portrait alleged to represent Shakespeare. . . . Mr. Clements purchased the portrait of an obscure dealer about 1840, and knew nothing of its history, beyond what he set down on a slip of paper when he acquired it." In the upper left-hand corner the picture bears, in *cursive characters*, the inscription "Willm Shakespeare 1609." On the death of Mr. Clements in 1895, it was purchased by Mrs. Charles Flower, and was presented to the Memorial Picture Gallery at Stratford, where it now hangs.

Mr. Sidney Lee, in the 1898 edition of his *Life of William Shakespeare*, wrote of this portrait: "Connoisseurs, including Sir Edward Poynter, Mr. Sidney Colvin, and Mr. Lionel Cust, have almost unreservedly pronounced the picture to be anterior in date to the engraving, and they have reached the conclusion that in all probability Martin Droeshout directly based his work upon the painting." But, writes Mr. Corbin (p. 73 of the work referred to), "it so happened that I had a letter from Sir E. J. Poynter expressing his opinion directly opposite to that Mr. Lee attributed to him, and also notes of the conversation in which Mr. Colvin animadverted on the 'cursive' inscription, and said that he was inclined to think the portrait an early copy of the engraving. These I brought to Mr. Lee's notice. In the library edition of his *Life*, published in 1899, the so-called Droeshout original was replaced as frontispiece by a reproduction

in colours of the Stratford bust, and Sir E. J. Poynter was omitted from the list of connoisseurs in favour of the portrait." Mr. Sidney Colvin and Mr. Lionel Cust are, however, still quoted as "almost unreservedly" pronouncing the picture to be "anterior in date to the engraving."¹ But Mr. Corbin writes: (p. 62) "In September, 1896, I had an interview with Mr. Sidney Colvin at the British Museum. My notes of this interview are to the effect that, though he assigned the portrait to a very early date, perhaps the first half of the seventeenth century, he regarded it as a very careful copy of the print!" In an article published in *Harper's Magazine* for May, 1897, the same writer tells us that "Sir Charles Robinson, his Majesty's Surveyor of Pictures, pointed out that the inscription is in cursive characters. The custom at that period was to use capitals. Mr. Sidney Colvin, Keeper of Prints in the British Museum, told me later that this cursive inscription was unique in his experience."² Then in his book (p. 74) he writes, alluding to Mr. Lee's citation of Mr. Colvin as an authority in favour of the portrait, "with regard to Mr. Colvin's opinions there are thus two second-hand reports, which are as nearly contradictory as possible. In 1898, and again in 1901, I tried to secure his written statement of them; but while he has made no correction in the words my notes attribute to him, he is apparently—and considering the personal turn the dis-

¹ Our faith in "connoisseurs," including the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, is, alas, not a little shaken, when we find it asserted, on excellent authority, that a spurious portrait of Charlotte Brontë, altogether unlike the supposed original, has been admitted into that gallery. If such an egregious error can be committed in the case of a person whom some still living can remember, what may not be done in the case of a seventeenth-century portrait—especially where the features of the alleged original are, really, altogether unknown to us?

² Mr. Corbin repeats these statements in his book (p. 63) and adds, "The custom at that period was to use block letters, such as we find in the Ely Palace portrait," but he says (p. 78) "it would be more accurate to say that the characters are what printers call lower-case italics," but they "are none the less suspicious on that account."

cussion has taken, not unnaturally—unwilling to be drawn into it. The opinion Mr. Lee attributes to him accordingly, that the portrait is anterior in date to the engraving, is not, at least in one very important meaning of the word, 'unreserved.'"

As to Mr. Cust, Mr. Corbin tells us that in 1896 he (Corbin) obtained from him a written statement as follows: "In spite of its being painted over another portrait, I still regard (the Droeshout painting) as a picture of the early seventeenth century. I cannot pledge myself to its having *preceded* the Droeshout engraving, although my inclination is to think so. I feel quite convinced that it is not one of the countless forgeries with which the world is perpetually being dosed. The portrait agrees with the engraving, and may therefore be accepted as a portrait of Shakespeare. . . . Whether done during his lifetime or not must remain a matter of uncertainty. It is not the work of a good painter." Upon this Mr. Corbin comments: "Few documents have ever come to my notice which indicate more clearly the tragic difference between the inclination to believe and belief." Mr. Cust's opinion certainly does not read much like what Mr. Lee calls an "almost unreserved" pronouncement that the picture is "anterior in date to the engraving"!

It will have been noticed that Mr. Cust speaks of the picture as "being painted over another portrait." This important fact was discovered by Sir Charles Robinson, His Majesty's Surveyor of Pictures and Superintendent of the Art Collections of the South Kensington Museum. As Mr. Corbin writes: "The existence of an underlying portrait has never been denied, and at once calls up the shades of Zincke and Holder," and he adds (p. 69): "Holder and Zincke sold dozens of counterfeit presentments beside which this is Hyperion to a satyr." Also "the fact remains that the characters in which the inscrip-

tion is written, as has been already stated, are so suspicious that they have been ruled out of the case."

Now Mr. Lee tells us nothing about these suspicious "cursive letters"; does not even mention the fact that the picture is painted over an underlying portrait; has, as Mr. Corbin shows, wrongly cited Sir Edward Poynter as an authority in favour of the portrait being the "Droeshout Original"; and says not a word of the great weight of opinion on the other side. It is an excellent example of the judicial spirit in which Mr. Lee writes.

What are the opinions on the other side? Sir Charles Robinson wrote (*Times*, December 3rd, 1898), saying that the members of the Society of Antiquaries were at first strongly inclined to believe in the portrait, as no doubt they were, for, of course, it would be a grand thing to find the original of the Droeshout engraving! "But this was in the evening, after dinner, when people are often inclined to see things in the most favourable light. . . . A reinspection, however, in the full light of day threw quite a different complexion on the matter. It was then soon perceived that the picture was of precisely the same class as the majority of the other *soi-disant* Shakespeare portraits, that is to say, it was substantially an ancient sixteenth or seventeenth-century portrait, painted in oil on panel, which had been fraudulently repainted and vamped up in various ways—metamorphosed, in fact, into a portrait of the great dramatist, probably towards the end of the last or the beginning of the present century. Apparently the original portrait was that of a lady, for the leading forms and details of the work could still be discerned in many places by a practised eye piercing through the fraudulent envelope. There was, moreover, one other damning circumstance. The picture was painted on a substantial white-wood panel, put together in the Italian manner, an almost certain indication that the original work was that of an Italian master, doubtless

working in his own country. Had it been a genuine contemporary portrait of Shakespeare, on the other hand, painted in this country, the material on which it was executed would just as certainly have been a thin oak panel, simply glued up in the usual English manner of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."

Here it must be noted that the allegation as to the "white-wood panel" was promptly contradicted by Mr. G. R. M. Murray, of the Botanical Department of the British Museum, who pronounced the panel to be elm; but the statement that it was "put together in the Italian manner" has not, so far as I know, been controverted.

Then that doughty champion, Dr. Furnivall, appears on the scene. "Dr. Furnivall," says Mr. Corbin (p. 61), "assailed the picture with his customary vigour, on the ground that it has no pedigree, and declared it was a 'make-up' of the late seventeenth century from the print and the bust, both of which the artist had seen." He subsequently appears to have modified his opinion to the extent that he "was forced to admit that no trace of the bust is discernible. He had overlooked the fact that in the engraving the cheek showed a marked fulness. But his judgment as to the portrait, and, in fact, as to all painted portraits of Shakespeare, remains unchanged."

But Mr. Corbin himself supplies some of the most damning evidence against the portrait. It would seem that the artist got hold of an old portrait painted on a worm-eaten panel, and painted over the worm-holes, thus providing the "connoisseurs" with an undoubted antique! Some of the worm-holes are clear cut; others seem painted round the edges, *and at least one, on the line of the right cheek-bone, has plainly been painted over; it is discernible now only because the paint has sagged into it.* If these appearances are to be relied on, the painter sought to give an appearance of antiquity by using a panel already "worm-holed"! Such are Mr. Corbin's

notes of 1896, but he adds, "in 1901 the surface paint in this worm-hole has apparently been picked away"!¹

Oh! sweet Mr. Shakespeare! I *will* have his picture to hang in my study!

Mr. W. Salt Brassington, Librarian of the Memorial Gallery at Stratford, writes with all the passionate faith of a priest of the shrine: "There is now *no doubt* that it is a life portrait of Shakespeare, painted in 1609." We might say, in fact, with Mr. Collins, that it is "as certain as anything connected with Shakespeare can be"! What says Mr. Mather, however, "a connoisseur of the school of Morelli and Berenson," who accompanied Mr. Corbin to Stratford to view the picture? His verdict is: "clearly a late copy of the print."²

We need not follow Mr. Corbin any further in his criticism of this marvellous newly-found "Droeshout original." It is a very pretty quarrel as it stands between the various Stratfordian "connoisseurs," who disagree among themselves about this picture as they disagree about almost every other point of Shakespearean controversy. I think, however, every impartial reader of Mr. Corbin's book will admit that the author, and the authorities whom he cites in his favour, have between them knocked the "Droeshout Original," metaphorically speaking, into a cocked-hat and spurs!

And now one word as to the picture itself. It is obviously an improvement on the extremely crude engraving. "Though coarsely and stiffly drawn, the face is far more skilfully presented than in the engraving, and

¹ *Harper's Magazine*, May, 1897, p. 903. *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*, p. 78. Mr. Corbin further says: "In colouring the portrait resembles the bust, with a single exception. I failed to find the least trace of hazel in the eyes; they are simply muddy blue." Mr. Spielmann's conclusion is that "the Flower portrait, with its improvements on the Droeshout defects, yet in design fundamentally identical, is the copy from the print as completed for the Folio, and not the original of it." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 387.)

² Mr. Corbin's book, p. 77.

the expression of countenance betrays some artistic sentiment which is absent from the print." So Mr. Sidney Lee (p. 238). The ordinary observer remarks at once that the stubbly growth of hair on the upper lip of the engraving has now blossomed forth into quite a presentable moustache. I do not know if this is appealed to as a proof that the portrait is of "anterior date" to the print! One would rather think, however, that, bad workman as the engraver unquestionably was, he would hardly have suppressed this elegant moustache if he had found it in his model picture, and substituted the stubbly hairs of malice prepense.¹ But be that how it may, the face is still the face of a simpleton, though not showing quite so much "inanity" as that of the print. If there is "some artistic sentiment" to be found in it, it is assuredly the "irreducible minimum." Now any copyist of the engraving, seeing what a lamentable model he had before him, would naturally try to improve upon it as much as possible, while at the same time taking care not to make too great a departure from the original, and that this represents the true state of the case with regard to this so-called "Droeshout Original" will, I think, be the conclusion arrived at by every man who does not allow his wish to get the better of his judgment. The "Flower portrait" is "doubtless" an improved copy of the Droeshout engraving, vamped up in the approved Holder-Zincke fashion, so as to appear contemporaneous with the date inscribed upon it.²

Mr. Corbin himself, having demolished the "Droeshout Original," proceeds to advocate the claims of what is known as the "Ely Palace" or "Ely House" portrait, nor

¹ As to the moustache and the differences between the engravings in the four Folio editions, the reader may consult Mr. Corbin at p. 80 *et seq.*

² Yet Messrs. Garnett and Gosse adopt it as the frontispiece of the second volume of their *English Literature Illustrated*, as a "copy of an original Portrait of Shakespeare in oils, 1609." Thus is the public fooled to the top of its bent.

is it to be wondered at that as a good Shakespearean he should desire to find the bard of our admiration in this picture rather than in the "Flower portrait." For here we have the painting not of a sheepish hydrocephalous simpleton with leering eyes, but of a man of fine type and of intellectual characteristics.

"This painting," says Mr. Lee, "is of high artistic value. The features are of a far more attractive and intellectual cast than in either the Droeshout painting or engraving, and the many differences in detail raise doubts as to whether the person represented can have been intended for Shakespeare. Experts are of opinion that the picture was painted early in the seventeenth century."

I do not propose to follow Mr. Corbin in his arguments in support of the "Ely Palace" portrait. He has knocked over the "Droeshout Original," but he has, I fear, failed to make good the claims of his own favourite picture as an original portrait of Shakespeare.¹

Then we have the "Chandos," portrait now in the National Portrait Gallery. Here we have quite a different personage, with beard and earrings, and a weak-looking chin. There is, of course, the high forehead, "the baldness at the top of the head, and the fulness of the hair about the ears," but the expression is very different from that of either the "Flower" portrait, or the "Ely Palace" portrait. "Its pedigree," writes Mr. Lee (p. 241), "suggests that it was intended to represent the poet, but numerous and conspicuous divergencies from the authenticated [?] like-

¹ "The strongest evidence," writes Mr. Corbin (p. 56), "of the authenticity of the Ely Palace portrait is to be derived from the character of the moustache, and of the drawing of the costume." These do not strike one as very strong pegs whereon to hang a picture of such weight! Mr. Corbin gives us both a photogravure (frontispiece) of the Ely Palace portrait, and an engraving (p. 40). It is curious to notice that the lines of the jerkin in these two appear to be entirely different. I am unable to understand how this should be so, if both were taken from the same original.

nesses show that it was painted from fanciful descriptions of him some years after his death." Again, there is the "Felton" portrait, of which we are told that "Steevens held that it was the original picture whence both Droeshout and Marshall made their engravings, but there are practically no points of resemblance between it and the prints."¹

Then there is a so-called "Jansen" portrait, as to which Mr. Lee says, "It is a fine portrait, but is unlike any other that has been associated with the dramatist."² Moreover, Jansen did not come to England till after Shakspeare's death; but perhaps the Player gave him a sitting during one of his numerous continental trips, and "made up" specially for the occasion!

Further, there are the "Soest" or "Zoust" portrait, the "Buttery" portrait lately on view at Sotheby's,³ an imaginary terra-cotta bust (suggesting reminiscences of Mr. Tree in one of his numerous characters) now in the possession of the Garrick Club, and generally considered the most pleasing likeness of Shakespeare, because it is quite different from all others; the alleged "Death-mask," and other counterfeit presentments. But it would be a waste of time to delay further over these so-called Shakespeare

¹ Lee, page 242. William Marshall made a copy of the Droeshout engraving for the frontispiece of the edition of *The Rape of Lucrece*, published in 1655. It has been pretended that Richard Burbage, the actor, painted both the "Chandos" and the "Felton" portraits, and those who desire so to do will doubtless believe it.

² We were told by *The Tribune*, of February 18, 1907, that Mr. Spielmann gives this picture the first place among "Shakespeare" portraits; but Mr. Spielmann, in his recently published essay, says of it that "its identity with Shakespeare, it is to be regretted, cannot on any existing ground be regarded as established." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 392.)

³ This so-called portrait is painted on a panel with the poet's coat-of-arms and motto, "non sans droit," as the newspapers told us. It was discovered about the year 1850 by the late Charles Buttery, picture restorer to the late Queen, and was "at once recognized by him as a genuine seventeenth-century portrait of Shakespeare"! I went to see this picture at Sotheby's, in 1902, and was not edified. Mr. Lee ignores it.

portraits. Shakespeare has been well called a "myriad-minded" man, and to judge by the numerous alleged representations of him, all differing amongst themselves, one would imagine that he was a "myriad-headed" man as well. But the fact is that, as commonly happens, the demand has produced the supply. There are in reality no portraits of Shakespeare, for it may be said with confidence that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* had not the absurd and inane features of the Droeshout signboard; and how any of the orthodox could for a moment desire to find the bard of their admiration in that monstrosity is indeed extraordinary. No; we have no portrait of Shakespeare. We "must look not on his Picture but his Book," unless, indeed, we fall back upon Dugdale's picture of the bust as it was when he saw it about 1636. This truly would seem to be the best authenticated of all the representations of the poet. It is, as Mrs. Stopes says, "the earliest known engraving." A melancholy man, truly, but is it not likely that "Shakespeare" in old age was a melancholy man? Mrs. Stopes thinks that in this bust "there is something biographical, something suggestive," that "it shows us the tired creator of poems, exhausted from lack of sleep." "Far from resembling the self-contented fleshy man of to-day, the large and full dark eyes look out of cheeks hollow to emaciation." May not this be the true Shakespeare? But stay. Look for a moment at the frontispiece to the *Sylva Sylvarum*, showing Francis Bacon in 1626. Note those hollow cheeks, that short beard, that drooping moustache, that peculiar underlip, "the fulness of the hair about the ears," and the high forehead which the hat fails entirely to conceal; compare it, even to the row of buttons running down the centre, with Dugdale's engraving. "Look upon this picture, and on that." And the bust was executed by a London man! The stone carted from London! Good heavens! *Ah! Corydon, Corydon, quae te dementia cepit!* Is it for

Hanwell we are heading, or shall we be consigned to Broadmoor as criminal lunatics?¹

¹ Since this was put into print yet another Shakespeare portrait has been discovered. The cry is still they come! "Widespread interest has been aroused by the rediscovery of what is supposed to be the earliest known portrait of Shakespeare at the Bridgewater Arms, Winston, near Darlington. The portrait, which measures 15½ inches by 17½ inches, has in white letters on the panel the inscription, 'Ae suae (aetatis suae) 24-1588,' and on the back are the letters 'W+S.' Nowhere, however, is there an indication of the painter's name or initials." (*The Tribune*, February 18th, 1907. See, too, the *Daily News* and *Manchester Guardian* of same date, and *The Observer* of February 17th.) One of the first things, therefore, that "the Stratford rustic" seems to have done on coming to town was to get his portrait painted—perhaps it was a presentation portrait for the Earl of Southampton! But if we may judge from the reproductions in the newspapers this very latest discovery is not exactly "a thing to be grasped at." *O qualis facies, et quali digna tabellâ!* But the excitement concerning it seems to have subsided almost as suddenly as it arose. The fact is that the thing is getting a trifle overdone. But Mr. Lee might truly write that the wealth of Shakespearean portraiture "far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare"! Evidently the immortal bard was *bellua multorum capitum*—as "multi-faced" as Southey's demon. Unfortunately his portraits, like the greater part of the "mass of biographical detail," were "faked." Mr. Spielmann, whose essay on the Portraits of Shakespeare has appeared since this work was in type, writes: "I may say at once that a long and minute study of the portraits of Shakespeare in every medium and material has led me, otherwise hopeful as I was at the outset years ago, no distance at all towards the firm establishment of the reputation of any one of them as a true life-portrait." (*Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 374.)

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST FOLIO

IN 1623 was published that most precious of volumes known as the First Folio. Mr. Sidney Lee tells us, in his introduction to the recently published Facsimile, that "of the thirty-six plays which appeared in this volume only sixteen had been printed at earlier dates—fifteen in the author's lifetime, and one, *Othello*, posthumously. . . . No less than twenty dramas, of which the greater number rank among the literary masterpieces of the world—nine of the fourteen comedies that were here brought together for the first time, five of the ten histories, and six of the twelve tragedies—were rescued by the First Folio from oblivion." Well may Mr. Lee say that "the pieces, whose approaching publication for the first time was thus announced, were of supreme literary interest," viz. *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen*, *Measure for Measure*, *Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *Winter's Tale*, *3-Henry VI*, *Henry VIII*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*. Licence to publish these sixteen plays was obtained from the Stationers' Company, by Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, on November 8th, 1623. Four other dramas which had not hitherto been published in the form which they now assumed were included in the Folio volume, viz.: *Henry VI*, Parts 1 and 2, *King John*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, but for the publication of these no licence was sought, presumably because they were

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founded upon, or were revisions of, earlier plays already in print.¹

And not only is it true that of the thirty-six plays published in the Folio only sixteen had been printed or published before, but—and this is still more remarkable—six of them, as it seems, had never been heard of before, to wit: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Timon of Athens*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Coriolanus*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Henry VIII*.² What did Player Shakspeare of Stratford do with the MSS. of these six plays? Why did he make no use of them in his lifetime? It is certain that these precious manuscripts were not in his possession when he died in 1616. How is it that they never saw the light till seven years after his death?

For the great gift of the First Folio the world is indebted to those, whoever they were, who undertook its publication in 1623; but not to the author of the dramas, if William Shakspeare of Stratford was indeed the author; for he, careless of fame, intent on "gain not glory," had passed away seven years before, without book or manuscript in his possession, and without breathing a word as to any wishes which he might conceivably have entertained as to the publication of these world's masterpieces. So far as he

¹ "Each of these plays," writes Mr. Lee (*Life*, p. 251), "was based by Shakespeare on a play of like title, which had been published at an earlier date, and the absence of a licence was *doubtless* due to an ignorant misconception on the part either of the Stationers' Company's officers or of the editors of the volume as to the true relations subsisting between the old pieces and the new." Notwithstanding Mr. Lee's favourite adverb, I rather doubt that "ignorant misconception."

² There was, of course, an old play, *The Taming of a Shrew*, and a play of *Henry VIII* or *All is True* (as Sir Henry Wotton styles it), being acted at the Globe Theatre in 1613, when the performance was put an end to by the fire which consumed the theatre. Mr. Fleay says (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 250), "*Henry VIII* as we have it is *not* the play that was in action at the Globe when that theatre was burned." Mr. Gollancz says it "undoubtedly" *was* so; and of the same opinion is Dr. Garnett (Essay prefixed to *At Shakespeare's Shrine*, p. 12). Who shall decide when (as usual) the doctors disagree? *All's Well that Ends Well* may *perhaps* be identical with *Love's Labour's Won*, mentioned by Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598).

was concerned, his interest in the works of Shakespeare ceased when he quitted the stage; so far as he was concerned *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale*, and the other immortal dramas, then unpublished, might have been for ever lost to humanity.

"He and his colleagues wrote for the stage, and not for the study," says Mr. Lee. "They intended their plays to be spoken and not read," and Shakespeare, we are told, "was paid by the company for his writings, and in return made over to the company all property and right in his manuscripts"; after which, it seems, he thought no more about them, and cared nothing.

We will consider this remarkable theory more particularly later on. Let us now examine this priceless First Folio volume.

The title-page tells us that it contains "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. Published according to the True originall Copies. London. Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Edward Blount, 1623." The colophon, at the end of the book, is, "Printed at the charges of W. Jaggard, Edward Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Aspley, 1623."

The work had, of course, to be printed by a member, or members, of the Stationers' Company, and as Malone tells us, several of these booksellers¹ had "a property in the quarto plays which were here reprinted," wherefore their assent to, and co-operation in the publication was necessary. William Jaggard was, says Mr. Lee, "the piratical publisher of *The Passionate Pilgrim*," and "had long known the commercial value of Shakespeare's work." Blount, who appears both on the title-page and in the colophon, "had been a friend and admirer of Christopher Marlowe, and had actively engaged in the posthumous publication of two of Marlowe's poems. He had published that curious collection of mystical verse entitled

¹ Bookseller, stationer, publisher were convertible terms in those days.

Love's Martyr, one poem in which, 'a poetical essay of the Phoenix and the Turtle,' was signed 'William Shakespeare.'" Isaac Jaggard was William Jaggard's son.¹

The nominal editors of the volume are Shakspeare's fellow players, John Heminge and Henry Condell. Dick Burbage would, "doubtless" (if I may use Mr. Lee's favourite adverb), have been associated with them, but he had died in 1618. The names of these worthies, Heminge and Condell, are signed to the Epistle Dedicatory and to the Preface, addressed "to the great variety of readers," which are prefixed to the volume. The Dedication is addressed "to the most Noble and Incomparable Paire of Brethren, William Earle of Pembroke, etc., Lord Chamberlaine to the King's most excellent Majesty, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, etc., Gentleman of his Majesties Bedchamber. Both knights of the most Noble Order of the Garter, and our singular good Lords."

Let us deal first with the Preface, "To the great variety of Readers." Malone showed long ago that at any rate the greater part of this was written by Ben Jonson. "Hemings and Condell being themselves wholly unused to composition, and having been furnished by Jonson, whose reputation was then at its height, with a copy of verses in praise of Shakspeare, and with others on the engraved portrait prefixed to his plays, would naturally apply to him for assistance in that part of the work in which they were, for the first time, to address the publick in their own names."² Whether these worthy players did anything more than lend their names for the occasion may well be

¹ Mr. Lee says (Preface to Facsimile, p. 14): "Jaggard associated his son Isaac with the enterprise. They alone of the members of the syndicate were printers. Their three partners were publishers or booksellers." This is odd, seeing that the title-page bears the inscription: "*Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Edward Blount.*" How came this, if Blount was not a printer? Mr. Lee is not accurate as to the signature of *The Turtle and Phoenix*. It is "Shake-speare." (See Lee's *Life*, p. 251.)

² *Malone's Shakspeare*, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 663.

Dedication of
First Folio.

doubted ; but, for the present, let us see how Malone sets about to prove Jonson's authorship of the Preface, or the greater part of it. This he does most conclusively by setting forth in parallel columns extracts from the Preface and corresponding passages from Jonson's works. I must refer the reader to the second volume of *Malone's Shakspeare* (p. 664) for the proof, but I will give one or two examples of the parallel passages set forth.

The Players' Preface begins thus : " To the great variety of Readers. From the most *able* to him that can but spell." In like manner we find prefixed to *Catiline*, in 1611, two addresses : " To the Reader in ordinary "—" To the Reader extraordinary "—or, in other words, " To the great variety of Readers," the " Reader extraordinary " being, in the corresponding passage, " the most able " ; " the Reader in ordinary " he " that can but spell." So, too, in the Preface to the *New Inn*, we have " To the Reader. If thou beest such (i.e. if thou can'st indeed read) I make thee my patron, and dedicate my work to thee. If not so much, would that I had been at the charge of thy better literature. Howsoever, if thou *can'st but spell*, and join my sense, there is more hope for thee, etc." In the Folio Preface we have, " There you are *numbered* ; we had rather you were *weighed* " ; and in Jonson's *Discoveries*, " Suffrages in parliament are *numbered*, not *weighed* " ; and the passage continues : " Nor can it be otherwise in those publique counsels where nothing is so *unequal* as the equality ; for there, *how odde soever mens braines or wisdomes are*, their power is alwas *even* and the same." Compare this with the Folio Preface. " Then, *how odde soever* (i.e. how unequal soever) *your braines be or your wisdomes*, make your license the same, and spare not " ; the word "*odd*" being here used in its original sense, as opposed to that which is *even* or *equal*. Then, again, in the Preface we have : " Judge your *sixpen'orth*, your *shillings worth*, your *five shillings worth* at a time,

or higher, so you can rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, whatever you do, Buy. *Censure* will not drive a Trade . . ."; while in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, acted in 1614, we find "It is further agreed that every person here have his free will of censure. . . . It shall be lawful for any man to judge his *sixe-pen'orth*, his *twelve pen'orth*, so to his *eighteen pence*, two shillings, and half a crowne. . . . He shall put in for censures here, as they do for lots in the lottery; marry if he drop but *sixepence* at the doors, and will *censure a crowne's worth*, it is thought there is no conscience or justice in that." There is, too, a similar passage in *The Magnetick Lady*. "Read him, therefore," says the Folio Preface, "and *again and again*; and if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger *not to understand him*." This is altogether Jonsonian, for Ben was fond of this contrast between *reading* and *understanding*. So in his address to the ordinary reader, prefixed to *Catiline*: "Though you commend the two first acts, with the people, because they are the worst, and dislike the oration of Cicero, in regard you *read* some passages of it at school, and *understand them not yet*, I shall find the way to forgive you." And in his first epigram "To the Reader": "Pray thee, take care, that taks't my book in hand, To *read it well*, that is, to *understand*."

So Malone, citing passage after passage, throughout twelve pages, and I venture to say that a more conclusive proof of authorship from internal evidence could not be found.¹ Malone, it is true, thought that the players might have written some part of this Preface themselves, though

¹ One must charitably hope that Mr. Willis had not read this conclusive proof when he made Blount say, in his absurd mock trial, that Jonson wrote neither the Dedication nor the Address. *The Shakespeare-Bacon Controversy*, by William Willis, p. 16. Mr. James Boaden had no doubt about the matter. "Ben Jonson," he says, "it is now ascertained, wrote for the Player editors the Dedication and Preface to his works." (*On the Portraits of Shakespeare*, 1824, p. 13.)

all of it had been under Jonson's revising hand; I venture to say, however, seeing that Jonson undoubtedly wrote so much, and that worthy Heminge and worthy Condell were "not only wholly unused to composition," but were probably altogether incompetent to write in this style at all, that Jonson wrote the whole of it. Old Ben was not the man to write part and leave the rest to two players who, if they were not ignorant, had at any rate no literary experience or qualification. It is a very reasonable supposition that he wrote the Dedication to "The Incomparable Paire" also. Consider this sentence, for example: "Country hands reach foorth milke, creame, fruites, or what they have; and many Nations (we have heard) that had not gummes and incense obtained their requests with a leavened cake. It was no fault to approach their gods by what meanes they could: and the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples." Is that the style of players, such as they were in 1623—such as the *Return from Parnassus* reveals them to us? Why, it is taken direct from Pliny, *Mola salsa litant qui non habent thura*; and from Horace;

Immunis aram si tetigit manus,
Non sumptuosâ blandior hostiâ,
Mollivit aversos Penates
Farre pio, et saliente micâ.¹

No, no, this does not smack of Heminge and Condell, but of the same classical pen that composed the Preface. There is really nothing derogatory to the character of these good men in supposing that they were ready to appear as signatories to what was written for them. It was quite customary to do so. Thus when the Folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays was brought out in 1647, by the publisher Humphrey Moseley, there was a similar dedicatory epistle addressed to the

¹ There is, too, a touch of Ovid in the "fruites": *Et sparsæ fruges parcaque micæ salis*. (Fast. 2. 536.)

survivor of the "Incomparable Paire," viz. Philip, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who was then Lord Chamberlain. This was signed by ten of the actors of the King's Company, but nobody, I imagine, supposes that they wrote it, or any one of them. "The actors who aided the scheme," writes Mr. Lee, in his Introduction to the Facsimile edition of the First Folio, "played a very subordinate part in its execution. They did nothing beyond seconding Moseley's efforts in securing the 'copy,' and signing their names—to the number of ten—to the dedicatory epistle."

But let us still further examine the "Preface to the great variety of Readers." After the first paragraph, which is Jonsonian to the core, as any one who has read old Ben can see even without Malone's elaborate proof, the two players continue: "It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have been wished, that the author himselfe had lived to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care and paine, to have collected and publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with divers stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors, that expos'd them: even those are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers,¹ as he conceived them: Who, as he was a happie imitator of nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

Halte là! This "gives furiously to think." "We have

¹ This phrase, "absolute in their numbers," is, of course, a Latinism. See p. 285 n.

The phrase "absolute in all numbers" is ~~also~~ applied by Ben Jonson to Sir Kenehm Sigby in the dedication title of *Eupheme* [v. Jonson's works (Gifford + Cunningham). III. 357]

scarse received from him a blot in his papers"! The players tell us, therefore, that they "received" the "papers" from Shakespeare, that they hold the author's own manuscripts, and that these were written with such "easinesse"—*currente calamo*; the writer's thoughts being put on paper just as he conceived them—that there is hardly a blot on them. But this is palpably and absurdly untrue. Let us hear what the Cambridge editors have to say on the point. "The natural inference to be drawn from this statement is that all the separate editions of Shakespeare's plays were 'stolen,' 'surreptitious,' and 'imperfect,' and that all those published in the Folio were printed from the author's own manuscripts. But it can be proved to demonstration that several of the plays in the Folio were printed from earlier quarto editions, and that in other cases the quarto is more correctly printed, or from a better manuscript, than the Folio text, and therefore of higher authority. For example, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and in *Richard II*, the reading of the quarto is almost always preferable to that in the Folio, and in *Hamlet* we have computed that the Folio, when it differs from the quartos, differs for the worse in forty-seven places, while it differs for the better in twenty at most. As the 'setters forth' are thus convicted of a 'suggestio falsi' in one point, it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another. Some of the plays may have been printed not from Shakespeare's own manuscripts, but from transcripts made from them for the use of the theatre. And this hypothesis will account for strange errors found in some of the plays—errors too gross to be accounted for by the negligence of a printer, especially if the original manuscript was as unblotted as Heminge and Condell described it to have been. Thus, too, we may explain the great difference in the state of the text as found in different plays. It is probable that this deception arose not from deliberate design on the part

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of Heminge and Condell—whom, as having been Shakespeare's friends and fellows, we like to think of as honourable men—but partly, at least, from want of practice in composition, and from the wish rather to write a smart preface in praise of the book than to state the facts clearly and simply. *Or the Preface may have been written by some literary man in the employment of the publishers, and merely signed by the two players.*"¹

"Want of practice in composition" would hardly account for the statement as a fact of what the writers must have known to be false; but, no doubt, the solution of the difficulty lies in the passage which I have thrown into italics. The Preface was undoubtedly written by a "literary man," and that "literary man" was Jonson.

In truth it requires but very little thought to perceive that the idea that the players had Shakespeare's unblotted autograph manuscripts in their hands is futile. R. L. Stevenson recognised this. "We hear of Shakespeare and his clean manuscript; but in the face of the evidence of the style itself and of the various editions of *Hamlet*, this merely proves that Messrs. Hemming and Condell were unacquainted with the common enough phenomenon called a fair copy. He who would recast a tragedy already given to the world, must frequently and earnestly have revised details in the study."²

This is sound common sense; but we must carry the inquiry further. Had the publishers of the First Folio any of Shakespeare's original manuscripts at all? From Mr. Lee's introduction to the Facsimile edition, I gather that in his opinion the question must certainly be answered in the negative; for he tells us that "the First Folio text was

¹ Preface to the *Cambridge Shakespeare* (1863), p. 24. The editors, whose initials are appended to this Preface, were W. G. Clark and T. Glover. The second and third editions were edited by Mr. Aldis Wright. The italics are mine.

² *Men and Books*, p. 149. (Essay on Thoreau.)

derivable from three distinct sources ; firstly, the finished playhouse transcripts, or 'prompt-copies' ; secondly, the less complete transcripts in private hands ; and thirdly, the quartos." In the case of sixteen of the plays the publishers had previously printed quarto editions at their command, and, as the Cambridge editors tell us, "It can be proved to demonstration that several of the plays in the Folio were printed from earlier quarto editions." But since, in other cases, the Folio text so often differs from that of the quartos (and by no means always for the better, as the same editors remind us), it is evident that the publishers must have had manuscripts of some kind to work from. These, says Mr. Lee, were, in the first place, the theatrical "prompt-copies." But these alone were not sufficient. "But even if it were the ultimate hope of the publishers of the First Folio to print all Shakespeare's plays, *in the inevitable absence of his autograph MSS.*¹, from the finished theatrical transcripts or official 'prompt-copies,' their purpose was again destined to defeat by accidents on which they had not reckoned. In 1623, the day was far distant when Shakespeare first delivered his dramatic MSS. to the playhouse manager. In some cases thirty years had elapsed, in none less than twelve, and during the long intervals many misadventures had befallen the company's archives." There was, for instance, says Mr. Lee, the fire, in 1613, at the Globe, "where the Company and its archives had been housed for fourteen years." Therefore, according to this writer, the publishers had, in some cases, to fall back upon "the less complete and less authentic transcripts in private hands."

This is Mr. Lee's conception of the sort of manuscripts which the publishers of the First Folio had to work upon. "No genuine respect was paid to a dramatic author's original drafts after they reached the playhouse. Scenes and passages were freely erased by the managers, who

¹ My italics.

became the owners, and other alterations were made for stage purposes. Ultimately the dramatist's corrected autograph was copied by the playhouse scrivener; this transcript became the official 'prompt copy,' and the original was set aside and destroyed, its uses being exhausted. The copyist was not always happy in deciphering his original, *especially when the dramatist wrote so illegibly as Shakespeare*,¹ and since no better authority than the 'prompt-copy' survived for the author's words, the copyist's misreadings encouraged crude emendation on the actor's part. Whenever a piece was revived a new revision was undertaken by the dramatist in concert with the manager, or by an independent author, and in course of time the official playhouse copy of a popular piece might come to bear a long series of interlineations. Thus stock pieces were preserved not in the author's autograph, but in the playhouse scrivener's interlineated transcript, which varied in authenticity according to the caligraphy of the author's original draft, the copyist's intelligence, and the extent of the recensions on successive occasions of the piece's revival."²

Mr. Lee further tells us that "only eighteen (or with *Pericles* nineteen) of Shakespeare's thirty-seven dramas remained in 1623 in the repertory of the theatre." In other cases, therefore, the "promoters" of the work had to search for, and obtain permission to make use of, transcripts which private persons had obtained by some means or other.

It will be seen that by this theory poor Heminge and Condell are thrown over altogether. The most rabid Baconian could not treat them with more contempt. They have put their signatures to a preface in which they tell us that they have "collected" Shakespeare's "writings," and

¹ My italics. But how about Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, and the "Italian script"? *Ante*, p. 14.

² Preface to the Facsimile, p. 18.

these are "cur'd and perfect of their limbes . . . absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them." They are the author's own manuscripts, for "we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers," which fact is put forward as proof of the "easinesse" with which he wrote! And who would know the handwriting of their fellow-actor if not Messrs. Heminge and Condell? Yet now we have the accepted modern biographer and critic telling us that instead of clean unblotted autograph MSS., the publishers had before them, besides the quartos already printed, only "prompt copies" and other "less complete and less authentic transcripts" collected from private persons! Moreover, in the case of the "prompt copies," not only had the poet's original manuscript been treated with but little respect, but the copyist had not unfrequently made errors in deciphering his original, "especially when the dramatist wrote so illegibly as Shakespeare"!

So much for Messrs. Heminge and Condell and the papers without a blot! I conceive that these worthies saw no harm whatever in putting their signatures to Jonson's preface when asked to do so. I have no doubt that "Dick Burbage" would have done the same had he been alive.¹ Moreover, it is quite possible that in the case of many of the plays these nominal editors had, as R. L. Stevenson suggests, "fair copies," by whomsoever made, placed before them. The theory that the promoters of the undertaking, in some cases at any rate, worked from theatrical copies seems at first sight to be supported by the fact that in three plays, viz. *The Taming of the Shrew*,

¹ As a fact this statement as to unblotted manuscripts seems to have been, as the editor of the 1811 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher suggests, "a sort of commonplace compliment." For "the same story as to entire freedom from paper-blotting is applied by the stationer Humphrey Moseley to John Fletcher. He says in the introduction to the Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647, 'Whatever I have seen of Mr. Fletcher's own hand is free from interlining, and his friends affirm that he never writ any one thing twice.'" (Stotsenburg's *Shakespeare Title*, p. 91.)

Much Ado About Nothing, and *Henry VI*, Part 1, we find the names of subordinate actors inserted instead of those of the dramatic characters which they represented. Nevertheless it is by no means safe to make that assumption. Knight, for example, wrote: "There is a remarkable peculiarity in the text of the Folio which indicates that it [*Much Ado*] was printed from a playhouse copy," because in Act IV of that play the name of the actor Kempe is substituted for that of Dogberry, and the name of Cowley for that of Verges. From this Knight concluded that Heminge and Condell had permitted the names of Kempe and Cowley to remain as they found them in the prompter's book, "as a historical tribute to the memory of their fellows." Yet the truth is that the peculiarity alluded to by Knight is common both to the Folio and the Quarto of 1600—the Folio, in fact, was printed from the Quarto!¹

Before proceeding further it may be instructive to set side by side with Mr. Lee's rationalistic hypothesis the entirely different theory of another Stratfordian enthusiast of undoubting and childlike faith. It is like comparing a "verbal inspirationist" of the old Biblical school with a representative of the "higher criticism" of modern times; and it will afford another illustration of the manner in which, like the theologians, Stratfordians disagree amongst themselves, though again, like the theologians, they at least find agreement in the invectives which they launch at the heads of heretics and infidels.

This is how the ingenuous Mr. Willis—who has adopted the charming and facile, if somewhat childish, expedient

¹ Moreover, it seems rather curious, if we are to suppose that "prompt-copies" were made use of, that the various scenes were not indicated. *Henry VI*, Part 1, for instance, commences with *Actus primus, Scæna Prima*, but the other scenes are not marked, so that, except the words "Enter the Master Gunner of Orleans," we have nothing to show that we have left the Tower of London (Act I, Scene 3) for Orleans (Act I, Scene 4). *Julius Cæsar* is divided in acts, but not scenes. *Antony and Cleopatra* into neither. *Macbeth* into both acts and scenes. (See, further, Mr. Castle's *Shakespeare-Bacon*, etc., p. 351.)

of calling witnesses from the shades and putting into their mouths what he wishes them to say—has dealt in his mock trial with this question of the manuscripts.

Mr. Willis puts Edward Blount into his imaginary witness-box, and this is the sort of "evidence" (save the mark!) that he gives: "Some time in the early part of the year 1622 Mr. Heminge and Mr. Condell called upon me. They brought a large bundle of manuscript. They said they were desirous of publishing all the plays that Shakespeare had written, in order to keep alive the fame of Shakespeare, and as an entertainment and instruction for succeeding generations; that they ought to do it at once, because imperfect copies were getting abroad. . . . The manuscripts were handed over to me; I cannot say they were all in the same handwriting. I do not know the handwriting of Shakespeare. I saw, by a hasty inspection, that there were twenty plays which, to my knowledge, *had not appeared in print in any shape or form.*"¹ Then Blount is made to say that, having examined the manuscripts, "I saw I had in my hands a treasure." However, when he is subsequently asked if he has preserved this "treasure," he replies that he has not. He has not the manuscripts in his possession. "I did not see any reason for keeping them!"

I make this quotation not only because it is amusing to see the sort of theory which is gravely put forward by a learned county court judge, who looks upon all sceptics in this matter as "fanatics" (may we, I wonder, take this as a specimen of the orthodox idea of "evidence" and "probability"?) but also because it is instructive to note these extreme differences in Stratfordian belief, for it will be seen that Mr. Willis's theory differs *toto cælo* from the hypothesis adopted by Mr. Sidney Lee.²

¹ Original italics.

² It is indeed difficult to conceive how any reasonable being, who has given consideration to the facts of the case, can maintain the hypothesis that

But let us further examine Mr. Lee's more reasonable theory. According to this it is the most natural thing in the world that Shakspeare should have had no manuscript in his possession when he died, and should have left no directions for the publication of his work, including the many then unpublished masterpieces, for he had many years before parted with his manuscripts and all rights in them to the theatrical company to which he had belonged. "He and his colleagues," says Mr. Lee in his Preface to *the Facsimile*, "*wrote for the stage and not for the study. They intended their plays to be spoken and not to be read.*"¹ It was contrary to the custom of the day for dramatists to print their plays for themselves, or to encourage the printing of them by others, or to preserve their manuscripts. Like all dramatists of his age Shakespeare composed his plays for the acting company to which he attached himself; like them he was paid by the company for his writings, and in return made over to the company all property and right in his manuscripts." According to this theory, then, Shakspeare had assigned all rights in his manuscripts to the company, was duly paid, kept no copies, and thought no more about them. And such, we are told, was the universal custom with dramatists of the day. It will, I suppose, be set down to "fanaticism" that I should doubt the truth of this proposition; that I should doubt if it be consonant with the known facts of human nature; that I should doubt that Marlowe, for instance, assigned away all rights in his dramatic works and was

Heminge and Condell had really received from Shakespeare his autograph manuscripts. In their "epistle dedicatory," which differs somewhat from the Preface "to the great variety of Readers," these worthies tell us that the author "not having the fate, common with some, to be executor to his own writings," they "have collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his orphans guardians." If they actually "received" them from Shakspeare himself they must have so received them before the spring of 1616 when Shakspeare died, yet they let seven long years elapse before doing their duty by these poor orphans!

¹ My italics.

thenceforth careless whether or not they were published for the benefit of posterity. And what of him whose name at once occurs to us? What of Ben Jonson? Did he never see to the printing of his plays or "encourage the printing of them by others"? Surely it is notorious that in his case the contrary was the fact. Jonson was most particular as to the publication of his dramatic works. He carefully revised them for the press, and wrote prefaces for the published editions. Thus, when he published his *Sejanus*, he was careful to inform his readers that those portions which had been contributed to the drama, as acted, by another pen, had been excised. "I would inform you," he says, with some sarcasm, "that this book, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the public stage; wherein a second pen had good share: in place of which I have rather chosen to put weaker, and, no doubt, less pleasing, of mine own, than to defraud so happy a genius of his right by my loathed usurpation." We are asked, however, to believe that the author of *Hamlet*, writing "for the stage and not for the study"—"for gain, not glory"—made over once and for all his rights in it to the Globe Company; preserved no manuscript, and reserved no right, or thought, of publishing it. And so, too, with those marvellous master works which were only rescued by the Folio from oblivion—*The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*—he had no interest in their publication, no anxieties for their preservation. Assuredly it would tax a "forty-parson power" to provide all the faith that is required for this orthodox Stratfordian theory!

But there is a great deal more to be said. The idea that Shakespeare was the poor creature that some of his orthodox admirers would make him out to be; that he wrote for the stage only and not for the study; that he cared only to make "a competence" and to get a coat-of-arms, and

thought nothing of posthumous fame, is contradicted not only by presumptions founded on the known facts of human nature, but by other conclusive arguments.

In the first place we may remark that the poet of the Sonnets, so far from being indifferent, aspired to and was assured of immortality. Thus Sonnet xviii:—

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

And again, Sonnet lv:—

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

See also the same idea in Sonnet lxxv, and other places.

well-stated.

Is it possible to suppose that this man imagined there would be less immortality for his *Hamlet* than for these "sugred sonnets"?

"It must never be forgotten," writes Mr. Justice Madden, "that not one of the copies in the possession of Heminge and Condell, true original though it may have been, had been either written or revised by its author with a view to publication." Upon which supposed fact the learned judge makes the following not unnatural comment: "That the author of *Othello* and *As You Like It* should not have deemed those works worthy of the editorial care bestowed on *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*; that he used them simply as a means of making money, and, when that purpose had been served, took no further heed of them; that, notwithstanding the publication and rapid sale of pirated and inaccurate copies, he was never moved, during the years of his retirement at Stratford, to take even the initial step of collecting and revising for publication the manuscripts of his plays; and that so far as their author was concerned, they might be stolen, travestied, or perish altogether; are surely among the strangest facts in the history of literature." Yes, indeed, adds Judge Webb, "among the strangest facts in the history of literature

most surely, if the retired Player was in reality the author of *As You Like It* and *Othello*—facts so strange, indeed, as to suggest a doubt whether he could by any possibility have been the author. Nevertheless the facts stated by the learned judge are accepted as authentic by all the biographers of Shakspeare. In the opinion of all he showed utter insensibility as to the literary value of the Shakespearean Plays, and utter indifference as to their preservation.”¹

they are strange
in any case.

But now let us consider a critic of a very different order. As we have seen, R. L. Stevenson, writing of *Hamlet*, says that “he who would recast a tragedy already given to the world must frequently and earnestly have revised details in the study”; and as we know, *Hamlet* was revised and revised again. Let us see what that plain-speaking critic, Mr. Swinburne, has to say on this. I make no apology for quoting at some length. “This minor transformation of style in the inner play, made solely with the evident view of marking the distinction

¹ This is how a distinguished French writer, diplomatist, and literary critic conceives of Shakespeare: “He is romantic in his plays, a conservative bourgeois in his life. . . . When an attack was made or any literary wrong inflicted on him he said and did nothing. To Greene’s slanders and Jonson’s sneers he answered not a word. *His propensity to hold aloof was an ‘all round’ one*, and led him to keep apart even on occasions when more would have been expected from his ‘open and free nature.’ At a time when all authors exchanged complimentary poems to preface each other’s works, when burly Jonson wrote many even in favour of men he liked little enough, not once did Shakespeare do the same. He never troubled any one for such verses, nor ever wrote any. Most poets paid their tribute to Elizabeth, to Prince Henry, when they died; he wrote nothing. More or less silly, ridiculous, or insignificant works were published under his name, he never disclaimed them; garbled texts of his own dramas, of the masterpieces of his peerless genius were issued, he never protested nor gave the real text. *Such an attitude under such provocation is absolutely unique.*” So writes Monsieur J. J. Jusserand in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*. He goes on to say that he did not seem to have “the slightest regard” for his plays, and “as for his Sonnets, in spite of all he says in them of their assured immortality, he attached no more importance to them than to his plays; he never printed any, and when a pirate printed them, he said nothing.” Like Brer Rabbit, it

~~So was~~ Goethe
Very much so.

between its duly artificial forms of speech and the duly natural forms of speech passing between the spectators, is but one among the innumerable indications which only a purblind perversity of prepossession can overlook of the especial store set by Shakespeare himself on this favourite work, and the exceptional pains taken by him to preserve it for after time in such fullness of finished form as might make it worthiest of profound and perpetual study by the light of far other lamps than illuminate the stage. *Of all vulgar errors the most wanton, the most wilful, and the most resolutely tenacious of life, is that belief bequeathed from the days of Pope, in which it was pardonable, to the days of Carlyle, in which it is not excusable, to the effect that Shakespeare threw off Hamlet as an eagle may moult a feather or a fool may break a jest; that he dropped his work as a bird may drop an egg or a sophist a fallacy; that he wrote 'for gain, not glory,' or that having written Hamlet, he thought it nothing very wonderful to have written.*¹ For himself to have written, he possibly, nay probably, did not think it anything miraculous; but that he was in the fullest degree conscious of its wonderful positive worth to all men for all time, we have the best evidence possible—his own; and that not by mere word of mouth, but by actual stroke of hand. . . . Scene by scene, line for line, stroke upon stroke, and touch after touch, he went over all the old laboured ground again; and not to ensure success in his own day, and fill his pockets with contemporary pence, but merely and wholly with a purpose to make it worthy of himself and his future students. . . . Not one single alteration in the whole play can possibly have been made with a view to stage effect or to

seems, he "went on sayin' nuffin"! *Absolutely unique* indeed! But the worthy man, we are told, only wanted to retire to his native Stratford, to "have the best house, and be among the most considered citizens there." A "unique" immortal, and a perfectly "unique" creed!

¹ My italics.

present popularity and profit; or we must suppose that Shakespeare, however great as a man, was naturally even greater as a fool. . . . Every change in the text of *Hamlet* has impaired its fitness for the stage, and increased its value for the closet in exact and perfect proportion.¹ Now, this is not a matter of opinion—of Mr. Pope's opinion or Mr. Carlyle's; it is a matter of fact and evidence. Even in Shakespeare's time the actors threw out his additions; they throw out these very same additions in our own. The one especial speech, if any one such especial speech there be, in which the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth, is passed over by modern actors; it was cut away by Heminge and Condell. We may almost assume it as certain that no boards have ever echoed—at least, more than once or twice—to the supreme soliloquy of Hamlet. Those words which combine the noblest pleading ever proffered for the rights of human reason with the loftiest vindication ever uttered of those rights, no mortal ear within our knowledge has ever heard spoken on the stage. A convocation even of all priests could not have been more unhesitatingly unanimous in its rejection than seems to have been the hereditary verdict of all actors. It could hardly have been found worthier of theological than it has been found of theatrical condemnation. Yet beyond all question, magnificent as is that monologue on suicide and doubt which has passed from a proverb into a by-word, it is actually eclipsed and distanced at once on philosophic and poetical grounds by the later soliloquy on reason and resolution."

A word of comment on this. Swinburne, remarking on the undoubted fact that *Hamlet* has been revised "scene by scene, line for line, stroke upon stroke, and touch after

¹ This is in direct contradiction to Mr. Lee's opinion that he "wrote for the stage and not for the study"! As already mentioned, Mr. Lee thinks that Pope "had just warrant" for his famous lines. (*Life*, p. 225.)

touch," impresses upon us that all these changes were not made "with a view to stage effect or to present popularity and profit," for, on the contrary, "every change in the text of *Hamlet* has impaired its fitness for the stage and increased its value for the closet." As a striking example he refers to that great speech in Act IV, Scene 4, commencing

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge

—that speech whence Shelley took his celebrated line

We look before and after—

in which, says Swinburne, the genius of Shakespeare "soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth," and which, in his judgment, eclipses and distances the famous "monologue on suicide and doubt." Now this speech, as he tells us, magnificent as it is, was written not for the stage but for the study, not for the hearer but for the reader; the proof being that it is omitted in all acting editions, and was "cut away by Heming and Condell" themselves, i.e. it is not to be found in the Folio. It is clear, therefore, that Mr. Swinburne rejects the allegations of the players that in the Folio they have presented us with Shakespeare's Plays in their final form "absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them"; for the excision of this speech from the Folio has, on his own showing, not "impaired its fitness for the stage," but has, on the other hand, greatly impaired "its value for the closet"; for which reason the modern editors of *Hamlet* have always reinstated it. Similarly there are other passages found in the quartos but not in the Folio the omission of which, though we could ill spare most of them for the study, really improves the play for the stage. Take, for example, the passage, Act III, Scene 4, l. 71 :—

Sense, sure, you have,
Else, could you not have motion, etc.

These and other lines might well be omitted from a play

which must necessarily be greatly "cut" for acting purposes.

Judge Webb, as it seems to me, has somewhat misunderstood Mr. Swinburne on this matter of the revision of *Hamlet*; for he quotes him as though he supported his own opinion that the passages omitted from the Folio were deleted by Shakespeare "with true judgment." "Every passage he omitted," says Judge Webb, "he must be supposed to have deliberately omitted, as inconsistent with the perfection of his work as he finally conceived it. These omissions, strange to say, have been restored by those who have affected to give us Shakespeare's text."¹ But Mr. Swinburne is evidently of opinion that the modern editors have done well in restoring the speech "on reason and resolution"; for Shakespeare's own revised version, intended for the study and not for the stage, must be, according to this critic, not the Folio of 1623, but the Quarto of 1604; and Mr. Swinburne would, I take it, agree with the Cambridge editors that where the Folio version of *Hamlet* differs from the quartos it generally differs for the worse. The theory usually put forward by the critics is that the Folio version is an abridgment for the stage. Thus Mr. Fleay writes (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 227): "*Hamlet* is extant in three forms—the Folio, which is evidently a stage copy considerably shortened for acting purposes; the 1604 Quarto, which is a very fair transcript of the author's complete copy, with a few omissions; and the 1603 Quarto, imperfect and inaccurate." But even if we take this view, and consider the 1604 Quarto to represent the author's revised version, I do not think we are called upon to accept Mr. Swinburne's opinion in its entirety, and to say that "every change" made by Shakespeare in revising the text of *Hamlet* "has impaired its fitness for the stage, and increased its value for the closet in exact and perfect proportion." I cannot think

¹ *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 265, Note F; and see p. 86.

that the retention (viz. by the Quarto) of the magnificent "soliloquy on reason and resolution," for example, rejected though it be by the actors, really impaired the fitness of the play for the stage. Some will, no doubt, be of opinion that Mr. Swinburne's eulogy of this speech is couched in somewhat extravagant terms,¹ but I think it must be conceded that, if not in language at any rate in meaning and in the lesson which it inculcates, it is a finer speech than the more famous soliloquy; for the latter, magnificent though it is in its language, and of great dramatic propriety in the mouth of that strange character *Hamlet*, is, considered as serious philosophy, quite contemptible. For what does it amount to? Simply to the proposition that everybody would commit suicide were it not for fear of what might happen after death! How much finer is the sentiment of the other speech, omitted by the editors of the Folio—"the noblest pleading ever proffered for the rights of human reason"! This, if finely declaimed by an actor equal to the task, could, surely, not impair the fitness of the play for the stage; nor can I imagine why it should have been constantly omitted unless it be because *Hamlet* has already had one long soliloquy, and it was necessary to shorten the play for acting purposes.

On the other hand, that the Folio *Hamlet* is simply an abridged version for the stage is far from clear; for this 1623 edition has evidently been under the revising hand for other purposes than those of mere abridgment. Additions have been made as well as omissions. The Quarto, therefore, though it professes to be "printed from the only true and perfect copy," wants several passages found in the Folio, and the latter, though in the opinion of

¹ Mr. Swinburne's *perfervidum ingenium* sometimes carries him away. For example, in the old editions of *King Edward the Third*, Act II, Scene 2, 157, the old editions read "But I will through a hellie spout of blood," which so takes Mr. Swinburne's fancy that he declaims about "this unspeakable and incomparable verse." Yet "hellie (i.e. helly) spout" is, as Mr. Tyrrell pointed out, but a scribe's error for "Hellespont"!