Here, at any rate, we may say, is a proof of personal observation; not indeed a naturalist's but a poet's observation.

But Mr. Elton tells us we have all been mistaken as to the meaning of the lines. "Rooky," he says, "in Shakespeare's home meant vaporous, or reeking,"[1] and the crow "has nothing to do with Tennyson's 'black republic,' on the elms, or the crow 'that leads the clanging rookery home.' It is rather the night-crow preparing for deeds of rapine in the misty woods." Well then, all I can say is that if this piece of very much up-to-date criticism be accepted, it is only another, though very glaring, example of Shakespeare's want of personal observation in the matter of birds and beasts. For the simple fact is that there is no such thing as a "night-crow" that does "deeds of rapine in the misty woods" after dark. The crow feeds by day, and only "bats and owls," including the insectivorous so-called "fern-owl," are night feeders; though, possibly, Mr. Elton was not aware of the fact.[2] But that most excellent and learned man seems to have always had a hankering after some new interpretation which would only manifest itself to one who had exceptional antiquarian, or other special, knowledge; and I fear he was not infrequently, and in this case especially, misled by that rather unfortunate tendency. Whether, therefore, rooky means "reeky," or alludes to the "black republic," I believe, and am happy in the belief, that the passage refers to our old friend the rook winging his way home to the wood at sundown.[3]

[1] There is, of course, nothing new in this interpretation, though some still think that "rooky wood" means "the wood frequented by rooks." See Messrs. Clark and Wright in their note on the passage. Shakespeare has the word "reechy" (=reeky) in *Much Ado*, III, 3, 143. Possibly the "rookery" is meant after all!

[2] One ought, perhaps, to mention the night-heron also.

[3] The author, or one of the authors, of *Troilus and Cressida* had at least the common knowledge of the habits of the crow:—

"the busy day
Waked by the lark, hath roused the ribald crows." (IV, 2, 9.)

And now let us turn to *As You Like It*, that play to which, according to some critics, Milton alludes when he talks of Shakespeare's "native wood notes wild." There was, we are told, a Warwickshire "Arden," and although "*the Arden* of *As You Like It* was," as Mr. Elton truly says, "a mere region of romance," the name being "derived from the Belgian Ardennes," still it may be "connected in some slight degree," and, by most of the critics, it *is* connected in a very strong degree, with this Warwickshire Arden.[1] Now, as the Quarterly Reviewer says, Shakespeare's characters in *As You Like It* "live in Arden Forest and yet they never hear or see a single bird or insect or flower all the time that they are there. As for animals, deer excepted (and these the poet was compelled to introduce for food), there is only a lioness, and 'a green and gilded snake.' The oak is the only forest tree in the play.[2] There is not a flower in it. Even the words 'flower' and 'leaf' are never mentioned in the play; nor the word 'bird,' except in an interpolated song. There is not even an indication of the time of year, except that the Duke and others talk of the bitter cold. Yet what do we find? The play is always illustrated as if the time of year were midsummer, and critics say: 'We hear the wind rustling in the fragrant leaves of the fairyland of Arden' (*Henry Irving Shakespeare*) and speak of 'leafy solitudes sweet with the song of birds'! Such is the magic potency of genius; it makes captive imagination, transports the mind to scenes that are never even hinted at by the poet, and makes us paint forests green, and fill them with happy animal life and summer flowers, when the

[1] But seeing that Shakespeare founded his play on Lodge's *Rosalynde*, where we find that the banished king "lived as an outlaw in the forest of Arden," i.e. the Ardennes, I venture to think that the supposed reference to this "Warwickshire Arden" is altogether imaginary.

[2] There is, indeed, a "palm tree" (Act III, Sc. 2, 186), but it has been charitably supposed that by this is meant the willow, the catkin-covered branches of which do duty for "palms," in this country, on Palm Sunday.

writer speaks only of 'the icy fang and churlish chiding of the winter's wind,' calls the forest always a 'desert,' and tenants it with lions and venomous serpents."

Not a flower, not a bird in the forest of Arden! Only a lioness and a snake! This hardly looks like reminiscences of the woods of Stratford! Was Shakespeare learned in forestry? Or, if not that, was he a lover of trees? Listen once more to our Reviewer. "It has been said of Shakespeare that he had 'a fine contempt for details,' and this contempt he carries into his treatment of animals. A bird is a bird, a beast is a beast, and it does not seriously matter what sort of bird or beast it is, so long as the touch of nature which the passage needs, or which affords a metaphor, is there. *He was supremely indifferent to that which all other writers prize so highly and call 'local colour.'* This is shown as conspicuously in his flora as in his fauna; for where, for instance, the names of individual trees would have greatly advantaged his text and brought the scenes in which they were mentioned more substantially before the eye, he is content with the word 'tree.' And as real trees that he knows of, he actually uses in his forest only the oak, the pine, and (very doubtfully) the sycamore. There are no elms, or beech-trees, no birch, ash, chestnut, walnut, poplar, alder, plane, fir, larch, lime, or hornbeam. Is not this extraordinary? So with animated Nature. Shakespeare took only what suited for the occasion and only just as much as would suffice. He does not employ animals to embellish or ornament his lines; they are there for the use they serve in illustration, or as a simile. He never lingers over a beast or bird longer than the quotation he is working on. When it has served his purpose, it goes. *If he is dealing with inanimate Nature* he delights to linger, to elaborate, to polish. But with an animal he never stays longer than to say just the one thing that serves to make it apt, and, as a rule, he does not even stop to choose a specific variety.

He has no butterflies in his sunshine, no moths in his twilight, no crickets in his meadows, no bees in his flowers. Living creatures do not slip naturally into his landscape. When he thought of being out in the field and garden and orchard he did not think of the small life that goes to gladden the scene, and makes 'the country' so blithe and beautiful for most of us."

When we come to one class of animals, however, the case is very different. I refer to the "beasts of the chase" and "beasts of the forest," namely the boar, the deer, and the hare. "Whether Shakespeare ever saw a boar-hunt is a matter for conjecture; but he gives a superb description of the animal and its chase in *Venus and Adonis*. Any one who chooses to do so could resolve this description into its original elements, and refer them respectively to Spenser and Drayton, Du Bartas, Chester, and others who wrote of the mighty boar before Shakespeare, and all of whom in turn borrowed from Ovid, Pliny, and Virgil. But the complete picture is Shakespeare's own, and it is very noteworthy as an illustration of the poet's treatment of a real animal in which he felt an actual personal interest."

His frequent references to deer need only to be mentioned. "Here he was perfectly at home, and thoroughly familiar, from personal observation, with the haunts and habits of the animal he was describing. The result is a detailed and most beautifully accurate natural history of the deer, whether stag, hart, or hind, buck or doe."

It is frequently said that Shakespeare writes as an enthusiastic sportsman, but such does not seem to me to be the fact. That he was perfectly familiar with "sport" as then practised, in all its branches, cannot be doubted, but he frequently writes more like a "humanitarian" than a sportsman. Who does not remember the Duke in the forest of Arden?

And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
Being native burghers of this desert city,
Should in their own confines with forked heads
Have their round haunches gored.

Or Jaques and the

poor sequester'd stag,
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,

and whose misery was such as to touch the other lords also?

The wretched animal heaved forth such groans
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting, and the big round tears
Coursed one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase.[1]

But especially does this humanitarian spirit manifest itself in the exquisite lines in *Venus and Adonis* concerning the hunted hare. Here we have a minute description of the chase of the hare, and Mr. Lee[2] finds "curious resemblances to the *Ode de la Chasse* (on a stag hunt) by the French dramatist, Estienne Jodelle, in his *Œuvres et Meslanges Poetiques*, 1574." But what we are here concerned with is the tender sympathy expressed for the

Note

[1] Jaques, it seems, had actually arrived at the conception that animals have *rights*.

"Indeed, my lord,"
The melancholy Jaques grieves at that,
And, in that kind, swears *you do more usurp*
Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you.

There is a grand touch of humanitarian feeling in *Cymbeline*, Act I, Sc. v, where the Queen says to Cornelius—

I will try the forces
Of these thy compounds on such creatures as
We count not worth the hanging, but none human.

And the physician replies—

Your highness
Shall from this practice but make hard your heart;
Besides, the seeing these effects will be
Both noisome and infectious.

[2] Page 66 n.

"poor wretch" whose "grief may be comparéd well to one sore sick that hears the passing bell":—

> Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch
> Turn, and return, indenting[1] with the way;
> Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,
> Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay;
> For misery is trodden on by many
> And being low never reliev'd by any.

But Shakespeare, I imagine, had read Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, where the hunter is told "thou shouldest rather be moved with pity to see a silly innocent hare murdered of a dog, the weak of the stronger, the fearful of the fierce, the innocent of the cruel and unmerciful."

With hawks and hawking, too, Shakespeare is, of course, thoroughly familiar, though whether he would have agreed with Sidney when he said, "Next to hunting I like hawking worst," we cannot say. He is constantly employing the language of falconry in a metaphorical sense. But one remembers how it was said: "Why, you know, an a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting languages now-a-days, I'll not give a rush for him: they are more studied than the Latin or the Greek."[2]

Whence is it that Shakspere of Stratford is supposed to have derived his wonderful knowledge of sport? Hunting —more especially the chase of deer—and hawking were the recreations of the great. Thus we find Bacon saying, with regard to "Forests, Parks, and Chases": "It is a sport proper to the nobility and men of better rank; and it is to keep a difference between the gentry and the common sort."[3]

Sir Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, proposes to relegate hunting to the "bouchers" (i.e. butchers) among the Utopians. "Yet," he says, "this is nowe the exercise of most noble men." So the affected Amoretto, in the *Return*

[1] Note in passing the legal expression.
[2] See *The Return from Parnassus.*
[3] Notes for a speech in a case of deer-stealing. Abbott's *Life*, p. 223.

from Parnassus,[1] asks the scholar Academico: "Say, sweete Sir, do yee affect the most gentle-man-like game of hunting?" As to hawking it was, as we know, the sport of "Lords and Ladies gay." We have no indication whatever that Shakspere had the opportunity of making himself familiar with these sports of the rich and noble. To account for the wonderful knowledge displayed in the *Plays* and *Poems* he has been made lawyer, schoolmaster, gardener, printer, soldier, and a great many other things besides; but I am not aware that he has ever yet been turned into a gamekeeper. True it is that some of his admirers will have it that he was a poacher, and stole some of Lucy's "harts or does" (as Mr. Lee so quaintly puts it); but really that is hardly sufficient to account for all this familiarity with the ways and terms of falconry and the chase. Yet Shakespeare displays as much knowledge in these matters as must have been possessed by Bacon himself, of whom Francis Osborn says: "I have heard him entertain a Country Lord in the proper terms relating to hawks and dogs."[2]

very curious.

[1] Part 2, Act II, Scene 5.

[2] Osborn, speaking of universal knowledge, or what he calls "an universall inspection," writes: "My memory neither doth, nor I believe possible ever can, direct me to an example more splendid in this kind than the Lord Bacon, Earle of St. Albanes, who in all companies did appear a good Proficient, if not a Master in those Arts entertained for the subject of every one's discourse. So as I dare maintaine, without the least affectation of Flattery or Hyperboly, that his most casuall talke deserved to be written. . . . So as I have heard him entertaine a Country Lord in the proper termes relating to Hawkes and Dogges, and at another time out-cant a London Chyrurgion. . . . The eares of the hearers receiving more gratification than trouble; and so no lesse sorry when he came to conclude than displeased with any did interrupt him." *Advice to a Son*, 1658, Second Part, p. 70. "As a matter of fact," writes Judge Webb, "the works of Bacon are as full of allusions to sport as the plays of Shakespeare." But, as the learned Judge further comments, "it would have been strange if the son of a Lord Keeper had never been taught to ride, stranger still if one who had resided for three years at the Court of France had never observed how French falconers flew at everything they saw, and how a French cavalier could grow into his seat." Bacon is particularly fond of metaphors from falconry. (See the *Mystery of William Shakespeare*, Note B, p. 255.)

Horses, too, notwithstanding the fact that he took the description of "the ideal horse" from Du Bartas, Shakespeare knew thoroughly and loved well. "He writes of them," says the Quarterly Reviewer, "as a Centaur might write, as participating in his own nature. He loved them, and the result is the noblest description ever written of the noblest of animals."

Dogs, also, he thoroughly understood, that is, dogs as used for hunting and bear-baiting. His hounds are well known to everybody, but even here he was wont to go to the classics for his descriptions. He speaks of hounds "bred out of the Spartan kind," and a "hound of Crete," evidently having in mind the line of Ovid (*Met.*, III, 208): *Gnosius Ichnobates, Spartana gente Melampus.*

But for all his humanitarian pity for the hunted beasts of the chase, he does not seem to have understood the dog as the dear, loving, and faithful friend of man. "Dog" is a term of reproach, and cats are "creatures we count not worth the hanging." As for the fox it had not yet been elevated into that position of dignity which man graciously assigns to the creatures whose sufferings in the chase are made to minister to his pleasures. True it is there was fox-hunting "of a sort" at that time. Academico, for instance, in the *Return from Parnassus*, says: "There is an excellent skill in blowing for the terriers; it is a word that we hunters use when the Fox is earthed." But *Vulpicide* had not as yet become a recognised crime, nor was Renard held sacred to the sport of the rich. Deer-hunting and hawking were the aristocratic sports. "Fox," therefore, with Shakespeare, is a term symbolical of stealth, and cunning, and theft.

"His lion is the chivalrous lion of Pliny and romance, his tiger is Hyrcanian; and so on. In a word, his natural history is commonplace when it is correct and 'Elizabethan' when it is wrong; but the manner of it is so

beautiful, incomparably beautiful, that the matter borrows a beauty from it."[1]

Turning now from the animate to the inanimate world, we are at once struck by Shakespeare's love and knowledge of flowers. Here there can be no difference of opinion. Mr. Dewar, still fighting shadows, writes: "He had his share, an ample one, we feel, as we read him, of 'the glowing life that sunshine gives, and the south wind calls to being. The endless grass, the endless leaves, the immense strength of the oak expanding, the unalloyed joy of finch and blackbird'; from each he received something that became interwoven in his being. It is impossible that the man who had no share in these things could have written of that

> Bank where the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxlips, and the nodding violet grows."

As though any one had ever asserted that Shakespere had "no share in these things"!

As to his love of flowers, quotation could, of course, be piled upon quotation. The lyrics (whoever wrote them) are full of them. It is true that in *As You Like it*, where we should most have expected to find them, there is not one; but if we are content to imagine a leafless forest, save for the "green holly" swept by "the churlish chiding of the winter's wind," we may explain the deficiency by reference to "the seasons' difference." But let us turn to the *Winter's Tale*. It has been frequently said that the author of this play must have been familiar with country life. Well, I have no doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with the country, whether he gained his knowledge at Stratford, or at Twickenham, or at Gorhambury, or elsewhere. But he nowhere writes as the simple countryman. Perdita, for instance, is the most delightful of shepherdesses, but it is highly characteristic of Shakespeare

[1] *Quarterly Review*.

that he makes a young girl, brought up from infancy in a rustic cottage, exclaim, "O Proserpina, For the flowers now that frighted thou let'st fall From Dis's waggon!" Her violets are "sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes, or Cytherea's breath." It is as though he could not keep clear of classical allusions even when least appropriate.

Comparison has frequently been made between Perdita's list of flowers and Bacon's in his *Essay on Gardens*. There is, for example, the extraordinarily close parallelism between "lilies of all kinds, the flower-de-luce being one," and Bacon's "flower-de-luces (or flower-de-lices) and lilies of all natures."[1] But the two lists are well worth comparing generally. They are both arranged according to the seasons. If Perdita speaks of "streak'd gillyvors," Bacon speaks of the "stock gillyflower." If Perdita says, "For you there's rosemary and rue, these keep seeming and savour all the winter long," Bacon says, "For December, and January and the latter part of November, you must take such things as are green all the winter, rosemary, lavender, sweet marjoram."[2] In the *Essay* we have the cowslip substituted for "bold oxlips." Primroses, violets, daffodils, marigolds, marjoram, besides those already mentioned, are common to both lists. Bacon gives us another list very much the same, and including gillyflowers and flower-de-luce, in his *Natural History*, Cent. VI, 577.

[1] Mr. Ellacomb (*Plant Lore of Shakespeare*, p. 99), after noticing that Shakespeare calls the flower-de-luce one of the lilies, and that another way of spelling it is fleur-de-lys, says that Bacon separates the two, as though the flower-de-luce was not a lily. I demur to this. If I speak of "spaniels and dogs of all natures," I do not treat "spaniels" as though they do not belong to the genus "dog." I merely name one species first, and make general mention of the others. This, as it seems to me, is what Bacon does, in full agreement with what Shakespeare says.

[2] "Our carnations and streak'd gillyvors." Gillyflower or gillyvor comes from *caryophyllus*, another name for the carnation or clove-carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*). Caryophyllus means "nut-leaved," and the name was first given to the Indian clove-tree, and thence transferred to the carnation on account of its scent. Bacon mentions "pinks and gillyflowers, specially the matted pink and clove-gillyflower." The French have *giroflée*, from *girofle*, a clove.

But whatever may be thought of these "parallelisms," the conclusions to which we are brought by a consideration of Shakespeare's Natural History are unaffected. What are those conclusions? In my judgment they are these. The idea of a young romantic Shakspere who wandered by the "pioned and twilled" banks of Avon,[1] and through the woods and over the fields of Stratford, observing the birds, and the beasts, and the insects, with the eye of the poet, and the love of the naturalist, must be rejected as a mere myth called into being in order to meet the supposed exigencies of the case. But was not Shakespeare an observer of Nature? Yes, indeed. In the first place, he was a profound student of human nature, such a student and interpreter as perhaps the world has not seen before or since. In the second place he was deeply contemplative of inanimate Nature. He watched and profoundly meditated upon natural phenomena: the winds, the tides, the clouds, the waves beating "upon the pebbled

[1] "Thy banks with pioned and twilled brims" (*Tempest*, Act IV, Scene 1, 64). Some explain "pioned" by reference to the "piony" or peony, and would read "lillied" for "twilled," comparing Milton's "By sandy Ladon's lillied banks." Or "twilled" is interpreted, very dubiously, as covered with sedge. But how "pioned"? The peony cannot be alluded to, although Sowerby says it once grew on an island in the Severn. A theory has been started, however, that *Warwickshire* rustics gave the name of peony or piony to the marsh marigold. If there were ever such usage I am confident it would be found not to be confined to Warwickshire. But the truth is there is no evidence of it whatsoever. Mr. Elton says (p. 146), as some others had said before him, that "pioned" means "raised by the spade, like mounds in war cast up by the labouring pioneers." As to "twilled," he says "it seems to be an allusion to the diagonal pattern on 'twilled cloth,' the bank being marked with parallel lines of 'binders' pegged down when the hedges were plashed to protect quick-sets, or boughs split and 'laid down' against the bite of cattle." We may possibly be excused if we remark that the word "pioner" in the above sense is a very favourite one with Bacon. (See Theobald's *Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light*, chap. x.) However, it is very doubtful if the masque in *The Tempest* is by Shakespeare at all. Mr. Henley, by the way, pointed out that there is no necessity to suppose that "brims" referred to rivers. He takes the "ditching and delving" explanation as appropriate to the banks of *Ceres;* and Dr. Furness, the editor of the New Variorum Shakespeare, adopts this theory, provisionally at any rate.

v. Lean's Collectanea - IV. 239-41.

shore," the thunder, the lightning, and the rain. He well knew

> the boundless store,
> Of charms that Nature to her votary yields ;
> The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
> The pomp of grove, and garniture of fields ;
> All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
> And all that echoes to the song of even,
> All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
> And all the dread magnificence of heaven.

And thus it is that Johnson was justified in calling him "the poet of nature," and that Mr. Dewar is justified in saying that "the plays bear throughout . . . the hall-mark of the great-hearted lover of nature."

Flowers and gardens, particularly, he loved ; but flowers, it may be remembered, could in his day be well studied in London. Not only were there magnificent private gardens in London,[1] but there were fields within a short walk of the city where wild flowers were to be found in infinite variety, though this is not by any means to say that Shakespeare's study of flowers and gardening was confined to London and its suburbs.

But to say that Shakespeare was a "naturalist"—even a perfunctory one—to say that he was a close observer of *animated* Nature, is to say the thing that is not. He gives no indication of having lived a country life observant of the habits of birds, and beasts, and fishes, and insects. But horses and hounds and the beasts of the chase—these he had observed, and these and all their ways he well knew. With sport, the amusement of the great, he was perfectly familiar. Yet he does not seem to write of it as the sportsman, but rather as the thinker, with, sometimes, much sympathy for its victims ; and even of sport he cannot write without reference to classical authors, and more especially to Ovid.

[1] The City companies had beautiful gardens in London. The garden at Twickenham, too, was famous. Donne has a poem to it.

In connection with Perdita and her flowers, every reader will recall those exquisite lines :—

> Daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty.

Here, indeed, is mention of the swallow, but it is a mere mention. We look in vain for any reminiscence of a swallow skimming over the fields, or over the Thames, or over the much-appealed-to Avon ; such a reminiscence, for example, as Tennyson's when he speaks of

> Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
> Their wings in tears, and skim away.

Here we have the swallow itself, painted for us to the life by one magic touch. We feel at once that the poet had watched the bird and loved it. But with Shakespeare the swallow seems to be little more than an emblem of swiftness. ("As swift as swallow flies," e.g., and other lines to the same effect.) As to the delightful passages about the "ruddock with charitable bill," in *Cymbeline*, the Quarterly Reviewer points out that similar expressions "occur in probably every preceding poet, and the 'charitable bill' appears to have been almost a proverbial saying."

No ; if we want the poetry of country life—the life of the woods and fields and streams—it is not to Shakspeare that we must go. And it was, doubtless, for this reason that Harrison Weir when he brought out his charming *Poetry of Nature* (meaning thereby *animated* Nature), did not include therein one example from Shakespeare, though he quotes a long passage from Ben Jonson.[1]

But as the poet of *human nature*, Shakespeare, of course, stands pre-eminent. Here he is "not of an age but for all time." I have quoted from a Quarterly Reviewer. Let

[1] Viz. the lines commencing "Mild breathing zephyr, father of the Spring," and ending :

> The chirping swallow, call'd forth by the sun
> And crested lark doth her division run ;

me conclude with a quotation from an Edinburgh Reviewer. "Shakespeare's vision of life is so wide, his moral insight so profound, his knowledge and sympathies so vitalised and universal, and his command of language so absolute, that every part in the wide circle of contemporary learning and experience may throw some light on his pages. In particular, his birthright of pregnant speech is so imperial that he seems to appropriate by a kind of royal prerogative the more expressive elements of diction, in every department of human attainment and activity. No section of life or thought is too humble for his regard; none too lofty for his sympathetic appreciation. The day-spring of his serene and glorious intellect illuminates and vivifies the whole."[1]

Noble words. But to whom applicable? To the Stratford player, or to "that magnificent and universal genius" (as Mr. Begley styles him), "the philosopher of Gorhambury," or to yet another? To "Shakespeare" at any rate, whoever he was.

> The yellow bees the air with music fill,
> The finches carol, and the turtles bill."

In the *Poetaster* (Act IV, Scene 6) Jonson speaks of the swallow flying low before rain and storms:—

> Ay me, that virtue . . .
> Should like a swallow, preying towards storms,
> Fly close to earth.

Messrs. Nicholson and Herford completely miss the point of this little piece of Natural History. Their comment is: "Seemingly his way of saying that they (alone) prey flying"! *Quod est absurdum.*

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1872.

CHAPTER XV

JONSON, SHAKESPEARE, SHAKSPERE, AND BACON

THE strength of the Stratfordian faith undoubtedly lies in certain utterances of Ben Jonson, and especially in the memorial verses written by him for the First Folio. It is all-important, therefore, to examine Jonson's testimony carefully, as a whole, and no matter which side we take in this vexed controversy, I think it will be admitted that the various Jonsonian utterances with regard to "Shakespeare" are by no means easy to reconcile one with the other, and that, considered all together, they provide us with an extremely hard nut to crack. Old Ben in this matter appears as a Sphinx, and if, like his prototype, he could have devoured all those who gave erroneous answers to his riddle, great would have been the mortality among the critics and commentators.

Malone, though an excellent Shakespearean critic, suffered his judgment with regard to Jonson to be warped and distorted by the *idée fixe* that Ben in all his dealings with "Shakespeare" was possessed by the spirit of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. He is for ever descanting upon "the malignity of Jonson." It is now, I think, generally admitted that in this matter Malone was the victim of a delusion. On the other hand, Jonson's champion, Gifford, not content with vindicating the conduct of his hero in temperate language, becomes almost hysterical when he has to speak of Malone, and wholly so when he is commenting on poor Drummond of

Hawthornden, whom he treats, as Colonel Cunningham says, "with more than rabid insolence and injustice."[1] In dealing, therefore, with old Ben let us endeavour to preserve an impartial mind, not allowing our judgment to be deflected either by Malone's prejudices or Gifford's panegyrics, and, above all, let us try to steer a safe course between the Scylla of Shakespeariolatry and the Charybdis of Baconian infatuation.[2]

That Jonson, during a certain period of his life, thought himself justified in giving utterance to some very severe criticism of Shakspere cannot, I think, be doubted. Let us examine some of these utterances which, it is contended, must have reference to the provincial player.

Jonson wrote a large number of short poems which he called epigrams. These epigrams are very interesting for many reasons, and amongst others because they give the names of many distinguished persons, men and women of rank, well-known literary men, and others with whom Jonson was on familiar terms. "What a thousand pities" it is that Shakspere was never inspired to write just one or two of such poems, addressed, say, to Southampton, or Pembroke, or any others of the great personages of the day, the nobles and courtiers and men of genius who were, of course, intimate with the immortal Stratfordian, and eager for his society! But the master-mind, as we know, wrote for gain and not for glory, and there was but little hard cash to be got out of an epigram, so we must

[1] Gifford had not seen the *Conversations with Drummond* in their true form, as edited by David Laing, but "there is nothing in the conversation in their worst form, condensed and 'arranged' by some conceited clerk, and garbled by the unscrupulous Theophilus Cibber, to justify one-twentieth part of the abuse which Gifford has heaped upon their recorder, and even that twentieth is left without foundation, when we discover how much has been omitted, how much displaced, and how much interpolated" (Cunningham's Preface, p. ii).

[2] I do not mean by this to stigmatize the Baconian theory as necessarily "infatuation," but that *some* Baconians are infatuated will, I think, be generally admitted!

console ourselves with the thought that, notwithstanding this utter dearth of what I may call personal poetry, we know (for are we not told so by our priests and prophets?) more concerning the personal life of William Shakspere than concerning the life of Benjamin Jonson, or any other contemporary poet!

But let us return to Jonson's epigrams. A licence for the publication of the First Book of these (apparently a further issue was contemplated) was obtained in 1612, and the collection was published in the Folio edition of Jonson's poems which appeared in 1616, the year of Shakspere's death. I find upwards of 130 of these epigrams in Walley's Edition of Jonson's works. Epigram No. 56 "On Poet-Ape," is well known, and runs as follows:—

Poor Poet-ape, that would be thought our chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,[1]
From brokage is become so bold a thief,
As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.
At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,
Buy the reversion of old plays, now grown
To a little wealth, and credit in the scene,
He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own,
And told of this, he slights it. Tut, such crimes
The sluggish, gaping auditor devours;
He marks not whose 'twas first, and aftertimes
May judge it to be his, as well as ours.
Fool! as if half-eyes will not know a fleece
From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

Now that this refers to Shakspere, if not undoubted, as Sir Theodore Martin assumes it to be, seems to me at least extremely probable. Compare the language with that

[1] "Frippery"—old clothes, cast-off garments, or a place where cast-off clothes are sold. The French *Fripier*—a dealer in old clothes. "We know what belongs to a frippier," says Trinculo in *The Tempest* (Act IV, Scene I, 226), where Mr. Morton Luce's note is "Frippery: old-clothes shop. Old French 'fripper' to rub up and down, wear to rags. Cotgrave gives 'Friperie, broker's shop, street of brokers, or of Fripiers.' And 'Fripier' a mender or trimmer up of old garments, and a seller of them so mended."

of Green's celebrated denunciation of "the only Shake-scene." To Green Shakspere (if the allusion be really to him) was "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers . . . an absolute *Johannes Factotum*," and addressing his fellow-playwrights he says, "Oh that I might intreate your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes [i.e. the players][1] imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions." Poet-ape is, of course, the poet who appears in borrowed plumes; who is arrayed in garments stolen from others, "the frippery of wit." Thus in the Prologue to Jonson's *Poetaster* the figure of *Envy* is brought on to the stage and asks :—

> Are there no *players* here? No *poet-apes*,
> That come with basilisk's eyes, whose forkéd tongues
> Are steeped in venom, as their hearts in gall?
> Either of these would help me! They could wrest,
> Pervert, and poison all they hear or see,
> With senseless glosses, and allusions.

And at the end of the play we find the line,

> And apes are apes, though clothed in scarlet,

which reminds us that players belonging to the royal household were clad in scarlet cloth.[2]

Sir Theodore Martin quotes the *Poet-Ape* sonnet as undoubtedly written upon Shakspere,[3] but says it was

[1] We are reminded of the passage in the *Return from Parnassus*, Act V, Scene 1 :—

> "Better it is mongst fidlers to be chiefe
> Than at a plaier's trencher beg reliefe.
> But ist not strange these mimick apes should prize
> Unhappy schollers at a hireling rate?"

[2] The *Poetaster* was entered on the Stationers' registers December 21st, 1601, and published in 1602. It was two years after this that Shakspere, Burbage, Hemming, and Condell marched in the royal train from the Tower to Westminster on the occasion of James's entry into London, each of them having been presented with four yards and a half of scarlet cloth, the usual dress allowance to players belonging to the household (H.-P., Vol. I, p. 195).

[3] *Shakespeare or Bacon*, pp. 37, 68.

written in Jonson's early days, and that his opinion with regard to the object of his satire subsequently underwent an entire change, as evidenced by his later utterances. But, whatever may have been the date at which it was composed (it must have been after Shakspere had "grown to a little wealth and credit in the scene"), it was published, and apparently for the first time, in the Folio containing Jonson's collected works which was given to the world in 1616, the year of Shakspere's death. The "Epigrams" are dedicated to William Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain, etc., the elder of the "Incomparable Pair" of the Shakespeare Folio, and Jonson writes, "I here offer to your lordship the ripest of my studies, my Epigrams," so that he appears to have been entirely unrepentant.[1]

But there are, as I think, other allusions to Shakspere in that remarkable play *The Poetaster*. We have, for instance, a dialogue between Tucca, the braggart Captain, and Histrio, the player, of which the following is a sample :—

Tucca. There are some of you players honest, gent'manlike scoundrels, and suspected to ha' some wit, as well as your poets, both at drinking, and breaking of jests ; and are companions for gallants. A man may skelder ye, now and then, of half a dozen shillings, or so. Dost thou know that *Pantalabus* there?

Hist. No, I assure you, Captain.

Tucca. Go, and be acquainted with him then, he is a gent'man parcel-poet, you slave : his father was a man of worship, I tell thee. Go, he pens high, lofty in a new stalking strain ;[2] bigger than half the rhymers i' the town again : he was born to fill thy mouth, Minotaurus, he was ; he will teach thee to tear and rand. Rascal, to him, cherish his muse, go ; thou hast forty—forty shillings, I mean,

[1] Note in the epigram the word "brokage," i.e. "the trade of dealing in old things" (Dr. Johnson), or the gain derived from acting as agent or middleman. Note also that Jonson thought that anybody "with half an eye" could be able to distinguish the "shreds" from the whole piece, just as he would not be deceived into confounding mere "locks of wool" with "a fleece."

[2] Stalkers were strolling players who, as Tucca presently explains, would "stalk upon boards and barrel heads to an old cracked trumpet."

stinkard;[1] give him in earnest do, he shall write for thee, slave! If he pen for thee once, thou shalt not need to travel with thy pumps full of gravel any more, after a blind jade and a hamper, and stalk upon boards and barrel-heads to an old cracked trumpet.[2]

We note here that *Pantalabus* was a player who had the reputation of writing "high, lofty, in a new stalking strain," and against whom Jonson is bitterly satirical. The name *Pantalabus* is, obviously, from *πάντα λαμβάνειν*, to take all, or to take up all, as in the *Poet-Ape* sonnet, "*He takes up all.*" He is, in fact, a *Johannes Factotum*, as Green said. Further, he is a "parcel-poet," i.e. like a parcel-gilt goblet, he is a poet on the surface only, but inwardly and truly base metal.[3]

That Jonson did not repent of this attack on *Pantalabus* seems clear from the fact that in the 1616 edition of the play he added a new scene (Act III, Scene 2) which was not in the 1602 quarto, where the old lawyer Trebatius suggests to Horace (Jonson) that he might do better,

> Than with a sad and serious verse to wound
> *Pantalabus* railing in his saucy jests;

to which Jonson replies that he loves peace,

> But he that wrongs me, better, I proclaim,
> He never had assayed to touch my fame.
> For he shall weep, and walk, with ev'ry tongue
> Throughout the city, infamously sung.

To return to Tucca and Histrio, we may note that the Captain says to the player (Act III, Scene 1), "Thou art an honest shifter, I'll ha' the statute repealed to thee," allud-

[1] "Stinkard" is a name frequently applied to the "groundlings" of the public theatres. The contempt in which the common players were held is forcibly illustrated by many passages in this play.

[2] Act III, Scene 1.

[3] Herrick has a couplet on "Parcel-gilt Poetry":—

> "Let's strive to be the best, the gods, we know it,
> Pillars and men, hate an indifferent poet."

Tucca, in Dekker's *Satiromastix*, threatens Horace (Jonson) that "the *Parcel-poets* shall sue thy wrangling Muse in the Court of Parnassus."

ing to the statute of Elizabeth previously referred to in Act I, Scene 1, where Tucca, speaking of the players, exclaims, "They are grown licentious, the rogues; libertines, flat libertines. They forget they are i' the statute,[1] the rascals, they are blazoned there, there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees; they need no other heralds, I wiss."

As I have already said, there seems to me strong reason to suppose that this is a reference to Shakspere's newly acquired coat-of-arms, but I think there is yet another hint at this shady transaction in Act II, Scene 1, where *Crispinus* talks grandiloquently about his arms. Now, *Crispinus* is also a "parcel-poet,"[2] and the critics tell us that he is intended to impersonate Marston, the main object of the play, according to the received theory, being to ridicule him and Dekker (Demetrius Fannius).[3] It may be so, but that is no reason why Jonson should not have had a hit at "William Shakspere gent." in the person of *Crispinus* when he boasts about his lineage. The following is the passage alluded to :—

Chloe. Are you a gentleman born?

Crispinus. That I am, lady; you shall see mine arms if't please you.

Chloe. No, your legs do sufficiently show you are a gentleman born, sir; for a man borne upon little legs is always a gentleman born.

[1] 14 Eliz. c. 5, and 39 Eliz. c. 4. *Ante*, p. 175.

[2] When Cæsar asks him what he is (Act IV, Scene 3), he replies, "Your gentleman parcel-poet, sir," whereupon Cæsar exclaims, "O, that profaned name," referring, I take it, to the

"Grand old name of gentleman,
Defamed by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use."

[3] It is objectionable, however, to place the names of Marston and Dekker in brackets after those of Crispinus and Demetrius in the *dramatis personæ*, as do Messrs. Nicholson and Herford in their edition of *Jonson's Plays*, because that which is, after all, only matter of inference should not be stated as though it were a fact vouched by the author. "Crispinus is *usually supposed* to be Marston," says Mr. Elton (p. 53 n.). The editors, too, have been guilty of a bad *lapsus calami* in putting Ben Jonson's name in a bracket after that of Pub. Ovidius, whereas it should, of course, have stood after the name of Horace, who represents the author.

Cris. Yet, I pray you, vouchsafe the sight of my arms, mistress, for I bear them about me, to have 'hem seen: My name is Crispinus, or "Cri-spinas" indeed; which is well expressed in my arms, a face crying *in chief*, and beneath it a bloody toe, between three thorns *pungent*.

If "Crispinus or Cri-spinas" is not a jest on Shake-speare, or "Shake-speare," as the name constantly appeared on the title-pages of the plays, it is difficult to suggest what the reference can be or how the joke comes in at all.[1] I think, therefore, that "Cry-thorns" here probably stands for "Shake-speare." Jonson, though he gives, as we have seen, an absurd explanation of the name, may in selecting it have had in his mind the Latin word *crispo*, to brandish, so frequently used by Virgil, and other writers, of a spear, as "*bina manu lato crispans hastilia ferro*" (*Æneid*, XII, 313). Moreover, the supposed allusion to Shakespeare seems to be confirmed by a reference to the *Satiromastix*, in which Dekker, as is well known, delivered a very vigorous counter-attack to Jonson's *Poetaster*. Here we find Jonson, as represented by *Horace*, delivering himself thus to his adoring disciple Asinius Bubo: "Why you *Rooke*, I have a set of letters readie starcht to my hands, which to any fresh suited gallant, that but newlie enters his name into my roll [i.e. becomes one of Jonson's sons, "sealed of the tribe of Ben"] I send the next morning, ere his ten a clock dreame has rize from him, onelie with clapping my hand to't, that my Novice shall start, ho, and his hair stand on end, when he sees the sudden flash of my writing:

[1] Mr. Fleay, indeed, tells us that the reference is to Marston, because "Mars is red or bloody (compare *Mars ochre*) and toen is toes." But (1) this interpretation is so absurdly far-fetched that it seems to me impossible to accept it. (2) It only affects to be an explanation of the "bloody toe," and (3) it leaves the name *Crispinus*, and, especially, the hyphenated form *Cri-spinas* entirely unexplained. As to the form "toen" I cannot recall an instance of its use, but I know that in the pictorial language of the time "ton" was usually represented by a barrel—a "tun." Thus on the roof of Peterborough Cathedral, and on a gateway close by, we have "Kirkton" represented by a church standing on a "tun."

what you pretty Diminitive rogue, we must have *false fiers* to amaze these spangle babies, these true heires of *Mr. Justice Shallow* . . . here be Epigrams upon Tucca, divulge these among the gallants; as for *Crispinus*, that *Crispin-asse*, and Fannius his Play-dresser; who (to make the Muses believe their subjects eares were starv'd, and that there was a dearth of Poesie) cut an Innocent Moor i' the middle, to serve him in twice, and when he had done made Poules-work of it, as for these Twynnes, these *Poet-apes*, their mimicke tricks shall serve with mirth to feast our Muse, whilst their owne starve." Here we have Crispinus (or Crispin-asse, instead of "Cri-spinas"), the *Poet-ape*, coupled with undoubted allusions to Shakespearean plays. Later on, Crispinus, pronouncing judgment against Horace-Jonson, thus delivers himself:—

> Or should we minister strong pills to thee
> What lumps of hard and indigested stuff,
> Of bitter *Satirism*, of *Arrogance*,
> Of *Self-Love*, of *Detraction*, of a blacke
> And stinking *Insolence* should we fetch up!
> But none of these; we give thee what's more fit.
> With stinging nettles crown his stinging wit.

Then, having made Jonson swear to certain appropriate matters of reformation, Crispinus reverts to the "Poet-ape," which evidently rankles with him:—

> That fearful wreath, this honour is your due,
> All Poets shall be *Poet-apes* but you.

But unless I am greatly mistaken, there is an earlier hit at Shakspere and his coat-of-arms to be found in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Act III, Scene 1. Here we have the following conversation bętween Sogliardo, Sir Puntarvolo, and Carlo Buffone the Jester:—

> *Sogliardo.* Nay, I will have them, I am resolute for that. By this parchment, gentlemen, I have been so toiled among the harrots[1]

[1] i.e. Heralds.

yonder, you will not believe; they do speak i' the strangest language and give a man the hardest terms for his money, that ever you knew.

Carlo. But ha' you arms? ha' you arms?

Sog. I' faith, I thank God, *I can write myself a gentleman now;* here's my patent, it cost me thirty pound, by this breath.

Punt. A very fair coat, well charged, and full of armory.

Sog. Nay, it has as much variety of colours in it, as you have seen a coat have; how like you the crest, sir?

Punt. I understand it not well, what is't?

Sog. Marry, sir, it is your boar without a head, rampant.

Punt. A boor without a head, that's very rare!

Car. Ay, and rampant too! [*To Puntarvolo*] troth, I commend the herald's wit, he has decyphered him well: a swine without a head, without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility.—You can blazon the rest, signior, can you not?

Sog. O, ay, I have it in writing here of purpose, it cost me two shillings the tricking.

Car. Let's hear, let's hear.

Punt. (*aside*). It is the most vile, foolish, absurd, palpable, and ridiculous escutcheon that ever this eye survised—'Save you, good Monsieur Fastidius.

Car. Silence, good Knight;—on, on.

Sog. (*reads*). "Gyrony of eight pieces; azure and gules, between three plates; a chevron, engrailed checquy, or vert, and ermins; on a chief argent, between two ann'lets sables, a boar's head, proper."

Car. How's that? On a chief argent?

Sog. (*reads*). "On a chief argent, a boar's head proper, between two ann'lets sables."

Car. (*to Puntarvolo*). 'Slud, it's a hog's cheek and puddings, in a pewter field, this.

Sog. How like you 'hem, signior?

Punt. Let the word[1] be, "*Not without mustard:*" Your crest is very rare, sir.

Now Shakspere obtained his coat-of-arms after much toil "among the harrots." On October 20th, 1596, a draft was prepared under the direction of William Dethick, garter king-of-arms, granting the request made in the name of John Shakspere. "Garter stated," says Mr. Lee (p. 149), "with characteristic vagueness, that he had been 'by credible report' informed that the applicant's 'parents and late antecessors were for theire valeant and faithfull

[1] i.e. the Motto.

service advanced and regarded by the most prudent prince King Henry the Seventh of famous memorie, by thence whiche tyme they have continewed at those partes (i.e. Warwickshire) in good reputacion and credit'; and that 'the said John (had) marryed Mary, daughter and heiress of Robert Arden, of Wilmcote, gent.'" After which bit of bunkum we read that, "In consideration of these titles to honour, Garter declared that he assigned to Shakespeare this shield, viz.: 'Gold, on a bend sable, a spear of the first the poynt steeled proper, and for his crest or cognizance a falcon, his wings displayed argent, standing on a wreath of his colours, supporting a spear gold steeled as aforesaid.'" And "in the margin of this draft-grant there is a pen sketch of the arms and crest [a *tricking*], and above them is written the words, 'Non sanz Droict.'" Thus Jonson appears to have thought that as Shakspere's "word" was "Non sans Droit," Sogliardo's might appropriately be "Non sans Moutarde"![1]

We may note that Sogliardo, who is laughed at as "a boor" by Sir Puntarvolo,[2] is the younger brother of Sordido, a farmer. Shakspere's father was also a farmer, among other things, and (*pace* the Stratfordians) a Stratford boor also.[3]

John Shakspere, acting no doubt on behalf of his son, had had long negotiations with "the harrots" before he

[1] Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, Act II, Sc. 4, 261. "His wit's as thick as Tewksbury mustard."

[2] In "The Characters of the Persons," prefixed to the Folio edition of the play, Sogliardo is styled "An essential clown, brother to Sordido, yet so enamoured of the name of gentleman, that he will have it, though he buys it."

[3] Whether the "boar without a head" has any reference to Bacon's crest (Bacon shorn of his head, "without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility," in the person of a *boor*) I should not like to hazard a conjecture! I may add that the above had been written several years before the appearance of Monsieur Jusserand's essay in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare* (1907), in which he comes to the same conclusion as to the significance of "not without mustard." He points out that Shakspere's negotiation with the heralds had been much talked about, and the subject of much criticism.

finally obtained his coveted coat-of-arms, entitling both him and his son to say with Sogliardo, "I thank God, I can write myself gentleman now; here's my patent." According to their own statement, which, however, as Mr. Lee says, may have been "a formal fiction designed to recommend their claim to the notice of the heralds," those negotiations commenced as early as 1568. The draft grant was drawn up, as we have seen, in 1596. In 1597, Jonson's old master, William Camden, became Clarenceux king-of-arms,[1] and not long afterwards, on the representation (not over-scrupulous) that the draft grants of 1596 had been definitely assigned to John Shakspere when he was bailiff, the heralds seem to have granted him an exemplification of it.[2] *Every Man Out of His Humour* was entered on the Stationers' Register in April, 1600, and was published in 1601.

I lay no stress on the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, with its supposed satirical reference to Perdita in the *Winter's Tale*, and to the sorry flights of stage "supers" representing the armies of York and Lancaster,[3] because, first, it is not clear that this prologue was not written

[1] Jonson dedicated his first and greatest comedy, *Every Man in His Humour* "to the most learned and my honoured Friend, Master Camden, *Clarenceux*." It is quite possible that he and his old Master had talked—and laughed—together over Shakspere's application for an escutcheon.

[2] So says Mr. Lee, but Halliwell-Phillipps writes (Vol. I, p. 162): "It does not appear that either of the proposed grants was ratified by the College." Shakspere, however, had no doubt obtained a copy "on parchment," and the "tricking."

[3] The lines so often quoted are:—

> To make a child, now swaddled, to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard, and weed,
> Past threescore years: or, with three rusty swords,
> And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,
> And in the tyring-house bring wounds to scars,

and the last line, supposed to refer to *The Tempest*, "You that have so graced monsters may like men." The story that Jonson was indebted to Shakspere for the production of his great comedy is called by Gifford, and I

before the *Winter's Tale* had been given to the public; and, secondly, because the "long jars" of York and Lancaster were portrayed at the theatres long before any of the plays of "Shakespeare's" Trilogy of *Henry VI* made its appearance; and, thirdly, because, as already indicated, it is very difficult to say how far Shakespeare's work enters into those plays at all. In the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), however, occurs a passage which is generally supposed to be aimed at Shakespeare: "If there be never a servant-monster in the Fair, who can help it, he [i.e. the author] says, nor a nest of antics? He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like Drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels." The "servant-monster" is supposed (and, I think, with great probability) to be an allusion to Caliban in *The Tempest*, and the "nest of antics" is taken as referring to the satyrs who dance in *A Winter's Tale*, though this latter allusion seems to me not a little doubtful. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. II, p. 310) expresses the opinion that there is no allusion to Shakespeare at all in this Prologue, since Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair* is ridiculing "those primitive dramatic exhibitions which, known as 'notions' or puppet-shows, were peculiar favourites with the public at that festival. In some of these tempests and monsters were introduced, as in the Motion of Jonah and the Whale. The 'nest of antics,' which is supposed to allude to the twelve satyrs who are introduced at the sheep-shearing festival, does not necessarily refer even to the spurious kind of drama here men-

think proved by him to be, an "arrant fable." According to Gifford, *Every Man in His Humour*, in its earliest form, was successfully produced by Henslowe, "at the Rose, a rival theatre with which Shakspeare had not the slightest concern." But the story bristles with improbabilities. See Gifford's *Memoirs of Ben Jonson*, p. xlvii *et seq* (Ed. Cunningham). As to the Prologue, see p. xxxix, xli and lii n. *Contra* see Ingleby's *Centurie of Prayse*, p. 118. Gifford brings forward strong arguments against the theory that the Prologue was not written till 1616.

tioned. The 'servant-monster' and the 'nest of antics' may merely mean individual exhibitions," as "in the masques of that period." Mr. Lee, however, and Dr. Ingleby think otherwise.[1] But, whatever may be thought of these supposed allusions in Jonson's Prologues, there is, I venture to say, very little doubt that old Ben, at one period of his life at any rate, looked upon Shakspere as a "Poet-ape," a *Pantalabus*, a *Johannes Factotum*, a "parcel-poet," an "upstart crow," beautified with feathers stolen from others. Sir Theodore Martin, indeed, thinks that the "Poet-ape" Sonnet has "an incidental value" as showing that Jonson shared the belief that it was Shakspere, "and nobody else" who "dressed up and put new life into old and faulty plays, and made them popular in their altered form." But the Epigram hardly goes so far as this. What it does prove is that Jonson looked upon Shakspere (if, indeed, it refers to him) as one who put forward the writings of others as his own, or, in plain English, as an impostor. He is a writer who "takes up all, makes each man's wit his own," and does it so speciously that he fancies "aftertimes may judge it to be his, as well as ours." But the imposture is too transparent. "As if half-eyes will not know a fleece from locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece!" He has acted as somebody's "broker"—"from brokerage has become so bold a thief," etc.—and the work which goes in his name is, in truth, the work of somebody else. This agrees entirely with Greene's estimate; but the "incidental value" of Jonson's Epigram is, first, that it must have been composed much later than Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, for it speaks of Shakspere (if Shakspere be really intended) at a time when he had "grown to a little wealth and credit on the stage," and, secondly, that Jonson had apparently seen no reason to recant his opinion in 1616, for surely old Ben, who preferred to be called "honest" to

[1] Lee's *Life*, p. 207. Ingleby's *Centurie of Prayse*, p. 105.

all other epithets, would not have published this sonnet in cold blood, among "the ripest of his studies," his Epigrams, if he had recognised that his estimate had been entirely wrong, and that the Sonnet was a false libel on a great and original genius.

Let us now consider Jonson's celebrated utterances prefixed to the Folio of 1623. Fronting the title-page of that priceless volume is a most portentous "sign-board" known as the Droeshout engraving. I have already dealt with this monstrosity in the chapter on the various supposed portraits of Shakespeare.[1] It is sufficient to say here that this ridiculous caricature, though it be calculated to "make the angels weep," can but move to laughter a human being who is not prepared to prostrate himself before any Shakespearean idol, however hideous. In fact, this woodeny thing, with its hydrocephalous forehead, straight lank hair bunched over the ears, and idiotic stare is only fitted for a place in *Comic Cuts*. On this counterfeit presentment Ben Jonson writes a decade of lines. Here are the first four :—

> This Figure that thou seest put,
> It was for gentle Shakespeare cut ;
> Wherein the Graver had a strife
> With Nature to out-doo the life.

Here old Ben might seem to have in his mind the lines from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*,

> Look, when a painter would surpass the life,
> In limning out a well-proportioned steed,
> His art with nature's workmanship at strife
> As if the dead the living should exceed. . . .[2]

[1] *Ante*, p. 244.

[2] This sort of expression, says Mr. M. H. Spielmann, had become "almost a *cliché*." He points out that "more than thirty years before Malherbe had placed below de Leu's engraving of Montaigne a quatrain curiously suggestive of the same idea :

> Voici du grand Montaigne une entière figure ;
> Le peintre a peint le corps, et lui son bel esprit ;
> Le premier, par son art, égale la nature ;
> Mais l'autre la surpasse en tout ce qu'il écrit.

But when one looks at the graven image the idea of the Graver here having had a strife with Nature to "out-doo the life" strikes one as extremely funny. *Solvuntur risu tabulæ.* The Graver has "out-done" life with a vengeance, and produced something that, happily, never was on sea or land. But comic as is the situation thus produced, the merriment of it is altogether eclipsed by Boaden's comment: "To me this portrait exhibits an aspect of calm benevolence and tender thought; great comprehension, and a kind of mixt feeling, as when melancholy yields to the suggestions of fancy"! Verily this unquestioning worshipper at the shrine would have seen "the consummation and the poet's dream" in a wooden image outside a tobacconist's shop if only he had been told it was "for gentle Shakespeare cut." Such is the power of imagination when we have surrendered our reason to an *idée fixe.* For my part, I think that though Jonson may have had in his mind the lines I have quoted from *Venus and Adonis*, he must also have had alongside them Hamlet's reproof to those who "imitated humanity so abominably."[1]

But let us hear what he has to say of "the Graver," and his portrait.

> O, could he but have drawn his wit
> As well in brass as he hath hit
> His face, the Print would then surpasse
> All that was ever writ in brasse.
> But since he cannot, Reader, looke
> Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

According to Mr. Corbin[2] there is nothing at all exagger-

[1] Steevens, quoted with approval by Dr. Drake, says "Shakespeare's countenance deformed by Droeshout resembles the sign of Sir Roger de Coverley when it had been changed into a Saracen's head; on which occasion *The Spectator* observes that the features of the gentle knight were still apparent through the lineaments of the ferocious Mussulman." See Drake's *Shakespeare and his Times*, Vol. II, p. 623.

[2] *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*, p. 18.

ated about this. "It says that the graver has failed to express Shakespeare's mind as well as he has drawn his features, and advises the reader, if he wants to find the real Shakespeare, to turn to the plays." And, adds this writer, "Surely this is not the least of Ben Jonson's triumphs in commendatory epigram"! But Jonson does *not* say that the graver "has failed to express Shakespeare's mind," or anything so absurd. It would, indeed, be ridiculous to impute "failure" to the graver for not expressing a man's mind in a portrait. The graver did not do so, and did not make the attempt, because, of course, as Jonson says, the thing is impossible. But, says Ben, if he only *could* but have drawn his wit as well in brass as he has hit the likeness of his face, why then the print would certainly surpass "all that was ever writ *in brass*." The absurdity here is that if the graver *could* have drawn the mind as well as the face he would have produced a mental as well as a physical caricature. In that case the print would certainly have surpassed all that was ever writ *in brass!* Happily, however, that was beyond the graver's power.[1]

This interpretation does not, of course, exclude a further esoteric meaning, viz. that the reader, "if he wants to find the real Shakespeare," as Mr. Corbin says, "must turn to the plays," and if the artist could but have drawn "the wit" of "*the real Shakespeare*," then, indeed, the print would surpass all that was ever writ, whether in brass or anything else; thus bringing to our minds the often quoted words inscribed round Hill-

[1] "Brass." Thus in *Love's Labour's Lost* (V. 2, 395) we have, "Can any face of brasse hold longer out?" Cf. Fuller (1642), "His face is of brasse, which may be said either ever or never to blush.' Judge Webb tells us that in the copy of the Folio of 1623, in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, the word "brass" is given in italics, and it is also given in italics in the College copy of the Folio of 1632. This, however, is, I imagine, a false point, for it will probably be found that other nouns in the sonnet are put in italics, according to a very general custom in printing at that day.

note this

yard's miniature of Francis Bacon, "*Si tabula daretur digna animum mallem.*" If only his mind could be painted, then, indeed, there would be a worthy portrait of him!

Mr. Lee's comment is: "Jonson's testimony does no credit to his artistic discernment"; but it is impossible to believe that old Ben was not only so lacking in his perception of the grotesque, but also so deficient in the sense of humour as this would imply.[1] A far more probable solution of the difficulty, as it seems to me, is that he was writing "with his tongue in his cheek," knowing that while the multitude would complacently take his criticism *au pied de la lettre*, the enlightened few would recognise that it had an esoteric meaning.

It is quite possible that the "figure for gentle Shakespeare cut" is not the one which the editor of the Folio originally intended to prefix to the work, for there is a mystery about this engraving as about everything else connected with Shakespeare. How many copies of the first Folio were originally issued it is impossible to say, but a very large number must have been lost or perished in the 280 years which have elapsed since the publication of that famous volume. "It seems," however, as Mr. Lee tells us, "that about 200 copies have been traced within the past century." But "of these fewer than 20 are in a

[1] Jonson writes enthusiastically of painting. "Whosoever loves not picture is injurious to truth and all the wisdom of poetry. Picture is the invention of heaven, the most ancient and most akin to Nature." See *Discoveries* CIX. and CX., *Poesis et pictura* and *De Pictura*. Mrs. Stopes (*Monthly Review*, April, 1904) thinks that "we may be justified in considering Ben Jonson's *fulsome praise* of Droeshout, in his desire to help the editors, as only possible through his deficiency in artistic sense." I think there is a much simpler, and a much more probable explanation. Mr. M. H. Spielmann, in his Essay on the Portraits of Shakespeare, in the *Stratford Town* edition (p. 374), more than hints that in his opinion Jonson's lines are not "to be taken seriously." After quoting the first two lines, he writes, "Does this mean, it has been asked, that the engraving was cut to represent Shakespeare—or that it was cut to his order, long before, and possibly rejected by him?"

perfect state, that is with the portrait *printed* (*not inlaid*) on the title-page and the fly-leaf facing it, with all the pages succeeding it, intact and uninjured."[1] In the copy in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, for example, we are told by Judge Webb that "the Flyleaf is a manuscript facsimile of print, the Figure is pasted upon the title-page, and the Dedication, the Address, and the Verses to the memory of the Author, are literally *inlaid* in the following pages by a species of typographical mosaic, the centre of the pages being cut away so as to leave a framework of paper, in which the documents are inserted." (p. 126.)[2] It is possible, therefore, that the word "for" in Jonson's sonnet may have a double meaning, since "for" was often used in the sense of "instead of," as in Jonson's line in his verses to the author, where he says that a poet who desires his work to live must "strike the second heat upon the Muses anvil,"

> Or *for* the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne.

It is conceivable, therefore, that the editors of the Folio originally intended to illustrate the work with a portrait more resembling the *original* bust in Stratford-on-Avon Church, which, as we have already seen, appears to have been very different from the present one.

But let us now consider Ben's lines,

> To the Memory of my Beloved,
> THE AUTHOR
> Mr. William Shakespeare:
> And
> What he hath left Us.

Jonson begins by protesting that though he is lavish in

[1] Lee's *Life*, p. 258. Original italics.

[2] In one, at any rate, of the copies of the Folio in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, the engraving appears to have been very skilfully inlaid. I pointed this out to Mr. Aldis Wright, who said there was no doubt of the fact.

praise, confessing Shakespeare's "writings to be such, as neither Man nor Muse, can praise too much," (which style of panegyric might proceed from mere ignorance, or blind affection, or crafty malice, such as

> . . . might pretend this praise,
> And think to ruine, where it seem'd to raise),

yet he was not thus "ample" in eulogy in order to draw upon Shakespeare's name the detraction of "envy," the constant effect of excessive and indiscriminate praise, for in Shakespeare's case "*'Tis true, and all men's suffrage.*" Then he proceeds to his famous address to the poet:—

> . . . Soul of the Age!
> The Applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
> My Shakespeare rise; I will not lodge thee by
> Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
> A little further, to make thee a roome:
> Thou art a moniment, without a tombe,
> And art alive still, while thy Booke doth live,
> And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

Here we have, in the first place, what a reviewer in *The Speaker* (April 16th, 1904) calls a "little difference of opinion about Shakespeare's tomb" between Jonson and William Basse, for Basse (whose title to fame seems to consist in this, that instead of waiting, as Jonson did, for seven years after Shakspere's death, he wrote some lines "on Mr. William Shakespeare" only *six* years after that event!) had in 1622 written somewhat as follows:—

> Renowned Spenser lye a thought more nye
> To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lye
> A little nearer Spenser, to make roome
> For Shakespeare in your threefold, fowerfold tombe
> To lodge all fowre in one bed make a shift
> Until Doomesdaye, for hardly will a fift
> Betwixt *this* day and *that* by Fate be slayne,
> For whom your Curtaines may be drawne againe.
> If your precedency in death doth barre
> A fourth place in your sacred sepulcher,

Under this carved marble of thine owne,
Sleepe, rare Tragedian,[1] Shakespeare, sleep alone ;
Thy unmolested peace, unshared cave,
Possesse as Lord, not Tenant, of thy Grave,
That unto us and others it may be
Honor hereafter to be layde by thee.

Of these lines there are, Dr. Ingleby tells us, "so many discrepant versions, manuscript as well as printed, that it is difficult to determine their original or their finished form." The above-quoted version is the one preferred by the Editor of the Second Edition of the *Centurie of Prayse*, Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, who also has "a little difference of opinion" with Dr. Ingleby as to this curious epitaph. The lines, says Ingleby, are "usually attributed to the elder W. Basse," but the evidence of authorship seems somewhat doubtful. How the date is determined I do not know, but Malone says, "the MS. appears to have been written soon after the year 1621." Anyhow, the epitaph (so called) was presumably written before Jonson composed his lines, for he apparently alludes to them, and has "a little difference of opinion" with Basse, saying that he, at any rate, will not lodge Shakespeare by Chaucer or Spenser, or ask Beaumont to be so kind as to "lye a little further" to make room for him ; which is very sensible on Jonson's part, seeing that Shakespeare was not buried in Westminster Abbey, as Basse seems to have thought he was, or was to be, for otherwise there is no sense in his allusions, which, in any case, would appear to be not a little mixed.[2] Moreover, if Jonson had seen the

surely not. G. has misread Basse's 9th to 12th. ~~verses~~ lines.

[1] "Tragedian" originally meant, of course, a writer of tragedy, but in Shakespeare's time it was usually employed to mean an actor of tragedy, or *an actor in general*. At any rate, Shakespeare himself always uses the word with this signification. See *Schmidt's Shakespearean Lexicon*, and *The Imperial Dictionary sub voce*. See too *Hamlet*, II, 2, 342 ; *All's Well*, IV, 3, 299 ; *Richard III*, III, 5, 5 ; and *ante*, p. 211. As to Basse, see *ante*, pp. 201 and 336.

[2] I think Basse must have had in his mind the Latin distich which Camden

epitaph which, as William Hall tells us, Shakspere in his lifetime directed to be cut upon his tombstone, he would have known that it was quite useless to ask him to make room for anybody, his last thought being to imprecate a curse on any one who should move his bones! It seems that one or two of the copies of Basse's lines bear the words "on Mr. William Shakespeare, he died in April, 1616," or other words to that effect; but whether W. Basse was responsible for this identification of his Shakespeare, the "rare tragedian," or "brave tragedian" (who was, if the other poets were not so obliging as to make room for him, to enjoy "unmolested peace" under some "carved marble" or "uncarved marble," as some versions have it, of his own), with William Shakspere of Stratford, does not appear. It is rather curious that Jonson should say of Shakespeare "thou art a Monument without a tomb," seeing that Shakspere, at any rate, had a tomb and a monument of his own in Stratford Church. Jonson, however, prefers to speak of the poet as still alive, if not physically at any rate in his works, and therefore he need not trouble Spenser and Chaucer and Beaumont in the manner proposed by Basse.

Then follows those memorable words which I have already discussed :—

> And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek—

words which those who see how singularly inappropriate they really are to the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare have been at such infinite pains to explain away, if possible, without impeaching the credit of the

tells us (*Reges Reginæ*, 1600) was on the gravestone first placed on Spenser's tomb.

> Hic prope Chaucerum, Spensere, poeta poetam
> Conderis, et versu quam tumulo propior.

Spenser was to be near Chaucer in his tomb, and was even nearer to him in his verse. If only Shakspere had been buried in the Abbey (and why was he not?) Basse's lines would have been appropriate.

witness, or assuming that he is here indulging in a little Socratic irony.[1] It may be as well to quote the lines once more :—

> And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
> From thence to honour thee I would not seek
> For names ; but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
> Euripides, and Sophocles to us,
> Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
> To life again, to hear thy Buskin tread,
> And shake a stage : or when thy Sockes were on,
> Leave thee alone, for the comparison
> Of all that insolent Greece, or haughtie Rome
> Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Shortly after follow that noble line, so often misquoted :—

> He was not of an age, but for all time.

And then these :—

> Nature herself was proud of his designs,
> And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines !
> . . . . . .
> Yet must I not give Nature all : Thy Art,
> My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.

[1] It has recently been suggested by a learned German, Dr. Konrad Meier, that an entirely wrong interpretation has been habitually given of Jonson's celebrated words. The line "And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek," has been constantly quoted without the context, as though it were a bare statement of fact. But the passage continues :—

> "From thence to honour thee I *would* not seek
> For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus, etc."

Upon this, says Dr. Meier, "the conditional word *would* in the principal sentence, indicates that we have here a conceded relation, annexed to a conditional one ; and, as in every conditional sentence, the conditional word *would* points to the *unreal* alternative, which is to be taken as the opposite of the actual fact." Adopting this interpretation the sense is, "even had it been true that thou hadst but small Latin and less Greek, even so I should not be at a loss (cf. Porson's 'The Germans in Greek are sadly *to seek*') for names, but would still place thee side by side with the great poets of antiquity." If this be, indeed, the right interpretation (and it seems worthy of consideration), Jonson can no longer be quoted as an authority for an unlearned "Shakespeare"! See *Baconiana* for October, 1907, where Mr. Theobald has given a translation (into which, by the way, an error seems to have crept) of Dr. Meier's German.

curious

For though the Poet's matter, Nature be,
His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil: turn the same,
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;
Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn,
For a good Poet's made, as well as born.
And such wert thou. Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so, the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-turned and true-filed lines:
In each of which he seems to shake a Lance,
As brandisht at the eyes of Ignorance.

Here, then, we have Jonson's opinion that so far is it from being true of Shakespeare that "Nature only helpt him," as Digges absurdly wrote, in reality he owed much to that *Ars Poetica* which the greatest of all poets could hardly fail to possess. For, says Jonson, it is not true without qualification that *Poeta nascitur non fit*. A poet has to be "*made*" as well as "*born*," and if he desires to write anything worthy of immortality he must "sweat" as did Shakespeare, and "strike the second heat upon the Muses' anvil," turning his lines and himself with them; or in other words, he must bear in mind Horace's advice, "*Saepe stilum vertas*"; he must amend and polish, reconsider, recast, rewrite, and revise. And such a poet was Shakespeare ("And such wert thou"), whose "well-turned and true-filed lines" are themselves the mirror of his "mind and manners."[1] Now this is precisely what he says in his *Discoveries* as to the requisites of a poet. "But that which we especially require in him is an exactness of study

[1] How in the face of all this Professor Herford could write (*Ben Jonson*, "The Mermaid Series," p. lxvii) "What chiefly struck him (Jonson) in Shakespeare was his 'want of art' and absence of effort," is one of those things which pass all understanding. It is curious to find Dryden asserting that Jonson learnt "Art" of Shakespeare.

Shakespear who taught by none, did first impart
To Fletcher Wit, to lab'ring Jonson ART!

and multiplicity of reading, *lectio*, which maketh a full man,[1] not alone enabling him to know the history or argument of a poem and to report it, but so to master the matter and style as to show he knows how to handle, place, or dispose of either with elegancy when need shall be. And not to think he can leap forth suddenly a poet by dreaming he hath been in Parnassus, or having washed his lips, as they say, in Helicon. There goes more to his making than so; for to nature, exercise, imitation, and study *art* must be added to make all these perfect. *Ars coronat opus.* And though these challenge to themselves much in the making up of our maker,[2] it is art only can lead him to perfection, and leave him there in possession as planted by her hand."[3]

Finally, Jonson, in his First Folio verses, addresses Shakespeare as "sweet Swan of Avon," thus, undoubtedly, identifying him, to all outward appearance, with Shakspere of Stratford.

"One could wish," comments Dr. Ingleby, "that Ben had said all this in Shakespeare's lifetime," and it is certainly curious to contrast this splendid eulogy with what Jonson said of Shakspere at other times, both these utterances concerning the Poet-Ape, Pantalabus, etc., which we have already referred to, as probable allusions, and other criticism now to be mentioned. Jonson died in August, 1637, having outlived Shakspere by twenty-one years. Among his papers was found the work to which I have just alluded, which bears the title, "Timber, or Discoveries, made upon men and Matter, as they have flowed out of his daily Readings; or had their reflux to his peculiar Notion of the Times." This work was published in 1641. At what dates the various sections of it were written we cannot tell, but it is clear that the work was commenced quite

[1] "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man" (Bacon, Essay on *Studies*).

[2] i.e. poet (ποιητής).

[3] *Discoveries*, CXXX.

late in life, for at an early page, Jonson writes, under the heading "*Memoria*," "I myself could in my youth have repeated all that ever I made, and so continued till I was past forty; since, it is much decayed in me. . . . It was wont to be faithful to me, but shaken with age now . . . it may perform somewhat but cannot promise much."

Taking the year of Jonson's birth as 1572–3, and assuming that he was upwards of fifty when he wrote of himself as "shaken with age," we are brought to the year 1623, the date of the publication of the First Folio, as the earliest date at which the above sentences could have been written. A little further on, however, he alludes to Bacon as then deceased,[1] and as Bacon died in 1626, this part of the work must have been written after that date. It seems, then, safe to assume that the references to Shakespeare (No. LXIV) which are to be found shortly before the allusion to *Dominus Verulamius* (No. LXXI) were written about the same time, viz. subsequently to the year 1626.[2] I will now set forth this famous and often-quoted passage *in extenso*. The heading, or marginal note, is *de Shakespeare nostrati*, i.e. concerning our fellow-countryman Shakespeare.[3]

The passage runs thus: "I remember the players have

[1] Mr. I. Gollancz says, "The reference to Lord Bacon points to a date after his fall in 1621." Temple Classics Edition, p. 139. It obviously points to a date after his death. In No. CXXIII Jonson speaks of the late Lord St. Albans.

[2] Dr. Ingleby gives the limits of date as 1630–7, the latter being the year of Jonson's death, and this appears to be correct, for in a passage which occurs early in the work as it now stands (some pages before the heading *Memoria* above alluded to) Jonson mentions the date 1630. It seems impossible, therefore, that the reference to Shakespeare could have "preceded" the writing of the First Folio Eulogy, as Mr. I. Gollancz imagines (Temple Classics Edition, p. 139).

[3] Why Jonson thought it necessary to describe Shakespeare as "our fellow-countryman" is not very clear, for, as Judge Webb observes, "whoever Shakespeare was, he was an Englishman and everybody must have known it." (See *The Mystery of William Shakespeare*, p. 136 note.) Perhaps Ben merely meant "our fellow Shakespeare." But it is to be noticed that

N. often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, 'Would he had blotted a thousand,' which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this but for their ignorance who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour, for I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped. '*Sufflaminandus erat*,' as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too! Many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause'; and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned."

Now whatever side we take in the Shakespearean controversy, we must, surely, admit that this is a very remarkable and not a little perplexing utterance. According to Jonson, "the players," by which name we may take it he refers to Hemminge and Condell, thought to commend "their friend," viz. player Shakspere, by saying that "in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line." Player Shakspere is here identified with author Shakespeare, and we thus have it on Jonson's testimony that the players looked upon William Shakspere the actor as the author of the plays, and praised him for never

But remark the word "often", supra.

Abraham Sturley, writing to his brother-in-law Richard Quiney (whose son Thomas married Shakspere's daughter Judith) speaks of "*our countriman*, Mr. Shaksper," January 1597–8, and again, in November, 1598, "our countriman Mr. Wm. Shak." (H.-P., Vol. II, 57–9). Jonson, however, was not of the same *county* as Shakspere, as were Sturley and Quiney.

curious.

blotting out a line. Here we are brought back at once to the Folio address *To the Great Variety of Readers*, which, as I have already shown,[1] was almost undoubtedly written by Jonson himself; "What he thought, he uttered with that easinesse that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers." But we now know that this statement is ridiculous; that if the players had any unblotted manuscripts in their hands (which is by no means probable) they were merely fair copies; that if they really thought that the author of the plays wrote them off *currente calamo*, and never blotted a line, never revised, never made any alterations, they knew nothing whatever concerning the real Shakespeare. It seems strange, too, that Jonson should say that they "chose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted," for Ben knew well enough that Shakespeare did not "fault" in this way. He knew

strange indeed

> . . . that he
> Who casts to write a living line must sweat
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the Muses anvile, turne the same,
> (And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame.

And such he tells us was Shakespeare. How, then, can he affect to believe the players' statement that he never blotted out a line? Judge Webb suggests that Jonson "regretted, as every sober student of Shakespeare must regret, that the incomparable writer who, in his laborious revision of his work had blotted out so much, had not blotted out still more"; but this hardly seems a satisfactory explanation. Then compare this description of Shakespeare with the magnificent eulogy of the First Folio verses. *There* he is the greatest of all poets, the

> Soul of the age!
> The applause, delight, the wonder of our Stage!

Here he is, "indeed, honest, and of an open and free

[1] *Ante*, p. 264 *et seq.*

nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions," but "flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." *Sufflaminandus erat*, i.e. in modern English, he had to be shut up! He was like Aterius, whose volubility was so great that he ought to have been closured. *Tanta illi erat velocitas orationis, ut vitium fierat. Itaque D. Augustus optime dixit, Aterius noster sufflaminandus est.*[1] This surely is hardly the description which we should have expected from Jonson of the great bard who "was not of an age, but for all time"! Very remarkable, too, is the criticism to the effect that "many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause'; and such like, which were ridiculous." Is Jonson here speaking of the player or the playwright? *Julius Cæsar* was first published in the Folio of 1623, and the passage alluded to there stands:—

> Know Cæsar doth not wrong, nor without cause
> Will he be satisfied.

It may, of course, have originally stood as quoted by Jonson, or it may have been, as some have suggested, that Shakspere the player misquoted the passage on the stage. There seems some plausibility about the latter suggestion, for it is difficult to imagine that Jonson would have dismissed the great dramatist with such a niggling "two-penny-halfpenny" criticism as this. And surely it is of the player, not the poet, that Jonson speaks when he says that his volubility was such that, like Aterius, he had to be (or ought to have been) shut up! In any case the contrast between this passage of the *Discoveries* and the panegyric of the Folio is so remarkable as to give

[1] Seneca, *Exc. Controv.*, IV, *Proam.* 7.

rise to much doubt, much perplexity, and much consideration.[1]

Let us now go back a few years and see what Jonson said of Shakespeare only three years after player Shakspere's death. In January, 1619, Jonson was staying with William Drummond of Hawthornden. Drummond, as everybody knows, made notes of his conversation with old Ben, and he thus records what his illustrious guest said about Shakespeare. "His censure[2] of the English Poets was this . . . That Shakspeer wanted arte. . . . Shakspeer, in a play, brought in a number of men saying they had suffered ship-wrack in Bohemia, wher y^{r} is no sea neer by some 100 miles."

Could anything be more astonishing and at the same time more unsatisfactory than this? Here we have Jonson unbosoming himself in private conversation with his host and friend—"a chiel" who was "takin' notes"—and this, apparently, is all he has to say about the great bard who, only four years afterwards, he was to laud to the skies as the

> Soul of the age!
> The applause, delight, the wonder of our Stage!

One would have expected to find whole pages of eulogy, in Drummond's notes, of the poet who was "not of an age, but for all time"; instead of which we have only these two carping little bits of criticism: "That Shakspeer wanted (i.e. lacked) arte"—a curious remark to

[1] As has been already said, there is every reason to believe that Jonson himself wrote the address *To the great Variety of Readers* prefixed to the Folio. We see the same thoughts emerging here when he speaks, "*De Shakespeare nostrati*," not only in the imaginary never-blotted manuscripts, but also in such sentences as these, "What he thought he uttered with that easinesse' (First Folio); "Wherein he flowed with that facility," etc. (*Discoveries*). It is natural enough that Jonson, when he wrote in the character of the players, should have preferred the more homely word "easiness" to the Latin "facility," which he employed when writing *in propriâ personâ*.

[2] *Censure* here means opinion or judgment.

have proceeded from the mouth of him who wrote in the Folio lines that a poet must be "made, as well as born," that Nature must be supplemented by art, and that in Shakespeare's case such art was *not* lacking, but was conspicuous "in his well-turned and true-filed lines"! And then that niggling bit of criticism concerning the coast of Bohemia in the *Winter's Tale*, which may be compared with the depreciatory allusion to *Julius Cæsar* in the *Discoveries*![1]

Why is it that Jonson appears on one occasion only in the character of eulogist of Shakespeare as a poet, viz. when he comes forward, seven years after Shakspere's death, as an inspired sponsor to bless the undertaking of 1623? Why is it that in private conversation, or in his own observations upon "Men and Matter," he has no word of praise, but only carping criticism to bestow upon the writings of the great poet for whose posthumously published works he composed that splendid panegyric? We seem driven to reply in the words of the immortal "J. K. S." :—

> These are the questions nobody can answer,
> These are the problems nobody can solve,
> Only we know that man is an advancer;
> Only we know the centuries revolve!

It would appear, however, that, for some reason or another, Jonson looked upon the issue of the First Folio as a very special occasion, and that, if we could only get to the back of his mind, we should find that there was some efficient cause operating to induce him to give the best possible send-off to that celebrated venture.

Here it becomes necessary to consider some of Jonson's allusions to Bacon, and particularly those in the *Discoveries*. As already mentioned, No. lxiv (Temple Classics

[1] As to the Bohemian coast Shakespeare merely followed Greene's *Pandosto* (or *Dorastus and Fawnia*), on which he seems to have founded his play.

Edition) contains the famous reference to Shakespeare. No. lxx is headed *De claris oratoribus*, and No. lxxi *Dominus Verulamius*. The latter runs thus: "One, though he be excellent and the chief, is not to be imitated alone; for never no imitator ever grew up to his author; likeness is always on this side truth. Yet there happened in my time, one noble speaker who was full of gravity in his speaking; his language, where he could spare or pass by a jest,[1] was nobly censorious. No man ever spoke more neatly, more presly,[2] more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end."[3]

After this high tribute to Bacon as an orator (from which we learn that he so loved a jest that he found it difficult to spare one or pass it by), comes paragraph No. lxxii, headed *Scriptorum catalogus*. This must be quoted *in extenso*:—

"Cicero is said to be the only wit that the people of Rome had equalled to their empire: *Ingenium par imperio*. We have had many, and in their several ages (to take in but the former *seculum*), Sir Thomas More, the elder Wyatt, Henry, Earl of Surrey, Chaloner, Smith, Eliot, Bishop Gardiner, were for their times admirable; and the more, because they began eloquence with us. Sir Nicolas Bacon was singular, and almost alone, in the beginning of Queen

[1] We are reminded of what had been said of Shakespeare: "His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too"!

[2] i.e. concisely.

[3] This agrees with what Francis Osborn wrote as to Bacon's hearers being "no less sorry when he came to conclude than displeased with any did interrupt him." *Ante*, p. 445 n.

Elizabeth's time. Sir Philip Sidney and Mr. Hooker (in different matter) grew great masters of wit and language, and in whom all vigour of invention and strength of judgment met. The Earl of Essex, noble and high; and Sir Walter Raleigh, not to be contemned, either for judgment or style; Sir Henry Savile, grave and truly lettered; Sir Edwin Sandys, excellent in both; Lord Egerton, the Chancellor, a grave and great orator, and best when he was provoked; but his learned and able, though unfortunate, successor is he who hath *filled up all numbers*, and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to *insolent Greece or haughty Rome*. In short, within his view, and about his times, were all the wits born that could honour a language or help study. Now things daily fall, wits grow downward, and eloquence grows backward; so that he may be named and stand as the mark and *ἀκμὴ* of our language."

It has frequently been said, with reference to this passage, that Jonson compiled a catalogue of all the best writers of his time, and put Bacon at the head of it, while he omitted Shakespeare altogether. It will be seen, however, that this is to attribute to the above quotation a much wider significance than can properly be ascribed to it. It is true that the passage is headed *Scriptorum catalogus*, and that the editor of the Temple Classics Edition has inserted the sidenote, "a bead-roll of English writers," but, as in the interpretation of statutes, when general expressions follow the mention of specific things, such expressions must be construed as having reference only to things *ejusdem generis* with those expressly mentioned, so here, when we consider the names specified by Jonson, it rather seems that he is thinking mainly of wits and orators of his own and the preceding generation, than compiling a list in which we should expect to find mention made of all the best writers, whether of prose or poetry, of the time. Still, after making full allowance for such

considerations, it does seem remarkable that in "a bead-roll of English writers," including such names as those of Philip Sidney and Walter Raleigh, and speaking of times wherein "were all the wits born that could honour a language or help study," no mention should be made of the great dramatist whom Jonson in 1623 characterised as the "Soul of the Age." The plea has been put forward that he had already dealt with Shakespeare in the paragraph which I have quoted *de Shakespeare nostrati*, but this seems an altogether inadequate explanation, for that paragraph is miserably unsatisfactory if it is to be considered as the only notice of the great poet which Jonson thought it necessary to give, in his observations on "Men and Matter." More remarkable still is his splendid eulogy of Bacon as the man who had attained perfection in his literary works, who had "filled up all numbers,"[1] and who was to be named as "the mark and *ἀκμὴ*" of the English language. And most remarkable of all is the fact that Jonson applies the same language indiscriminately to Shakespeare and Bacon. Of Shakespeare he had said that "his wit was in his own power" and that he wished "the rule of it had been so too." Of Bacon he had said that "his language, where he could spare or pass by a jest, was nobly censorious." To Shakespeare in 1623 he had addressed the lines:—

> Leave thee alone, for the comparison
> Of all that *insolent Greece or haughty Rome*
> Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Of Bacon he now writes that he "had performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred to *insolent Greece or haughty Rome*." It is certainly not surprising that the Baconians should dwell on this extraordinary coincidence of expression. Were there, then, they ask,

[1] Petronius Arbiter has (caput lxviii), "Duo tamen vitia habet, quae si non haberet, esset *omnium numerûm*," i.e. he would have been perfect. See p. 285 n.

two writers of whom this description was appropriate—both of whom might be properly compared, and even advantageously compared, to the best writers of "insolent Greece" and "haughty Rome"; or was there in truth but one who went under two names (using a *nom de plume* in the field of drama and poetry), and had old Ben forgotten that in speaking of that writer, under cover of the pseudonym, he had used precisely the same expressions as he now applies to him in this noble outburst of posthumous praise?

But Jonson's eulogy of Bacon does not stop here. After noticing his *Novum organum* as a work "which, though by the most of superficial men, who cannot get beyond the title of nominals, it is not penetrated nor understood, it really openeth all defects of learning whatsoever, and is a book

"*Qui longum noto scriptori porriget ævum*,"[1]

he goes on to utter memorable words on the true greatness of the man whom he knew so well. "My conceit of his person was never increased toward him by his place or honour. But I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength; for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllable for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue, but rather help to make it manifest."

Had ever man nobler testimony than this which is here borne to the memory of Bacon by one of the greatest of his contemporaries? Homage such as this, posthumously

[1] Paragraph lxxiii. *De Augmentis Scientiarum.* Is there perchance an emphasis on *noto?* Was there another book "qui longum *ignoto* scriptori porriget ævum"?

offered by one so thoroughly qualified to pronounce judgment, and who was writing for posterity, is surely sufficient justification for Tennyson's description of those "two godlike faces" of

> Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulam,
> The first of those who know.

The extraordinary thing is that nowhere in his prose works, or in his recorded conversations, has Jonson left us any noble eulogy of this sort consecrated to the memory of Shakespeare. If it could be said that Jonson had failed to appreciate the greatness of Shakespeare's works, the explanation might be accepted as satisfactory, though at the expense of Jonson's judgment. But we have the Folio lines to show that such a theory cannot for a moment be advanced. These celebrated verses make it clear that no one had a more lofty appreciation of "the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare; and what he hath left us," than had old Ben. Why was it, then, that, except in this one instance, his utterances fall so miserably short of what we have a right to expect? Why, in fact, does he speak with two voices? Those who are not wedded to the orthodox faith would, of course, explain the difficulty by saying that, however sphinx-like were Jonson's utterances, he had clearly distinct in his own mind two different personages, viz. Shakspere the player, and Shakespeare the real author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, and that if in the perplexing passage quoted from the *Discoveries* he appears to confound one with the other, it is because the solemn seal of secrecy had been imposed upon him.

It is impossible to say when Jonson first became acquainted with Bacon. *Every Man Out of his Humour*, which was produced in 1599, was dedicated "To the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom, the Inns of Court,"[1] to whom, says Jonson, "When I wrote

[1] This dedication is not given in the Quarto.

this poem I had friendship with divers in your societies; who, as they were great names in learning, so they were no less examples of living." We can hardly doubt that among these learned lawyers alluded to was Francis Bacon, who is known to have taken, from his earliest days at Gray's Inn, such a keen interest in the drama. The passage quoted from the *Discoveries* (No. lxxi) shows that Jonson must have heard Bacon speak either in Parliament or at the Bar.[1] "In any case," writes Judge Webb, "Bacon was on intimate terms with Jonson long before he was created Lord St. Albans. In 1617, when he was Lord Keeper, he engaged Jonson to compose a masque for the Christmas Revels of his Inn. In the summer of 1618, when Jonson was setting out on his pedestrian tour to Scotland, Bacon told him that he loved not to see poesie going on any feet but the dactyl and the spondee." On January 22nd, 1621, Bacon celebrated his sixtieth birthday with great state at York House.[2] Jonson was present on that occasion and wrote the following ode "On Lord Bacon's Birthday."

Hail, happy genius of this ancient pile!
How comes it all things so about thee smile?
The fire, the wine, the men! and in the midst
Thou stand'st as if some mystery thou didst!
Pardon, I read it in thy face, the day
For whose returns, and many, all these pray;
And so do I. This is the sixtieth year,
Since Bacon, and thy lord was born, and here;
Son to the grave wise keeper of the Seal,

[1] "His judges" does not necessarily mean "the judges" in a court of law as assumed by Judge Webb (p. 121).

[2] This date is given by Judge Webb, and many others, as January, 1620, and if a man's first birthday is the day on which he is born then Bacon's sixtieth birthday would be on this date; but it is common practice to speak of the day on which a child having completed its first year enters upon its second, as its first birthday. Moreover, Jonson expressly writes: "This is the sixtieth year since Bacon and thy Lord was born." Professor Fowler in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states the date as I have given it.

> Fame and foundation of the English weal.
> What then his father was, that since is he,
> Now with a title more to the degree;
> England's high Chancellor; the destin'd heir,
> In his soft cradle, to his father's chair:
> Whose even thread the fates spin round and full,
> Out of their choicest and their whitest wool.
> 'Tis a brave cause of joy, let it be known,
> For 'twere a narrow gladness kept thine own.
> Give me a deep-crown'd bowl, that I may sing,
> In raising him, the wisdom of my king.

Here, again, there certainly seems to be some esoteric meaning which it is not easy to grasp. Why does the genius of the place seem to stand as if he were doing some mystery? What was that mystery? What was "the brave cause of joy" of which Jonson writes "let it be known, for 'twere a narrow gladness kept thine own"? Not the mere fact that this was Bacon's sixtieth birthday, for that was known to everybody and was being publicly celebrated. What, then, was the secret "cause of joy" which the genius of the spot was implored not to keep to himself, but to publish to the world? What was the "mystery" which was being performed? The Baconians assert that here is an allusion to the secret Shakespearean authorship, a secret known to Jonson, and which he hoped might soon be published to the world. The Stratfordians, of course, reject this interpretation with scorn, but they are unable to give any plausible explanation of Jonson's meaning, and the mystery remains a mystery still.

Jonson, it appears, was Bacon's guest at Gorhambury, and was one of those "good pens" which were employed by him to translate the *Advancement of Learning* and other works into Latin. Writing to Toby Mathew, on June 26th, 1623, Bacon says: "My labours are now most set to have those works which I had formerly published, as that of *Advancement of Learning*, that of *Henry VII*, that of *The Essays*, being retractate and made more per-

fect, well translated into Latin by the help of some good pens which forsake me not." The best of these "good pens," it seems, was Jonson. "It is probable that he assisted him (Bacon) in the preparation of the *Novum organum*, which was published in 1620, and it is an undoubted fact that the Latin of the *De Augmentis*, which was published in 1623, was the work of Jonson. It may be assumed, therefore, that Jonson was assisting Bacon in the publication of his works in 1623, when the Shakespeare Folio appeared; and it is absolutely certain that he assisted in the publication of that memorable volume. We have every reason to believe that he was the writer of the address to the great "variety of Readers," and we know that he was the writer of the verses to the memory of 'The Author,' and of the lines to 'The Reader' which face the title-page of the famous book."[1]

note this.

There is yet another passage where I think we can trace Jonson's pen in connection with one of the Shakespearean plays, and that as early as the year 1609; for in that year appeared a quarto edition of *Troilus and Cressida*, which has the unique distinction among the plays of Shakespeare that it contains a preface; and a "very extraordinary preface" it is, as Charles Knight remarked. It may be well to give it *in extenso*. It runs thus :—

"A NEVER WRITER TO AN EVER READER.
"NEWS.

"Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical; for it is a birth of your brain, that never undertook anything comical vainly; and were but the vain names of comedies changed for the titles of commodities, or of plays for pleas, you should see all those grand censors, that now style

[1] Judge Webb (p. 123).

them such vanities, flock to them for the main grace of their gravities; especially this author's comedies, that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit, that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies. And all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings as were never capable of the wit of a comedy, coming by report of them to his representations, have found that wit there that they never found in themselves, and have parted better witted than they came; feeling an edge of wit set upon them more than ever they dreamed they had brain to grind it on. So much and such favoured salt of wit is in his comedies, that they seem (for their height of pleasure) to be born in that sea that brought forth Venus. Amongst all there is none more witty than this: and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not (for so much as will make you think your testern well bestowed), but for so much worth as even poor I know to be stuffed in it. It deserves such a labour, as well as the best comedy in Terence or Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone, and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasure's loss and judgments, refuse not, nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude; but thank Fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you, since by the grand possessors' wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave all such to be prayed for (for the states of their wits' healths) that will not praise it. Vale."

Now, there were two Quarto editions of *Troilus and Cressida* published in 1609. Both were "imprinted by G. Eld for R. Bonian and H. Walley," but one contains this preface, while the other does not, and the edition which omits the preface bears on the title-page the statement

that the play is printed "as it was acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe." The text of the two Quartos is identical. Which of them was first published? *Prima facie* one would say the one with the preface, for it would have been absurd to print a preface saying that the play was "a new play, never staled with the stage . . . not sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude," etc., after an edition had already appeared stating that the play had been acted by the King's servants at the Globe. And this is the view taken by Charles Knight, who thought that *Troilus and Cressida* was in fact a new play, and that it had not been publicly acted when the original edition, with the preface, appeared. It is true that in the Stationers' books there is an entry of February 7th, 1602–3 in the name of Roberts, of "the booke of Troilus and Cresseda, as yt is acted by my Lo. Chamberlain 's men," but Knight contends that this was a different play, probably by Dekker and Chettle, which subsequently appeared under the name of *Agamemnon*. If it were not so, how came there to be an entry on January 28, 1608–9 in the names of Richard Bonian and Hen. Walley, of "A booke called the History of Troylus and Cressuda"? For if this latter play was the play originally entered to Roberts, the copyright was in Roberts, and there must have been an assignment from Roberts to Bonian and Walley which we do not find.[1] "After the piece has thus been published," says Knight, "it is publicly acted; and then the preface which states that it has not been acted is naturally suppressed, in a new edition of which the title-page bears the additional recommendation of 'As it was acted by the

[1] In the 1602–3 entry the book is entered for James Roberts to be printed "when he had got sufficient authority for it." Some assume, therefore, that he never did get "sufficient authority," and therefore never printed the play. Mr. Lee says (p. 183) that Roberts's "effort to publish 'Troilus' proved abortive owing to the interposition of the players," but this seems to be mere assumption.

King's Majesty's servants at the Globe.'" According to this critic, the expressions "never staled with the stage," etc., mean what most people would take them to mean, viz. that the play had not been acted on the public stage; but he quotes the conjecture of Tieck that "in the palace of some great personage, for whom it was probably expressly written, it was first represented,—according to my belief for the king himself. . . . But whether the king or someone else of whom we have not received the name, it is sufficient to know that for this person, and not for the public, Shakspere wrote this wonderful comedy." Some persons have supposed that the proprietors of the Globe were the "grand possessors" who might have stood in the way of the publication of the play; but to imagine that such persons would have had such a high-sounding title bestowed upon them seems absurd. "But suppose," says Knight, "the grand possessors to be, as Tieck has conjectured, some great personage, probably the king himself, for whom the play was expressly written, and a great deal of the obscurity of the preface vanishes." This does not seem unreasonable. At any rate, it is well to bear in mind that many of Shakespeare's plays were written with the view to their performance in some royal palace, such as Greenwich or Whitehall, or in some nobleman's mansion, such as Wilton, or in the Hall of one of the Inns of Court. For such places and to such cultured audiences these great dramas seem especially appropriate, whereas it is hard indeed to conceive *Hamlet*, for instance, as we know it, being performed in one of the public theatres, such as they then were, with arena open to the sky, before a standing audience of "groundlings" and "stinkards," drinking beer, cracking nuts, eating fruit, howling and fighting, or burning the juniper when the smell becomes too overpowering.[1]

This, however, by the way; but it is right to mention that here, as usual, there is much disagreement among the

[1] See Taine's *English Literature*, chap. II.

commentators. Those who are curious on the subject may consult the Cambridge editors, Mr. Sidney Lee,[1] Mr. Israel Gollancz, and others.

But who wrote the Preface? "An anonymous scribe," says Mr. Lee. There seems good reason to suppose that that anonymous scribe was none other than Ben Jonson. This opinion rests, first, on considerations of style. Consider the heading, "A never writer to an ever reader." Mark the expression "never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical,". . . . "plays for pleas," etc., and above all that characteristic allusion to the "testern" which the reader will, says the writer, not fail to think "well bestowed."[2] Mr. E. W. Smithson, author of an able and very suggestive essay on *Shakespeare-Bacon*, writes (p. 10, note 2): "In my opinion, founded at first on mere considerations of style, Jonson is responsible for the quickly suppressed preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, as well as for the Heminge and Condell addresses to the First Folio." Of the same opinion is Judge Webb, who points to the admirably true and sagacious statement of the writer of the preface that "this author's comedies are so framed to the life that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives." With these words the Judge compares the answer of Tibullus in *The Poetaster*, when Augustus asks him for his "true thought of Virgil." "Tibullus, anticipating the remark of Dr.

[1] Mr. Lee (p. 148) apparently thinks that the "grand possessors" were the players; but why these worthies should be so styled is by no means apparent; indeed, the supposition seems not a little ridiculous. The play by Dekker and Chettle has been lost, unless, indeed, it was published under the name of "Shakespeare"! See *ante*, p. 357, *et seq.*

[2] The tester or testern was a coin of the value of about sixpence. Jonson is fond of speaking of a man's right to get his sixpennyworth, to judge his sixpennyworth, etc. See passages cited chap. ix, pp. 265–6. As to "the palm comical," Jonson frequently uses "palm" in the sense of "praise," as in *The Poetaster* (Vol. I): "Well said! This carries palm with it," i.e. is worthy of praise.

Johnson that a system of civil and economical prudence might be collected from the works of Shakespeare, observes :—

> That which he hath writ
> Is with such judgment labour'd and distill'd
> Through all the needful uses of our lives,
> That could a man remember but his lines
> He should not touch at any specious point
> But he might breathe his spirit out of him." [1]

Judge Webb, therefore, thinks, as many others have thought, that Jonson was, under the name of Virgil, referring to the *true author* of the Shakespearean plays.

But the argument does not stop here. In the Folio, *Troilus and Cressida* is preceded by a prologue "non-Shakespearean," as the critics tell us, and apparently inserted in order to fill up a space. The speaker of a prologue generally wore a black cloak, but in this case the speaker was in armour.

> And hither am I come
> A prologue arm'd.

In Jonson's *Poetaster* we have the same thing, viz. "An armed Prologue." [2] Here seem to be many indications of the same "good pen" that was translating Bacon's works into Latin, and writing dedicatory verses (to say nothing of prefaces) for the Shakespearean Folio.

Whether or not Jonson had the great dramatist in his mind when he wrote the above-quoted lines concerning Virgil of *The Poetaster*, every modern must admit that they find their true application in Shakespeare only. As Jonson goes on to say, through the mouth of Cæsar, a man

> might repeat part of his works
> As fit for any conference he can use ;

and Horace (i.e. Jonson himself) makes the prophecy, which has been so amply fulfilled if it refers to Shakespeare :—

[1] *Poetaster*, Act V, Scene 1.

[2] If any muse why I salute the stage,
An armed Prologue ; know 'tis a dangerous age.

> And for his poesy, 'tis so rammed with life,
> That it shall gather strength of life with being,
> And live hereafter more admired than now.

But if Jonson in all this was really referring to Shakespeare, it can, I think, hardly be doubted that Shakespeare the dramatist and Shakspere the player were for him distinct personages. Whether or not it be true, as I have contended, that in *The Poetaster* Jonson has a hit or two at the player (concerning his coat-of-arms and other matters already referred to), it is, in any case, extremely improbable that he would have written this magnificent eulogy of Shakspere in the year 1601. The critics, therefore, generally search for some other application. Thus Messrs. Nicholson and Herford suppose that the lines are intended to refer to George Chapman. But if *he* be intended, Jonson's prophecy has failed to find fulfilment. And who would say of Chapman's poetry that

> . . . 'Tis so rammed with life,
> That it shall gather strength of life with being?

Again, if Jonson really wrote the 1609 preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, the unorthodox would, of course, contend that Jonson had already been admitted "behind the scenes"; that he knew well enough the difference between Shakespeare and Shakspere, and that while he eulogises the one, he had many a hit at the other.[1]

The Stratfordians, however, of course deny both that Jonson wrote the preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, and that the lines to Virgil have any application to the bard who in very truth "was not of an age but for all time." Thus,

[1] Substitute the word "pleas" for that of "plays," says the writer of the preface, and all the "grand censors" that affect to look upon comedies as "vanities" would flock to them. Why this legal reference? Did, perhaps, the writer think that "when the gown and cap is off, and the lord of liberty reigns, then, to take it in your hands, perhaps may make some bencher, tinted with humanity, read—and not repent him," as Jonson wrote in his dedication of *Every Man Out of His Humour* to the Inns of Court? And was the preface so quickly suppressed because it might be indicative of a "concealed poet"?

as I have before pointed out, we are left face to face with this extraordinary fact, viz. that Jonson, on one occasion, and on one occasion only, bursts out in inspired praise of the poet Shakespeare, that occasion being the publication of the Folio seven years after Shakspere's death; while on other occasions, both before and after that date, he has but a few words of carping criticism for the work of the great dramatist.

I here leave the Jonsonian riddle. I repeat that it presents much difficulty whichever side of the controversy we adopt. In the case of the anti-Stratfordian theory the difficulty lies not so much in the verses prefixed to the Folio, as in the passage quoted from the *Discoveries*. It is easy enough to conceive how the dedicatory verses might have been written by one who knew the secret of the true authorship. Moreover, the Stratfordians themselves have to put their own peculiar gloss upon them. "Small Latin and less Greek," for example, may be true enough of the "Stratford rustic," but is found to be entirely inappropriate to the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. It has therefore to be ingeniously, if not ingeniously, explained away. Moreover, the Stratfordians are put to their choice between the allegation that "Shakspeer wanted art" of the Drummond conversations, and the ascription to Shakespeare, in the Folio lines, of that art in a large measure, together with that care and industry in the matter of revision, which are so indispensable for him who "casts to write a living line." As to the lines on the Droeshout engraving they really help the case of the unorthodox. The passage in the *Discoveries* itself presents no little difficulty to the Stratfordians, not only because what is there said about Shakespeare is altogether inconsistent with the Folio panegyric, but also, among other things, because of its reference to the imaginary unblotted manuscripts, the existence of which all critics (except perhaps the enthusiastic Mr. Willis) have long

since given up as a vain thing fondly imagined.[1] In any case we may confidently say that this remarkable passage is very far from being conclusive of the matter at issue. *Et adhuc sub judice lis est.*

But some good person will exclaim, with an air of much virtuous indignation, do you mean to suggest that Ben Jonson, "honest Ben," would have deliberately made himself party to a lie? I reply once more that Jonson's namesake, the great lexicographer, defined a lie as "a criminal falsehood," meaning thereby, of course, an unjustifiable, or immoral falsehood; that justifiable falsehoods are not lies; that whether or not a particular false statement is or is not justifiable is a matter for the individual conscience (Scott, for instance, thought he was quite justified in denying the authorship of *Waverley* when questioned on the subject); that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so"; that, for all we know, Jonson might have seen nothing in the least degree objectionable in the publication by some great personage of his dramatic works under a pseudonym, even though that pseudonym led to a wrong conception as to the authorship; and that if, being a friend of that great personage, and working in his service, he had solemnly engaged to preserve the secret inviolate, and not to reveal it even to posterity, then, *doubtless* ("I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word"!) he would have remained true to that solemn pledge.[2]

[1] See especially Mr. Lee's introduction to the Folio Facsimile.

[2] Jonson sometimes indulges in a good-humoured laugh at Shakespeare's expense, as when in *Every Man out of his Humour*, III, 3, he makes a little fun out of Sonnet 128 concerning

> Those jacks that nimble leap
> To kiss the tender inward of thy hand.

(Mons. Jusserand, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Vol. X, p. 318, says he makes the sonnet "the subject of his sneers," but I see "no sneer" at all), or when he parodies the description of the "ideal horse" (*ante*, p. 60 n.), but I think if his undoubted references to the *works* of Shakespeare are carefully examined any charge of "malignity" will be found to vanish. The unorthodox suggestion, of course, is that Jonson spoke with two voices—he eulogizes the poet, he sneers at the "poet-ape."

CHAPTER XVI

THE "EARLY AUTHORSHIP" ARGUMENT

SOME Baconians put forward as an argument against the supposed identity of "Shakespeare" and Shakspere of Stratford that Shakespearean plays were before the public at a date so early as to preclude the idea that the player could have been the author of them. Mr. Edwin Reed (e.g.) gives us a list of thirteen plays, which he says must have been written before 1592. These are *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *King John*, *Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *King Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2, and 3.[1]

I have already dealt with *Titus* and *Henry VI*, which in my judgment are not Shakespearean plays, though the Master may have added a few touches to Parts 2 and 3 of the trilogy. *Pericles* I set aside as too doubtful.[2] Of the other plays mentioned I propose now to consider two only with reference to this argument for "early authorship," viz. *Hamlet* and *King John*.

When "Shakespeare" composed his *Hamlet* it is by no means easy to determine. "There is evidence that as early as 1587 a drama on this subject had been written and performed in England. In the preface by Thomas

[1] *Francis Bacon our Shakespeare*, chap. II.

[2] The first two acts, the critics tell us, are certainly not Shakespeare's, but Dr. Garnett and others consider that the third act is "unquestionably" his—probably the whole of it, but, at any rate, the greater part.

Nash to Robert Greene's *Menaphon*, the first edition of which, according to Dyce, was printed in 1587, though no copy appears to be known of an earlier date than 1589, occurs a passage which certainly refers to a play of *Hamlet*, and has been thought to contain an attack on Shakespeare." I quote from the preface to the Clarendon Press edition of the play by Mr. Aldis Wright and the late W. G. Clark, names which must command respect among Shakespeareans. The passage alluded to is as follows: "It is a common practice now-a-days amongst a sort of shifting companions that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *noverint*, whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavours of art, that could scarcely latinise their neck-verse if they should have need: yet English Seneca read by candle-light yields many good sentences, as 'Blood is a beggar,' and so forth; and if you intreat him fair in a frosty morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfulls of tragical speeches." Now if this old *Hamlet*, performed as early as 1587, was written by *Shakespeare*, it would be a very strong argument indeed for those who contend that *Shakespeare* and *Shakspere* the "Stratford rustic" were different persons. For the play referred to in 1587 must have been written some time before that date, but in 1587 Shakspere was only in his twenty-third year, and either had not left, or had only just left Stratford, and not even the most fanatical of Stratfordian enthusiasts has yet ventured to assert that he came from his provincial birthplace with *Hamlet*, as well as *Venus and Adonis*, already written in his pocket; though, of course, there is no saying what "genius" may be capable of! And even if we take the date of Greene's *Menaphon* as 1589, the argument against the Stratfordian authorship is almost as strong, and would, indeed, as it seems to me, be conclusive.

"That this early *Hamlet* was Shake-speare's," writes

Mr. Reed, "no unprejudiced person can entertain a doubt, for we are able to trace it in contemporary notices all along from 1589, as above shown, to its appearance in print in the Shakespearean Quarto of 1603."[1] I certainly cannot subscribe to this dictum, although I am confident that I am quite "unprejudiced" in the matter. Most critics are of opinion that the drama alluded to by Nash was not Shakespeare's work, but an old play, perhaps written by Thomas Kyd ("*doubtless* Thomas Kyd," says Mr. Lee, just because there is no evidence and much doubt), upon which, together with the *Histoires Tragiques* of Belleforest, Shakespeare is supposed to have founded his immortal work.[2] It is remarkable, however, that this old play had apparently a soliloquy commencing "to be or not to be," and also a ghost, although, says Mr. Reed, "this was not in the original prose legend of *Hamlet* as given by Saxo Grammaticus nor in any subsequent version, down to the time of the drama, the murder having previously been represented as an open one, and therefore not requiring a messenger from the dead to reveal it." Mr. Reed believes that "so important a change as this must be ascribed to the creative genius of the dramatist himself"; but I see no reason why the old playwright should not have conceived of the ghost. The presence of the soliloquy with the famous words "to be or not to be," is, to my mind, much more remarkable. The evidence for the latter is to be found in Nash's preface to Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella:* "Nor hath my prose any skill to imitate the almond leaf verse, or sit taboring five years together nothing but 'to be, to be' on a paper drum"; where "paper drum" is, we are told, a slang expression meaning "dramatic poetry." This was published

curious

[1] *Francis Bacon our Shakespeare*, p. 67.

[2] The *Histoires Tragiques* were not translated till 1608, but, says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare doubtless read it in French," and for once we may accept the adverb here.

in 1591, and means, according to Mr. Reed, that the soliloquy had been "the subject of declamation on the public stage for five years preceding, or since 1586." It cannot, however, be said with certainty that the reference is to a soliloquy in a play of *Hamlet*, and even if it were so, it is far from conclusive that that play was the work of Shakespeare.

The reference to the ghost is contained in Lodge's *Wits Misery*, printed in 1596, where the fiend "Hate-Virtue" is thus described: "He walks for the most part in black under cover of gravity, and looks as pale as the vizard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the theatre, like an oyster wife, 'Hamlet, revenge.'" But in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as we know it, the ghost does not cry, "Hamlet, revenge," though he lays upon his son the injunction "Revenge my foul and most unnatural murder"; so that, unless the players introduced the words quoted from Lodge, as "gag," the play must have been a different one from that with which we are so familiar.

Again, in 1594, Henslowe makes a note in his *Diary* of a play called *Hamlet* (which he does not mark as "new," as was his custom on the occasion of a first performance), acted at the Newington Theatre, which the Lord Chamberlain's men (Shakspere's company) were then, as it is supposed, temporarily occupying. But this affords no proof that the play was Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is usually supposed to be "the old *Hamlet*."[1]

[1] See Henslowe's *Diary*, as edited by Payne Collier (1845), at p. 35. Henslowe's note, as the heading of his entries for June, 1594, is: "In the name of God Amen, beginninge at Newington, my Lord Admeralle and my Lorde chamberlen men, as foloweth, 1594." Then, after five other entries, we have "9 of June 1594, Rd at hamlet viij^{s}," i.e. received at the performance of *Hamlet* eight shillings. It seems from Henslowe's note, as Collier remarks, that the Lord Chamberlain's players were at this date acting at the Newington Theatre with the Lord Admiral's men. "The companies may have occupied the house on alternate days, but this is the less likely, because Henslowe received a share of the takings every day. Perhaps they acted twice a day, each company once." So Collier, but neither hypothesis seems very probable. The Lord Chamberlain's, it will be borne in mind, was Shakspere's Company.

At what date, then, did Shakespeare produce his play? Well, on July 26th, 1602, "A Book called the Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants" was entered on the Stationers' Company's registers by the printer, James Roberts. This apparently refers to "The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmark, by William Shakespeare," which was published next year (1603) by N. L. (identified as Nicholas Ling) and John Trundell, and known as the First Quarto Hamlet. According to the commonly accepted hypothesis, therefore, the year 1602 marks the production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

An argument, however, has been adduced to prove that Shakespeare must have produced his play of *Hamlet* much earlier than this, viz. before the year 1598. It appears that Gabriel Harvey in this year (1598) purchased a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, and in it he inscribed the following manuscript note: "The younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, but his *Lucrece* and his tragedy of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, have it in them to please the wiser sort." It has been urged that this entry could not have been made before 1600, because Harvey also speaks of *translated Tasso*, and the first edition of Fairfax, to which he is assumed to allude, appeared in 1600. To this it has been answered that five books of the *Jerusalem*, translated into English, were published by R. Carew in 1594. Moreover, Bishop Percy, who was the owner of Harvey's book in 1803, wrote to Malone: "In the passage which extols Shakespeare's tragedy, Spenser is quoted by name among our flourishing metricians. Now this edition of Chaucer was published in 1598, and Spenser's death is ascertained to have been in January, 1598–99, so that these passages were all written in 1598, and prove that *Hamlet* [i.e. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*] was written before that year." Notwithstanding this, Malone, who inspected the book in

the possession of Dr. Percy, says: "I have found reason to believe that the note in question may have been written in the latter end of the year 1600." He does not, however, state his reasons, except the reference to the translated Tasso, which he says was doubtless the first edition of Fairfax; neither does he say if the date, 1598, was written, as some have supposed, at the end of the note, and in Harvey's own handwriting. Steevens, however, says: "I have seen a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, which formerly belonged to Dr. Gabriel Harvey (the antagonist of Nash), who, in his own handwriting, has set down the play as a performance with which he was well acquainted in the year 1598. His words are these: 'The younger sort'," etc., as above.[1]

If this note of Gabriel Harvey's is to be received as proving that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was written before 1598, i.e. more than five years before the publication of the First Quarto (and it seems strong evidence to that effect), this is, undoubtedly, a fact which "gives furiously to think"!

Malone thought there could be very little doubt that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was first performed in the autumn of 1600, "from the reference which is made in it to the 'inhibition' of the players, which 'comes by means of the late innovation.' All the theatres, except the Fortune and the Globe, were inhibited by an order of Council, in June, 1600 . . . and so the other city tragedians were forced to travel." Messrs. Clark and Aldis Wright, however, doubt the validity of this argument, because the passage in question appears for the first time in the 1604 Quarto, and is not in the edition of 1603. But however that may be, it seems clear that the play published in 1603 had been

[1] I take this quotation from Judge Stotsenburg's *Shakespeare Title*, p. 479. The author refers to the "Variorum of 1773." I have not verified the quotation. The extract from Malone's note will be found in his edition of Shakespeare, by Boswell, Vol. II, p. 369.

known upon the stage for a considerable time previously to that year, since the title-page bears upon it the words, "As it hath been diverse times acted by his Highnesse servants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Universities of Cambridge, and Oxford, and elsewhere."

Let us now more particularly consider the Quartos of 1603 and 1604. As already mentioned, the "Book called the Revenge of Hamlet," etc., was entered on the Stationers' Register in July, 1602, by James Roberts. Then came the First Quarto, published in 1603, and printed for N. L. (Nicholas Ling), by John Trundell. This was succeeded next year (1604) by the publication of the Second Quarto, printed, as the title-page informs us, by I. R. for N. L., i.e. as one may infer, printed by the same James Roberts for Nicholas Ling. This Second Quarto edition, which, as the title-page also informs us, had been "newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was according to the true and perfect coppie," is our *Hamlet*, as we know it, and by its aid the editors have been able to enrich the shorter version of the Folio with many passages which we could indeed ill afford to lose. At the same time there are a few passages in the Folio which are not in either of the Quartos.[1] The 1603 Quarto is a very curious work, and three theories have been advanced concerning it, which can be taken either separately, or, as is more usual, in combination. It is said that the play is (1) a piracy, printed from a copy which was hastily taken down, and perhaps surreptitiously obtained, either from shorthand notes made during the representation, or privately from the actors themselves. (2) Shakespeare's first sketch of the play. (3) An old play which Shakespeare had begun to remodel, and retouched by him to a certain extent, but before his alterations were complete. As to (1). The hypothesis that

Note this.

Note

[1] According to Messrs. G. W. Clark and Aldis Wright, "The text of the play as it is found in the First Folio of 1623, and the subsequent Folio editions, is from sources independent of the Quartos."

this Quarto represents an imperfect version of the play, taken down in shorthand and surreptitiously printed, cannot in my judgment be sustained. The differences between this and the Second Quarto are not such as can be accounted for by the theory that it was put together from the notes of an inefficient shorthand writer. The Second Quarto, as Mr. Edwin Reed truly says, "presents to us exactly the same state of things which we have found in the later history of so many other of the Shakespeare plays—a revision so radical, and in most respects so vastly improved, as to make this form of the play almost an independent work." To mention one or two only of the features in which the earlier differs from the later version, we may remark that the scene with Ophelia, as Messrs. Clark and Wright point out, which in the modern play occurs in III, 1, is, in the older form, introduced in the middle of II, 2. Further, "Polonius is Corambis in the older play, and Reynaldo is Montano. The madness of Hamlet is much more pronounced, and the Queen's innocence of her husband's murder much more explicitly stated in the earlier than in the later play. In fact, the earlier play in these respects corresponds more closely with the original story." Moreover, the 1603 Quarto contains passages which are not to be found in the 1604 version, "a fact," says Mr. Edwin Reed, "which ought to settle the question at once." This writer believes that the First Quarto represents a very early production. "The difference in mental power between the two is so great that nothing but the intervention of a comparatively long period of development in the life of the author can account for it.' This is in harmony with Mr. Swinburne's theory of long and patient revision.

Mr. Knight maintained that the Quarto of 1603 represents the original sketch of the play, and that this was an early work of the poet. Messrs. Clark and Wright, however, differ in respect of this last conclusion, because they

doubt Shakespeare's connection with the play before 1602, basing their scepticism mainly upon the fact that Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, published in 1598, makes no mention of *Hamlet*. This, however, seems inconclusive, because Meres did not pretend to give an exhaustive catalogue of Shakespeare's plays, and it may be that the superiority of Shakespeare's version to the older play was not at that time sufficiently apparent to constrain him to mention it among typical Shakespearean tragedies. Or maybe it had not at that time been published as Shakespeare's. But now let us see what is the theory put forward by these distinguished critics in the Clarendon Press Edition of the play (p. x). "It is this:—That there was an old play on the story of *Hamlet*, some portions of which are still preserved in the quarto of 1603; that about the year 1602 Shakespeare took this and began to remodel it for the stage, as he had done with other plays; that the quarto of 1603 represents the play after it had been retouched by him to a certain extent, but before his alterations were complete; and that in the quarto of 1604 we have for the first time the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. It is quite true, as Mr. Knight has remarked, that in the quarto of 1603 we have the whole 'action' of the play; that is to say, the events follow very much the same order, and the catastrophe is the same. There are, however, some important modifications even in this respect. . . . In fact, the earlier play in these respects corresponds more closely with the original story. In *the earlier form it appears to us that Shakespeare's modification of the play had not gone much beyond the second act. Certainly in the third act we find very great unlikeness and very great inferiority to the later play. In fact, in the first, third, and fourth scenes there is hardly a trace of Shakespeare*,[1] and in the second, which is the scene where the play is introduced, there are very remarkable differences. The fourth act in lan-

[1] My italics.

guage has very little in common with its present form, and in the first scene of the fifth act there are still some traces of the original play. In the second scene of this act the dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio is not found, and the interview with Osric in its old dress may fairly be put down to the earlier writer. The rest of the scene is much altered, and of course improved, and wherever these improvements come it strikes us with irresistible force that in comparing the later with the earlier form of the play we are not comparing the work of Shakespeare at two different periods of his life, but the work of Shakespeare with that of a very inferior artist. If any one desires to be convinced of this, let him read the interview of Hamlet with his mother in the two quartos of 1603 and 1604." As to Hamlet's soliloquy, as it appears in the 1603 quarto, these critics write that it is "sadly mutilated, as if written down in fragments from memory"; but to that last opinion I cannot subscribe, if it be meant to imply that it may have been written from memory of the speech as we now know it. A writer from memory or a transcriber of shorthand notes would not have produced,

> For in that sleep of death, when we awake,
> And borne before an everlasting Judge . . .
> The undiscovered country, at whose sight
> The happy smile . . .
> But for this, the joyful hope of this," etc.

"The joyful hope" is an entirely different idea to that of "the dread of something after death"—in fact, it is a substitution of hope for fear (suggesting that it is the hope of a better life which enables us to bear the ills that flesh is heir to), which is indicative of a quite different version of the speech, and not of the imperfect memory or notes of the transcriber.

"In conclusion," say Messrs. Clark and Wright, "we

venture to think that a close examination of the quarto of 1603 will convince any one that it contains some of Shakespeare's undoubted work, mixed with a great deal that is not his, and will confirm our theory that the text, imperfect as it is, represents an older play in a transition state, while it was undergoing a remodelling, but had not received more than the first rough touches of the great master's hands."

Mr. Sidney Lee is of opinion that "Shakespeare's tragedy owed much to the lost version of *Hamlet*," which he believes was written by Thomas Kyd, "whose tragedies of blood, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Jeronimo*, long held the Elizabethan stage" (p. 177).

If Messrs. Clark and Wright are correct in their opinion that, in the 1603 version, "Shakespeare's modification of the play had not gone much beyond the second act," and that "certainly in the third act we find very great unlikeness and very great inferiority to the later play," a good deal of criticism will have to be accepted *cum grano salis*. Thus Dr. Garnett thinks that the writer of the scene where Hamlet gives directions to the players must have been "in the constant habit of giving instructions to performers." Even if we accept that inference (which to me seems altogether untenable), the conclusion which the learned critic seeks to draw from it is not a little doubtful, since these directions to the players are to be found in the third act of the play as it appears in the 1603 edition, and, according to the theory put forward by those eminent Shakespeareans, Messrs. Clark and Wright, they may very possibly belong to the old play.[1]

Let us now leave our old friend *Hamlet* for the nonce

[1] See *English Literature*, Vol, II, p. 201. The real truth seems to be that Shakespeare got the suggestion for Hamlet's address to the players from Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*, translated out of French by George Pettie (1581). See "A Forgotten Volume in Shakespeare's Library," by Edward Sullivan (*Nineteenth Century*, February, 1904). If this be so, it effectually disposes of Dr. Garnett's curious inference, which, in any case, seems to me quite unwarranted.

and turn to the play of *King John*. Here the argument for "early authorship" seems at first sight very striking. In 1591 was published a play entitled *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*. It was published in two parts, each in a separate volume, with a distinct title-page. Part I is "The Troublesome Raigne of *John* King of England, with the *discoverie of King* Richard Cordelion's Base sonne (vulgarly named, The Bastard Fawconbridge): also the death of King *John* at *Swinstead Abbey*." Part II is "The Second part of the troublesome Raigne of King *John*, *conteining the death* of Arthur Plantaginet, the landing of Lewes, and the poysning of King John at Swinstead *Abbey*." Both title-pages bear the inscription, "As it was (sundry times) publikely acted by the Queenes Maiesties Players, in the honourable Citie of London." A unique copy of this first edition of the play is preserved in the Capell Collection at Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1611 the two parts of the old play were put together in an edition published in one volume. The title-page of this second edition (1611) bore the words, "*written by W. Sh.*" In 1622 appeared a third edition, and here the title-page informs us that the work was written by "W. Shakespeare." Now if these title-pages contain truthful statements, it is clear that the old play of 1591, which had been "sundry times" before that date publicly acted by the Queen's players, was written by Shakespeare, in which case his declaration in 1593 that the *Venus and Adonis* was the first heir of his invention must be taken with many grains of salt, and we must be asked to believe, on the assumption that Shakespeare and Shakspere are identical, that the Stratford player had stepped into the ranks of successful playwrights, and had produced a very popular historical drama, some three or four years after he left his native town.[1] Moreover, Francis

[1] As I have already said, I do not think it possible to construe the phrase "the first heir of my invention" strictly, as implying that Shakespeare had written no play before 1593.

Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), mentions *King John* among Shakespeare's tragedies, although the play which is now known as Shakespeare's *King John* made its first appearance in the Folio of 1623. Added to which many critics, including Tieck and most of the Germans, contend that the original play bears the impress of Shakespearean authorship. "In the folio of 1623," writes Mr. Edwin Reed, "the play appeared rewritten and enlarged as we now have it (under the title of *King John*), but in such a manner as to demonstrate beyond all serious doubt that the two versions were the product of the same hand, at different stages of the author's intellectual development."

Here again I find myself compelled, most reluctantly, to dissent from Mr. Reed's pronouncement. It appears to me that the theory of the Shakespearean authorship of *The Troublesome Reign* falls to pieces upon perusal of the old play. I find it impossible to believe that the same man was the author of the drama published in 1591 and that which, so far as we know, first saw the light in the Folio of 1623. What "Shakespeare" did, as it seems to me, was to take an old play (which he did not "enlarge" but compress, converting ten acts into five), and to metamorphose it in his own marvellous manner. It is as though he had said to the public, "Here is one of the plays which has succeeded in gaining your favour. I will show you what such a work ought to be, and what it may become in the hands of a Master." The old play is altogether transformed. Hardly a single line of the original version reappears in the *King John* of Shakespeare. The style is entirely different. It is not only that the verses of the old play have the monotonous pause at the end of each line, but we feel that we are in a different atmosphere altogether. I cannot find the touch of the master hand in *The Troublesome Reign*. Let the reader compare the Bastard's abuse of Lymoges in the old play :—

> Shamst thou not coystrell, loathsome dunghill swad,
> To grace thy carkasse with an ornament
> Too precious for a Monarch's coverture? etc.

with Constance's invective in Act III, Scene I of the Folio play :

> Thou wear a lion's hide ! Doff it for shame,
> And hang a calf's skin on those recreant limbs—

and I am confident that he will appreciate my meaning. Then let him set side by side John's scenes with Pandulph in the old and the Folio dramas, and consider the following magnificent lines, and especially the last nine of them :—

> What earthly name to interrogatories
> Can task the free breath of a sacred king ?
> Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
> So slight, unworthy and ridiculous,
> To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
> Tell him this tale ; and from the mouth of England
> Add this much more, that no Italian priest
> Shall tithe or toll in our dominions ;
> But as we, under heaven, are supreme head,
> So, under Him that great supremacy,
> Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
> Without the assistance of a mortal hand :
> So tell the pope, all reverence set apart
> To him and his usurp'd authority.

He will not find a trace of this sort of thing in the old play. It is not, as I submit, the work of the same writer in a later stage of development ; it is the work of a different hand, and a hand guided by the inspiration of genius. The old play has many merits and many fine passages, but it is not, surely, Shakespeare's. It belongs to an earlier style, bringing reminiscences of such writers as Greene and Peele ; as, for instance, in such words as "hugie,"[1] and "triúmph," with the accent on the last syllable, and in the insertion of Latin lines, as "*Quicquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi*," and "*Multa cadunt inter calicem supremaque labro*."

[1] "Spying the hugie whale," Part II, Act 2, Scene 1. This word, and "triúmphs," "triúmpher," occur also in the non-Shakespearean *Titus*. "Hugy" also occurs in *Edward III*.